

ALGIERS LOWER COAST COMMITTEE UPDATE
PRESENTED AT THE SEPTEMBER 20 COMMUNITY MEETING

At the July Community Meeting, it was announced that Stanton Square LLC, which acquired 24.7525 acres on English Turn Parkway between the Arbors and Stanton Road from English Turn Land LLC, had filed with the City Planning Commission (CPC) a conceptual pre-application for development of 17 of these acres. The Board responded to this revelation by forming a committee to investigate the proposed development, to inform the community of its findings, and to develop a response on behalf of the community. Committee members were solicited throughout the Lower Coast, and almost 40 of your neighbors responded.

Within days, an organizational meeting was held. Janet Duroncelet was selected to chair the Committee, Ernest Legier was selected as the co-chair, and Kelly Legier was persuaded to serve as the secretary for the Committee. In addition, subcommittees were formed to handle outreach, lobbying and legal efforts of the Committee, and immediately a flurry of activity began.

Our Outreach Subcommittee, chaired by Sharon Cayce and Mike Boyd, undertook the task, together with multiple volunteers from the Committee, to distribute flyers throughout the Algiers Lower Coast in an effort to make certain that every single resident would have actual notice of the plans for development. Compliments of another member, Lee Dupont, signs were erected throughout the Lower Coast as part of that outreach effort. Next, the Outreach Committee, helped to mobilize some 100 residents to appear at a Design Advisory Committee (DAC) meeting to hear the developers' architects discuss their formal proposal and answer questions from DAC members. That presentation was extremely alarming and solidified the Committee's opposition to the proposed project. The developers propose a 276-unit apartment complex consisting of 2 4-story buildings and 13 3-story buildings, with 414 parking spaces. While promising to retain 28 trees, they plan to remove hundreds that now serve to absorb stormwater runoff and act as a barrier to storm winds. The promise of the use of porous concrete was not reassuring either since the soil in this wetland area is already saturated and not likely to be able to absorb much, if any, of the runoff. There was also discussion of the need to add 3 feet of soil to meet FEMA elevation requirements, which promised to exacerbate the runoff into the Arbors as well as onto English Turn Parkway. While the Design Committee is charged only with the responsibility of determining whether proposed plans meet the existing zoning requirements, it remains our contention that those plans cannot be considered in a vacuum and that property owners' rights cease when they adversely affect neighboring tracts. Although the DAC deferred a decision on the formal submission, the developers have the opportunity to make recommended changes and re-submit. Furthermore, despite the deferral, pre-construction activity has occurred on the site, and another talented member of our committee, Roy Glapion, a civil engineer, explained exactly what that activity (soil testing) involved.

In the meantime, the legal subcommittee was equally busy. Chaired by Ernest Legier, it set out to choose counsel to represent us through the administrative process and hired Bob Ellis. Counsel's focus has been to lobby the City Council, particularly our Council Member Freddie King to file a motion to create an Interim Zoning District (IZD), which would simply stay permitting while investigation can be done to address our concerns about drainage, flooding, hurricane evacuation, and inadequate infrastructure. As part of the effort, Bob created a petition in support of the IZD and the Outreach Committee was again involved in going door to door to explain the requested action and to obtain signatures. Almost 1000 Lower Coast and Algiers voters signed it. Although the petition, a resolution by the ETPOA Board unanimously supporting the IZD, and even a proposed motion to the City Council have been delivered to the Councilman's Office, there has been no action to date. In the event our administrative and political efforts are unsuccessful, another legal Subcommittee member, Darren Patin, has investigated a judicial approach to the issue and is preparing draft documents to be ready to respond in the need of an immediate response to particular action of the developer.

In investigating the historical basis for the aberrational zoning for this property, in the midst of all other property zoned single family residential, semi-rural residential, suburban single family residential and rural residential, the Committee found other properties in proximity to English Turn that are also zoned multifamily or even suburban commercial. It was determined that it was in the best interest of the community to petition to change the zoning in all of these properties to single family residential, which would also bring the Lower Coast into conformity with the CPC's original recommendations for development. Noting that the cost of infrastructure to develop the Lower

Coast was so great that, absent significant contribution from any potential developer, the CPC, in a 1985 report authorized by the City Council, suggested that very low density was appropriate. Nevertheless, developers of ET itself sought the multi-family zoning designation for this property for possible future development. Although the city accepted their request almost 40 years ago, in the 1986 Development Agreement, it reserved the right to change the zoning designation for the public safety and welfare. When the development of the sites zoned multi-family and commercial did not materialize, the CPC recommended the change we seek in 2010, during its consideration of appropriate land use while preparing the first Master Plan for the City.

Consideration of changes to the City Master Plan is again underway and the Legal Subcommittee is preparing to participate. It will require the preparation of separate application forms for each property for which we seek a zoning change, an explanation of reasons for the change, and any supporting documentation. Preparation has begun. Jerry Sneed has requested documentation via public records requests from several governmental entities, and we are investigating the hiring of experts to bolster our arguments. All of our effort to establish that this development is not only ill-advised but threatens the surrounding properties in the Lower Coast are dependent on the response of CM Freddie King. To Save our Sponge (the forested wetlands that protect our community) and to Protect our Peninsula (the Lower Coast of Algiers), we ask that CM King concur with his constituents and deliver the applications for amendment to the Master Plan (upon which we are working diligently) to the City Planning Commission by October 14, 2022 - amendments which will create a uniform land use of single family residences and which the CPC has consistently recommended for the Lower Coast of Algiers.

Respectfully Submitted,
Janet Duroncelet