

# Lakeland plan upsets residents

By Sharon Conway

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"I want to hear about Lakeland Urban Renewal," said Mary Hollomand, a Lakeland resident. "But what we have heard tonight is that what we are building in our community is housing for others, for outsiders. Where is the development for us."

Hollomand and 80 other residents from the Lakeland community and nearby College Park repeatedly voiced this concern at a public hearing on the Lakeland Community Development Project Aug. 3.

Representatives from Leon Weiner Associates, and the mayor and council of College Park, presented a proposed development plan for the Lakeland project at the hearing. It included a 150-unit seven-story senior citizens' apartment building, a 150-unit seven-story apartment building "for faculty and staff at the University of Maryland," 40 units of low income housing, 26 single family town houses and six single family homes on a 20-acre site just east of Rte. 1.

A 5-foot tall earthen dike would complete the project at the southern end of the area and would prevent flooding from the Paint Branch Creek into the flood plain area, Weiner said. That, coupled with a drainage system within the project, would be adequate flood control, he said.

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The citizens of Lakeland, an all-black community of about 150 families located off Rte. 1 in a semi-rural enclave near the university, were angry about the proposal. With its roughly paved tree-lined streets and porched houses of different age, it is more like a rural Florida town than a suburb of a large metropolis. Single family homes are the rule in Lakeland. Children and grandchildren tend to stay, if they can find housing, to raise their families.

In 1969, an urban renewal project was initiated for the area through a \$5.7 million grant from the Department of Housing and Urban Development. Older dilapidated houses on the outskirts of Lakeland were torn down and much of the land was purchased by the city of College Park.

But controversies over flood control, choice of developers and types of new housing for the area delayed further action on the project until last year when the College Park city council chose Leon Weiner Associates over three other companies to present a new development proposal.

A new controversy, however, began about what the Weiner development would offer.

Community members said they wanted single family homes, and that the six proposed by Weiner were not enough.

Weiner said his proposal was based upon conclusions taken from a market survey of College Park and nearby Washington areas. "Our market studies show a mix of housing types and uses, a mix of financing," said Weiner. "As the developer, I have tried to meet the objectives you have."

But several citizens complained that the Lakeland community had not been consulted about the design. The Project Area Committee (PAC), the local community organization, was not consulted, they said, as to the wants and needs of Lakeland.

"A lot of people who used to live in Lakeland had to acquire lands in other parts of College Park because there was no housing for them," said Lakeland resident Sam Hollomand. "They would like to move back to Lakeland. Why weren't they consulted?"

"Only six single homes in this project?" said Agnes Gross, who has lived in Lakeland for 52 years. "We want to have individual homes. To say we couldn't buy them, or afford them—it should be left up to us to decide whether we can or not. Nobody has said yet they (Lakeland residents) couldn't pay it (the cost)."

Weiner replied, "I have made a proposal according to the advertisement for this project. If someone made a commitment to you, it is not my responsibility. It is not my responsibility to build it for you, but to build it so it will fly (in the market).

"That land has been paid for by all the people in College Park, not just Lakeland," Weiner said. "They have some notion that all the land belongs to them. It doesn't."

At the close of the meeting Mayor St. Clair Reeves directed Weiner to work with the PAC group and other Lakeland residents before coming up with a final proposal by Aug. 31.

Weiner said he hopes PAC will come up with specific alternate proposals for the plan. "I will accord them every courtesy to get an accurate picture of the proposal."