



PRESS RELEASE:

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Villa Hills small area study approved, land use change creates new opportunity

Mayor Irvin T. “Butch” Callery is ecstatic. “Last night’s vote by the Kenton County Planning Commission is historic. By approving the land use change to make nearly 115 acres in the heart of Villa Hills mixed use, they have set the stage for a new kind of development never before seen in Northern Kentucky.”

It started more than 2 years ago when the Benedictine Sisters of St. Walburg were advised by consultants that in order to fund their retirement, they would need to sell the old monastery farm. After more than a year of study a taskforce of residents, city officials, property owners, and two well attended public meetings, the taskforce report recommended changing the land use from Other Community Facilities to Mixed Use. “The future land use for the area restricted its use to government facilities, schools, or public utilities. This hampered the Sisters’ ability to sell the property at a price that would fund their retirement. It also prevents the city from receiving future taxes because many of those uses are tax exempt,” said Villa Hills City Administrator/Clerk Craig Bohman. A second, smaller section of the monastery property adjacent to Madonna Manor will have its land use changed from Other Community Facilities to the same residential density as Madonna Manor. Madonna Manor is expected to purchase that area and expand their campus. The area of the St. Walburg property that contains the monastery itself, the cemetery, Villa Madonna Academy, and Tom Braun fields will remain under the ownership of the religious order.

Mixed use incorporates residential, neighborhood based retail, and small offices in a well-designed community. Typical mixed use areas include a variety of residential housing in several styles, types, and densities in a traditional neighborhood design with amenities open to the public. Traditional neighborhood design typically has wide sidewalks, homes oriented close to the street, and rear loaded alleys where garages, mailboxes, and garbage cans are placed. One regional example of such a mixed used community is Norton Commons in Louisville (<http://nortoncommons.com/galleries/community-photos/>). Comments from the public at both

public hearings indicated the need for step-down housing, single story plans, and open floor plans. Public amenities that were desired included a walkable community, open public spaces, an overlook of the Ohio River Valley, and some neighborhood restaurants and shops.

The report received unanimous support from the Villa Hills City Council. The City petitioned the Planning Commission to change the future land use of the area which passed on a unanimous vote. Many of the Planning Commissioners praised the Sisters for being forward thinking and for involving the community in crafting a vision for the property.

“This development has the capability to remake how future subdivisions across Northern Kentucky are built,” stated Mayor Callery. “We hope that the Sisters sell the property to a developer that is willing to invest in building a community and not just build another development.” As the owners of the property, the religious order will issue its own RFP and select who they will sell the property to. The city will then work with that developer to design the zoning for the site.

As is the case with land use, the report leaves a wide range of possibilities. While there is public support for many of the amenities, none are required. “We wanted to give the Sisters the most flexibility in selecting a developer. This process helps developers know what is possible on the site and what the community is interested in,” said Mayor Callery.

Attached is a rendering of one possible way the land could be developed. “This is based on existing traditional neighborhood developments in other parts of the country that have a higher density and slightly taller buildings than those envisioned by our small area study,” noted Mayor Callery. “I’m looking forward to seeing what plan the eventual developer brings forward.”

For more information please contact Mayor Callery.

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