



Posted on Tue, Sep. 30, 2008

Midway votes to rezone industrial land for homes

MIXED-USE DEVELOPMENT WOULD HAVE HOTEL, WINERY

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MIDWAY — Goodbye, industrial land. Hello, houses.

That's essentially what Midway City Council said Monday night in a 5-1 vote to approve a rezoning that allows more than 600 residential units on land that was once touted as the future site for Woodford County industry.

The mixed-use development as proposed by Dennis Anderson of Lexington will have 605 single-family houses and townhouses, an 80-room hotel, a winery, a primary health care facility and 3.5 miles of walking trails.

To put that in context, the city of Midway now has 623 occupied housing units, according to information presented at a May planning commission meeting. The park is on the northeast corner of Interstate 64 and Ky. 341, and most of its 172 acres had been zoned for light-industrial uses.

Douncil members Aaron Hamilton, Sheila Redmond, Sharon Turner, Matt Warfield and Charlann Wombles voted for the rezoning. Council member Diana Queen was the lone vote against the rezoning.

Anderson said he did not have a time line on when construction would start. "We've always been patient. We're more focused on right than fast," he said.

Anderson has agreed to pay more than \$6 million for the property to the Woodford County Economic Development Authority, provided no litigation arises. Hank Graddy, attorney for the Woodford Coalition, which had opposed the rezoning, could not say whether litigation might be filed.

The council heard comments from 25 citizens. Marcella Long, who has lived in Midway for 69 years, supported the rezoning. She expressed the frustration of many who wish Midway had more retail opportunities.

"It's a shame when you have to go to Versailles, Georgetown or Lexington to get one nail" to hang a picture frame, Long said. "I'm saying that we need a change here in this town."

But critics said the rezoning could eventually cost more in services such as water, sewage treatment, police and fire protection than the city would see in property taxes.

"Residential property costs you, business and industry pays you," said Sally Kinnaird, a 33-year resident of Midway. "So if we give away the opportunity for industry on that property, we are saddling ourselves with undeniable debt for the rest of the time that property is here."

And critics had said the development would double the population of Midway, where the 2000 U.S. Census counted 1,620 residents.

To address those concerns, the Woodford planning commission in July stipulated that no more than 50 permits for residential units would be issued in any calendar year. Testimony taken during a May hearing indicated that it would take 12 years to build all the proposed residential units.

It is hoped that the houses and townhouses will be attractive to retirees, "empty nesters," and single, young professionals. And it will provide jobs, housing and recreation within close proximity to one another.

The property had been zoned for light-industrial uses since 1991, but only three small firms eventually located in the park. Nearly a third of the 20,000 commercial parks in the United States have a "residential component," said Michael Duckworth, chairman of the Woodford County Economic Development Authority.