



A rendering of a restaurant at the proposed Summerfield Farms development.

SUMMERFIELD FARMS

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David Couch will take his revised plans to develop **Villages of Summerfield Farms**, which include 600 apartments, to the Summerfield Planning Board Thursday night for a vote on a text amendment that would allow him to proceed with a 973-acre development district.

The 6 p.m. meeting, moved to Summerfield Baptist Church to accommodate the expected crowd, should have some contentious moments as the apartments portion of the development has sparked energized opposition from many residents. Couch has modified his plans, which originally included 1,192 apartments, since losing a 4-1 vote of Town Council in April, following a 3-2 positive vote from the Planning Board.

Couch, CEO of Blue Ridge Cos., needs the Open Space/Mixed Use amendment to the town's Unified Development Ordinance to develop Villages of Summerfield on his Summerfield property, which includes a market and event venue off Pleasant Ridge Road. Couch's property also has vacation homes available for rental.

Couch needs the amendment to the UDO because Summerfield ordinances currently do not allow apartments. Brad Rentz, the town's planning director, said town ordinances allow for duplexes, triplexes and quadplexes, but only one community of duplexes has been built and they are not leased.

Summerfield Farms renderings



David Couch has proposed a mixed-use development with more than 3,800 housing units on Summerfield Farms, his 973-acre property.

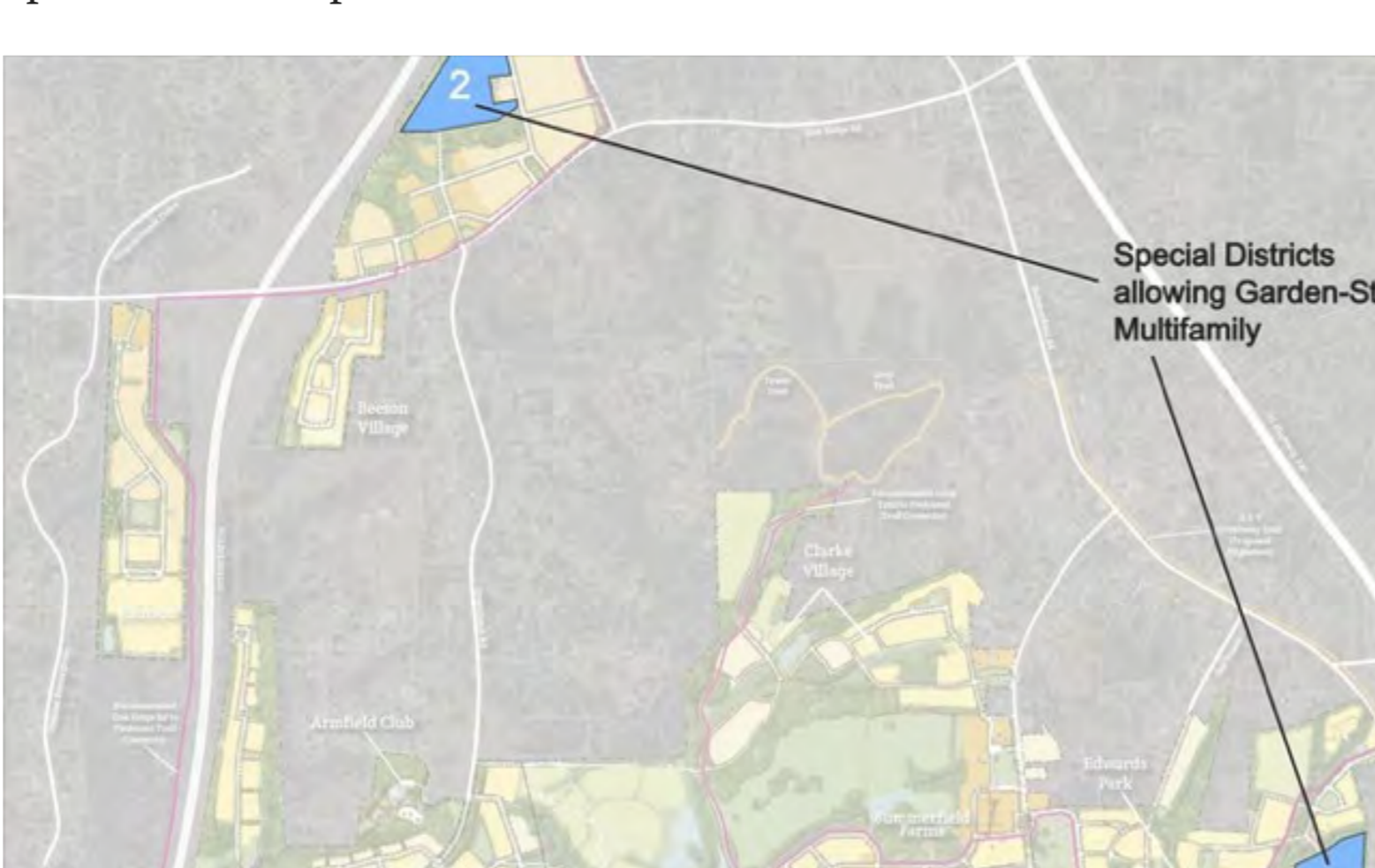
In the public comments portion of the meeting in April, Couch raised the issue of cutting the number of apartment units to 600.

