

4 SEEK WEKIVA SUBDIVISION PERMITS PLANS CALL FOR DEVELOPING 10,000 ACRES

[Lake Edition]

Orlando Sentinel - Orlando, Fla.
Author: Kevin Spear of The Sentinel Staff
Date: Mar 2, 1989
Section: LAKE SENTINEL
Text Word Count: 760

Document Text

(Copyright 1989 by The Orlando Sentinel)

The push for development in the Wekiva River basin has been stepped up by four landowners who have asked for permits to build subdivisions on about 10,000 acres.

Most of that land, covering an area nearly twice the size of Eustis, would be subdivided into 5-acre lots as allowed under the current agricultural zoning.

Conservationists and developers have objections to such subdivisions. They likely would require individual septic tanks and wells, extensive road networks; and allow fences in an area rich with wildlife.

Maury Carter of Orlando last week submitted a preliminary application for a 6,680-acre subdivision. STS Land Associates also turned in a preliminary application last week for its proposed Wekiva Falls development on 1,800 acres. And the developer of the proposed Wekiva Park Estates has been working for several weeks toward approval of a subdivision on 1,100 acres.

A fourth developer, a Winter Park partnership, has about 750 acres zoned to allow a subdivision of about one home per acre.

In recent years, several owners of the larger Wekiva River tracts expected to rezone their land to permit the type of dense subdivisions built across the river in Seminole County.

But the Wekiva River Protection Act of last year and recent actions by county officials have all but ruled out rezoning to allow those types of subdivisions in most areas of the 122-square-mile basin. What is left to the large landowners are the options of building subdivisions of five-acre lots or selling their land for conservation.

"We are really running scared," said Carter. "Each month of any given period of time, the restrictions are more severe. We are going to try to do what we can today."

Carter's land lies north of State Road 46 and stretches across Black Water Creek. He said his application calls for expanding a sand-mining operation on his tract. The sand mining is creating a 40-acre lake that will be part of the subdivision, he said.

Carter said his subdivision will not have deed restrictions that prohibit fencing or any other use of the five-acre tracts.

"Better planning says the area deserves something a lot better," he said. "But you can't sell five- or ten-acre lots in the country and have city-type restrictions."

The proposed Wekiva Falls was to have more than 2,000 homes on 1,800 riverside acres in Lake and Orange counties. That plan, which required rezoning, was dropped late last year after running into environmental opposition.

Spokesman Steve Fussell said the current agricultural zoning would allow a maximum of 393 five-acre lots on the tract. The exact number of lots will not be known until market studies determine how many 10-acre lots to include in the subdivision, he said.

The Wekiva Park Estates tract first was proposed to have 800 homes on about 1,100 acres along the river north of S.R. 46. That was dropped in the face of mounting environmental pressure, and earlier this year a subdivision application for 183 homes was filed.

The fourth development effort under way is by a partnership represented by Westhampton Realty in Winter Park. Jerry McGratty, of the real estate company and one of the partners, said the partners bought the property zoned for a planned-unit development (PUD).

A PUD allows a combination of commercial and recreational uses and has no set limit for the number of homes per acre.

McGratty said their 750 acres spans S.R. 46 and S.R. 46A and is next to an interchange of the proposed 100-mile Orlando beltway. He recently submitted a subdivision application for a small part of the property, primarily so the PUD zoning does not lapse. Complete plans likely will not be known until after the final route for the beltway is set, McGratty said.

The Lake County subdivision application process works to ensure that zoning requirements are met and that road and lot plans are adequate. The process looks at whether a proposed subdivision is the best use of land in an area. That is presumed to have been covered by zoning provisions.

County officials had been keeping a secret of the Carter and Wekiva Falls preliminary applications because county ordinance allows a developer to request informal and confidential discussions during early stages.

Don Findell, director of environmental services and acting director of planning and zoning, said confidential talks allow a developer to more easily determine county requirements. He said Carter and Wekiva Falls officials had requested confidential talks.

Confidential meetings between county officials and representatives of the Carter tract and the Wekiva Falls tract will be held late next week, Findell said.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction or distribution is prohibited without permission.

Abstract (Document Summary)

Maury Carter of Orlando last week submitted a preliminary application for a 6,680-acre subdivision. STS Land Associates also turned in a preliminary application last week for its proposed Wekiva Falls development on 1,800 acres. And the developer of the proposed Wekiva Park Estates has been working for several weeks toward approval of a subdivision on 1,100 acres.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction or distribution is prohibited without permission.