

Delaware Gazette

Agrihood starting to take shape

By **Dillon Davis** - July 8, 2023



Kari Lindberg has long dreamed of being able to live alongside her family and friends in a private neighborhood all to themselves, and along with her sister, Lisa, she is in the process of turning that dream into a reality.

In 2021, the sisters purchased 11 acres of land on Cheshire Road in Berlin Township with the goal of developing the site into an agrihood, which integrates agriculture into residential neighborhoods.

As part of the project, which will all be privately funded, six residential homes will be constructed on the land along with its own community center, two acres dedicated to gardening and farming, and four acres of forest and wetland.

Kari Lindberg and her family moved to Delaware County in the early 1960s but later left the area after the construction of the Alum Creek Dam. While the family scattered over time, Lindberg never lost sight of her goal of one day bringing everyone back together permanently.

"I've always wanted to build some sort of family and friends compound for living close together," Lindberg told *The Gazette*. "A couple of years ago, my sister decided to go in with me, and she wanted Delaware County because that's where we grew up, and we have so many great memories of that."

When the Lindbergs found the property, it was under contract with a residential developer who intended to build more than 30 houses on the land.

After pitching their idea for the agrihood to the Berlin Township Board of Zoning and garnering the support of residents in the area, Lindberg said "the whole neighborhood showed up" to voice their support for the agrihood project when it was time for the developer to present their proposal.

Ultimately, the developer nixed the proposal and pulled the contract, freeing up the Lindbergs to purchase the land and proceed with getting the land rezoned.

The agrihood, which will be named "The Shire" after the fabled "Lord of the Rings" setting, saw its first development occur last week with the raising of a relocated barn that will serve as the residents' community center and gathering space. The Mount Vernon Barn Company, which saves

and repurposes old barns, found the barn in Utica, Ohio, and is reconstructing the barn on the property. The timber beams are in place, and work on the roof is underway.

Although not yet constructed, all the homes are spoken for and will not be for sale, Lindberg said. One home will be kept open for visiting guests, she added.

As for the two acres of farming land, Lindberg said she and her sister would like to find a farmer, preferably younger in age, to work the land as a start to their own farming ambitions.

"Young people have the enthusiasm and the energy but don't always have the finances, and we are a little older and have the ability to offer this to some young person who wants to start their own kind of market garden or farm," she said.

The only thing the residents of the agrihood would ask of the farmer during the early stages is that a portion of the produce is left for them, Lindberg added. "We just want to have local food because I'm a huge believer that we should be growing a lot more local food," she said.

"We have a hoop tunnel that is 20 feet by 100 feet, and we want to be able to grow things all year long like lettuce and greens and stuff like that," Lindberg said. "We want to provide this for a young person. I've advertised it, but we haven't yet found the right fit."

The farming opportunity is currently listed on the Ohio Ecological Food and Farm Association's Heartland FarmLink website. For anyone interested in learning more about the opportunity, visit heartlandfarmlink.org/property/shire or email Lindberg at lindberg29shire@gmail.com. Lindberg believes that as the project continues to develop and people can begin to see their vision take shape, more interest will be shown in the opportunity.

"When I advertised, I just had an empty lot and people might not see the whole vision we have," she stated. "I figure as the buildings go up, and the hoop tunnel is there now, people will think it's really cool."

When the project is completed, Lindberg went on to say they would like to invite the neighborhood to see it and thank them for their support in making it happen. Asked what she would like the agrihood comes to represent, she expressed hope it will lay a foundation for future projects, regardless of size or scope.

"Definitely for our family, it's a place for all of us to help each other out and be close together," she said. "But we also want it to set an example. We also want the neighbors to be involved because when we went out and walked door to door, the neighborhood is just very excited about this kind of idea. And I think the more people see things like this, it doesn't have to be to this crazy scale. ... It's just setting a template for people."