

## Letter to Editor

The proposed rezoning to commercial of the 54.5 acres of land at the end of Mallory Lane, known as the “flagpole property”, was narrowly defeated last Monday night. Those in opposition to the proposal are to be commended for their passion in wanting to protect the residential character of land adjacent to their homes. One feels a high degree of sympathy for their concerns in light of the fact that this was the fifth or sixth time that they’ve had to come before the City Commission to contend with rezoning proposals for this land since the early 1980’s.

So what’s next? One would assume that the developer is already contemplating some type of proposal for a residential development under the current R-2 zoning for the Planning Commission’s consideration. A proposal, mind you, that is not likely to deed any open space to the City as was previously proposed. That may be fine as comments made during the Public Hearing and Commission meetings suggest that many residents near the “flag pole” property favor the traditional residential R-2 development, or possibly “OSRD Condos”, as described in one recent Letter to the Editor, without more open space.

There are two significant concerns, however, with the prospect of additional residential development to this fabulous piece of property that should be part of our thought process and decision making going forward:

- **Increased community costs.** Research shows that residential land uses do not cover their costs and must be subsidized by other types of land uses. The costs for local services (schools, police and fire, roads, solid waste and sewer treatment, etc.) outweigh the increased tax revenue. From a purely economic standpoint, residential development is a tax liability to all of us, not an asset.
- **Additional traffic considerations.** If this area is developed as residential (which also eventually means the adjacent property), approximately 70-80 single family one acre lots could be constructed. The traffic volume generated by those lots is estimated to exceed more than 700 additional trips per day. This additional traffic would be routed to Wikle Road, General MacArthur or both. There may also be concerns that the City will need to connect Wikle and General MacArthur to insure access for emergency vehicles.

Maybe there’s a third alternative: Harness all of this enthusiasm and work with the City to find some creative and cost effective way to acquire some or all of this land so that it could be left in its current state forever. It has been encouraging during the past few months to see so much passion for protecting this beautiful property. When it comes right down to it, and with the specter of many new connectivity issues and significant increases in traffic, we’re willing to bet that most people would like to keep the land exactly the way it is with no development.

An increasing amount of research is showing that open space conservation is not always an expense but an investment that can produce important economic benefits. Instead of

costing money, conserving open space as part of a smart growth strategy can save communities money in the long run.

Someone once said “if you like the view, you better be willing to pay for it”. The owners of this land have the right to develop their property within the constraints of City guidelines and will eventually do so.

Is working with the City to acquire this land worth considering? That’s something for the community to decide. But there is a window of opportunity here that may or may not be available to us for long. Time is of the essence. Failure to act raises the risk of increased land costs in the future and the loss of desirable open space that may be currently available.

The Updated 2020 Plan supports the contention that the vast majority of citizens believe the preservation of more open space in Brentwood is important. Maybe the recent events around the “flag pole” property debate afford us with the opportunity to “put our money where our mouths are” finally. Something to consider.

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President  
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