

Panel backs small lots on village square

Written by CAROL POMEDAY
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Higher-density residential plan intended to capture character of Luxembourg

The Village of Belgium Plan Commission recommended Tuesday that a new mixed-use district be created that allows smaller houses and lots in the New Luxembourg subdivision being developed by the Ansay Development Corp.



The Village Board is expected to adopt the zoning on July 8.

The new zoning would allow 1,500-square-foot, three-bedroom, two-bathroom houses on 50-foot-wide lots and a mix of business, cultural and municipal uses to recreate the ambiance of a Luxembourg village.

Neil Tiziani of Ansay Development presented a preliminary plat for nine lots along Peter Thein Avenue, a public street that has sidewalks and utilities. The laterals were installed for 100-foot-wide lots, which is the village requirement for single-family houses, so more laterals will be needed. The houses can be as close as 15 feet apart.

Belgium Fire Chief Dan Birenbaum said the department is opposed to houses being that

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close together for safety reasons.

Village President Richard Howells said the houses on Main Street are as close as those proposed in the New Luxembourg development.

“Yes, but they’re already there. This is adding more,” Birenbaum said.

He recommended sprinklers be required if the board allows the density.

“If a house gets on fire, the neighbors’ houses are in danger,” he said. “Have you considered adding sprinklers? At a fire chiefs convention, we were told the state is close to requiring sprinklers in all new construction.”

Tiziani said they don’t plan to install sprinklers, which would add to the price of the houses.

“We want to build houses that we believe will sell in Belgium,” he said. “Anything we add to them increases the cost.”

Larger lots would mean fewer houses and it will take longer to recover the infrastructure cost and generate tax revenue for the village, he said.

“Because of the life of the TIF (tax incremental financing district), we don’t have that time. We have only nine years left,” Tiziani said.

He also requested street setbacks be changed to 20 feet from the center line of public and private streets. The original proposal was for a 30-foot setback on public streets and 20 feet on private ones.

Although Birenbaum, who is also the public works director, said it may be difficult to install all the laterals in the shorter setbacks, the commission recommended the change pending engineering approval.

Tiziani said their engineer says it is possible and the two engineers will have to work it out.

The reduced setback will allow the central plaza to be larger and houses to be closer to the street, adding to the Luxembourg feel.

“In Luxembourg, the streets are busy, but pedestrian friendly,” Tiziani said. “The front yard will be smaller, but the plaza will be their front yard. We want people to get out, use the hiking trails and the plaza. We want them to be active, not sitting at home.

“We want to create excitement in the plaza that hopefully will translate to interest in the subdivision.”

The 27,000-square-foot plaza, which will be deeded to the village when it’s completed, will

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include a splash pad, band shell, green space, gardens and sculptures, Tiziani said.

The plan must be approved by Grand Duke Henri of Luxembourg and will be named in his honor. The sculptures, splash pad and other items will be designed by Luxembourg artisans, Tiziani said.

“Mike Ansay and his daughter are in Luxembourg now and making the same proposal there,” he said. “They’re sending doors from Luxembourg that will be used in buildings here and arranging for sculptures and other art.”

The commission also recommended approval of a certified survey map creating the Village Hall lot and village square.

The new Village Hall, which will be 3,400 square feet, doubling the current office space, will be built on the south end of the village square. The Luxembourg American Cultural Center will be on the east side, a community building will be on the north end and commercial buildings are planned on the west side with the plaza in the center.

Residential housing will initially be developed south and west of the village square, with senior multi-unit housing and a community-based residential housing facility planned north of the cultural center.

A groundbreaking ceremony for the Village Hall and village square will be held at 4 p.m. Thursday, Aug. 8, during Luxembourg Fest.

Work will begin in September on the Village Hall and two houses in the subdivision. The hall is expected to be completed by spring.

A PRELIMINARY PLAT for the New Luxembourg development shows the village square, plaza and site for the new Village Hall on the south end of the square. The Luxembourg American Cultural Center, a community center and commercial buildings will also be on the square with a central plaza where concerts and other events can be held. Single-family lots on Peter Thein Avenue will be the first housing developed by Ansay Development Corp. Multi-family housing for seniors is planned north of the cultural center.