Housing, industry limits reflect village fears of overexpansion

by Joyce Wagner

Alfred residents are reacting to "what they perceive to be a deterioration of the village," Deputy Mayor William Hall said.

In public forums, residents complained of noise, crowds and poor maintenance of downtown - particularly fraternities - and they said they feared losing Alfred's small-town flavor to industrialization that might be brought by the Ceramic Corridor.

In response, the Village Board last month amended village zoning laws to create specific districts for education and research and development.

The Educational District encompasses school-owned property. It includes standard school-related facilities and, significantly, fraternities and sororities. Under the terms of the amendment, any new Greek organization wanting to build a house would have to do so on University property.

"Fraternities have effectively been zoned out of the village," said Sandra Schofeld, a member of the village planning board.

Already-existing Greek houses in the village will not be affected by the amendment.

The Research and Development District encompasses the area behind the Ford Street apartments. While the amendment permits construction of R&D facilities, it restricts the potential growth of such facilities.

"The amendment insures light rather than heavy-type industry ... that doesn't bother anybody," said Housing Inspector

Continued on p. 3

Alfred, N.Y. Fraternities
Village clamps down on Greeks, industry

continued from p. 1

Tom Braddock

The amendment to create the two new districts was passed unanimously over the objections of AU, which claimed the regulations impose an expensive burden on it. With passage of the amendment AU must now get village approval before beginning any new building.

"Government regulation increases the cost of doing business. It's a simple proposition," said Peter Fackler, AU's vice president of business and finance.

AU also objected to the amendment on grounds that it is unfair since Alfred State College, as a state entity, cannot be zoned by the village.

Fackler said the R&D regulations will not hurt plans for the Ceramic Corridor, a multi-million dollar joint venture between AU and Corning Glass Works which would establish a business "incubator" to bring ceramics-, glass-, and fiber optics-related businesses into the area.

Public demands for new zoning regulations erupted last spring, apparently after Gary Brown, owner of the Sigma Alpha Mu fraternity house on Elm Street, came to the Planning Board with a proposal to add to the house.

Schofield said the "plan to expand (SAM) may have triggered" residents' anger.

Although Brown later decided to build apartments on the land instead, emotions have continued to run high.

According to the Alfred Sun, at an "Alfred 2000" forum conducted May 16 Dr. Warren Bouck charged the downtown area is "being transformed into a Fraternity Row" and suggested businesses might be forced to locate outside the village in the future.

At a June 23 meeting of the Alfred 21st Century Group, residents named as a concern "the student takeover of downtown," said Peg Prisco, chairwoman of the Planning Board.

And Ken Snyder, Alfred Town Councilman said, "Alfred used to influence the students ... Now that's all turned around - they influence us. We change our lifestyle to suit them."

Some residents have defended students. In a May 25 letter to the Alfred Sun, the Rev. and Mrs. Glenn Bucher of North Main Street pointed out that faculty members, graduate and undergraduate students have been supportive of the community economically and socially.

Hall said the sentiments expressed this summer by residents are not anti-student.

"Students are an integral part of the community. The concern is for a few fraternities that have not been good citizens."

Schofield said the Planning Board has not directly approached fraternities with its complaints.

"We've tried to go through the schools to organize meetings with them, to let them know our feelings, but I don't think that's been very effective."

Dean Birriptella, president of Gamma Theta Gamma at 52 N. Main St., said nobody in village government has approached him, but he is aware of the controversy.

"We're part of the village too. We'd be more than happy to work something out with them. ... We don't like looking bad, you know."