

## **\$300M multi-use project receives recommendation**

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MARIETTA - After an almost three-year battle, the Cobb County Planning and Zoning Commission voted 5-0 Tuesday to recommend approval of a \$300 million multi-use development on 81 acres along the Chattahoochee River.

Some, however, remain opposed to the proposal, as it is in the county's 100-year flood plain and much of the development - including one portion that is proposed as residential - will be just feet away from heavy industrial businesses.

The Board of Commissioners is expected to make a final decision on the development at its 9 a.m. zoning meeting on Feb. 15, at the commission meeting room on the Marietta Square.

Garvis Sams of the Marietta law firm Sams, Larkin & Huff represented the development team of Green Street Properties, Marthasville Development and Jamestown Properties, along with Riverview Industries L.P., the owner of the property. Sams is asking that the 81.25 acres just west of the Chattahoochee River near I-285 and River View Road be rezoned from heavy industrial to Planned Village Community. The case was previously continued in October after several nearby business owners and community activists raised concerns.

Sams said the development spans 1,800 feet along the Chattahoochee riverbank. Buildings would be at least 150 feet from the river, he said, and the development would include 155 single-family homes, 332 town homes, 165 condos, 200 senior units, 850 apartment units, and potential retail, restaurant and other commercial space. Sams said 37 percent of the development would be dedicated greenspace.

Jamestown Properties alone 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. He noted how it won the 2005 Development of Excellence Award from the Atlanta Regional Commission. 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, TimeWarner, EMI Music Publishing and Major League Baseball.

Sams said the group is 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.

The groups are working with the county to get a federal grant that would help fund the cleanup of the riverbank, which Sams said is riddled with excess mud, trash and waste. The property is in the 100-year floodplain map. But Sams and Planning Commission Chairman Murray Homan said that map could change after the cleanup, and that the lowest floors would be elevated three feet above the floodplain. And with new fill coming in, Sams said the area would likely be taken off of the floodplain map.

But in an e-mail sent to the Journal Tuesday, Roberta Cook, who lives in Grayson Pointe, two blocks from the proposed development site, argued that will not be enough.

"The developer claims they will not be building in the flood plain because they will fill it with soil and set the buildings above flood plain level; however, this practice does not stop flood water from surrounding the buildings. Currently, the land within the 100-year flood plain is vacant, minimizing flood consequences, so why do we want to jeopardize it with new buildings, property and people? How sustainable is this to our community? Flood plain elevations increase over time, which we have experienced first hand in Cobb County. Unless these buildings are fitted with flotation devices, they won't be able to adjust to future higher flood levels," Cook wrote.

Planning Commission member Bob Hovey also argued that some of the nearby roads would have to be elevated to avoid flooding. If not, he said everyone in the development would essentially be landlocked and no emergency vehicles could get in. Sams said the group would agree to help fund a transportation project to raise the road, Dickerson Drive, should the project ever be needed.

And while Sams argued that most of the traffic from the development would likely go to Veterans Memorial Highway, Karen Barton, President of the Chattahoochee Business and Industrial Association and owner of Phoenix Crane near the development property, said most of the traffic would actually be dumped onto Cobb Drive. The estimated 9,000 cars from the development would create a traffic nightmare in an area that is already considered heavily congested, Barton said.

In addition, Barton, who was one of 20 residents opposing the project at Tuesday's meeting, wanted to be sure the development groups placed a notice to potential residents and business owners prior to occupation that the development is near industrial uses that would sometimes be loud and smelly.

"Like so many other industries, we have been there for generations. We aren't leaving. We aren't a transitional area, and we know if this is approved, we will have to coexist with each other," Barton said. "Major industrial users will come right through the town center of this development with trucks that operate 24 hours a day."

Barton suggested larger buffers be placed to separate the development from the industrial sites, and for the developers to work with her group to come up with adequate language to place on marketing materials for the site. Sams agreed.

The commission gave the developers two years to begin work on the development; otherwise, any approved zoning changes would be lost. Homan also entered a stipulation that the groups can only build up to 300 apartments before having to develop 10 acres of another component, such as homes that would be for sale only or commercial properties.

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