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Planning commission recommends disapproval of revised Brownland Farm plan

By Coleman Bomar • Staff Writer
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A sticker worn by those who opposed the Brownland Farm development plan at a Franklin Planning Commission meeting on Feb. 24, 2022.

By Coleman Bomar

The Franklin Municipal Planning Commission on Thursday recommended disapproval of both a revised development plan for a subdivision at Brownland Farm in Franklin and a resolution rezoning the property from Agricultural and Civic Institutional District to Planned District.

The new plan would reduce the number of lots on the 233-acre property from 471 to 357. It would also set aside 163.2 acres of the property as open space, add a fire truck route bypassing Hillsboro Road in case of a “100-year flood event” and replace condominium buildings containing more than four residential units each with 11 multiplex buildings containing less than four units each.

Originally, the plan proposed 177 townhomes, 205 single-family home 24 multiplex units, and roughly 60 multifamily units.

The Franklin Board of Mayor and Aldermen will decide whether or not to approve the new plan and rezoning request at a meeting April 12.

Many in the community oppose the development at Brownland Farm, an equestrian hub which is located close to the intersection of Hillsboro Road and Mack Hatcher Parkway in Franklin surrounded by the Harpeth River floodplain.

More than 2,700 people have signed the "OPPOSE High Density and Mixed-Use Development on Brownland Farm" petition on www.change.org.

According to the petition, the development's density "will forever ruin the historic, rural landscape and set a dangerous precedent for the future across the remaining pastoral landscapes in Franklin. This farm should be included into a special area plan for the entire West Harpeth region."

Concerned neighbors of Brownland Farm voiced opposition to the revised plan during Thursday night's public comment segment. Most expressed fears that development in the area, surrounded by a floodplain, would increase flooding frequency and volume due to its proximity to the Harpeth River. Flooding is already a major problem for neighboring residences.

"Even today, everybody on our street was under a flood scare, and I can't help but think it's partly because of some of the development that has been going on," said Drew Clausing, a nearby resident. "For that reason, I'm not convinced that the flood mitigations that have been prepared for Brownland and some of the other larger developments in the city, especially right along the river, ... are going to mitigate. From what I can tell, things need to be done to mitigate what is already happening."

An amendment to Envision Franklin would be required for development to take place in the area. Most of the proposed units are in the floodplain. The land would need to be rezoned for the plan to come to fruition.

Michelle Anderton, owner of Brownland Farm and longtime resident of the community, maintained that the neighbors' fears of increased flooding due to the development were unfounded and had been addressed.

"Brownland Farm has been in our family since 1952," she said. "It's been continuously used since that time and has been a horse farm for almost 60 years. Four generations of our family have known this property as home. We did not enter lightly into the decision to sell the farm. We approved a contract with a developer who has been keen to work with us on understanding how the water works on our property. They have been principled in modelling a development based on engineering studies and real-world knowledge of how the water works based on our 70 years of observation."

Kevin Estes of Land Solutions is the developer of Brownland Farm, which is represented by Greg Gamble, president of Gamble Design Collaborative.

The planning commission voted 6-2 to recommend disapproval of the developer's rezoning request and 7-1 to recommend disapproval of the new plans. The motion for disapproval of the rezoning request was made by Commissioner Ann Peterson and seconded by Commissioner Marcia Allen. The motion for disapproval of the new plans was made by Allen and seconded by Commissioner Jennifer C. Williamson.

"I do think [Brownland Farm] can be developed in a way that will fit Envision Franklin. I just don't think that this is the way," Allen said.

She elaborated that the new plan did not properly consider potential floodplain complications and thus did not merit approval.



Tags

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