

Plan Commission recommends zoning change for Wester land, Village Board to consider plan Sept. 10

The Belgium Plan Commission unanimously recommended approval of a zoning change for 28.5 acres owned by Dean Wester south of Lakeview Drive to accommodate an assisted-living facility and senior complex.

The Village Board will consider the petition from Wester to change the zoning from community business to institutional zoning at its Sept.10 meeting.

Before recommending the change, commission members learned more about the project, the timetable and long-range plans for the property. The initial phase will be to build a 28-bed assisted-living facility with half the beds termed memory care for patients with Alzheimer's disease or dementia. That unit will be self-contained with its own kitchen, dining area and laundry in the center of the wing.

"You see a lot of buildings with memory care and assisted living mixed," said Tammy Rabe, who will operate the facility. "Having them separated, we are able to have better programs in place. If you have people who wander most of the night, they will wander in a circle around the dining area, kitchen and laundry until they've calmed down."

The other end of the building will have a regular assisted living facility connected to a large central area where a variety of services, including a bistro, theater, billiards room, barber, salon and chapel, will be available to residents.

"We want people to get out into the community, but in winter, they won't have to go out. They can get what they need in the facility," Rabe said. "If we bring facilities here, we can change them as needed."

The 30,000-square-foot assisted-living facility will be the first building constructed, Wester said, but there are plans to develop a senior complex that includes independent apartments and housing for disabled veterans.

"I've met with the Veterans Administration and it will take a year just for the paperwork," Rabe said. "When we break ground here, we'll start the paperwork."

Rabe said she's also working with the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) to bring a low-income housing facility to the property.

A wellness center for residents and perhaps the community, an adult day care and a child care facility are also planned, she said. A group home is also a possibility.

Assisted-living complex progresses

Written by CAROL POMEDAY
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The memory-care and assisted-living wings will be added onto in 14-bed increments, she said, because of the way the facility will be staffed to ensure there are two employees in each wing.

“As you add on, it’s safe to assume you will be coming to the village about your next action just to keep us in the loop,” Village President Richard Howells said. “I want to keep the flow of information open.”

Wester commented, “I think it would be great if a year from now we had to put in another 14 units. It’s based upon the need.”

Rabe said that within a 20-mile radius of Belgium all similar facilities are being added onto or have plans to expand.

The 28-bed facility will have 35 employees, including full and part-time workers, she said.

Rabe’s background is in marketing, initially in the food industry and for the past eight years overseeing senior living complexes in Wisconsin, Illinois and Michigan. At the Belgium facility, services will be tailored to what residents want and need rather than follow a corporate model, she said.

“Health care is being scrutinized. We have to be on top of the trends and respond to them,” Rabe said.

She said her four grandparents recently needed care that went from health care to end of life issues, and what they liked are included in her plans for the facility.

Because the complex will be visible from I-43, Lakeview Drive and Highway LL, Rabe said all sides of the buildings will be attractive.

Wester said the complex will be owned by a group of investors.