

Daily Press

VILLAGES FINDING MORE FAVOR

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Caption: The design concept for a three-neighborhood portion of the *Villages* of *Gloucester* that would house multi-family condominium-style units.

Map (b&w) Daily Press
The *Villages* of *Gloucester*

Support for The *Villages* of *Gloucester* continues to build as a Board of Supervisors vote looms.

Support for a mega-development planned for *Gloucester* County continued to swell Monday night as a standing room only crowd weighed in on The *Villages* of *Gloucester*.

Monday night's public hearing -- the last before county supervisors decide the project's fate -- drew more than 100 people and filled Page Middle School's auditorium to near capacity.

A little more than two hours into the public hearing, resident comments ran about 29 to four in favor of approving a rezoning of 908 mid-county acres to allow the development.

Many comments cited economic and social benefits to county residents and support for locating a championship caliber golf course in the county.

Many speakers decried criticism that the development would infringe on *Gloucester's* character.

A minority in the group expressed concerns about environmental and traffic impacts, as well as a distaste for urbanization.

In February, planning commissioners voted 8-4 to recommend approval of the project.

Supervisors have until November to decide the fate of the 1,120-home project but are expected to vote at an upcoming board meeting.

In 2003, *Gloucester's* supervisors voted to deny The Barrens, a similar plan for the same property.

Since then, developers have scaled down and revamped the proposal.

Notable in plan changes are a significant number of proffers, the legally binding promises developers have offered to entice decision-makers.

They include cash payments to the county to offset public service burdens, infrastructure improvements and open space requirements among others.

With the addition of three new concessions last week, total proffers now number 28 and span 17 pages of the rezoning application, according to Andrew Condlin, a project attorney.

Design plans show several small *village*-like communities surrounded by amenities including recreation areas, a retail center and business park.

Developers have said the project represents a \$750 million investment that would generate about 670 permanent jobs and \$83 million for the county in tax revenues over 20 years. *