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Authority wants to redo Savanna Woods

Larger complex would have residents of mixed income.

By Nichole Monroe Bell
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The Charlotte Housing Authority wants to redevelop Savanna Woods, a 49-unit public housing apartment complex off Park Road, into a larger, mixed-income community.

Neighbors worry the project will bring too many apartments to a neighborhood filled with single-family homes.

Built in the 1980s in Charlotte's Sedgefield neighborhood, Savanna Woods' aging apartment units have no central air conditioning or connections for washers and dryers.

All the apartments are for families earning 30 percent or less of the area's median income.

The housing authority recently filed a rezoning request that would allow more buildings on the 12.5-acre site on Marsh Road west of Park Road. If approved, the agency would demolish existing buildings and erect a 223-unit development in two phases.

The first phase, to include 117 units, is estimated at \$14 million, according to housing authority spokeswoman Jennifer Gallman. A public hearing is scheduled for Jan. 20.

The new units would be designated by tenant income levels. At least 45 units would be traditional subsidized housing for families earning 30 percent of the area's median income. Others would be for families earning about 60 percent of the area's median income. The project would also include market-rate units that are not income-restricted, Gallman said.

Mixed-income developments have become the preferred model for modern public housing. Agencies are attempting to revitalize neighborhoods by focusing on projects that serve the poor without concentrating poverty.

In First Ward, such efforts have yielded a mixture of subsidized and market-rate housing that has become one of uptown's most desirable neighborhoods.

Last month, the housing authority unveiled Seigle Point, a 204-unit apartment complex located in the Belmont community. Seigle Point replaced Piedmont Courts, a 1940s-era public housing project that had become notorious for drugs and crime.

Some Sedgefield residents worry the proposed Savanna Woods project would change the character of a neighborhood that is already seeing an abundance of new apartments and high rise condos. Sedgefield is filled with about 650 post-World War II bungalows.

"We're concerned about the density," said neighborhood association board member Janelle Travis. "There's just a lot going on and we're getting overwhelmed on all ends."

Gallman said simple changes in a building, such as central air conditioning or washer and dryer connections, can improve communities.

Air conditioning makes interiors more pleasant during summers, which can cut numbers of people outside creating noise. Washer and dryer connections may eliminate clothes lines, improving an area's appearance.

"Not only can the community change for the better, but families are living in a healthier environment," she said.

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carolynnty wrote on 11/16/2008 08:07:17 PM:

I have never understood why someone would want to buy market priced housing in such a mixed area where thugs and gang members mooch off their mothers and grandmothers who qualify for subsidized housing. I don't want the hoodlums in my area, lowering my property values. You can cite the success of First Ward mixed use development, but I am not convinced the folks who can afford market priced housing will buy/stay in such areas. I am all for poverty stricken people having a chance to live in safe neighborhoods; however, their relatives and acquaintances seem to undercut such programs.

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verbal40 wrote on 11/16/2008 05:31:50 PM:

CHA is a disgrace to the city. I witnessed it first hand. This organization operates off of government funds which is payed for by us all. Except for those who live in these communities. The tenants and the authority is mainly comprised of lazy and uneducated people. The drugs, prostitution, and crime run rampant throughout. Cheryl Campbell, Ama Sarpong, and George Connor are responsible for sweeping things under the rug. They like to hire people who can barely read, write, or speak English. They will set them up to live in low income housing and send them to classes to learn English on company time. These are neighborhoods that are run on a socialistic platform managed by an authority comprised of nepotism and cronyism.

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danimal wrote on 11/16/2008 04:41:49 PM:

Typical Sedgefield snobs who have priced out the normal people in the community. They want to brag about living in a diverse part of town but don't want to deal with the dievrstiv. Go move to Ballantvne if vou don't like it.

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