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West side homeowner group continues to fight against apartments

The Springfield City Council chamber may be more crowded than usual Tuesday night as a group of west side property owners continues to fight against apartments off Wabash Avenue.

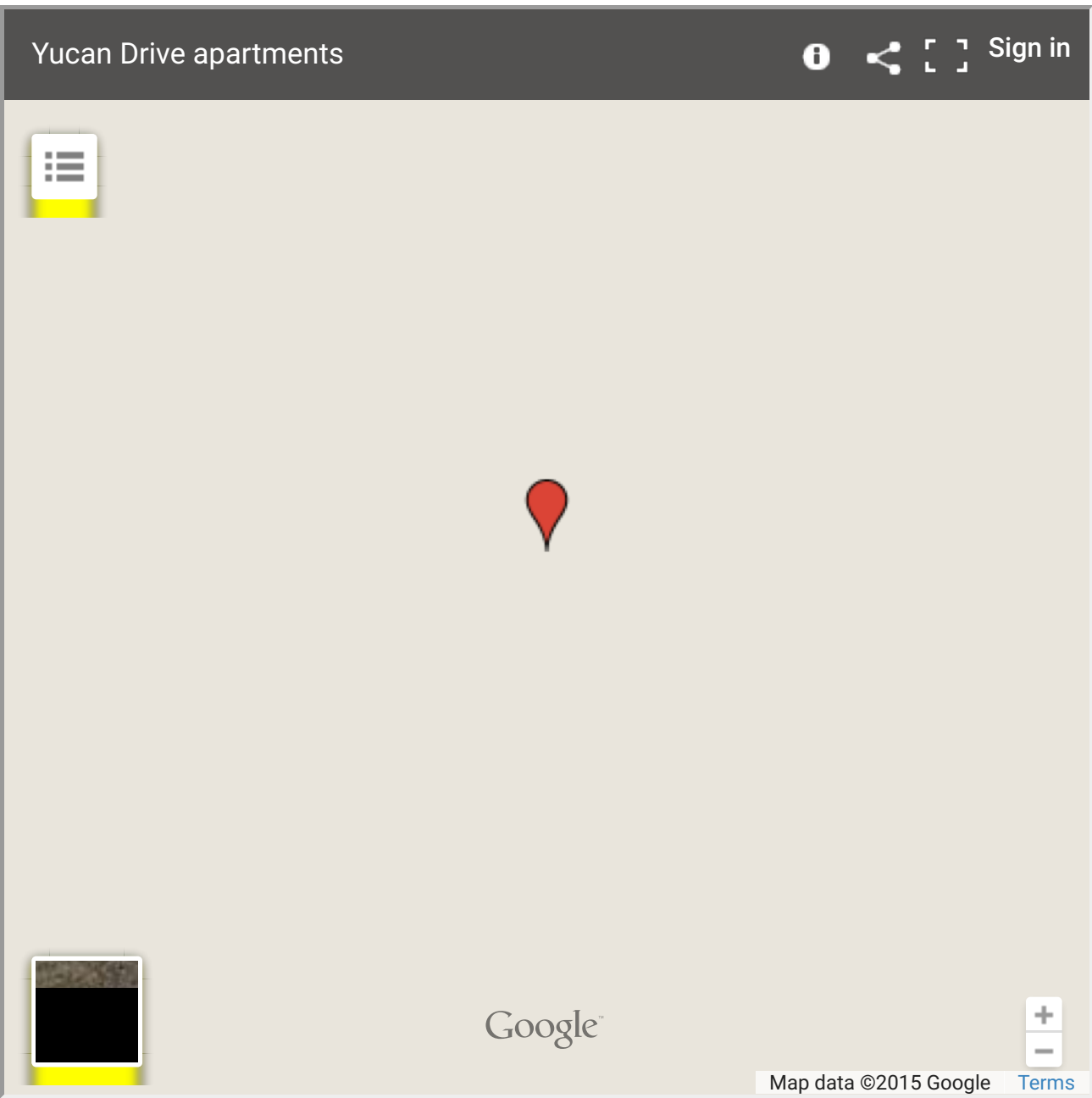
Residents of the Cobblestone Estates subdivision are concerned the rezoning of a nearby parcel on Yucan Drive, which is on the council's Tuesday zoning agenda, will pave the way for apartments, something they've been trying to fend off for years.

"It's just not the same as homeownership where people have a stake in their neighborhood and they want to keep it good," said Roger Kanerva, a Cobblestone Estates Subdivision Homeowners Association board member.

Gordon Gates, the attorney representing local developer Corky Joyner, calls it a simple zoning change that would reclassify the property from highway business service district to central shopping district.

"This really isn't a big deal," Gates said. "I'm not sure why everyone is so up in arms."

The 5.2 acres in question are off Wabash, west of Veterans Parkway, and include two separate parcels. Joyner, who couldn't be reached for comment late last week, owns another lot to the east, which already is within the central shopping district zone.



A legal notice published in the Jan. 30 edition of The State Journal Register advertised the February Springfield Planning & Zoning Commission meeting where this issue was discussed. The commission recommended that the city council approve the rezoning.

The change would allow the property to be marketed "for various possible uses including multiple-family residences," according to the notice.

Meanwhile, a flier the homeowners association is circulating says members have seen a proposal for an apartment complex with up to 144 units divided among multiple buildings.

"The density of this development will be higher than anything we have in this area," Kanerva said, adding that Joyner has shown plans for apartments to the group. "They are starting an expansion of Wabash to handle some more of the traffic, but the amount of traffic is still going to be an issue."

The association is asking the city council to send the proposed zoning change back to the zoning commission for another public hearing so its members are able to be there to object.

In a letter to the city council, John Myers, the attorney representing the association, wrote that nobody from the Cobblestone Estates group, or two other nearby homeowners associations, saw the legal notice or a sign posted on the property "despite the fact that board members regularly travel Yucan Drive and keep a look out for such signs."

Cobblestone Estates residents have been at odds for years with development proposals for Joyner's land. Aldermen in 2012 voted 7-3 in favor of a request from Joyner to rezone the [property](#) for mixed shopping and residential use.

The association filed a lawsuit in late 2012 against Joyner in which they say he owes the group more than \$43,000 in dues. The association takes care of drainage issues in that area and is charging Joyner until he builds his own stormwater detention and retention facilities, according to the lawsuit, which is pending in Sangamon County Circuit Court.

The homeowners' concerns about apartments center on quality of life and declining property values. The group has been distributing fliers and posting on social media urging people to show up at Tuesday's city council meeting.

"Think of all the trash, noise and traffic this will bring to our neighborhood," association president Debra Woods wrote on March 6 on the association's [Facebook page](#).

Kanerva said Friday that he wasn't sure how many people will attend the council meeting, but he suggested those in opposition to the zoning change may be there en masse.

"It's not going to be five or 10, I can tell you that much," Kanerva said.

The city council meets at 5:30 p.m. Tuesday on the third floor of Municipal Center West.

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