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Submitted by
Diane Stevenson

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TO: Mr. Jimmy Massey, Mr. Kurt Larsen
FROM: Diane Stevenson, North Idylwild

SUBJECT: Neighborhood Stability within the Special Area Study

This past summer, when area residents were studying the effects of nearby high-density housing (and proposed high density housing) on our neighborhood, we researched crime statistics and sociological studies dealing with the concept of "neighborhood". By reading literature on the subject, by talking with Lonnie Lanza-Kaduce (the acting Director of Studies in Criminology and Law at the University of Florida), and by visiting the Alachua County Sheriff's Department, we obtained the information presented in this report. The following summary is intended to support the position that further multi-family housing of any kind (including PUD) will adversely affect the stability of our neighborhood.

REPORT

The Serenola/Idylwild area displays characteristics set forth as desirable in Land Use 2000--specifically, economic and social diversity, and neighborhood identity and allegiance, all of which LU 2000 seeks to encourage. We are currently a very stable neighborhood and, generally speaking, stable neighborhoods are characterized by being residential, and by having low mobility. People do not move in and out, but remain long-term residents, who, over time, improve their properties. Permanent homeowners are interested in both appearance and value, and therefore have a commitment to the homes they own and to the neighborhood they live in.

A stable neighborhood is also characterized by a sense of community, or "social organization." The population of the neighborhood as a whole cares what the neighborhood as a whole looks like. Thus there is community pressure as well as the pride of ownership which motivates residents to maintain and improve their properties. Moreover, social organization involves recognition--neighbors know each other, and consequently also know who does not belong in the neighborhood. Thus strangers can be identified, and reports of suspicious activity can be made. Social organization and low mobility, in other words, are obviously strongly correlated.

Residents typically move in and out. Just as low mobility is correlated with social organization, high mobility is strongly correlated with social disorganization. Renters do not invest in a property they anticipate leaving, nor do they have a commitment to the area. Furthermore, residents of high-density housing complexes do not recognize strangers because people are continually moving in or out. High density housing, characterized by social disorganization and high mobility, has a high crime rate.

According to an article, "Suburban Crime: Testing the Police Hypothesis" (The Journal of Police Science), the one factor associated with all types of crime was housing density. In particular multiple family dwellings or apartments. Based on their research, the authors conclude:

1. perpetrators can blend in better with the resident population because they go unrecognized
2. the physical characteristics of multi-family housing allow the perpetrator to hide, commit the crime, and leave undetected

In fact, of all the variables associated with crime, multiple family housing, according to this article, is the best indicator of crime rate. The article further states that “. . . the very real fear and resistance to the construction of multiple family dwellings by the owners of single family homes of suburbia seems to be warranted. . . . The physical structure itself of multiple family housing is perceived as the associating factor because it attracts criminal incidents.”

The article, "Neighborhood and Crime: The Structural Determinants of Personal Victimization" (Journal of Research in Crime and Delinquency), restates the above findings. According to this article, also based on the research of its authors, high mobility decreases permanence and stability, and provides a context of anonymity; structural density, (a high proportion of multiple dwellings units), is therefore positively related to the accessibility of targets. Furthermore, the authors conclude, density inhibits any effective means of surveillance through sheer physical barriers, and, again, anonymity.

Both studies indicate that density, regardless of other variables, correlates strongly with crime. Interestingly, the second study found that both density and mobility have stronger effects on crime than the commonly believed variables of racial composition, poverty or unemployment. The authors state that "Despite varying levels of poverty, inequality, unemployment and racial composition, structural density exhibited a significant effect on personal victimization."

They also state, and this is an extremely important finding for our neighborhood, that "A major theory predicts that proximity to criminogenic areas is a major determinant of the probability of victimization."

The consequences, then, of additional high-density housing on the borders of our neighborhood involve a possible increased crime rate in our neighborhood, but perhaps more importantly, an increase in social disorganization within the neighborhood itself.

When high-density, multi-family housing is built adjacent to existing single-family dwellings, mobility increases and social disorganization begins to occur. The residents of single-family homes begin to move out and the homes become rental units.

Lonnie Lanza-Kaduce, Acting Director of the Center For Studies In Criminology and Law, remarked this past summer that the residents of the Serenola/Idylwild neighborhood have good reason to believe that their currently stable neighborhood will undergo social disorganization if the neighborhood continues to be surrounded by high-density housing. He gave permission to be quoted as saying: "If I were living there, I would be concerned that the quality of my neighborhood would change."

Mr. Lanza-Kaduce further stated,

"There are some correlates of crime that would cause a reasonably prudent person to be concerned about the proposed changes to the Idylwild neighborhood, or in fact to any stable neighborhood. These changes include increasing the density of the population by including multi-family units. To the extent that these changes would increase mobility of the long-term residents, and increase the number of new residents who are not likely to stay long periods of time, the increase in mobility would also cause me to be concerned about impact on crime."

In order to determine what effect high-density housing currently has on the single-family homes closest to it, we conducted a survey of the single-family homes on S.W. 23rd Terrace, which have, to the immediate north, Phoenix, The Arbor, Bridgelight, Casablanca East, Casablanca West, Grantwood, Hickory Place, Sunrise, Beval Palo Verde, Town Pare, Napier Grant, Talismar (and possibly others) . We were able to count eight homes. Of those, two were vacant, one was rented, and one had just been sold. These figures translate into at least a 37% vacancy and/or rental rate, which corresponds to what we expected to find--namely, a high rate of social disorganization characterized by high mobility.