But according to Rentz, the amendment voted on was for 1,192 units. The revised plan calls for the apartments in two areas, instead of four, as previously planned.

The "garden-style" apartments would be at the southeast portion of the Villages, just west of Summerfield Road, which runs parallel with nearby U.S. 220; and off Oak Ridge Road, separated by trees from Interstate 73, with Brookbank Road leading in from the south.

The entire development would consist of 11 "villages" with housing and some small neighborhood retail shops with roads connecting the villages and various walking and cycling trails. Summerfield Farms' retail would be preserved, and an old house across Pleasant Ridge could be converted into a restaurant.

Misty McCall, executive director of development for the Villages, said she expects the development to have "3,500ish residences," including the apartments and possible townhomes.



The areas in blue near I-73 (left) and U.S. 220 are the designated areas for apartments.

VILLAGES OF SUMMERFIELD FARMS

Rentz said Couch made some changes to text, but the reduction of apartments was the major change.

In a Dec. 20 letter to Town Council members and Town Manager Scott Whitaker, Couch acknowledged hearing "consistent" criticism of his plan from town council and planning board members as well as residents on these issues:

- The inclusion of apartments;
- Size and timing of the project;
- Traffic impacts;
- Compatibility with Summerfield's existing environment;
- Concerns that adding a new district to the UDO would gives Couch approval to do anything.

Rentz agreed that apartments, traffic and compatibility are three major topics for critics.

