

Your View: Riverwoods

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Too many red flags with Riverwoods development

I write to voice my opposition to the Riverwoods 320-unit high-density proposed development – as one born and raised in Woodstock and who still lives here, having my business in our town.

My concerns stem from anything but a not-in-my backyard rationale. Most of us long-term Woodstock residents are fine with residential growth – so long as the growth serves one of two needs: 1) affordable housing or 2) high-quality housing in keeping with our community’s character.

The proposed development along Lucas and Doty Roads in Woodstock is within an area deemed by Woodstock’s long-term land-use plan as a Resource Conservation Area. The developer proposes zoning to allow the highest density of a planned development within all zoning groups allowed in Woodstock. The single-family homes would have a typical lot size of 0.18 acres. The developer has proposed setbacks of less than the Woodstock zoning minimums: six-foot side-yard setbacks, cramming the single family houses and duplexes within 12 feet of one another.

This proposed high-density development is more than “challenging.” This is because the Natural Resource Information Report by McHenry County Soil and Water points to the “severe limitations” for both basements and slabs on 88.5 percent of the acreage. Among the official soil and water reports in McHenry County for the past eight years involving residential zoning changes of more than 10 acres, no other proposed development had the percentage of hydric soil (saturated, flooded, or ponded) in the range of the proposed development. And no other proposed development had “severe” limitations for slabs even close to the limitations involving the proposed 74 duplexes that would face Lucas Road.

The report warns against installing basements given the “severe” building limitations. And it points to the potential for “cracked foundations, wet basements” and “lower structural integrity” for buildings on the vast majority of the planned urban development. Nevertheless, it appears

that the developer may flout these red-flags, continuing to insist that all 244 houses would have partial basements.

Another challenge is that 42 acres are on a sensitive aquifer recharge area, including the area where the developer would build 74 duplexes. Building along the unique topography of the Kishwaukee River watershed presents long-term dangers of contamination of Woodstock's water supply and area wells as noted within the report. The development would also destroy most of the substantial remnant oak woodlands within this acreage.

Finally, consider the area where this proposal would be built: between Woodstock and Crystal Lake and between U.S. 14 and Route 47. This change to Woodstock's land-use plan would not promote smart growth but urban sprawl. The proposed high-density development along the banks of the Kishwaukee River would be out of character with Woodstock's historical charm. The Plan Commission and the City Council should retain this acreage as a natural resource area while rejecting this ill-advised development. We can do better!

Gunnar J. Gitlin

Woodstock