

Development/ Urban sprawl has an effect on inner cities

Continued from page 1B

prime examples of the controversies inspiring a push for stricter state controls on urban sprawl.

In Credit River, the soil is so thick with clay that mounded septic systems that use evaporation to disperse waste water must be built on top of the ground.

Residents near the Feldman's proposed housing development fear the contaminated water will flow instead into the area's many ponds and marshes. They say that the widely dispersed septic systems that exist now have already produced algae in some ponds.

Former Minnesota Viking Wally Hilgenberg told those at a recent planning commission meeting that he bought his 20 acres in 1977 and built dikes to create a 4-acre lake where his children swim. He described a natural area with birds in the trees and fish — even muskie — in the lake.

"If I get algae from water runoff, it's going to destroy the value of my property," he said. "These projects are not appropriate for this area at this time." He and about 50 others at the meeting contended that the Feldman project should be limited to 10-acre lots.

Bill Feldman responded that he has followed all the rules of the township and county in laying out the streets and designing the septic systems.

But the Met Council staff says those are the wrong rules.

Although their fate is not certain, the Feldman development and an adjoining project in Credit River are at the center of the debate over small lot developments.

The Met Council standard is that developments outside urban areas should have no more than four houses per 40 acres or an average of one house on 10 acres. Urban areas have sanitary sewer systems.

County Administrator Cliff McCann and County Planner Jon Westlake say the county received council approval in 1977 for 2.5-acre and 5-acre lots in the eastern townships including Credit River.

But council planner James Larsen said the council rejected that request. "If they did it anyway, that's a violation of the law," he said.

"This is a problem all across the metropolitan area," Larsen said. "Counties that develop 1- and 2-acre

lots simply ignore the policies."

Council attorney Brian Ohm said the problem in Scott County may just be a 20-year-old case of miscommunication, but the ongoing dispute exemplifies the problems cited by state Rep. Myron Orfield, DFL-Minneapolis, and other officials urging tougher state laws on rural development across Minnesota.

Orfield wants to avoid spending extra resources on services such as roads, sewers and schools for outlying areas. Officials of the core cities and older suburbs want to revitalize their areas instead of spreading the urban area.

Others, like the staff of the state Environmental Quality Board, are particularly interested in protecting natural resources such as wetlands and groundwater.

Orfield said that the plan he is proposing to the Legislature would enable state planning authorities to prohibit any development on urban fringe areas such as Credit River. Violators could lose state aid for projects such as roads and tax relief. Currently, the Met Council can seek court orders to enforce its decisions, but it has never done so.

All of those issues and more are wrapped into the debate in Credit River Township: Developers want growth; local officials want growth in an orderly way; current residents want to protect their woods, ponds and privacy; and regional and state authorities want existing urban areas to be fully developed before creating new ones.

The two development projects still on the drawing boards would be built on the south of 185th St. W. and

Judicial Rd., on the border between Lakeville in Dakota County and Credit River in Scott County.

The wooded area is dotted with homes valued from \$250,000 to upwards of \$1 million on lots and horse farms ranging in size from 10 to 20 acres or more. Nearby, however, are development projects with lots of 2.5 and 5 acres that range in price from \$40,000 to \$70,000.

With demographers predicting that the county's population will increase by 50 to 100 percent over the next 34 years, county officials called the moratorium a sort of time-out — a chance to prepare for the new people and more carefully plan current developments. "We needed more fine tuned planning and regulations, more sophistication," Westlake said.

John Shardlow, the planning consultant hired by the county, said the county has to make sure that the roads being built through woods and farm fields can eventually be connected to each other and to existing county roads and city streets.

He would not comment on the Feldman proposal, but he said lots had to be laid out in sizes and in configurations that will allow them to be subdivided years from now in a way that city sewer and water lines can reach them economically. Met Council staffer Larsen agreed, adding that 10-acre lots are easier to divide into smaller lots.

Officials of the county and the council are to meet this week to iron out their differences. The county's comprehensive plan is expected to be finished by the end of the year, and a decision on the Feldman development proposal also is expected by the end of the year.

Urban Sprawl p2 Mar 21 1994

Clipped By:



cdkostik

Sun, Jun 28, 2020