

New Luxembourg zoning approved

Written by CAROL POMEDAY
Wednesday, 10 July 2013 17:31

Despite concerns over small lots, houses, officials create mixed-use district

During a one-hour public hearing Monday a half dozen residents, several village employees and firefighters objected to the small lots and side yards that would be allowed in the New Luxembourg mixed-use zoning district.

However, members of the Belgium Area Chamber of Commerce praised the development, saying it is the latest trend in housing and something not currently available in the village.

The Village Board approved the creation of a mixed-use zoning district for the development and rezoned 56.4 acres owned by Ansay Development Corp. from its current zoning to mixed-use.

The board also approved a certified survey map for the Village Hall site, village square and the first nine lots that will be developed along Peter Thein Avenue.

The two-story, 1,300-square-foot, two-bedroom houses on 50-foot-wide lots will sell for about \$184,000 and are expected to appeal to people, mostly 55 and older, who no longer want or need a big house or yard, said Bill Tiabl, a real estate attorney representing Ansay.

“We want a community-friendly, intimate development that’s walkable, and want to make the village square a focal point of the village,” Tiabl said.

The development is designed to have the ambiance of a European community, where this type of housing is common, Village President Richard Howells said.

“Rather than European, how about Riverwest? Does that sound better than inner city?” a resident asked when he learned the lots would be half the current 100-foot width and houses would be 15 feet apart.

“In March, you stood there and said no concessions would be made as a condition for the Village Hall,” said Peter Anzia, a member of the fire department. “Now you come with small lots. What about fire protection? One house catches on fire and it will jump to another.”

Fire Chief Dan Birenbaum, who raised that concern at a recent Plan Commission meeting, said, “Everything is too close. If we could require a sprinkling system, I would feel better about this.”

Trustee John Hise said he researched how other communities handle that. Some require sprinklers, while others require 1/2-inch-thick fire retardant walls, he said.

“All you need to do is hold back the fire until the fire department gets there,” Hise said.

“This small-scale development is a growing trend across the country. We’re just offering another option to people. I live in a condo, but I think I would have picked this if it had been

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available.”

Sara Jacoby, operations and events manager of the Luxembourg American Cultural Center, noted, “There are a large group of people who believe that large houses on large lots are very irresponsible. This is the trend.”

Trustee Jason Acevedo, the lone board member to cast a no vote, said he supports the development, but believes the lots should be a little larger, noting changes to the first conceptual plan have already made some lots smaller.

Not all lots will be that small, Howells said, and the Plan Commission and Village Board can require larger lots.

“I think these will sell,” Acevedo said. “If they do, I guarantee that all the lots will be this small.”

Although the mixed-use zoning is only for the New Luxembourg development, which is in the tax incremental district, Trustee Vickie Boehnlein said another developer could come with a similar concept.

Village Attorney Gerald Antoine said the board would evaluate the development, its benefit to the village and act accordingly. Each mixed-use zoning could be different, he said.

The New Luxembourg development will be built around a village square that will feature the new Village Hall, a central plaza with a water feature, sculptures and stage for concerts and other events, a community center, art gallery, shops and businesses and the cultural center.

Ansay Development will pay for infrastructure costs and will receive the additional revenue generated by the tax district until those expenses are paid.

Mike and John Ansay donated \$600,000 to build a Village Hall and a lot in the village square valued at \$220,000. Construction is expected to start this fall with completion in spring.

A ground-breaking ceremony will be held at 4 p.m. Thursday, Aug. 8, to kick off Luxembourg Heritage Weekend and Luxembourg Fest of America.

The village square will be named in honor of Grand Duke Henri of Luxembourg.