

City considers new options for VK land

Written by Kristyn Halbig Ziehm
Wednesday, 23 February 2011 18:36

Port officials begin studying alternative uses for property Brookfield developer earmarked for massive subdivision

Port Washington officials last week began to take a look at how the city's south side will develop, given the fact that Brookfield developer Vincent Kuttemperoor is likely to lose control of much of the property he once proposed turning into a massive, high-end subdivision.

The Plan Commission directed city staff members to create an inventory of Kuttemperoor's holdings so they have a better idea which properties they are studying.

"Once we get an inventory ... then we'll be ready to look at land uses," Mayor Scott Huebner said.

The city also needs to find out which banks hold mortgages on the land, officials said, noting that one financial institution has already initiated foreclosure proceedings on a parcel of Kuttemperoor's land.

Ald. Dan Becker, a member of the commission, said the panel should proceed carefully, noting the decisions made will affect the community for decades.

"There are so many things you can do," he said.

Commission member Earl Kelley said the property east of Highway C — much of which was included in Kuttemperoor's initial annexation a decade ago — would be "beautiful residential land."

Others noted that parcels west of Highway C near the city's current industrial area could be used to expand that use, perhaps creating a business park.

Land along Highway 32 could also create a commercial corridor, members noted.

But, Kelley warned, the city has always set a key goal of not allowing any development on Kuttemperoor's land to compete with businesses downtown.

"It's almost like making a mini-land use plan for the area," commission member Bud Sova said. "We have to be careful. We don't want to block any future streets or infrastructure."

Kuttemperoor owns close to 800 acres on the city's south side and the Town of Grafton, including about 500 acres within the city limits, said Randy Tetzlaff, the city's director of planning and development.

The land, which stretches from the Lake Michigan shoreline to Highway 32, was amassed by Kuttemperoor beginning in 1988 and continuing through the 1990s.

City considers new options for VK land

Written by Kristyn Halbig Ziehm
Wednesday, 23 February 2011 18:36

However, when the housing market crashed, Kuttemperoor, like many developers, found himself struggling, Tetzlaff said. The developer has placed more than 300 acres on the market with an asking price of \$25 million, and individuals and developers are looking at smaller parcels — some as small as two acres.

People are beginning to ask what they can do with the property, Tetzlaff said.

“In the not-too-distant future, we have to have an idea what to tell them,” he said. “The question is where do we go from here?”

When Kuttemperoor annexed the land, a study of the property and its proposed uses was conducted for the city. Huebner said the city needs to examine that study and see if its findings are still valid.

City Administrator Mark Grams said Kuttemperoor added to his holdings after the study was completed.

The study, he added, “was the worst case scenario to determine how many houses could you pack in there.”

It looked at Kuttemperoor’s preliminary plan, which called for building as many as 574 single-family homes and 222 multifamily units, primarily duplex condominiums, as well as 22 acres of commercial shops and a 450-unit resort hotel. There was to be land for a school and public access to the lakefront.

Kuttemperoor estimated the development would ultimately be worth \$480 million.

He spent years working on concepts for the property, developing plans for a high-end golf course surrounded by residential development and considering ways to stabilize the eroding bluff.

Jason Wittek, 469 W. Grand Ave., asked the commission to consider that the development provide for a mix of income levels and housing uses, with coherent mixed-use neighborhoods that allow people to walk and bike to destinations.

“Wealth of a city isn’t just the value of its homes, but the utility of its neighborhoods,” he said. “I am in no way against new growth. But I am against more of the same growth we’ve seen on the outskirts of Port Washington in the last few years.”