

If you google Lake Hillmoor on your computer, you come up with a wealth of information. You discover that Michael Ford of Tempo Development, the developer on Lake Hillmoor, is also the President of a Crowdfunding company called Real Estate- Gold. You also discover that Mr. Ford intends to use crowdfunding as the funding source for the Hillmoor Development. For those not familiar with Crowdfunding, it is a new(2012), loosely regulated, unorthodox and basically untested alternative form of financing where a developer raises money for his project or development from private individuals, typically via the internet. It's intended for someone who comes up with what they think sounds like a good idea, but can't get normal financing for their endeavor thru the traditional banking channels or from any venture capital organization because the project exceeds the risk limits those professional institutions find acceptable . Because the Hillmoor Developer is unwilling to risk using all his own money, he invites small speculative investors on the internet to jump on his band wagon. Apparently, it's like the Wal-Mart of equity financing or like those 'get rich quick real-estate schemes' we use to see on late-night TV. It works for some, but reports are that most small investors, as high as 75%, lose their investment.

However, apparently these "investors" understand from the beginning that they are taking a big risk and probably pouring their money down a sink hole. Reputable fundraising sites make explicit warnings to potential investors about the real risk of the ventures not succeeding. Mr. Ford and his Real Estate-Gold crowdfunding company do have such a disclaimer on their website claiming he "does not make investment recommendations, or vouch for the accuracy or completeness of any of the information or materials provided by or through his website," and he warns Investors they "must be able to afford the loss of their entire investment."

What's important to note here is that it seems obvious that no valid, acceptable lending institution is willing to back the Hillmoor Development, including Mr. Ford himself because of the risks involved.

Risk is the keyword in this whole Lake Hillmoor project. Mr. White, the last prospective Hillmoor developer, did buy the property, but couldn't get the financing for his development, so the project went into bankruptcy. Fortunately, construction never started on White's

development, so the beautiful, green golf course property was left intact.

Now comes Mr. Ford who can't seem to afford, or want to take the risk of buying the property, but rather he wants the City to take a giant risk by giving him a comprehensive plan and map change without any assurance he can get sufficient crowdfund financing to even buy the property. And then he needs more financing to develop the property.

So what happens if he doesn't get enough financing or if Thom Hartmann is right in his book "The crash of 2016" and Mr. Ford goes bust in the middle of tearing up 40 acres of the Hillmoor Golf Course trying to construct the Lake for his a-Ford-able Development? Either way, it's the city that gets stuck with a giant hole gracing its entry way into the City.

Let's face it. If it was a good idea to have residential development surrounding a small man-made lake, every up-scale development would have one. When Mother Nature creates a lake, that's one thing. But if you try to fool Mother Nature by digging a hole, filling it with water, and think Mother Nature will do all your maintenance, you're terribly mistaken because these

manmade lakes act like giant sponges for pollution, sediments and contaminants in the runoff that actually feeds the lake.

Rain and stormwater run off of streets, parking lots, driveways and rooftops accumulating toxic pollutants from oil, gas, and asphalt residue. It then runs over the landscape-- gathering soil, fertilizers and pesticides from lawns, and anything else in its path and simply collects like sewage in the pond--, creating odors, mucking up the water, and encouraging weed and algae growth. Animal waste from dogs, birds and wild animals, will also get into the water and elevate the bacterial levels to further pollute and create more health risks at the lake.

We have a name for this rain water collection system. It's called a Stormwater Retention Pond and Mr. Ford has done a very sly job of solving this normally vexing problem of stormwater collection, except he's calling it a lake--Lake Hillmoor. He can call it anything he wants, even Little Lake Geneva, but it's still collecting polluted, contaminated and toxic stormwater from his development and the surrounding developments to keep the lake filled. So will Lake Hillmoor pass the 'duck test' 5 years from now? Will it still look like the lake and operate like the

lake it was when it was first filled with clean water from the city well, or will Lake Hillmoor look, act, and perform like a giant retention pond?

But in 5 years Mr. Ford and his crowdfunders will be long gone back to Illinois and it will be the City of Lake Geneva's responsibility, especially if the lawsuits come from those people who bought Ford's a-Ford-able homes on a lake that turned into a retention cesspool. The fact that the project was approved by the Plan Commission and City Council after exercising their required due diligence and careful investigation before approval, puts the responsibility for future problems at Lake Hillmoor on the City. One newspaper article about a lawsuit filed by property owners against a city for allowing a retention pond to be called a lake said, "They were told it was a lake. The city now calls it a retention pond. Mr. Johnson's business tries to clean these ponds as best they can, but he said he spends a lot of time explaining to people, 'you don't live on a lake-- you really don't, you live on a retention pond.'" That's exactly what the home owners on Lake Hillmoor will be saying when Mr. Ford escapes back to Illinois.

Mr. Ford didn't address these issues in our first 'get together' because he said he had engineers and other experts doing that. But unless his engineers and experts have superhuman plans to maintain Lake Hillmoor like a giant swimming pool, his plans and promotional material must be truthful by informing everyone that this is not Little Lake Geneva and that this Lake Hillmoor water will become polluted and must be dealt with in a cautious manner.

Because his plans show a "Beach" area, people will naturally assume they can swim and play in that water like they do on all the beaches around Lake Geneva. Sure, swimming might be possible the first couple years, but long term, it's impossible. So the Plan Commission and City Council have to be extremely insistent that Mr. Ford include critical restrictions on swimming and consumption of fish and acknowledges that polluted water can be potentially dangerous to human health, i.e., cause gastrointestinal, respiratory, dermatological and flu-like health problems. Therefore, not only swimming must be banned, but wading or entering the lake must be prohibited. Plus, there should be warnings that any activity on the lake itself must be done with utmost care to be sure no one falls into the polluted, unhealthy water.

Additionally, everyone should know that the aquifer the city gets its water from and the city well where Lake Hillmoor will get its initial water from is under this area? If so, what contamination risks might exist because of what happens or might happen with this Hillmoor Lake and the development? Plus, has the proximity of the White River been thoroughly checked for risks of pollution and contaminants coming into the White River from this development and lake? In fact what experts have been consulted to evaluate all the environmental and ecological risks this lake and development pose to Geneva Lake, its Watershed and the White River? Saying you checked with Dan Winkler will be worthless in court and ignoring these risks again puts the City at risk for future lawsuits.

The point is that the Lake Hillmoor Development is way too risky for the City of Lake Geneva to approve. Remember, if the City does approve this project, they're endorsing and abetting this subterfuge of a stormwater retention pond pretending to be a lake by allowing it to be called Lake Hillmoor. Initially the lake might be filled with clean city water from the city well, but it is being

continually refilled by contaminated stormwater and, long term, it will be nothing more than a giant retention pond that will be dangerous to the health and welfare of those living in the development. You will not be able to swim, wade or risk falling into the polluted water paddling a canoe or kayak or sailing a small sailboat. Eventually, this will be a non-activity body of water for both dogs and humans. Therefore, Mr. Ford's Lake Hillmoor Development fails to meet the "Private Recreational" requirement as designated in the current Comprehensive Plan and Map, and he must be denied his request to change that plan.

By: Richard Malmin