

MANUFACTURING REZONING OK'D FOR GENDER ROAD SITE - ThisWeek Community Newspapers (Columbus, OH) - September 26, 2002 - page 08A

September 26, 2002 | ThisWeek Community Newspapers (Columbus, OH) | TRICIA SYMANSIC ThisWeek Staff Writer | Page 08A

Fearing a strip mall or some other unpalatable development, several residents of the Chelsea Glenn subdivision convinced Columbus City Council Monday to allow a new self-storage facility on Gender Road.

The proposal conflicted with the property's zoning and the Southeast Area Plan, as well as the recommendations of city staff and the Columbus Development Commission. Council, however, voted 5-2 to rezone 7.5 acres on the west side of Gender Road and just south of Wright Road from residential to limited manufacturing.

"I want you all to understand that your voice does matter," council President Matt Habash said after casting his affirmative vote.

Howard Rozum, president of Storage One LLC, and his attorney, Jeffrey M. Lewis, met with residents whose property abuts theirs to work out any kinks before they submitted the proposal to the city. Three of those residents testified at Monday's zoning hearing, saying they thought a self-storage facility would generate less traffic and fewer problems than other commercial uses.

They pointed out what they said were beneficial aspects, such as an eight-foot wall along their property lines, a resident manager of the business and 24-hour security.

"Basically, this gives us a gated community," resident Gregory Wilson said. "We see that as a plus for our property values."

They argued that residential development of the property would be unfeasible because of its small size, a problem that would be magnified when Franklin County completes the scheduled widening of Gender Road. Zoning chair Mike Mentel pointed out that a member of the Development Commission had acknowledged the potential difficulty in developing the property.

The one public opponent to the project, resident Jeffrey Bond, said the land should be used as a park if residential development really proves impossible.

Council's development committee chairman, Rich Sensenbrenner, said fear of commercial development should not fuel support of the self-storage proposal. If the council were to follow the Southeast Area Plan, which was approved in January 2000, no strip malls would be possible.

"We would be not following the area plan because of fear that we definitely won't follow it in the future," Sensenbrenner said. "It's disappointing."

The plan calls for the undeveloped land across the street to become a town center and for Gender Road to be a gateway to the southeast area. It calls for Gender to be distinguished with such amenities as medians.

Putting a self-storage business across the street from what is supposed to be a community centerpiece seems incompatible, Sensenbrenner said. He and Councilman Kevin Boyce voted against the rezoning.

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