

The Capital

South County

New development plan eyed in Deale

By E.B FURGURSON III, Staff Writer

A year after neighbors' objections derailed a mixed-use plan in the biggest open area in "downtown" Deale, a prominent south county businessman has submitted a far less intensive plan.

Instead of the 184 homes, shopping center and offices laid out before the community in March 2004, the new plan calls for 20 single-family homes, with about 2 acres set aside for a community park.

Herrington Harbour Marinas' owner Stuart Chaney, who had been a partner with commercial developer Walt Petrie in the previous plan to develop all the land owned by Deale resident Tommy Wellons, wants to build the homes on 13 acres zoned for residential use.

"We intend to build a model green development, more in keeping with the scale of the community," said Mr. Chaney, whose son Hamilton is also involved in the enterprise.

Mr. Chaney said Mr. Petrie is still involved because he has the contract on the property, "but he is a silent partner. We have control of all decision-making."

Several acres of property zoned commercial and maritime, now occupied by boat storage and a marine repair business, won't be developed under the Chaney plan.

The remaining lots each have multiple zoning designations. Mr. Wellons has applied to redraw the property lines so each lot would have only a single one. That would reduce six parcels to five - one zoned residential, two commercial and two maritime commercial - and make it easier to redevelop in the future.

Though most people haven't seen the new residential proposal, some have already expressed relief.

Ron Wolfe, who led the community's small area planning committee, has talked to Mr. Chaney and is enthused about the potential of a public park.

"It is a great gesture and very much appreciated," he said. "It will take some time and effort to work out the kinks, but it will make such a difference. It will do so much for Deale."

He said the previous plan was out of touch with the needs of the community, and much more dense than his planning committee ever envisioned for the property.

"They came in here like they thought this was Loudoun or Fairfax County," Mr. Wolfe recalled of the meeting last year at Cedar Grove United Methodist Church.

Even Mr. Wellons was taken aback. "I was surprised. There was more development than I thought," he said after the meeting. "Originally it was not that involved."

Mr. Wellons has been interested in doing something with the 22-acre property for several years. He jokes that he's just "getting tired of cutting all that grass."

But another factor for him is more close to home: "I want to be a good neighbor."

The reaction of some neighbors to the original plan is on Mr. Chaney's mind. He has contacted South Arundel Citizens for Responsible Development, the major environmental organization in the area, and a meeting is on the horizon. President Amanda Spake said members are eager to see the plan and discuss the public park.

"We have not seen any plans since the meeting at Cedar Grove," she said.

Mr. Chaney said the new plan submitted last month is preliminary and will be the subject of a meeting with county planners on May 19.

"It could change - a couple homes more, a couple less," he said. "But it is essentially how we plan to proceed."

He said the roughly 2,400-square-foot, two-story homes, laid out at the northern end of the Wellons property along Deale-Churchton Road, would use ecologically friendly building materials, passive solar construction, permeable paving and possibly geothermal technologies. They also would boast state-of-the-art stormwater management techniques and improve the nontidal wetlands on the property.

The layout tentatively has five homes along a drive parallel to Deale-Churchton Road and the remainder off a road laid roughly where the current lane into the property sits. The largest lots would be at the center of the property in a four-home cul-de-sac.

"But you will notice they are a lot farther away from the homes in North Deale than the previous plan," Mr. Chaney said. "We could put them 20 feet away, but these are around 130 feet away."

He stressed that the proposal is an attempt to comply with ideas included in the local small area plan ironed out by local residents and passed by the County Council in late 2001.

"We want a project the community can be proud of," Mr. Chaney said. "But we want one we can be proud of too ... because we are not going anywhere."

*Published April 28, 2005, The Capital, Annapolis, Md.
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