



Going vertical

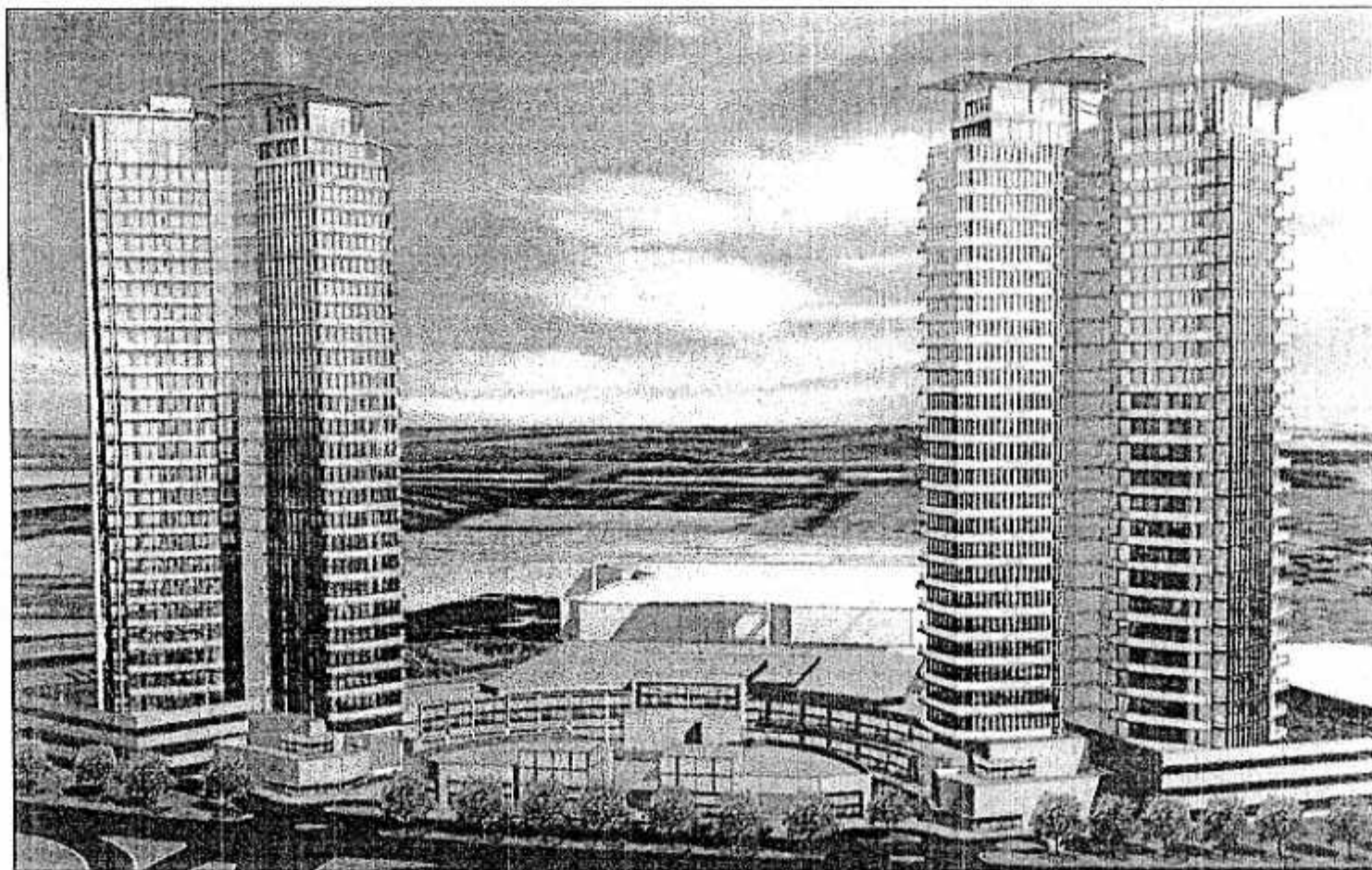
The Grand at Gwinnett joins list of high-rise condo towers in the wings

by Christopher Lanceitis

As they count the days until plans for The Grand at Gwinnett high-rise towers make the county planning commission agenda in mid-January, supporters of developer George Thorndyke's project can't stop talking about the future.

"This type of development is the future of Gwinnett Place," Gwinnett Place CID Executive Director Joe Allen says of the two 25-story high-rise condominiums and 40,000 square feet of retail space that would rise from what is now the parking lot of the old Macy's building at Gwinnett Place Mall. "This project represents a new way of doing things in Gwinnett County."

