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Development could make tax bill equal to a king's ransom

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forks proposals

There's a truism often heard in zoning meetings, PTA get-togethers and backyard barbeques about the nature of development in the suburbs: Builders tend to name their subdivisions after that which they eliminate from the landscape. Thus, we see treeless housing developments with the titles of Oak Knoll, Mountain View, Rolling Pastures, Birchwood Acres, etc.

In Forks Township – the scene of a "last-stand" battle by the supervisors and residents to preserve what is left of open land – four developers have requested a name change to consolidate their identity in a quest to build 3,000 to 4,000 homes in a farmland preservation district.

At Monday's zoning hearing, the developers' attorney said the four partners, KMRD LP, Bucks-Lehigh Land Co. LLC, Nic Zawarski & Sons Developers Inc. and Nic Zawarski & Sons Development Corp. would like to be known as just KMRD LP.

Usually, simplification is a good thing, but there's nothing simple about this zoning fight. It's going to be a long, protracted set of hearings, followed by a long legal battle, followed – in the worst dreams of residents, anyway – by an eventual compromise on soaring legal fees to allow much of the farmland preservation district to disappear under a crop of single homes, apartments, townhouses and mobile homes.

The reasons not to approve this development are evident: The loss of what's left of the township's agricultural community, more traffic, more sprawl. The most ominous note was sounded by Easton Area schools Superintendent Dennis Riker, who, in an op-ed column this week, laid out a potential school-budget deficit of \$30 million – the equivalent of 22 mills in property tax – that could result from 5,000 new kids entering Easton schools.

Those kids would come from several developments, the proposed Kings Mill Mobile Home Park, Kings Mill Townhomes, Kings Mill Condos, etc.

What's in a name? Plenty. A fitting moniker for this mega-development would be "A King's Millage." That's what Easton area taxpayers will feel like they're paying in school taxes if these homes are allowed to sprout by the thousands in Forks.

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