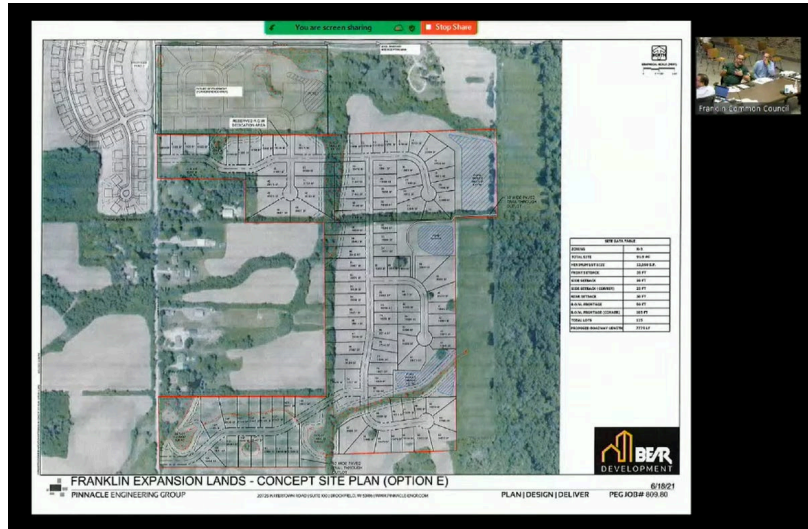




A developer is considering creating a subdivision where Franklin officials had planned a regional park

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By Erik S. Hanley
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An area Franklin had slated for a regional park could instead become a residential subdivision.

Bear Development presented a preliminary concept to the Franklin Common Council on Aug. 17. The plans call for a 115-lot subdivision on 92 acres off 112th Street west of the Franklin Savanna natural area.

Lots would average 22,000 square feet; the cost for a lot and home package would be between \$500,000 and \$525,000, according to Bear CEO S.R. Mills.

Mills said a typical ranch-style home on one of the concept lots would be about 2,200 square feet; two-story homes would be about 3,000 square feet. He said plans are available for homes up to about 3,700 square feet.

The estimated cost to improve the site is \$10 million, with a total project value of \$51.75 million.

Bear suggested changing the zoning to R-5 Suburban Single-Family Residence District. The location is currently about 80% A-1 Prime Agricultural zoning.

The biggest hurdle, according to Mills, is guidance regarding the city's comprehensive land-use plan. The land, owned by Ignasiak Investment Co LLC & Ger Vang, is slated to be a "planned regional park" in the Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan 2025.

Bear's project is also not compatible with Franklin's 2025 Comprehensive Master Plan or the Post Sanitary Sewer Scenario for the Southwest, according to a staff report.



Ald. Kristen Wilhelm was worried about making a change “just like that” to the comprehensive plan, especially for a park the community has wanted for some time.

“If not there for the community park that’s been already identified, what is the future of that area to have a park, and what lands are available for acquisition to replace that?” she asked.

Mills said the project could include an “interconnected trail system” linking with existing trails in the Franklin Savanna area. He said the goal would be to mitigate trails in backyards and minimize the environmental impact on the property, which includes multiple wetlands. Mills said he would be willing to shrink some lot sizes to create more open and preserved spaces.

Ald. John Nelson said he liked the plan, as did Ald. Dan Mayer.

“On first look, it looks pretty good,” Mayer said.

A few council members had questions, however. Ald. Shari Hanneman said she is “itchy” about the four cul-de-sacs on the concept rendering.

“That’s always a concern for our Department of Public Works,” she said, noting that they cost more money and time to maintain.

Wilhelm was also concerned about the “huge burden” housing is putting on taxpayers for the school system.

“With every residential home that comes in, there’s more need for schools,” she said.

Another consideration is 112th Street, itself, which City Engineer Glen Morrow said will need improvement in the future.

Bear also owns a 79-lot development across the street. Mills said demand for the higher-end single-family areas is “still strong,” adding that 67 of the lots have been sold.

“It hasn’t slowed down,” he said.

Morrow said the city is preparing to construct a water tower on Lover’s Lane, which would serve the area. A second tower in the same area could also be constructed in the future.

Since there was no official proposal from Bear, no votes were cast. A concept review allows a developer to gauge the interest of the council in a project and obtain individual feedback for a potential full proposal in the future. In this case, Mills made no indications whether the project would come back.