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Commissioners deny townhomes

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LAWRENCEVILLE - Commissioners changed conditions on a property north of Lawrenceville to help sell homes in a vacant development, but they stopped short of allowing townhomes.

The Gwinnett County Board of Commissioners voted unanimously Tuesday to deny the rezoning of property near the intersection of Ga. Highway 20 and Old Peachtree Road.

The proposed rezoning would have allowed the construction of 163 townhomes in the 25.38-acre, single-family residential district, located in the 1200 blocks of Old Peachtree Road and Mill Shyre Way.

The planning department and planning commission both recommended denial. Commissioners denied townhomes there in 2005 and 2007.

The townhomes were denied again, but officials allowed smaller homes to be built.

District 4 Commissioner Kevin Kenerly made the motion, saying the state of the economy is no one's fault but that something needs to be done.

"Leaving these subdivisions the way they are is what keeps your property values down," Kenerly said. "... better something is built here than left vacant."

Representing the applicant - T&B LLC - attorney Michael Sullivan said rezoning the property would be the catalyst for change and an exciting lifestyle and that the townhomes would attract young professionals as residents.

With other townhome developments where people expressed concern, he said, the "nightmares didn't come to pass ... the sky didn't fall."

Sullivan said builders won't buy the lots because they don't think people will buy the single-family homes.

Homeowner Robert Murrah spoke in opposition, saying high-density housing is inappropriate there and that the county's land use plan doesn't support it.

Allowing townhomes on the property - which has been cleared and infrastructure developed - isn't going to end the recession, he said.

"Nothing's selling here; nothing's selling anywhere," Murrah said.

In other business, public hearings were held regarding the proposed adoption of tax allocation districts in the communities of Jimmy Carter Boulevard, Indian Trail, Park Place, Lake Lucerne and Gwinnett Place.

Ken Bleakly of Bleakly Advisory Group said taxes will continue to flow to the county and school board.

"There will be no change to existing property owners," he said. "They won't even know they're in a TAD."

Another hearing on the districts will be held before a decision is made in October.