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My View: Rocky Ripple concerns about flood-control plan

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Nestled along the historic Indianapolis Central Canal in a bend on the White River is the small village of Rocky Ripple. Few people know about it unless they happen to drive through town along West 52nd Street trying to get to Michigan Road. Residents here are an eclectic group with a strong sense of community. The families of some have been here for generations.

The community is composed of artists, writers, potters, therapists, gardeners, carpenters, attorneys, professors, administrative professionals, self-employed contractors, musicians, veterans, retirees, young couples, and even a couple of storytellers. They know their neighbors and lend a hand as needed. They speak out against plans that could compromise the community, which is what is happening right now.

In early February, the Army Corps of Engineers released a report with significant changes to the levee project. Butler-Tarkington residents were stunned to learn that the original curb-type wall planned for the west side of the canal had become a 2-foot wall on the east side of the canal that grows into a 6-foot wall ending in Holcomb Gardens. The change would block access to and the view of the canal from walkers and cyclists, homeowners and those taking a leisurely drive through the area.

Rocky Ripple residents were also concerned to learn the plan walled them off from the rest of Indianapolis. Floodwaters trapped in Rocky Ripple could potentially flow freely into the canal, thus compromising the drinking water of 600,000 Indianapolis residents. The plan evolved from an intermittent wall to a 2-foot wall along the Rocky Ripple side of the canal, to a significant view-blocking wall.

On Feb. 24, the Town Council called a special meeting. More than 100 residents attended, many of whom spoke out against the new plan.

The council passed three resolutions to send to the Army Corps of Engineers. The resolutions invited the corps to stop the current

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Engineers. The resolutions invited the corps to stop the current canal project; allow residents more time to respond to the revised plan (the corps graciously extended the deadline by 30 days); and to once again include flood protection for Rocky Ripple. The following Monday, some 300 area residents crowded into the Riviera Club, many of whom expressed opposition to this new plan.

In 1996, Rocky Ripple opted out of the corps plan to put a wall along White River based on a very close poll, but officials continued to ask for flood protection. Many residents who saw the Wharley section of the project have since regretted voting down the Army Corps' original plan. Furthermore, many current residents did not live in Rocky Ripple in 1996 and were never part of the conversation.

While many residents have worked to slow the erosion of the earthen levee, increased development upstream, along with more frequent high-water events -- including the early March event -- continue to put pressure on an 80-year-old barrier.


The town once again is asking to be included in the corps' plan for flood protection. Thankfully, Indianapolis officials verbally agreed to petition the corps for change. Good neighborhoods are central to Indianapolis' quality of life. Rocky Ripple brings a unique charm to the city that can never be replaced should it be erased by a major flood. As our bumper stickers say, "I'm not lost, I live here." We want to continue living in Rocky Ripple.

Gaff-Clark, Tomey and Herrmann are members of the Rocky Ripple Town Council.

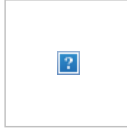
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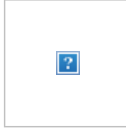

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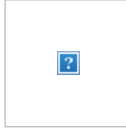

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