

# Mapleton-Fall Creek residents say new gas station is unneeded, unwanted

**BY:** Jack Rinehart (<mailto:jack.rinehart@wrtv.com>)

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INDIANAPOLIS - Controversy and anger were brewing on the north side this week – all fueled by a gas station that no one in the neighborhood wants.

Nearly everyone in the Mapleton-Fall Creek neighborhood said they thought the developer had dropped his plan for a gas station at 32<sup>nd</sup> Street and Central Avenue.

But, a construction permit was issued last Friday, and ground was broken this week – much to the neighborhood's surprise.

Tucked into the middle of a residential neighborhood, the gasoline station and convenience store is going up in an area many believe is over-served by gas stations and food marts.

As one resident told us, "We've got one at 30<sup>th</sup> and College. We've got one at 34<sup>th</sup> and Capitol, 34<sup>th</sup> and Illinois. We got one at 25<sup>th</sup> and College and 22<sup>nd</sup> and Delaware. We've got one at 38<sup>th</sup> and Fall Creek."

The developer didn't need city approval for a 1,700-square-foot gas station and convenience store in an area already zoned for commercial use. But opponents say that nearly five 500 residents signed petitions in opposition, and they call existing stores in the area magnets for crime.

"I will blame the city, or whoever, when they have the first robbery, the first killing, the first break-in or fire," said Al Polin, a member of the Mapleton-Fall Creek Association. "I'm going to blame them for what I will call 'feeding the rats.'"

In addition to potential crime, residents said they have environmental concerns about a gas station in the neighborhood.

"I don't like it," said Chuck Madden, also of the Mapleton-Fall Creek Association. "It's never good for the neighborhood. It's not an improvement. If they drop tanks in here, fuel always permeates the

soil, and all these homes have basements."

Residents say the area is plagued with a high number of vacant, boarded and abandoned homes. Over the past three years it has developed 56 housing units, bringing more than \$11 million in new investment to the neighborhood. For more than a year, the neighborhood had talked with the city about its desire for houses, retails and mixed use developments.

"We planned on bringing in the appropriate zoning in place that didn't see a gas station as part of that," said Leigh Riley Evans, CEO of the Mapleton-Fall Creek Development Corporation. "That's part of the time all of us residents spent in developing what they wanted to see in their community."

The development corporation has notified the city that it plans to file a formal protest Friday to stop development.

Ironically, the city is expected to roll out in the next couple of months a comprehensive new zoning overhaul that would prohibit gas stations like this one in residential neighborhoods.

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