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St. Charles Herald-GUIDE

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Diamond residents challenge Shell

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Staff writer

The Concerned Citizens of Norco have organized a debate with members of Shell Chemical Company on Wednesday night to discuss the plant's relocation policy.

The meeting will take place at 7 p.m. at the Masonic Lodge, 18 Washington St., Norco.

Although the group attended an Norco/New Sarpy Community-Industry Panel discussion with

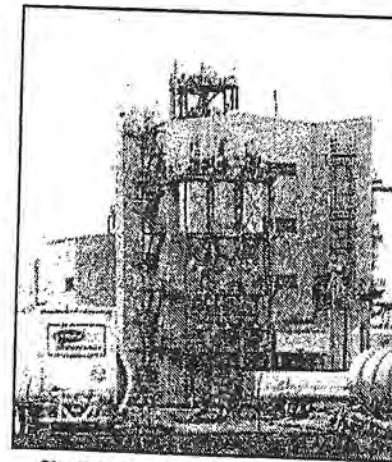
Shell in early October, residents said that because of the panel's limited structure, not all of their concerns were raised.

"The last situation was supposed to be a conversation, but it consisted of Shell presenting its program with no chance for citizens to speak except during the last few minutes of the meeting," said Anne Rolfes, director of the Louisiana Bucket Brigade. Rolfes attended the industry panel discussion and will also be present on Wednesday night.

"The debate will give residents the opportunity to articulate their vision," Rolfes said. "It will be the conversation that was originally planned."

On Oct. 3, a letter was sent by Shell to members of the Diamond Plantation community proposing a fair-market purchase of homes and vacant lots, with an additional 30 percent bonus, as well as a \$5,000 moving expense.

The proposal is part of Shell's "Good Neighbor Initiative," a



Shell Chemical Plant in Norco

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Residents

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multi-million-dollar plan in conjunction with Motiva Enterprises, LLC to improve the physical and community environment of the plants and the surrounding area.

Included in the initiative is the development of a "greenbelt" system, which would develop park-like areas along the Shell and Motiva fence lines. The purchase of remaining lots and properties in the Diamond community would expedite this process.

The Voluntary Fence line Purchase Program includes prop-

erties on Cathy, Norco and Washington Streets, and portions of Good Hope Street.

According to Shell, the minimum to be paid for a residential lot is \$50,000; \$25,000 would be

tary for Concerned Citizens of Norco, lives on Diamond Street. Her property does not fall within Shell's buyout plan and she wonders why.

"I can walk from the back of my house to Cathy Street, where I was raised," Gaynel said. "I don't see why Diamond is not part of this."

Gaynel, among other residents, is concerned that only part of the Diamond community is included in Shell's plans.

Margie Richard, president of Concerned Citizens of Norco, said that it was "very hard to see them [residents of Diamond Street] be in the struggle for so long and not

be included in the buy-all."

Richard said, however, that she was "not displeased" with the plan. "We all deserve cleaner air and better health care. It's a God-given principle."

Richard, Johnson and Norco Concerned Citizen Bessie Smith will be the main presenters at Wednesday night's debate. Timmons Roberts, a professor of sociology at Tulane University, will also speak.

"This is not mud-slinging or a grudge," Richard said of the debate. "This is about bringing community people, industrial facilities and government together, based on the principle that all men are created equal. It's a humanitarian thing, not a political issue."

As of Thursday, no comment was available from Shell.

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paid for a vacant lot.

The deadline for the offer is Dec. 31, 2001.

Gaynel Johnson, financial secre-