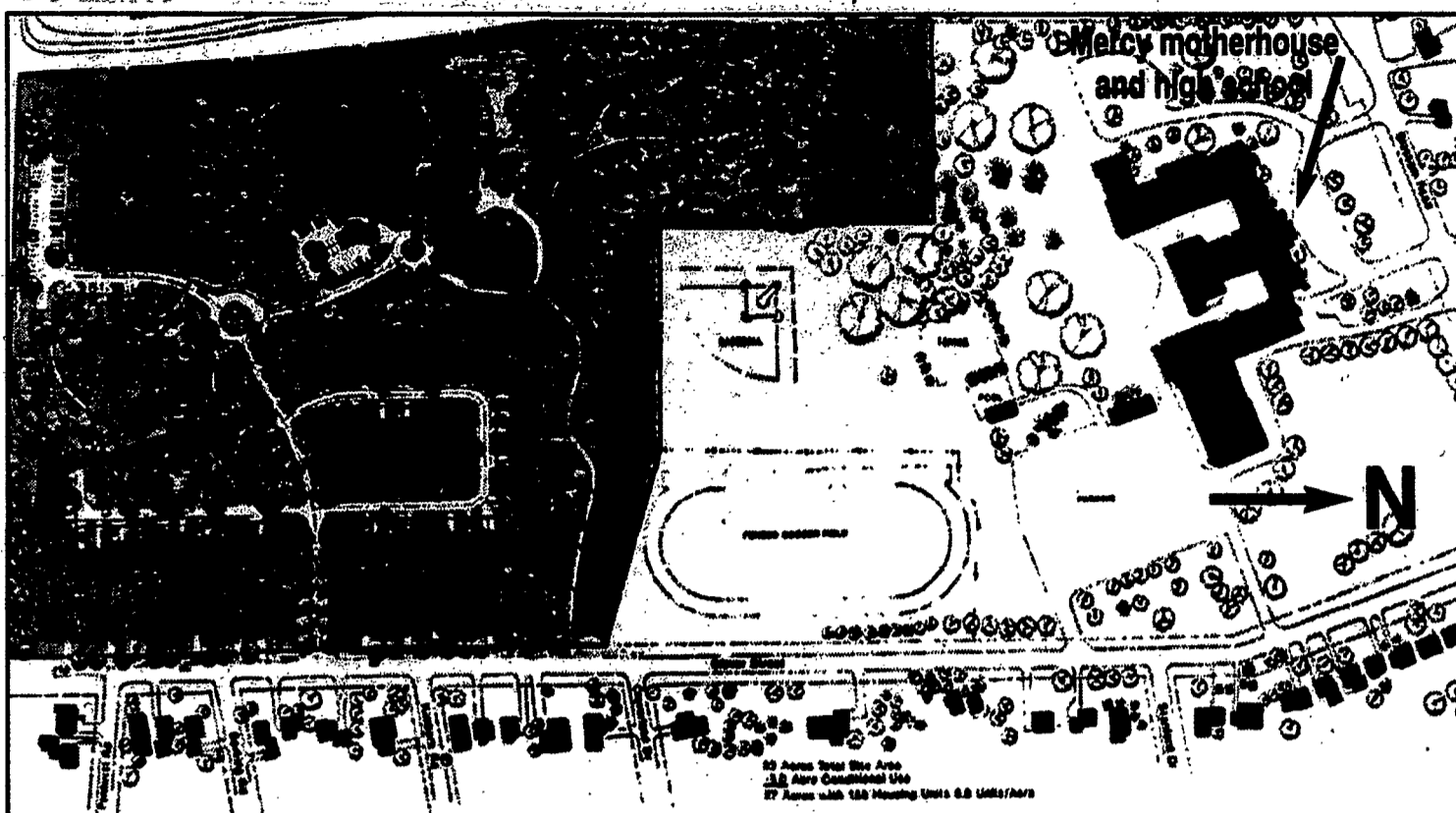


DIOCESAN NEWS



NewMark Development Co.'s proposed senior housing site on land the Sisters of Mercy want to sell to the company.

