



Planner Don Westphal,
President
Donald C. Westphal &
Associates

Time for a Makeover? (Part Three)

Outmoded home sites require reconfiguration

Q Cosmetic improvements aren't enough for my land-lease community. How do I reconfigure my lots?

A Many older communities built to accommodate smaller homes need more than just cosmetics to create a new image and preserve community value. Old, obsolete homes must be replaced to create an acceptable new appearance. Unfortunately, many home sites are just too small to accommodate the newer homes being produced today. In addition, the forty to fifty year-old infrastructure may be obsolete and costly to maintain. In such cases, the only alternative is a redesign of the community and an upgrade to the infrastructure. At least one of the three following solutions may be worth considering.

An assessment of the appropriateness of each option requires the utilization of the community inventory discussed in part one of this series. Of particular interest is the base plan prepared for the community showing the location of the above and underground improvements and including an assessment of the infrastructure condition. An investigation of the available homes to replace the older homes should be made. Some manufacturers are producing smaller single-section homes and small footprint two-story homes, while others have multi-section park home models available. Traditional single and multi-section homes may be the only option available or marketable.

The first solution might be only an adjustment in lot lines or lot configuration to allow replacement of the older homes with one or more of these available options. Frequently, existing sites are combined to create larger sites at a loss in project density. It is important to deter-



Before



After

mine whether the resulting new sites will produce enough income and increased value to justify the loss in numbers.

The second option increases lot length by reducing street width and moving parking onto homesites or off-street parking bays. Streets in many older communities with on-street parking and poor drainage are in need of major repairs. If this is the case, redesign the streets to minimum width, eliminating on-street parking. Such an approach can remove the eyesore of street side parking and increase lot depth by ten feet or more.

A third option would require the reconfiguration of all or part of the infrastructure and road system. A convenient way to arrive at a preliminary rearrangement layout is to prepare an accurate base plan of the community showing the entire infrastructure. Prepare the plan to

an accurate scale, 1"=50' or larger. Highlight the infrastructure items according to preservation priority, from the most desirable to the least. Determine the sizes of the homes most likely to be placed on the reconfigured homesites. Copies of these footprints can then be cut out of paper or thin cardboard at the same scale as the base plan. These cutouts can then be placed on the plan and moved about

to allow maximum preservation of various site infrastructure items. Required setbacks and space for site improvements, parking, garages, carports, decks, and storage buildings should be provided. Preferred positions of the future homes can then be marked on the plan and used in the final layout.

In all reconfiguration efforts it is important to follow local regulations

since it may be acceptable to place homes over some sewer or water lines. It is never acceptable to place homes or auxiliary structures over gas lines. Once the appropriate plans have been prepared and changes made to the homesites, image improvements suggested in the previous installments of this feature can be instituted to complete the upgrade. MHI will soon be publishing case study recommendations made by a joint upgrade study committee. These recommendations will be an additional resource for those interested in improving the appearance of their community and the image of the industry.

Don Westphal has over 35 years of experience planning manufactured home communities. He can be contacted at (248) 651-5518 or via email don@dcwestphal.com