

Subdivision plan calls for five lots on river property

Written by Steve Ostermann
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Renner Architects proposes new project for 16th Avenue site

Village of Grafton officials are considering a proposal that calls for the development of a five-lot subdivision on the east bank of the Milwaukee River north of Falls Road.

In a concept plan for the Tree Houses subdivision presented to the Plan Commission this week for review, Renner Architects has proposed building five single-family houses on a 3.45-acre parcel off 16th Avenue.

The property — which contains wooded areas, steep slopes and Milwaukee River shore land — is currently zoned for estate single-family residential use. The proposed lots range in size from 22,151 square feet to 36,495 square feet, which Village Planner Director Mike Rambousek said would meet minimum lot-size requirements for the zoning.

In a report to the commission, Rambousek stated that the village's Smart Growth Master Plan earmarks the property for medium-density residential development. He said the concept plan offers a proposal that could "positively impact the neighborhood with quality development at a density lower than the surrounding area."

The neighborhood is in an R-2 single-family district that allow lots as small as 10,000 square feet.

In 2001, Peter Renner, co-founder of Renner Architects, proposed developing a subdivision at the same site that initially called for as many as 11 lots and was subsequently downsized to four.

After the village rezoned the land to limit the number of houses permitted on the property, Renner sued the village, claiming the rezoning deprived him of the right to develop the land. A judge dismissed the lawsuit in 2004, and the land has remained undeveloped.

Rambousek said the village planning and development staff "is comfortable with five residential units on this site because their total width would be similar to the surrounding neighborhood and specifically the lots across 16th Avenue to the east."

However, Rambousek said, the property's large number of mature trees, shore land and floodplain areas and proximity to the river will require the footprints of each house, accessory buildings and driveways to be placed where they have the least impact on natural resources. The municipal code also requires a shore-land buffer of 25 feet from the high water mark of the river.

Rambousek said his staff recommended Renner Architects request rezoning the site to R-2 single family and that a deed restriction be placed on the property to prevent more than five lots from being developed at the site.

Rambousek said the review process for the proposed subdivision may include consideration of

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a conditional-use permit for the development. The project will require plat approvals by the Plan Commission and Village Board and Architectural Review Board approval of each house.