Proposed land sale draws concern

By Rob Cullivan
Staff Writer

BRIGHTON — The Sisters of Mercy's attempted sale of half of their 62-acre property here has met with controversy that all sides are trying to resolve. The potential buyer is a developer who wants to build a senior housing project. The land lies adjacent to Our Lady of Mercy High School and the sisters' motherhouse.

But local neighbors think the proposed project may be too big for the surrounding residential neighborhood, and would like to see something smaller, according to Connie Goonan, president of the PenClover Neighborhood Association. The association is one of a number of neighborhood groups representing residents in the area.

"We're all in favor of a senior housing proposal," said Goonan, pastoral council president at St. John the Evangelist Church in Rochester. "We're all in an agreement that is a good use of the land. (But) the size of the development continues to haunt us, and for us to come to a final consensus is a very difficult thing."

NewMark Development Company, a Rochester company that specializes in building senior housing, has been negotiating with the sisters since 1994 to buy the land. Christopher A. DiMarzo, NewMark's president, said his company wants to build 11 single-family homes on the property, along with 39 townhomes, and a 95-unit independent living center for seniors. In the future, NewMark would also like to build a 150-bed assisted living center for seniors on the land as well, DiMarzo said.

"The idea is to have a continuum of

care," DiMarzo said, adding that the development would be designed so that a senior could move from independent living to assisted living all on one site. "You wouldn't have to move to a different site or to a different town."

He added that one-third of the land would be preserved as woodland and wetland.

The company has met with concerned neighbors, he and Goonan said, and both sides are attempting to come to an agreement about the proposed site.

The Mercy sisters have owned the land since 1931, according to Sister Mary Fran Wegman, RSM, the community's vice president. The 32-acre wooded area is fenced in and currently serves no use, Sister Wegman said. She noted that the community needs to sell the property, in part, because its retirement fund is 73 percent underfunded.

She added that about half of the more than 200 Rochester Mercy sisters are retired, and the sisters' median age is 68. Even with income from the land sale, the sisters still face financial challenges, she said.

"(The land sale) will certainly help," she said. "But it's not going to get us out of the hole."

Sister Wegman said that her order wants to sell the land to NewMark because the developer's project would reflect the sisters' mission of caring for others. Although the sisters would have no formal relationship with NewMark, Sister Wegman and DiMarzo both noted that the sisters, and possibly students at Mercy, could either volunteer or be employed at the proposed development.

But before the sale can go through, DiMarzo wants to make sure that Brighton approves the proposed development plan. NewMark is working on its final environmental impact study to be submitted to the town in a few weeks, he said. Town Planner Ramsey Boehner said that NewMark has already submitted a draft study and that the public commented at a reportedly heated Jan. 12 meeting. The acreage is currently zoned for single-family dwellings, Boehner said, and NewMark is asking for high-den-

sity residential zoning. The town's council would have to give final approval to any development, Boehner said. No public meetings are currently slated on the issue.

DiMarzo said that his company has conducted a number of studies of the area and found that the new development would have minimal impact on traffic, even during evening rush hour. He said that the studies have found that seniors living at the development would most likely be on the road between 10 a.m. and 2 p.m.

Goonan said that explanations by company officials have helped to alleviate some concerns, but that neighbors still have questions.

"We absolutely agree that there would be no effect on the drivability of Clover Street, and on the livability," she said, referring to the street that borders the property on the east. "(But) to provide the kind of quality care (NewMark is) proposing requires a lot of service vehicles, staff vehicles ... All of these things will generate a different life than we're used to seeing."

Although he acknowledged their concerns, DiMarzo said that he hoped the neighbors would eventually see the development as beneficial to the land.

"Right now, it's a garbage dump," he said, referring to the fact that people sometimes leave their trash in the area. "We're going to make it into a park where people live, with trails that are usable."

