

Twelve Oaks development plan features slight changes

By Michael Burke

CALEDONIA - A developer who wants to build a \$200 million, mixed-use development called Twelve Oaks here may have quieted some potential opposition.

John Holding of Legacy Development showed his plan to approximately 90 village residents Monday night at the Gifford Elementary School auditorium. He spent two hours explaining it and answering questions about Twelve Oaks, which would lie northeast and southeast of the intersection of highways K and V.

On about 220 acres there, Legacy would build about 650 housing units in various formats - a scaled-back version of his original proposal. Twelve Oaks would include office and retail space including a supermarket.

Unlike a typical subdivision, Twelve Oaks is designed as a small community where people could find work, shopping, possibly a school, recreation and nature - all within walking distance.

One person who came to Monday's meeting with concerns was Warren Levin, who lives about 1 1/4 mile from there. He was also on the planning committee for that area.

"It does meet the concept of what the (village) was looking at in terms of economic development, Levin said Tuesday. His two concerns entering the meeting were the proposed housing density and travel on Highway K.

By incorporating green space into the development, "It falls within the guidelines of the plan for the area," Levin said.

Legacy proposes building two roundabouts, one at each end of the development area, to slow traffic.

"The plan was an excellent marriage of homes, commercial, multifamily," Levin said. "It met what I envisioned to be a small town within a town.

"(Helding) has answered all my concerns; I really don't have any more."

Density and traffic Helding said he heard most concerns Monday about housing density, traffic and drainage.

"A big part of this is the amenities," he said. "In order to do all of these amenities, we have to have density to make up for it."

Amenities would include stores and sidewalks, a ball field and a school. Twelve Oaks would preserve more than 50 acres of wetlands and marshes and a stand of mature oak trees and place an ecology center near one of those areas.

Helding also envisions community gardens or an apple orchard on what is now the Charles Petersen farm.

"So (density) is a concern," he said, "but the New Urbanism approach would have three to six dwelling units per acre. And we're at the three level, so we're at the low end."

Housing would represent about five different architectural styles based on homes that naturally cropped up in the area over time.

Besides owner-occupied housing, Twelve Oaks would likely have apartments for seniors. A range of ages is important, said Linda Keane of Studio 1032 in Shorewood, whose firm worked on the master land plan.

About Highway K traffic, Helding said, "Our response is: The village of Caledonia has always, since the early '90s, recommended a town center in that area."

At highways K and V, he said, "Something has to be done there anyway, be it a roundabout or a stop-and-go light. All of our data tells us roundabouts are the fastest, more-efficient traffic-calming device." That would require county approval.

Lynn Anderson, a Highway H resident, said Caledonia's population will increase - it's only a matter of how.

"You want what will come to be people-friendly and a nice place to live, and I think that's what (Helding) is trying to do for people," she said.

"There were some (people at the forum) that, no matter what you do, you're never going to please them," Anderson said. But she called the proposal "very, very well-thought out."

Twelve Oaks would be built in five one-year phases, likely starting early in 2007. Holding estimated the ultimate market value at \$200 million to \$220 million.