

Some neighborhoods are movin' on up

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Some Farmington Hills neighborhoods are movin' on up - at least in terms of zoning.

At its next meeting, Sept. 13, Farmington Hills City Council will consider final approval to rezone Pebblebrook Estates and Duke's Forestbrook subs from RA-2 to more restrictive RA-1 and RA-1B respectively. The adjoining subdivisions are west of Inkster Road and south of 12 Mile.

With 95 percent of the city built, planning officials are concerned how in-fill developments can disrupt the character of existing neighborhoods.

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Bob Tapert
—Association president

to seek higher zoning, though. "Anytime we do this, we want to make sure it fits so we're not creating a bunch of non-conforming properties," said Dale Countegan, Hills planning director.

Residents of West Franklin Estates in the Farmington-14 Mile are in the process of rezoning from RA-1 to RA-1A, which is the city's most restrictive and requires a minimum area of 33,000 square feet and a 140-foot setback.

By "upzoning" to allow less units per acre, builders will find it difficult to split lots and build two houses where only one existed before. Pebblebrook-Forestbrook residents asked the city to rezone their subs, which required a planning commission study session and public hearing before going to city council.

Under RA-2 zoning, homeowners association President Bob Tapert feared vacant lots in his sub could be redeveloped as two two-to-four unit lots.

"We had some questions about the zoning for the area. It didn't seem to reflect the character of the neighborhood," said Tapert, who is a retired city of Detroit planner. "Our homes are more like those in the Wood Creek area. We felt our zoning should be more comparable to that."

Neighbors wholeheartedly backed the idea.

"There was a lot of support," Tapert said. "Everyone wants to keep the character of the neighborhood."

Average setbacks in the Forestbrook sub are 191 feet, which meets RA-1 and RA-1B standards.

RA-1 requires lots size be 20,000 square feet and 100-foot wide while more restrictive RA-1B mandates lots be 26,000 square feet and 140-foot wide.

RA-1A is the least dense zoning classification, requiring lots be at least 33,000 square feet and 140 feet wide.

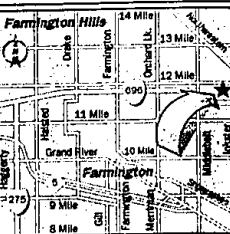
While pleased with the results of maintaining neighborhoods, planning officials are urging caution.

"This is not the entire solution to this," Countegan said.

The city is working on ordinances dealing with lot splits, open space and requirements that lots have public road access, Countegan said.

Meanwhile, Tapert is not surprised

Moving up zoning ladder
Adjoining Pebblebrook Estates and Duke's Forestbrook subs rezone to preserving neighborhood character



residents in West Franklin Estates have followed his neighborhood's path to zone upward. "And there will be probably more to come," he said.

Farmington Observer
 Published every Sunday and Thursday by Observer & Eccentric Newspapers, 803 E. Maple, Farmington, MI 48320-0110. Periodical postage paid at Farmington, MI 48320-0110. Postmaster: Send address changes to Observer & Eccentric, Newspapers 803 E. Maple, Farmington, MI 48320-0110. Telephone 442-1100.
 SUBSCRIPTION RATES
 Carrier Delivery \$47.40 One year \$55.00
 One year (St. Clair) \$38.00 One year (St. Clair) \$44.00
 Homebound \$60.00 One year (Out of State) \$60.00
 Newsstand per copy 75¢ One year (Out of State) \$90.00
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