

Plans would fill a 'hole'
Unincorporated Walkertown area would get housing

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WALKERTOWN

Developers are considering two housing projects that would help fill the large "doughnut hole" of unincorporated area in the middle of town.

A proposed housing subdivision along Rocky Branch Road would have 78 units on 39 acres. At the western ends of Rocklane Drive and Swain Lane, another project would have 30 single-family houses and 16 multifamily units in four buildings.

However, the developer of the Rocklane subdivision said this week that he would ask the City-County Planning Board to delay considering the project while he and his business partner decide whether to proceed with the development.

If only one subdivision is built, the "doughnut hole" still would grow smaller with a request for annexation by the developers of Muirfield Park, a subdivision along Rocky Branch Road.

"We have been trying to fill in those doughnut holes, but it has taken a long time," said Mayor Doc Davis of Walkertown. "We only do voluntary annexation, not forced, and that is the reason it has gone slower."

Eastwood Development Co. of High Point would develop Muirfield Park. The planned 78 units would have a density of two units per acre. The lots would range from about 6,000 square feet to 8,000 square feet, although a few would be larger.

The plans show that Muirfield Park would have a lot of land in common areas that would be left in a natural state. About 51 percent of the property - 19 acres - would remain undeveloped.

The subdivision would have access from Rocky Branch Road. Several interior streets would end in cul-de-sacs, which are dead-end streets with a turnaround at the closed end.

Kenneth Tuttle, Eastwood's land-development manager for the Triad, said that houses would be ready for sale on the property in September 2008.

Betty Faye Garwood owns the Muirfield Park property, and she co-owns another doughnut-hole tract of 70 acres at the end of Rocky Branch Road.

The subdivision along Rocklane and Swain drives would be called The Haven at Hanley Park. Timothy and Christi Welborn own that land.

Larry Callahan, a partner in Reid Properties of Forsyth LLC, said that the project is "on hold" while developers decide what to do.

The county's requirements for curbs, gutters and sidewalks may put the project's cost beyond his reach. "Because of all the requirements that the county is putting on developers

right now, I don't know if I can make any money on it right now," Callahan said. "Until we decide whether we can do anything, it may be a situation where we don't do anything."

Davis said that the availability of sewer service is driving development that has occurred in the central doughnut hole.

The town provided the area with sewer service in 2003. Since the lines' construction, development has slowly squeezed the doughnut hole shut. That is what townspeople want, Davis said.

"I'm sure they will be tickled to death to get it all filled in so we will look like a normal land through there," Davis said. "It looks like a big bird otherwise, with arms and wings stretched out."

Tuttle also said that sewer service was vital for his project to work. "It is the sewer through the property that made us look at it," he said.

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