

## EDITORIAL

We attended the December 14 neighborhood workshop about rezoning and developing a relatively small area sandwiched between the Braden Woods and River Club communities. The four stations at the workshop represented Neal Communities (typical housing styles), ZNS Engineering (land plan), Lincks & Associates (traffic), and Eco Consultants (environmental), all private agents, consultants, and contractors for the new property owner(s), the Myara family of Lakewood Ranch, whose new Cuban restaurant plans were featured in the Observer's December 10 issue.

We asked pertinent questions at each station and drilled down for concrete answers. We got vague, conflicting, and unsatisfactory responses, and it was obvious that the whole development concept was being misrepresented.

Neal Communities displayed photos of their higher-end signature homes and said prices would likely range from the upper \$400,000's to the upper \$600,000's. Apparently, Jessica Salmond, who wrote the December 17 Observer article about the workshop, was led to believe that prices might range from \$550,000 to \$800,000. We were also told that the size of the lots would range from one acre to a half or quarter acre. Considering that a sizeable portion of the 32.93 acre property would need to be set aside for protected wetland areas, run-off ponds, access road(s), and other infrastructure, not to mention the area bordering the Braden River which is prone to flooding, it's highly unlikely that the developer truly plans on squeezing 31 "higher-end" homes into such a small residential area or hanging such high price tags on them.

It was absurd that the traffic consultant was unfamiliar with the affected intersection at Pine Meadow Way and Clubhouse Drive and totally unprepared to answer questions about the constant traffic nightmare and danger the proposed gated community would create with only one entry/exit and no stop sign, not to mention the disruption to our neighborhoods by unmitigated noise and damage to our streets by heavy clearing and construction vehicles/equipment.

Last, but certainly not least, is the environmental impact. At one station we were told that some wooded areas would be preserved and at another we were told that the land would be totally cleared. We stand with other neighbors who were interviewed for your December 17 article in believing that this corner property should be preserved for our Florida wildlife whose habitat is being systematically destroyed. If Manatee County officials want to do the right thing, they will buy the property and preserve it as a wildlife refuge or turn it into a park which can be enjoyed by the residents of the two existing, adjoining communities. The residential development proposal represented at the workshop makes no sense.

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