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## Landowner seeks views on Summerfield's development

A mailing by David Couch aims to gather feedback from residents ahead of the Planning Board's review of his latest request for changes to Summerfield's development rules

by **CHRIS BURRITT**

**SUMMERFIELD** – As landowner David Couch renews his efforts to win Summerfield's approval of his development plans, he's seeking the viewpoints of residents to help shape the debate.

The "Let's Talk Summerfield" mailing to about 4,800 Summerfield property owners is asking them for their views on future residential, commercial and recreational development in town. The questions are aimed at gauging the community's interest in building trails, preserving open space, constructing a variety of housing and promoting locally owned businesses such as coffee shops and boutiques.

All of these are elements of Villages of Summerfield Farms, the planned development of luxury and traditional houses, cottages, townhomes and apartments that Couch has proposed for his 973 acres spanning Summerfield. As recently as last April, the Town Council has twice rejected Couch's request to amend the town's development rules to accommodate his development. He hopes to return to the Planning Board as soon as January, the first step in seeking to win the council's support of his revised development plans.

This week's mailing is seeking to broaden the conversation about future development in Summerfield and discern the breadth of opposition and support for Couch's plans. It gives people two ways to answer questions

and offer their feedback. They can go to a website or use the cameras on their mobile devices to scan a QR code on the mailing.

"We want to increase public participation in general, leveraging technology to engage the largest number of people possible," Misty McCall, executive director of development for Villages of Summerfield Farms, said in an interview earlier this week. "We want to gather public feedback and see where that takes us."

**"As we proceed, we are committed to hearing from all Summerfield residents about their hopes, dreams, and concerns," said the mailing, which is expected to start arriving in mailboxes within the next few days.**

Earlier this year, Couch's proposal to build 1,192 apartments proved to be a lightning rod that sparked the sharpest criticism of his plans. During public meetings, some residents said that, except for apartments, they endorsed the developer's plans for building 11 villages with different types of houses, connected by trails and dotted by small businesses.

Last April, the council's 4-1 vote to deny Couch's application to create a new zoning district reflected what council member Janelle Robinson described as the opposition of "the overwhelming majority" of Summerfield residents to apartments and higher-density residential development.

Opponents said they fear higher-density housing would worsen traffic, school crowding and crime, and threaten Summerfield's rural character.

In May, responding to concerns, Couch submitted a new text

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## Toy drive fills truck bed



Photo courtesy of Danny O'Connor

Thanks to the generosity of participants in the monthly StokeRidge (Tavern) car show on Nov. 6, held in the parking lot of Kings Crossing Shopping Center on N.C. 68 in Stokesdale, the Oak Ridge Lions Club toy drive yielded a truck bed full of donated toys that will be given to children in need this Christmas.

## Angel Tree up at Fidelity Bank



Good Samaritan Ministries' annual Angel Tree is now up at Fidelity Bank, 8110-U.S. 158 in downtown Stokesdale, and anyone wishing to pick up a child's Christmas wish list from the tree may stop by during the bank's business hours (Monday – Thursday, 9 a.m. to 5 p.m., and Friday, 9 a.m. to 6 p.m.). You

can also obtain a child's or sibling group's wish list by contacting Terri Johnson, Angel Tree coordinator, at (336) 643-5887 or [terrij1957@yahoo.com](mailto:terrij1957@yahoo.com).

Participants in the annual Angel Tree program, which provides Christmas gifts to children who might not otherwise receive any, are asked to bring the unwrapped and labeled gifts to Johnson's home at 7769 N.C. 68 North in Stokesdale by Dec. 14; gifts can be left on or near the table in the open carport.

## COUCH SEEKS VIEWS ON DEVELOPMENT

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amendment request that proposed halving the number of apartments to 592. That's the plan the Planning Board will consider, possibly during its January meeting.

To accommodate denser housing, Couch has proposed extending water and sewer services to his development, with property owners within the development – not other Summerfield taxpayers – paying for the additional public utilities.

In exchange for clustered, higher-density

housing and the absence of septic fields, Couch said he would preserve pastures, woodlands and scenic views on Summerfield Farms and several other tracts stretching from Pleasant Ridge Road to Interstate 73.

Less expensive housing such as apartments, townhouses, duplexes and cottages in Summerfield would provide more affordable options for people earning moderate incomes and enable older residents to downsize and remain in the community, according to Couch.



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