

# RIVER PARISHES

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AND THE METRO AREA

## Shell turns down debate on buyout

*Firm says forum  
could be divisive*

By Mary Swerczek  
River Parishes bureau

Shell Chemical officials have turned down a request to debate some of their Norco neighbors on the company's offer to buy out the people living on the St. Charles Parish plant's fence line.

Diamond residents delivered the debate notice by letter last

week and put it in a newspaper advertisement.

"Time to come out of your Shell for a good old-fashioned debate on the issues," the advertisement said.

They hoped to debate Shell's voluntary buyout plan with three Shell employees: plant

manager Wayne Pearce, manager David Brignac and external relations manager Don Baker.

Shell officials declined to debate because they have been meeting with residents individu-

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# Residents say Shell offer is too low

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ally about the program and answering questions, according to a news release.

"A debate by its very nature is confrontational and negative, and has the potential to be divisive," the release says.

But Diamond resident Margie Richard, president of Concerned Citizens of Norco, said the debate would have given residents a chance to clear up confusion about the program.

Shell and Norco's Motiva Refinery announced their plan in September to buy out property owners along the two streets bordering the chemical plant and the two streets next to the refinery.

The companies plan to create a "green belt" with landscaping, recreational parks and walking trails in the area vacated by residents.

As part of the plan, called the "good neighbor initiative," Shell and Motiva pledged to invest \$1 million over five years into a Norco community trust.

Diamond residents have criticized Shell's plan, saying the offers are paltry and won't be enough to let residents relocate.

Shell officials have responded that the plan offers a minimum of \$50,000 for a house or trailer and \$25,000 for a vacant lot, and would let residents move somewhere else in the parish.

Some Diamond residents also have said that Shell would divide the Diamond community if it buys only two of the four streets in the neighborhood.

But Shell officials say the buyout plan is essentially a continuation of their 30-year-old policy of buying property on the two streets surrounding each plant.



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