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HOUSING



At a public work session on Wednesday, Sept. 25, Columbus-based Windsor Companies provided some Planning Commission members with an early concept plan of a proposed 128-unit apartment complex the development company seeks to build where the Antioch College Student Union presently sits. Upon the impending demolition of the union, Windsor plans to erect two buildings populated with 32 two-bedroom and 96 one-bedroom units. (Rendering by Windsor Companies)

First steps toward 128 more apartments in Yellow Springs

By Reilly Dixon

Published: October 9, 2024

3 Comments

Two 64-unit apartment buildings will one day stand on the site of the Antioch College Student Union, if plans for the property come to their expected fruition.

Tentatively dubbed "Unity Village" by Columbus-based real estate developer Windsor Companies, the planned buildings will be composed of 32 two-bedroom and 96 one-bedroom units — 128 in total — ranging from 650 to 1,100 square feet. The twin structures will be four stories high, with one floor underground, and will adjoin a new parking lot as well as a small public park, according to plans.

These and other details emerged from a public meeting between Windsor and the Village on Wednesday, Sept. 25, when the developer's head designer, Jason Dorsey, joined some members of Planning Commission for a work session — the first step of many before Windsor can begin construction.

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Windsor purchased the 2.16-acre lot from Antioch College for \$500,000 in June of this year. As the News reported at that time, Windsor was also interested in buying two other college properties — the Charles F. Kettering and Sontag-Fels buildings, both of which are still under contract.

As Dorsey told the News in July, and as he reiterated at Wednesday's work session, the student union building — which was built in 1957 and closed completely in 2007 — is beyond repair or renovation; Windsor intends to demolish the building.

"I had hoped it could be saved, but it's just not possible," Dorsey said. "It's environmentally unsound."

In the coming months, Dorsey said Windsor is seeking ways to safely tear down the student union and remediate the land before any construction takes place.

In the meantime, the company is also beginning the process of rezoning the land from education, or E-1, to a planned unit development, or PUD. Per the Village code, that process entails the submission and subsequent approval of a preliminary development plan, as well as an eventual final development plan, and several public hearings. While Planning Commission will review these plans, ultimately

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Village Council has the final say on the rezoning.

For the purposes of last week's work session, Village Planning and Zoning Administrator Meg Leatherman said the goal was for Planning Commission members to give input on Windsor's earliest site plan — allowing the company to tailor its future preliminary development plan to address any concerns raised.

To that end, Planning Commission members requested Windsor take several actions:

- Conduct a comprehensive traffic study to determine the impact the future residents' comings and goings will have on surrounding roads, including Livermore, Whiteman, President and East North College streets;
- Consider providing more parking spaces than the 107 proposed for the 128-unit complex;
- And conduct a sound study on the proposed mini-split HVAC systems that Dorsey said will be placed on the roofs of the buildings.

A sizable amount of time at the hour-long work session was spent wrestling over the matter of parking. Planning Commission Chair Susan Stiles said she found the proposed number of spaces to be insufficient to the needs of the future residents.

"For me, personally, it's just not enough," Stiles said of the 107 proposed spaces. "That's less than one space per resident. People who live in Yellow Springs often need to commute to other communities for a variety of reasons — going to work, the doctor's office, the grocery store."

While Stiles noted that the Village Code requires two parking spaces per unit in multifamily residential developments, Leatherman pointed out that allowances can be made if a proposed development has features that encourage pedestrian mobility such as sidewalks, open spaces, bicycle parking and other features.

Planning Commission member Gary Zaremsky suggested that the few parking spaces may, in fact, be a good thing — that residents may be inclined to walk and bike more.

"This is a community that has promoted a transportation plan that encourages pedestrian and bicycle travel," he said. "This complex is relatively close to downtown, barely a walk to the [future] Senior Center, to the Wellness Center."

Addressing Stiles' concerns, Dorsey suggested that, should Windsor purchase the Kettering and Sontag-Fels buildings, residents could potentially use those adjoining parking lots as well as neighboring streets for overflow parking. Irrespective of those possibilities, Dorsey said that Windsor will look into creating additional spaces in the main parking lot.