The latest rendition of that new wave of residential and retail vision is Thorndyke's \$120 million development that would include 312 condos ranging in price from \$350,000 to \$3 million. According to Thorndyke and partner Adrian Cotasaenz, the project by Madison Walk would create thousands of jobs and generate more than



The Grand at Gwinnett is a \$120 million project that would rise from what is now a Gwinnett Place Mall parking lot. It is expected to be completed in 2008.

residents access to Atlanta-quality upscale shopping and to the county's transit system. Construction would break ground approximately six months after approval by the planning commission and board of commissioners – and be complete approximately 18 months later.

"If you look at this parking lot right now, it doesn't have nearly the number of people that it should," Cotasaenz says of the Gwinnett Place Mall site. He hopes The Grand at Gwinnett will flood the mall with more shoppers when people begin moving into the new condominiums. "This is a fantastic location close to I-85. Our project has the potential to generate revenues, enhance the tax base for the county, and has the potential to be able to create a new environment that will put us into the future. That potential is sitting here."

Allen and others see the latest live-workshop proposal as a boon for the county as a whole and the Gwinnett Place area in particular.

"We welcome what George Thorndyke and others are trying to do to keep Gwinnett Place strong," Allen says.

So does Gwinnett Chamber of Commerce Economic Development Director Scott Morris.

"This kind of project goes back to Partnership Gwinnett in terms of community feedback that said we have to begin to go vertical on residential and office complexes," he says, referring to a chamber initiative currently in the process of

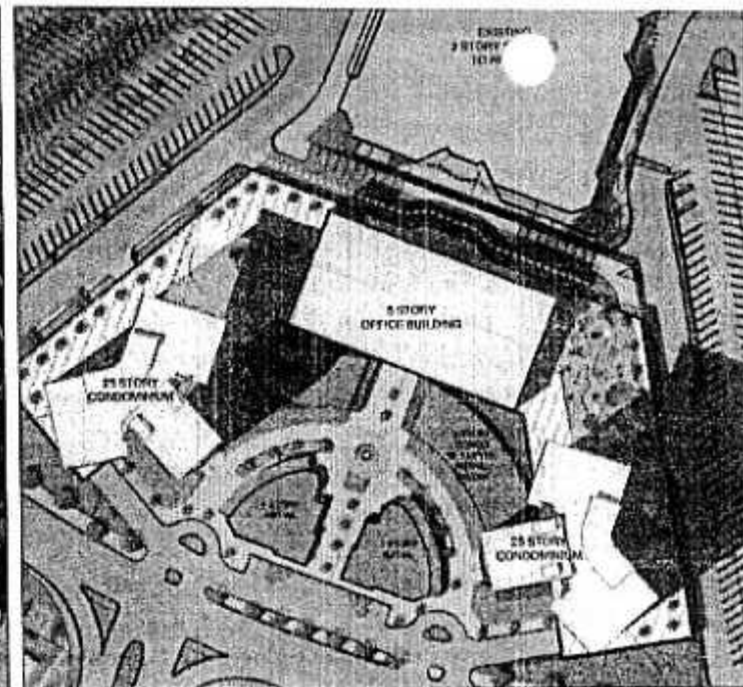


(L-R) Architect Lindell Sherrill, developers George Thorndyke and Adrian Cotasaenz all hope for a "yes" vote from the county.

developing a strategic growth plan for the county. "We've got to go vertical to keep up with the competition to attract jobs, young professionals and empty nesters."

Two other vertical projects on the drawing board are:

La Belle Verde. Headed by the Yamasaki company, the project on Steve Reynolds Boulevard in Duluth is set to break ground in a few months. It will include twin high-rise towers with 263 condominiums, a landscaped rooftop garden, and a retail complex with fine dining and a grocery center.



The development would be home to 312 condominiums.


Global Station. Gwinnett real estate developer Wayne Mason is working to bring a mixed-use development "mini-city" to 42 acres along the Gwinnett Place Mall area. The Gwinnett Prado and Gwinnett Station retail centers will be transformed into a live-work-play area of high-rises with residential, restaurant, entertainment and retail space. The tentative concept rendering of the \$600 million development includes 10 high-rise towers and a fountain. Mason expects to file rezoning requests some time during the first quarter of 2007.

For his part, Thorndyke likes the reac-

tion he has seen to The Grand at Gwinnett

"All the responses so far have been great," he says. "No one is saying don't do it."

Looking toward the future, architect Lindell Sherrill of Wakefield Beasley & Associates in Norcross can't wait to see his building take shape.

"This is an opportunity to begin a transformation that brings Gwinnett Place to the 21st century," he says. "This project is going to be a beacon of modernity to Gwinnett." 

Jill Von Wedel contributed to this report.