

Cedars of Dexter site plan gets green light

By Sean Dalton, Staff Writer

PUBLISHED: September 27, 2007

After some additional time to answer questions posed by the Village Council and respond to neighbor complaints, the Cedars of Dexter plans were unanimously approved Monday night.

The proposed 60-unit United Methodist Retirement Community development was tabled at the Sept. 10 Village Council meeting.

During that meeting resident Ken Tappe vocalized his concerns about the quality of trees and shrubbery used to replace larger, more established trees and other foliage to make way for construction.

He was also concerned about soil erosion stemming from the project.

"(UMRC) has plans for (those concerns), but when is that going to happen effectively?" Tappe said.

"I just hope that they complete the project to an extent that those will no longer be an issue."

Additionally, the developer must meet six conditions, including tree replacement according to village forestry standards, a review of development signage, a water utilities review, an engineering consultant's review and the developer must return the landscaping in the Westridge subdivision to its prior condition.

The sixth condition is the execution of the development agreement by both the village and UMRC.

That agreement is currently under review by the village attorney and will be further reviewed with additions by UMRC attorneys before being placed on the Oct. 8 Village Council agenda.

Residents at the Sept. 10 meeting said that they had understood that planting an adequate foliage buffer would take place earlier in the process.

Project Engineer Kate Bond responded negatively to Councilman Shawn Keough's question of whether the installment of the necessary trees and shrubs could be expedited.

"The reason that I would advise our clients not to pursue something like that goes beyond just that there isn't infrastructure there to maintain it," she said, going on to say that there aren't the necessary personnel to do so.

"There isn't anyone staffwise until the campus is operational to do so."

Bond also said that installing foliage screening too early could result in the developer having to replace dead or dying trees since there are still additional buildings to erect on the property.

She said planting would not begin until the project was fully operational.

Keough asked Collins and Bond to define "fully operational" so residents and the council could determine when that milestone is reached.

Bond said that due to the project's financing UMRC must sell 60 percent of the units before the Cedars of Dexter can cross that threshold.

Residents might not have to wait long, as UMRC officials have said previously that strong sales of the units could drive the project to completion within a year.

Kate Collins, special projects director for UMRC, reaffirmed that estimate this week,

"We've only been marketing this for seven weeks and we anticipate it to go quickly," Collins said.

Most of the 12-units already pre-sold are close to the community center near Gordon Hall on the south end of the property.

Collins spoke out to concerned residents, saying "What the community are seeing right now at Gordon Hall is a work in progress."

Tappe, who is a resident of Island Hills Estates on the west side of the development, said he will wait to see what happens, but was pleased with the village's response to his concerns.

"I think a number of people took it to heart and tried to negotiate," he said.

"I appreciate (the council) listening to someone who's not even in the village."