

Commissioner Booth: The last item on our agenda is PZR-2017-06 PZO-2017-01 requested by Larry Cochran, Parish President for an ordinance to amend the St. Charles Parish Code of Ordinances Appendix A, Zoning Ordinance of 1981 and Appendix C, Subdivision Regulations of 1981 to allow for garden home developments as a Special Permit Use with approval from the Planning Commission and supporting resolution from the Parish Council.

Mr. Albert: What you have before you tonight is an ordinance to allow for garden home developments in the parish through the Special Permit Use process and subsequently the major subdivision process. Six months or so ago, Parish President Cochran and I and some other folks sat down and talked about what the realities of variable lot developments were and the need for alternative housing options in the parish. We started talking about what had gone before us, the previous attempts and we kind of took the approach what are developers looking to do? From that point we started looking at how the parish gets the best development and at the same time respond to what developers are asking for or showing as need based in terms of housing and I was asked to draft this ordinance and it got through Legislative Committee with a good degree of support. The report you have in front of you shows the various aspects of the Comprehensive Plan that lay the ground work for this, it's something that this body approved several years ago and it kind of makes the foundation for these large scale changes in the ordinance and development patterns within the parish. Essentially what this allow for is for the developer to come to the Planning & Zoning Department, build up a proposal, propose smaller than typical sized lots and that might be the actual square footage of the lot, or the dimensions, or the nature of the construction on those lots. At the same time they are proposing that, they would provide to the parish a pattern book saying this is what you're getting, these are the housing types, this is what's going to be built and we work with them to assure a degree of building quality that gets presented to you and the Council and in turn for the variable lot sizes they are required to build higher quality or more predictable homes. In a sense, garden homes are enabled through a more rigorous design process and that's it and there's a lot in the ordinance too. If you have any questions, I'm going to sit down and be ready for those.

Commissioner Richard: So a garden home is a smaller home, is it a condominium?

Mr. Albert: It could be. Typically what a garden home is, if you had 10 acres and you could put 10 lots on that 10 acres, it's going to be spread equally throughout the entire thing. The principle of garden homes is that you aggregate all the density in one place and use the remainder of it for green space. So you might get those same 10 homes on that same 10 acre lot but they may be all located within the southeast quadrant of it so the lots for the individuals may be smaller and closer together than in the major subdivision that you just saw but they are also going to have permanent green space attached to that development.

Commissioner Richard: What's the purpose for that? I'm just curious.

Mr. Albert: Enjoyment.

Commissioner Richard: Is it a retirement home?

Mr. Albert: It can be a retirement home, aging in place. It's typically very desirable, it tends to increase property values. The individuals are responsible for less maintenance, you maintain a small yard and the association is responsible for maintaining the green space, park area, walking trails, whatever it is. It depends on what they plan to do.

Commissioner Galliano: Is there a percentage of green space that is mandatory?

Mr. Albert: 25%. So whatever size of development it is, if it is that 10 acres then 2.5 acres of the whole thing are going to be green, open, undeveloped, meant for recreation.

Commissioner Frangella: Is that in one lump sum area or is it spread out in different areas?

Mr. Albert: I think we encourage them to aggregate it.

Commissioner Richard: Is there anyone looking to develop?

Mr. Albert: I believe there are several groups waiting to see if this gets through. One of the challenges that we had was the different towns in St. Charles Parish all have very different characters. So if we came in and said you can do garden homes and they can be 2000 sq. ft. and this and this in the setback, that might work in Boutte but not work in Ama. So we tried to allow the developers put forth what seemed to be best in the areas.

Commissioner Galliano: Will the association collect any fees to maintain the 25%?

Mr. Albert: That would be up to them and we don't know what that would look like but we do require them to submit the documents proving those are in place. One thing I should mention is you're not going to see pocket developments pop up out of this. Someone who has a lot will not be able to dice it up and all of a sudden put 3 small homes on it, that's not what's happening. There is a minimum of 3 acres for them to even begin, you have to have a 3 acre plat to even start this. I ran the numbers, if you were to do this with 3 acres, you're not able to get any more density than if you would development it though standard lot means. So you can do it with 3 acres but to get value out of it, but as the developer you're going to look at larger pieces of property

Commissioner Frangella: The 25% of the land, it has to be usable land? It can't be where it's under water? Or they just don't develop that end and it goes down into the swamp.

Mr. Albert: I think there is something there that limits...essentially the way it's worded, at least one half of the minimum amount of open space must be free of delineated wetland areas in order to be readily accessible for active and passive recreation. So yes. It also have to be partially interspersed through the development.

Commissioner Gordon: So all of the homes are going to have the same style, same look?

Mr. Albert: That is going to depend on what they are going to present in their application to you. My experience with this in other jurisdictions is when you have a pattern book, it's going to say

this is what all our residential single family homes are going to look like, our duplexes are going to look like this, our homes that are 3000 sq. ft. are going to look like this, our homes that are 1500 sq. ft. are going to look like this. Admittedly, it's going to be a challenge for our permitting department when these start coming because they are going to have to work with a Planner every time and they are going to have to say does this meet the pattern book. It's going to require us to step up a little bit.

Commissioner Frangella: In the beginning is each part of that parcel going to be identified as duplexes, single dwellings so someone doesn't buy a single dwelling and all of a sudden you have a duplex on the each side of you, is it all going to be identified?

Mr. Albert: I would assume so, but this is key, see what's going to happen is the developer comes in and he doesn't specify those things they are not going to get passed you because you're going to ask that question and make them show it. You have tremendous latitude to completely dismiss a project because it doesn't meet what you think is the standard for your district or your area or somewhere that you've lived before.

Commissioner Galliano: I think garden homes is a good idea if it is done right.

Commissioner Frangella: We just don't want all the policing to fall on yall.

Mr. Albert: That's alright

Commissioner Granier: Will the developer still have to designate so much of the land to the recreation department even though they have green space?

Mr. Albert: No. They are going to be having their own within that property.

Commissioner Frangella: So there's going to be an association to maintain the property.

Mr. Albert: Correct.

Commissioner Frangella: So if that doesn't happen that's when you step in?

Mr. Albert: The neighbors are going to be suing the neighbors.

Commissioner Booth: Any other comments or questions? Call for the vote.

YEAS: Gordon, Granier, Richard, Booth, Frangella, Galliano

NAYS: None

ABSENT: Loupe

Commissioner Booth: That passes unanimously.

---