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## Developer proposes halving number of apartments

**A new text amendment application by landowner David Couch aims to address criticism of his previous proposal**  
by CHRIS BURRITT

SUMMERFIELD - A month after Summerfield Town Council rejected his application to amend the town's development rules, landowner David Couch submitted a new request and offered to reduce by half the number of apartments he wants to build on his 973 acres.

In his May 10 application to Town Hall, Couch said he wouldn't build apartments "immediately adjacent" to traditional subdivisions of single-family detached houses. Duplexes, triplexes and quadplexes wouldn't fall under that restriction.

These are among the concessions offered by Couch in response to criticism by some Summerfield residents and Town Council members to his proposal to build 1,192 apartments in the Villages of Summerfield Farms, a planned development of 11 villages spanning the town. As an example, some residents of Armfield objected to his plan to build apartments between their subdivision and Interstate 73.

After a year and a half of divisiveness among Couch's opponents and supporters, the owner of Summerfield Farms proposed a collaborative approach in a letter to Town Manager Scott Whitaker.

"The intent of this submittal is to open a dialogue with the Town to come to a mutually acceptable pathway for moving forward," Couch wrote in the letter that accompanied his text amendment application.

The new application drew criticism of Couch's proposal.

"Perhaps his intention is to wear the citizens and the Council down," according to a Facebook post by Stand Up For Summerfield. "We know revisions were made, but at its heart, this is the same (text amendment) packaged slightly differently."

The application starts anew the process for Couch and Summerfield leaders. If the council approves amending the town's development rules, Couch would seek the creation of a new zoning district - open space mixed-use village (OSM-V). Then, he and town leaders would negotiate an agreement with specific requirements for development of his property.

In his new application, Couch sought to clarify what he described as misinformation about the process.

"One criticism of the prior proposal was that the text amendment didn't provide details about apartments," the application said.

If the council approves his text amendment request, Couch said he would provide those details in his application to create the new zoning district.

"When time to do so, we will provide extensive detail on the apartments," the application said.

Couch reiterated his earlier point that his plan to build a range of housing would support the town's policy advocating moderately priced housing and comply with federal fair housing regulations.

"It is our suggestion that the Town needs this type of pathway to address the inclusion of attainably priced housing in Summerfield," Couch said in his letter to Whitaker.

He proposed that a minimum of 15% of the housing units he'd build would meet Summerfield's definition of "moderately priced housing." Town leaders and Couch would agree on price ranges as part of the development agreement, according to the application.

Couch's offer to halve the number of apartments to 596 isn't new. Near the end of a nearly 5-hour public hearing on April 12, he made the same offer. He also said he'd eliminate one of the four complexes he planned to build.

Even so, the council voted 4-1 to deny his request to amend the town's unified development ordinance to accommodate higher density housing.

Town staff is arranging a meeting with Couch to discuss his new text amendment application, Whitaker said in an interview earlier this week.

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