

## **BOC tables vote on river development**

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MARIETTA - Cobb Commissioners agreed Tuesday to hold off on voting for a \$300 mixed-used development along the banks of the Chattahoochee River after hearing concerns from nearby property and business owners.

The attorney representing the developers wants commissioners to rezone 81 acres west of the river near Interstate 285 from heavy industrial to planned village community -allowing for the construction of 155 single-family homes, 332 town homes, 165 condos, 200 senior units, 850 apartment units, and potential retail, restaurant and other commercial space. Garvis Sams of the Marietta law firm Sams, Larkin & Huff said the development would span 1,800 feet along the Chattahoochee riverbank. He said buildings would be at least 150 feet from the river and 37 percent of the development would be dedicated to greenspace. He acknowledged that portions of Riverview Road have flooded in the past, but said no buildings would be built within the floodplain.

Sams said developers are looking at a seven- to 10-year build out, with most of the apartments and some retail components closest to the river proposed in the first phase. The development complies with the county's Riverline Master Plan zoning map approved by the county last year, and has also been given the OK from the ARC and the Georgia Regional Transportation Authority.

However, many attended Tuesday morning's meeting in strong opposition to the development, fearing it would create more traffic in the heavily traveled area and drive out long-term industrial companies.

Karen Barton, president of the Chattahoochee Business and Industrial Association and owner of nearby Phoenix Crane, said she would move her business out of the county if the development is approved as is and has the anticipated impact on businesses.

She argued that many of the surrounding businesses operate oversized transfer trucks through the area 24 hours a day - including right through the middle of what the developers are proposing as the town center area. Barton said that if the development were to be approved, the heavy industrial companies sitting as close as 40 feet from residential homes in some areas, would eventually find it unreasonable to operate their businesses in an unwanted climate with difficult traffic and would move out of Cobb County.

"We generate millions in taxes and provide valuable, above average paying jobs for thousands of employees, the majority of whom are Cobb residents," Barton said. "We moved our businesses to this Riverview area many, many years ago because it was close to the interstate, because it was heavy industrial, because we didn't have to clean up our act to do our business, which is often ugly and dirty...Should this plan go through, as proposed, and our businesses become impacted like we feel that they will be, we will move out of Cobb County. Every one of the businesses that is in my association has already assured the rest of us that, when we get impacted to the point where we can no longer do our business, we will not stay in Cobb County. And that's going to be a big loss to the county. And everybody has to understand that."

Nonetheless, Commissioner Woody Thompson made a motion to approve the development, which was seconded by Chairman Tim Lee. But at the urging of Commissioners Helen Goreham and Bob Ott, who said important questions have to be addressed, the board voted 5-0 to hold the proposal until next month's meeting. The case was previously continued in October after several nearby business owners and community activists raised concerns.

Goreham said she was shocked that there would be a motion to approve the request before all questions had been answered.

"We have two very important issues to look at. I know economic redevelopment is high up there, but also, we have a responsibility as a board to nurture business in this climate, to see that business does not leave our area and ensure that we have job opportunities for the populace," Goreham said.

Ott echoed Goreham's thoughts.

"Representing the area basically right adjoining this, and having dealt with the interactions and the mixing of heavy industrial uses along with residential, it's a major issue," he said. "And even in the past, when this board has dealt with buffering, we've had some areas where we've had 100 and 500-foot buffers with residential and industrial and it hasn't worked. We've had to redirect waste hauling trucks from the transfer station at Plant Atkinson so that they don't interfere with residential property, because it's built on an industrial road or an industrial area."

He also said several road and area improvements have been recommended by the other boards, such as GRTA, for the development to thrive, but no documents state whether the county or the developer will be responsible for making those improvements.

Thompson, however, was willing to give even more leeway to the developers than the planning commission recommended - including raising the limit of apartments before further buildout from the suggested 300 to 450 and the time limit to start development or lose zoning from two years to three years.

After the meeting, Barton said she was astonished that Thompson was so eager to approve the project without first hearing concerns from other commissioners.

"I was extremely surprised when Woody Thompson asked for a vote right away, and extremely pleased that Commissioners Ott and Goreham questioned it further and listened to us," Barton said. "It does require more review, but I think we can compromise. I don't think it will do as well as they think it will because it is land-locked right in a very heavy industrial area ... It's a great project, it's just not good for this area - and it floods. That's been proven."

The developers are Green Street Properties, Marthasville Development and Jamestown Properties. Riverview Industries L.P. is the owner of the property.

Jamestown Properties has an \$8 billion portfolio, Sams said, and developed the mixed-use Glenwood Park in Atlanta, which rests near I-20 and heavy industrial uses. Green Street Properties, a subsidiary of Jamestown, also developed the massive Chelsea Market in New York City, a 1.2-million-square-foot mixed-use development that houses Google, The Food Network, Oxygen Media, Time Warner, EMI Music Publishing and Major League Baseball.

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