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# NORTHWEST HERALD

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## Woodstock commission votes no on Riverwoods housing plan opposed by neighbors, but fight's not over yet

### Plan will still be voted on by City Council

By Claire O'Brien      December 15, 2023 at 6:01 pm CST



Residents attend a Woodstock Plan Commission meeting Thursday during which the proposed Riverwoods development was discussed; people living nearby spoke out against the plans. (Claire O'Brien)

After an almost 4½-hour meeting in front of a standing-room-only audience, the Woodstock Plan Commission voted against the Riverwoods housing development proposal late Thursday.

But that's not the last word on the controversial plan, which opponents say is high-density and raises environmental and traffic concerns.

Lennar, a national homebuilder with McHenry County projects including Talamore in Huntley, is proposing the development with 244 single-family homes and 38 duplexes on the southeast side of Woodstock, near Lucas Road and Northwestern Medicine Woodstock Hospital.

Not all of the land in the proposed development is within city limits. Seventeen acres along Lucas Road are unincorporated and would have to be annexed. Current plans suggest that land would be where the 76 duplex units would be located.

Thursday's meeting included a public hearing during which Lennar gave a presentation about the development, and several residents on Lucas Road and surrounding areas, mostly unincorporated, spoke out against the plan.

Jessica Rizza said that she has a lot of environmental concerns about the project.

"I hope this development is not approved," Rizza said.

Resident Megan Liebetrau brought up her concerns, including drivers navigating Lucas Road and its intersection with Route 47.

"Our way of life would drastically change," Liebetrau said.

Liebetrau said she wasn't opposed to development in general but opposed this one.

Dave Brandt said he worked in soil science for 26 years and was asked to offer his views. He expressed concerns about the soils in the proposed development area and the potential for basement flooding in the homes.

Lennar's plans for the neighborhood indicate the duplexes would be on slabs and there would be partial basements in the single-family homes.

"You are going to get wet basements," Brandt said.

Documents provided to the Plan Commission reference a report by the McHenry County Soil and Water Conservation District that, according to city staff, "identifies a significant portion of the soils on the site to have severe building restrictions relating to the use of basements and slabs."

However, the developer "has conducted soil borings at several locations on the property ... [and] they believe that the soil will be suitable to accommodate proposed structures, according to the meeting packet.

Over the course of the long meeting, the audience got testy at points, and Chair Cody Sheriff admonished a couple of audience members at various points later on to remain civil.

The Plan Commission deliberated on the proposal after the public and Lennar weighed in.

“This is a toughie,” Commissioner Richard Ryan said.

He said he didn’t personally care to see the duplexes.

Commissioner Steve Gavers said the “duplexes should be in town.”

Setbacks also are smaller on the side yard than what the proposed new zoning would require. The side yard setbacks need to be 8 feet, while plans indicate they would be 6 feet.

“I really don’t like the density,” Gavers said.

The Plan Commission voted 2-4 against a proposed zoning change, among other matters related to the proposal, in a series of votes. Residents cheered after the votes.

But it’s the City Council that will have final say on the matter.

The proposal is not the first one developers have suggested for the site.

Much of the property was annexed to Woodstock in 1988, and a 457 single-family home development called Kishwaukee Woods was proposed but never moved forward, according to city documents.

Riverwoods was first proposed by Realen Homes in the mid 2000s but was never built, according to city documents.

**Woodstock McHenry County Development**

## **Claire O'Brien**

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