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## Commission unsure what to do with old landfill

The former site could house businesses or homes, but it's up to planners to decide what is best for riverside property.

Lawrence R. Heibel / The Grand Rapids Press

WALKER -- A conceptual plan for a residential development on the site of the former Fenske Landfill has prompted the Walker Planning Commission to debate whether property is best redeveloped as residential or industrial. Developer Dan Hibma of Land and Co., which owns the 195-acre property on Wilson Avenue SW just west of Butterworth Avenue and the Grand River, showed planners a conceptual development plan for the property last week. The plan called for a mixed-use development with 432 condominium units, 7,200-square-feet of neighborhood commercial space, a small office area and a recreational area.

The plan was scaled back from one proposed to planners in August with 848 apartments, 10,000 square feet of retail space and a marina.

The new plan would offer docks on the Grand River for pontoon boats, but would not have a marina.

Hibma also eliminated a connection to Kenowa Avenue with the only access to the site by way of Wilson Avenue. That was an important detail to Commissioner Steve Versluis, who said Kenowa Avenue was in no shape to handle additional traffic.

Hibma also told planners their request last year for an entrance to the project across from Butterworth Avenue was not feasible since the Michigan Department of Environmental Quality would not allow permits for construction in the Grand River floodway.

"In floodways, there's no tolerance for any change," Hibma said.

The property is zoned for industrial development; Hibma, however, said residential development makes more sense along the property's one mile of frontage on the Grand River.

"It is an ideal residential area," Hibma said. "If you go out to the site, you don't know what occurred on the green area. It's just a nice rolling hill.

"Short term and long term, this would have a lot of recreational benefit to residents living in the area."

Versluis said he had concerns about the safety of the closed landfill and recycling site.

"I would prefer to leave it zoned as an industrially zoned parcel," Versluis said.

"I just want to make sure this thing is safe. I want to minimize any hazards that might exist at all."

Planning Commission Chairman James Hickey, who sits on the Walker Brownfield Redevelopment Authority, has firsthand knowledge of the cleanup efforts over the past few years on the site. He said the development would be safe and no construction would be allowed on the actual landfill waste cell.

"I'd rather see condos rather than industrial any day," Hickey said.

Hibma said he has tentative approval from the city of Grandville for sewer service to the site. He would bring public water to the site from where it ends at Burton Street to the north.

Planning Commissioner Mike Slaughter voiced concerns about the added traffic on Wilson Avenue. Traffic Engineer Ed Swanson said condominiums would bring much less traffic than industrial development.

"We'll make this thing work and work well," Swanson said.

The Planning Commission plans to consider the conceptual plan for the site at a future work session. No date has been set for that meeting.

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