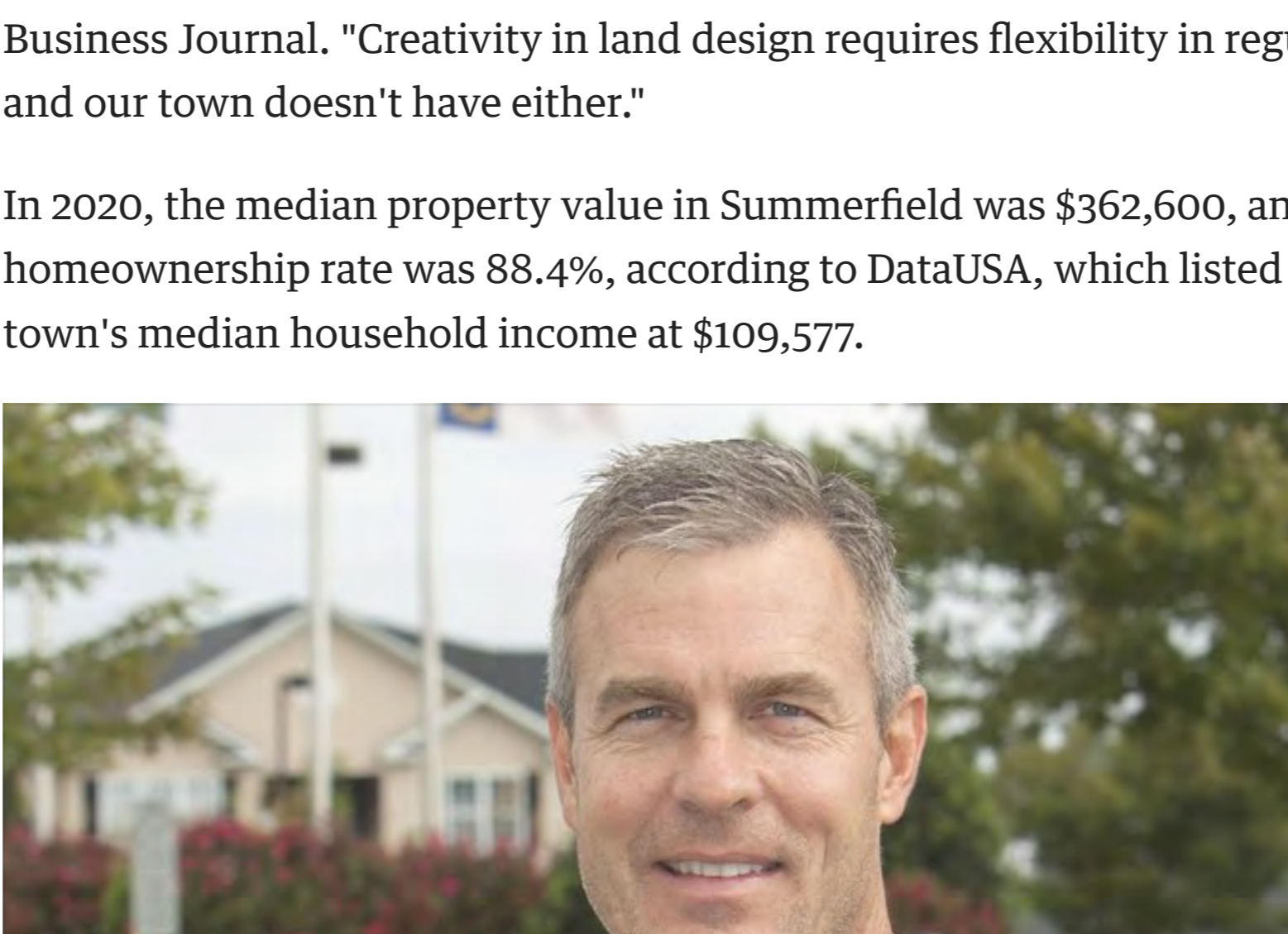
Summerfield, an affluent town of more than 11,000 in northern Guilford County, has a significant bloc of residents determined to keep the town's rural theme. High-density residential plans, including apartments, and large-scale commercial development have encountered consistent resistance.

Single-family residents must be built on lots of at least .73 acres. The town does not have public water or sewer – requirements for Couch to build his development.

Couch, who has been a Summerfield resident for 23 years, said his plan allows for manageable growth, leaving the town with much of its open land and scenic vistas.

"Preservation of scenic vistas and green spaces can't be done with a zoning ordinance that completely ties a developer's hands," Couch told Triad Business Journal. "Creativity in land design requires flexibility in regulations, and our town doesn't have either."

In 2020, the median property value in Summerfield was \$362,600, and the homeownership rate was 88.4%, according to DataUSA, which listed the town's median household income at \$109,577.



David Couch is CEO of High Point-based developer Blue Ridge Cos. An entity managed by Blue Ridge has purchased four retail strip centers in Greensboro for \$6.88 million.

FILE PHOTO

Couch has argued that the apartment portion of Villages of Summerfield, which would be in high motorist traffic areas of the development, would help the town meet state and federal fair housing laws while maintaining overall low density for the town. He also points out that his development would provide the opportunity for longtime residents to downsize their housing and allow needed workers such as teachers and police to live in the town.

"We're all going into the meeting with an open mind and will demonstrate to the Planning Board and many reasons this is the best path for the Town of Summerfield and its residents," said Couch. "We hope and expect the Planning Board to listen with an open mind and then do what's right for all Summerfield residents."

Regardless the outcome of the planning board, for the text amendment to go into effect, it would have to be passed by the town council.

To view a webinar produced by Villages of Summerfield Farms and take a survey about the proposed development, [click here](#).