Sister Wegman said that the sisters hope that all sides will agree on a shared vision in the end.

"The project is going to be our neighbor as well," she said. "We share the interest in developing a project that is going to be a friendly-type project for all of us."

Bishop appoints commissioners

Bishop Matthew H. Clark has appointed six women to serve three-year terms on the Diocese of Rochester's Women's Commission.

The new appointees will replace outgoing members, and join 11 other commission members who work on bringing attention to issues concerning women in the Catholic Church and society.

"The commission is a valuable resource to all parishes and faith communities of the diocese as they continue to recognize and value the dignity of women in the Church and society," Bishop Clark said in a statement. "Commission members are recognized for their abilities, leadership, creativity and commitment to realizing this goal."

The newly appointed members are:

Charlotte Bruney, pastoral administrator at St. Vincent De Paul Church in Churchville. Bruney also serves on the editorial board of the Diocesan Office of Liturgy's publication, "Liturgy Matters," and on the diocesan liturgical commission. A former hospital chaplain, she is a member of the InterChurch Council of Riga and resides in Chili.

Diane Burke, a member of St. Michael's Church in Penn Yan. She is a faculty member at Keuka College, and served on Our Lady of the Lakes Catholic Community's strategic planning team as part of the diocese's Pastoral Planning for the New Millennium. Her community service includes work with the Boy Scouts and Meals on Wheels.

Macrina Cardenas de Alarcon, director of Interdiocesan Hispanic Ministry of Western New York in Brockport, a joint effort of the Buffalo and Rochester dioceses. She holds a master's degree in theological studies from the Franciscan School of Theology in Berkeley, Calif.

Monette Mahoney, pastoral associate for faith formation and outreach at St. Mary's Church, Canandaigua. She has served as a music teacher in diocesan schools, and coordinator of education, catechetical and musical ministries at various parishes. She has also published several books and articles.

Xochitl Palacios, Hispanic ministry coordinator for the Roman Catholic Community of Geneva. She has also worked in health care and nutrition, and as an advocate for migrant farmworkers. She resides in Canandaigua and is a parishioner at St. Francis De Sales, Geneva.

Sister Edna Slyck, RSM, pastoral minister at Immaculate Conception Church, Ithaca. A diocesan schoolteacher for 21 years before beginning parish work in 1982, Sister Slyck was regional synod coordinator for Steuben County during the early 1990s diocesan synodal process. She also served as pastoral associate at Corn-ing-Painted Post Roman Catholic Community from 1988-1997.

Recognizing

* The Lyell Area Revitalization Committee, Rochester, inducted Father Paul Tommaso, pastor of Holy Family, Holy Apostle, St. Anthony, St. Francis of Assisi and St. Peter and Paul churches, into the committee's "Hall of Fame" in November.

* An anonymous donor who graduated from Bishop Kearney High School, Rochester, in 1978 and played baseball for Coach Ed Nietopski, has given the school \$105,000 for its gymnasium renovation project. When completed, the facility will be named "The Edmund J. Nietopski Gymnasium."

* A group of foreign exchange students at Mount Morris Central School collected toys and gave them to Catholic Charities of Livingston County, which then distributed them last Christmas.

Catholic Courier (USPS 135-580) Vol. 111 No. 18, February 10, 2000
Published weekly except the last Thursday in December.
Subscription rates: single copy, 75¢; one-year subscription in U.S., \$20.00; Canada and foreign \$20.00 plus postage. Offices: 1150 Buffalo Road, Rochester, N.Y. 14624, 716/328-4340. Periodicals postage paid at Rochester, N.Y.
POSTMASTER: Send address changes to Catholic Courier, P.O. Box 24379, Rochester, N.Y. 14624.

Lighting the Way
to a New Century



CATHOLIC SCHOOLS

Visit a Catholic School near you or
call 1-800-SCHOOL4 for a free brochure.