

## MIDDLETOWN

## Supervisors say no to age-restricted homes

*The board voted down an amendment to rezone property near the Oxford Valley Mall.*

By CHRIS ENGLISH COURIER TIMES

While Lower Makefield has approved 521 age-restricted homes on its part of the big Octagon Center development near the Oxford Valley Mall, Middletown wants no more of that kind of housing.

At their Tuesday night meeting, the Middletown Board of Supervisors unanimously voted down a proposed zoning amendment that would have allowed age-restricted homes on the township's 48-acre share of the property being developed by the Matrix Development Group of Cranbury, N.J.

Middletown already has 1,177 agerestricted houses or apartments. This type of housing requires at least one occupant of each home to be at least 55 years old and allows no children under 19.

"In my opinion, we're saturated with age-restricted housing in Middletown," said supervisors Chairwoman Lisa Pflaumer. "Even though a lot more are going in right next door in Lower Makefield, I don't think we need any more in Middletown."

Zoning too much land for one type of housing might lead to legal challenges, Pflaumer added.

"I'm also concerned with the long-term sustainability of too much age-restricted housing," she said. "Thirty or 40 years from now, will there be enough people who meet the qualifications who will buy all these age-restricted homes?"

Supervisor Robert McMonagle agreed. He previously had said adding many more age-restricted housing units in Middletown might skew the township's population too much toward the elderly and take away from Middletown's diversity. However, he said he was anxious for something to happen on the 48 acres.

"I want to see the property developed as successfully as possible," McMonagle said. "But this has been languishing for five years. Let's just zone it multiresidential and build some homes."

The Lower Makefield part of the project was changed to mostly agerestricted housing after a citizens group called Residents Against Matrix fought the original plan for big-box stores, hotels and large office buildings approved in 2000. Matrix officials had been holding off on plans for the Middletown land until things were resolved in Lower Makefield.

The age-restricted homes in Lower Makefield would be that township's first.

Matrix vice president of development Russ Tepper didn't have any immediate reaction to the Middletown board's denial of age-restricted homes Tuesday night, and the Courier Times was unsuccessful in its attempts to reach him for comment on Wednesday.

A 5-acre part of the Middletown land located north of Big Oak Road could be developed commercially, Matrix officials indicated Tuesday night.

As for the houses, Pflaumer indicated she would prefer single-family dwellings or townhouses but not condominiums.

"The turnover rate for condos, in my opinion, is greater," she said. "They're really an upscale version of apartment buildings and I'd like some housing stability with whatever is built there. I want people moving into our community to stay and be part of it for the longer term."