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Subdivision developers to move slowly

Housing slowdown affects Bedford Twp.'s Albring Farms project

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Now that a judge has ruled in their favor, the developers of the largest subdivision project in Bedford Township history are moving ahead with their plans — slowly.

Judge Michael W. LaBeau of Monroe County Circuit Court decided last month to allow development of the proposed 450-

home Albring Farms, agreeing with Mark Brant and Ron Blank of Bedford Partners LLC that the township board had unfairly denied their request to rezone half of their roughly 160 acres from agricultural to residential.

The developers can now build their subdivision on their land just north of Temperance fronting Erie Road, between Lewis Avenue and Crabb Road, but they plan to take it slow because

of the current housing market.

Mr. Blank said they are developing the infrastructure and then will sell the parcels piecemeal to individuals or businesses to build the houses.

While homebuilders and developers are still working in the township, they admit life isn't as easy as it used to be because of the housing slowdown that has hit the region.

The township issued an aver-

age of 262 residential building permits annually from 2000 to 2004. In 2005, the township permitted 179 new units — 159 of them single-family homes.

But in 2006, just 109 homes were built, according to the township's records, which represents a 32 percent decline since 2005.

Mr. Brant said the housing market is not as stagnant in Bedford as in others areas na-

tionwide.

"There is still some life in Bedford Township," he said. "We won't sell lots as quickly as we would like, but we think the market is strong enough so we are not tabling the project."

He said they will start building roughly 45 of the 80-foot, multi-family lots along the northwestern portion of the subdivision, along the main entrance on Erie

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Road. He said they will also develop 20 of the "senior citizen" condo lots, and 8 to 10 of the higher-end 100-foot lots during the first or second phase of the project.

"But it all will be market-driven and will depend on the interest expressed by the builders we sell these lots to," Mr. Brant said.

He said they probably won't go in front of the board for site-plan approvals until this fall and would likely not start development until the spring of 2008.

In total, they plan to develop 42 of the 100-foot lot parcels, 126 of the 80-foot lots, 133 of the 70-foot lots, and 149 of the condos.

Mr. Brandt said the 70-foot lots will likely sell for \$180,000 to \$220,000 and would therefore be best suited for younger families.

The 80-foot lots would sell for between \$220,000 and \$270,000 and would be marketed toward multifamily use.

And the 100-foot lots would go for between \$250,000 and \$350,000. He said they are still determining the pricing for the condos, but he expects they will be between \$110,000 and \$160,000.

The development will include roughly 22 acres of open space and it will also have three detention areas between 1.5 and 3 acres each.

"We realize that the people neighboring the development won't be happy because they are getting a neighbor, but they are getting much better buffers than

they would have had under the other plan," Mr. Blank said.

He is referring to the 80-acre subdivision proposal they had created after their rezoning request was denied. The other 80-acre parcel owned by the developers was already zoned to allow for a housing subdivision, so Mr. Blank and Mr. Brant had developed a site plan for a 207-lot development on the properly zoned land.

Throughout the trial, the developers referred to the 80-acre site plan as the "ugly duckling" because it was more condensed and had less open space. They called the 160-acre plan the "swan."

Judge LaBeau tied the two references together during his decision. He referred to the subdivisions' trajectory as a "Cinderella story."