

# RE-ZONING OF HOBSON WEST PONDS

On Tuesday, December 5th, I attended the City Council meeting to oppose the re-zoning from single family to multi-family housing on the Hobson West Pond area on West Street.

I have been a resident of Naperville for 32 years, and have watched the town grow from a quaint village of 38,000 residents to a booming city of more than 140,000. We all know that Naperville was selected as the #2 Large City in America to raise a family by Money Magazine, in August, 2006, but we were negatively cited for our traffic problems, high median home cost and two-year wait list for a train parking permit.

We also know that Naperville is having difficulty straddling the fence between small town charm and big city traffic and congestion due to our rapid population growth.

Now, the City Council seems determined to change the Master Plan zoning from single family homes to multi-family on a tract of land that is only six acres, with residential acreage of 3.72 acres; Crestview Builders, knowing the property was zoned for single family houses, spent \$2.75 million to acquire this property, then promptly applied for re-zoning. At a later meeting, Crestview stated they could not make an acceptable profit from the sale of only 12 single family homes as opposed to 29 townhomes (now modified to 22). Subsequently, this re-zoning issue was brought before the Naperville Planning Commission on two different occasions, and was rejected both times.

A large contingent of subdivisions have joined together in opposing this move. Led by Hobson West, this group includes homeowners from Green Acres, Buttonwood, the Fields, and the Highlands. The usual steps have been taken: petitions signed (a total of 1,061 signatures from 699 households within a mile radius of the property), meetings attended, city staff spoken with, city reports read, etc.—all to no avail; the recent

vote on Tuesday was 5-4 in favor of re-zoning.

Today, I feel that the future of our city is not being directed by City Council, but is being determined by the builders, developers, real estate agents, and the law firms who represent them. Is this what we want for our city's future? As our grandmothers would say, "Are we becoming too big for our britches?"

Though the City Council voted on December 5th to have the city staff prepare an ordinance to change the zoning to multi-family, the following issues are the major reasons why the residents of this area are strongly against this zoning change:

- 1) The set-back from the property line to the buildings is only 15 feet, compared to a set-back of 30 feet for single family housing. This proposed townhouse development does not include curbs, storm water drains, normal city streets, parkways or sidewalks.
- 2) The existing property currently has 152 mature trees; 125 of which are scheduled to be destroyed during the construction. Crestview has submitted a tree preservation plan stating some trees will be re-planted and others added. No details have been submitted regarding the number to be re-planted, and the size of the new trees.
- 3) The Hobson West Ponds property is only 6.0 acres, with proposed residential acreage of 3.72 acres. This is an average of six townhomes per acre, as compared to Hobson West single family homes with two homes per acre, and the Fields Townhouses with five townhomes per acre.
- 4) Even though flooding problems are common in this area, a survey by City Engineer Bill Novak indicates the property has met the preliminary requirements.

However, how can we be assured that the run-off from 22 townhouse units (with basements) will not increase the flooding problems?

- 5) A traffic study conducted by the city, with assurances that no substantial increase in congestion on Naperville-Plainfield Road will occur, has been "lost" and cannot be located for review.
- 6) Crestview Builders proposes to encompass all five of the townhouse buildings with a six-foot tall black wrought iron fence, which is inconsistent with the surrounding residential area.
- 7) Due to the brick construction of the buildings, and the placement on the property, an 80-foot long stretch of two-story solid brick will run parallel to West Street and parallel to Plainfield /Naperville Rd, set back only 15 feet from the sidewalk.
- 8) Additionally, a total of 280 linear feet from the back side of both a three-unit and a five-unit building on West Street and Plainfield / Naperville Road will only be set back 25 feet from the roads.

The final vote is scheduled to take place at the City Council meeting on Tuesday, January 2nd at the City Hall. If you disagree with the decision to change this zoning from the current R1A single family zoning to the R3A multi-family designation, please attend this meeting to show support for this cause.

Over the past years, I have fallen in love with Naperville and truly feel at home here. I will not leave, but I will keep a closer eye on the city's future development, and try to influence the City Council to act with the best interests of the entire city as their primary goal. Isn't that why we elected them?

*Paula Dulli, Hobson West resident*