

BRUNSWICK

Clearing forest for development raises concerns

Residents worry plans for age-restricted residences could negatively affect stormwater drainage

By ESTHER FRANCES

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Residents of Brunswick and Knoxville expressed concerns about stormwater drainage after the city of Brunswick said a developer could clear 57 acres of forest for a planned age-restricted housing development.

The city of Brunswick said in an annexation agreement that it has committed to stormwater infrastructure improvements, including adding swales and other measures to lessen the water flow in areas prone to flooding.

The mayor and City Council are considering a Planned Unit Development (PUD) overlay on previously annexed land known as the Daugherty, Ferris and Brylawski properties.

The Daugherty property was annexed into the city in 1992 and is approximately 113 acres. The Ferris and Brylawski properties were adopted into Brunswick on Feb. 25 of this year, and are approximately 57 acres and 15 acres, respectively.

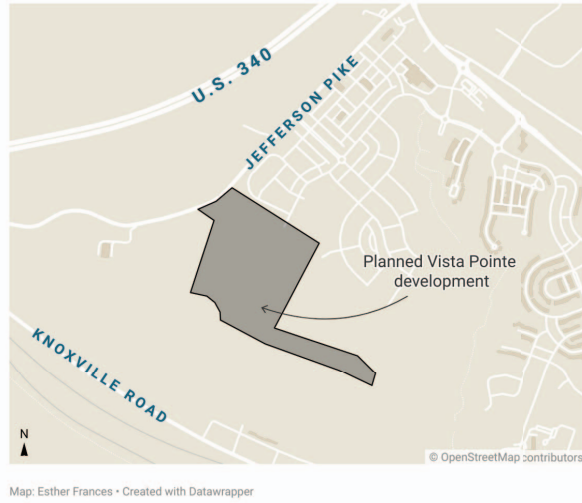
Pleasants Development plans to build 660 age-restricted units on that property as part of a project called Vista Pointe. The development would be restricted to adults age 55 and older.

Residents have expressed their concerns to the mayor and City Council about the area's ability to handle flooding if 57 acres worth of forest on the Ferris property for the development were cleared.

The mayor and City Council

Planned Vista Pointe development

The city of Brunswick is considering having a developer clear 57 acres of forest for a planned age-restricted development called Vista Pointe. Residents have shared concerns that it will worsen flooding during storms.



cil had a first reading of the PUD overlay on April 22.

Sarah Frost, a Brunswick resident who lives on Park Avenue, said at the April 22 meeting that clearing those acres will cause flooding issues.

"You're putting people's properties and lives at risk," she said.

Frost added that she has spoken with residents in the city throughout April, and that "overwhelmingly, they are absolute-

ly against this Vista Pointe development because it feels poorly planned."

"Everybody agrees that this is a terrible plan, and you all are going forward without even looking at any of these problems," she said. "It's really upsetting."

Frost asked the mayor and Council Members to reconsider.

"It's just outrageous," she said. "I can't believe that it's happening here, and I'm super disappointed

in everybody here that you have not addressed these issues when people are so upset about it."

Lorene Pregoner, a Knoxville resident living on Jefferson Pike, said that in normal rainstorms, "we get inundated with water."

"If you're going to take 57 acres and deforest it right up the street from us, at the top of the hill, guess where all that water's going to go?" she said. "I have neighbors who have lost cars, who have lost property."

Dan Fryer, the regional vice president for Pleasants Development, said at the April 22 meeting that the development company is working on a "massive study" to understand the current stormwater and drainage situation in the area.

"And it's tricky, because you guys do have an existing problem, and that makes it more difficult," he said.

Fryer said the development company is "not opposed to having those discussions at all."

Bruce Dell, the director of planning and zoning for the city, said that the property and the mature forest were logged before Pleasants purchased it.

"What is left is some large, junk trees that have dead wood in them, vines growing on them, that are more of a hazard than a thing of beauty that you would want to keep," he said.

In an email statement on behalf of the city of Brunswick sent on Tuesday, Mayor Nathan Brown wrote that a list of proffers was ac-

cepted as part of the annexation agreement that included stormwater infrastructure improvements, such as cleaning the 21-inch culvert north and south of Brunswick Street before the project starts.

Brown added that Frederick County must review stormwater management proposals to provide "further opportunities for public input and oversight."

He wrote that the city of Brunswick is following the established development process.

"Finally, both city staff and I have worked closely with many residents in the new addition area — some of whom live outside the city limits — on a range of issues, including stormwater management," he wrote. "In several cases, we were able to help residents address and resolve their concerns with the county successfully."

In a separate email statement, Council Member John Caves, speaking as an individual council member, wrote that he is listening to the public comments, but will "have to cast my votes based on what's best for Brunswick's residents given the whole picture."

"Stormwater management is one variable among many, and it's one that will have to go to a qualified body for approval," he wrote. "For that reason, my assessment now is that a worse-case outcome is unlikely."

The PUD will come back to the mayor and City Council on Tuesday for a second reading.