

# Union Grove's Population Could Grow by Nearly 20% by 2028 if Proposed Canopy Hill Neighborhood Fills Up

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By Scott Williams  
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**UNION GROVE** — A development that could bring more than 300 new families to Union Grove is moving ahead and could be under construction by next spring.

Canopy Hill, a project that involves single-family homes, townhouses and apartments, won Union Grove Plan Commission support Monday, despite some concerns among neighboring residents.

The development along Highway 45 on the village's north side would boost Union Grove's population by nearly 1,000 people and would add about \$100 million to the community's tax base. Union Grove's current population is around 4,960.

Neighbors spoke out at the Plan Commission meeting about fears that Canopy Hill would create traffic congestion, aggravate flooding issues and disturb the village's rural character.

"We're losing our rural image," neighbor Carol Swantz said.

Members of the Plan Commission, however, unanimously endorsed rezoning and other measures needed for the 154-acre development. The Village Board is expected to take action in January.

Village President Mike Aimone, who serves on the Plan Commission, said lengthy discussion and negotiation have gone into blueprinting a project that would serve Union Grove well without creating problems.

Development of the vacant site, just west of Union Grove High School, has been under discussion for more than 10 years.

"It's been a lot of back and forth, and a lot of hours," Aimone said. "I'm very optimistic that we have achieved a plan that meets the needs of the community."

As proposed, the project includes 188 single-family homes, 66 townhome and duplex-style condominiums, 60 apartments in three buildings. The plan also includes a future senior citizen residential center.

## **A gateway to Union Grove**

If the Village Board gives final approval, the developers hope to begin construction by next spring and then continue the development for the next eight years.



The development is a partnership of Kenosha-based Bear Development and Mount Pleasant-based Newport Group.

Bear Development projects that, upon completion, Canopy Hill will be home to about 950 people, based on average occupancy levels.

The homes would sell for an average \$425,000 each, while the one-bedroom to three-bedroom apartments would rent for \$1,000 to \$1,700 a month.

Aimone said Canopy Hill could become the village's largest development in recent history, surpassing a project in the 1990s that brought about 80 new homes to what is now the Fox Creek Crossing neighborhood.

Canopy Hill could also create an attractive new gateway entrance on Union Grove's north side, Aimone said.

"It'll be the first thing people see," he said.

Village Administrator Michael Hawes said the site across from Union Grove High School has long been planned for new residential growth.

"We're prepared for it as a community," Hawes said.

### **Plan was scaled back**

Bear Development and Newport Group scaled back earlier plans that included more multi-family apartments.

S.R. Mills, president of Bear Development, said discussions have been productive and cordial to find a formula that is acceptable to both the developers and the community.

Mills said he and his partners believe the current approach allows them to achieve what they wanted with the vacant land.

"It's been a great collaboration," he said of talks with village leaders. "We think, if not there, we're certainly close."

### **Other concerns**

Neighbor Jim Jachna joined other concerned residents at the Plan Commission meeting Monday. Jachna said he worries about wastewater management and traffic congestion.

Noting that traffic safety issues already exist near the high school, Jachna said, "I've got to believe that things are going to be even worse."

Bear Development representatives and village staffers offered assurances that the development would not create such problems, and that Canopy Hill is a project that has been carefully and meticulously assembled.

By taking eight years to complete the project, Mills said, developers are ensuring that Union Grove will not experience an immediate or dramatic impact.

"This is going to take a long, long time," Mills told the Plan Commission. "This is not something that would happen overnight."