

GIFFORD — Marie McCulloch, one of two residents remaining at the Industrial Trailer Park on 45th Street, can still recall her mostly Hispanic neighbors being evicted in July and their rental units demolished sometime later.

“There were eight families that had to leave,” McCulloch, 65, said on the front porch of her state-funded mobile home. “Some had three or four people living together, trying to make it. ... Then they (new owners) ripped them up. They weren’t in a shape to move.”

She said she has until July to move her newer 784-square-foot unit to another park and is struggling to find somewhere she can afford.

Eventually, she said, her neighborhood of 18 years is “going to be all poured with cement.”

County planners in June 2007 approved a site plan for a Prestige AB Ready Mix Concrete plant on part of the trailer park’s 9-acre site.

But county commissioners agreed Tuesday to have planners meet with Gifford leaders and craft new regulations so industrial projects don’t cause serious problems for residents.

Leaders of the Gifford Progressive Civic League, the Gifford Front Porch Council and the county’s NAACP branch wanted more than that. They asked the commission to rezone all 163 acres of general industrial land in Gifford to light industrial so a concrete plant couldn’t go there.

“We as a community felt totally dissed that we were not notified (the plant) was passed in 2007,” league President Joe Idlette III told commissioners.

Idlette and others complained of not knowing about the concrete plant’s plans until residents were being evicted.

County Community Development Director Bob Keating said Prestige had the correct general industrial zoning, and would have less than 150,000 square feet

of structure or pavement. So, planners could approve it without referring the project to the county Planning and Zoning Commission.

Gifford's industrial area has been zoned that way since 1957, when the county first enacted zoning laws, Keating said.

"We all know what that meant in 1957," Idlette said. "If there was anything undesirable for anywhere else, you'd stick it all out in Gifford."

Tony Brown, president of the local branch of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, said it's about time for the meetings with Keating.

"That's what should've been done in the beginning," he said. "If they had, this concrete plant would never be there."

But the Gifford leaders don't speak for everyone in the area, said neighbors of the planned plant.

Lee Borden, who lives next to the site, Wednesday said she doesn't anticipate problems. Prestige will surely bring much-needed jobs to the area, she said.

"It's going to be better than living next to that trailer park," she said.

CONCRETE FOCUS

Project: Prestige AB Ready Mix Concrete plant

Zoning: General industrial

Location: Southern 6 acres of a 9-acre site at 5045 45th St., Gifford

Property ownership: K&M Properties of Florida LLC, of Orlando, paid \$1.8 million for property to Vero Beach's Conk Land Acquisitions LLC in May 2007.