According to the Information provided by you, at least one of those multi-family complexes exceeds population stipulated as high density (14.01 to 24 DU/Acre): Beval Apartments has a DU/Acre of 32. Others in that cluster approach the maximum given by definition. According to the same fact sheet, Casablanca West, with an existing 98 units, has an additional 42 units planned; Grantwood has an additional 69 units planned; Southwood has an additional 44 units planned. So in addition to the proposed 560 units of Polos, and the proposed 184 units of Hunter's Run, there are 155 other units planned for an area whose density is uniformly high (and sometimes more than just high) . For the entire Special Area Study, the total number of existing and proposed multi-family units is 5537.

These complexes, along with those off 20th Avenue, are Zone 9 in the Alachua County Sheriff's Department. On a randomly selected day, 32.8% of police responses in Alachua County were to Zone 9-- full one-third. Moreover, 33.2% of all calls received for the same day were from Zone 9. These statistics demonstrate that the previously cited studies linking density alone (regardless of other factors) to high crime are valid.

Therefore, we conclude:

1. That no additional multi-family housing be permitted In the Special Area Study region where single-family homes presently exist. If in fact a goal of land use policy is to protect existing neighborhoods, this measure must be taken.
2. That our property values have declined and will continue to do so as a result of the southwest being used as a "dormitory community."
3. That social disorganization has already begun and will continue unless the Serenola/Idylwild area is afforded protection by Alachua County.
4. That crime will rise.

We ask you to consider current vacancy rates, to consider crime rates, to consider the value of our existing neighborhood both as a single-family neighborhood and as a collective investment on the part of families who wish to continue living here, to consider the poor planning of the past, to consider the burden of multi-family housing that this area has been asked to support without adequate attention having been given such facilities as the school or to the property values of single family homes.

Finally, we would like you to consider an article that appeared In TIME on June 27, 1988, entitled "Not in My Backyard, You Don't," which examines the reactions of residents asked to accommodate within their neighborhoods the less desirable consequences of growth. Central to this article is the ethical question "Who should bear the burden of the common good? While garbage dumps, group homes, mental health centers for the emotionally disturbed, and foster homes, and hazardous waste incinerators are necessary in any community, the article argues, the responsibility for their presence should be shared by the entire community. The New Jersey Supreme Court "broke new ground in 1975 when it ruled that wealthy suburbs must share the burden of low-cost housing," the article reports.

We believe that our neighborhood supports far more, in relation to other neighborhoods, than it should In terms of multi-family housing, and we believe that other areas of the county should accommodate whatever additional multi-family housing is constructed in the future. According to the TIME article mentioned, Perry Norton, an emeritus professor of urban planning at New York University, "advocates tax abatements for homeowners who live near an undesirable public facility, or a guarantee on the resale value of their homes." We ask you to consider this, too.

ADDENDUM
Fred Lindholm
November 27, 1988

The preceding report by Dr. Stevenson documents, through consulting with crime experts and through reading of the pertinent literature, that the some 5,500 apartment units existing or proposed within the special area study will decrease neighborhood stability and will increase crime.

There are no arguments with these assertions - other than the use of the future tense, as in "will increase crime". The article copied below from The Gainesville Sun's November 24th issue--three days ago--reports a murder and wild shooting scene occurring just to the West of the University's beef farm, which is adjacent to the North Idylwild single-family residential neighborhood. At the corner of S.W. 32nd Place and S.W. 23rd Terrace is part of the Southwood Apartment complex., where the argument leading to the murder occurred.

The Special Area that is being studied presently not only sustains the burden of some 5,500 apartment units but also the expanding mental-health facilities on Williston Road next to Squirrel Ridge Park and the South Idylwild and Chachala Park neighborhoods. Last month ago a client of these facilities had to be shot by police at the Subway Sandwich Shop up S. W. 13th Street.

We bring these facts to your attention asserting that our neighborhoods presently sustain more than our share of undesirable and destabilizing influences, thus further underscoring the conclusion on page 4 "that no additional multi-family housing be permitted in the Special Area Study Region where single-family homes exist". Practically speaking, when crime and neighborhood stability are considered together with needs for conservation, this means that all new rezoning for apartments within the Special Area should be allowed only for parcels that have direct and immediate access to either Archer Road or S.W. 34th Street.

The Gainesville Sun, Thursday, November 24 1988

Shooting victim dies; teens sought

A 19-year-old man was shot and killed Wednesday after he apparently got into an argument with another person, according to an Alachua County Sheriff's spokesman.

Police found the man lying on the ground in front of a home, dying, when they arrived at the corner of SW 32nd Place and SW 23rd Terrace at 5:28 p.m. He had been shot more than once by someone with a handgun.

A 27-year-old neighbor, who works at Shands Hospital, attempted to revive the man as he lay in the yard, but the man was pronounced dead at Shands. Police were not releasing the name of the man Wednesday night because the next of kin had not been notified.

Sheriff's spokesman Spencer Mann said that after the victim got in an argument, someone began shooting at him and he ran across the street. Police aren't sure whether he was first shot, then ran, or was shot after he made it across the street.

Police are looking for two teenaged males who fled in a vehicle.