As for municipal infrastructure, Village Manager Johnnie Burns and Superintendent Ben Sparks assured Planning Commission members that the grid is primed to absorb the new 128 apartments — they can easily connect to the surrounding electric, water and sewer mains and a large nearby storm drain.

East North College Street, which presently terminates at the Livermore Street intersection, would be extended to President Street and would run across the southern side of the apartments. From there, a multimodal path would be built eastward to Corry Street.

For the two buildings, Dorsey said Windsor is "going as green as possible." He said Windsor intends to top the apartments with "cool roof technology" in lieu of dark asphalt to offset heat, and all units will be outfitted with LED-only lights. He also noted that Windsor will build with only synthetic, man-made materials instead of stone sourced from destructive quarries.

"These are going to be sturdy buildings," he said. "You shouldn't have to do anything — interior or exterior — for a long, long time."

While there won't be any elevators in the two apartment buildings, some ground-level units will be ADA accessible. Other amenities will include washers and dryers in every unit, ample bike racks and electric vehicle charging stations. An on-site Windsor-based property manager will have an office in the apartments for at least the first year of tenant occupancy.

When asked, Dorsey was unable to say if Unity Village would include any affordable units — that is, apartments rented at a reduced rate for low-income tenants. However, in speaking with the News earlier this year, Dorsey estimated that rental costs will "likely" range from \$900 to \$1,700 per month. That estimate, he said, was based on the average rental rates of Windsor's other properties in the region.

Owning and managing over 1,000 residential units and more than 500,000 square feet of commercial spaces throughout Ohio, Windsor has a significant footprint in several neighboring cities. In Dayton, Springfield, Beavercreek and elsewhere, the company has spent millions of dollars in the construction of apartments, lofts, high rises, a library, an equestrian center and more.

Near the conclusion of Wednesday's work session, Stiles broadened her concerns over the proposed 128 apartments when she referenced the "quiet" and "old" character of the surrounding neighborhood.

"I support more housing ... and I'm not saying our community doesn't need more apartments, but putting them right there is a concern to me," Stiles said, and added that she'd be more amenable to apartments at that location if Windsor would build fewer.

Council member and Planning Commission alternate liaison Carmen Brown said reducing the number of units in Windsor's development plans would be "a disservice" to Yellow Springs workers who have long sought to live in the village.

"We have a good number of people who have worked in this town for 10, 20 years in our restaurants, our daycares, our retail stores, who haven't been able to live here, who commute every day to work," Brown said. "And I'm also watching a lot of people, who committed a lot of time to making Yellow Springs what it is, who are having to leave. If we could keep 128 Yellow Springs residents, family members and workers here, that would be nice."

Zaremsky added: "It wasn't so many years ago when, right across the street, Antioch had more than 1,000 college students living in dorms. It was jam-packed with people."

The next Planning Commission meeting is Tuesday, Oct. 15, at 6 p.m., in the John Bryan Community Center. While Planning Commission isn't slated to discuss Windsor's 128-unit apartment plan, residents may still express their support or concerns for the project during the meeting's public comments section.

Topics: Antioch College, Windsor Companies, apartments, rentals

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3 Responses to "First steps toward 128 more apartments in Yellow Springs"

 Tony Absi says:
January 15, 2025 at 4:57 pm

Well the artist's rendering shows a 4-story building too. Hopefully that one will have an elevator. Another problem is lack of parking – less than 2 spaces per unit. Will the excess cars clog the nearby streets?

 Barbara Mann says:
October 28, 2024 at 8:08 pm

I'm a little concerned about the 2-story building not having any elevators. I expect that there are elderly folks living in town who would like very much to live in one of these apartments, but wouldn't be able to except on the first floor. In addition, how in the world will furniture and appliances be moved to apartments on the second floor without an elevator?

 Don Hubschman says:
October 9, 2024 at 1:31 pm

Like so many other failed initiatives, we'll no doubt see (once again) that the Village's support for "more housing" exists only in the abstract. Wash/Rinse/Repeat

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