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FEATURED

BOC greenlights Venture Drive redevelopment district

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Gwinnett County commissioners approved the long-delayed Venture Drive Redevelopment Overlay District on Tuesday, a move that will spur redevelopment in a commercial area that officials said has been under-performing for years. (File Photo)

After months of delays and revisions, Gwinnett County commissioners approved new guidelines designed to encourage redevelopment of the Venture Drive corridor near Gwinnett Place Mall on Tuesday.

The commission unanimously approved the new Venture Drive Redevelopment Overlay District, which encompasses an area nestled among Interstate 85, Pleasant Hill Road and Steve Reynolds and Satellite Boulevards. Mixed uses such as residential, retail and office space would all be on the table for the district with no height limit on buildings.

“This is an area of commercial development that has been underperforming for many years,” county Planning Manager Jerry Oberholtzer said. “The purpose of this overlay district is to act as a catalyst for redevelopment.”

County officials are keen on the idea of setting up the Venture Drive area for redevelopment, but the plans have been back and forth between the Board of Commissioners and the Planning Commission since April.

The original proposal for the district was approved by the Planning Commission in April, but the Board of Commissioners tabled it for months while outside consultants rewrote the entire proposal. The revised ordinance was sent back to the Planning Commission, who approved it earlier this month.

Commissioner Jace Brooks, who represents the area, said the goal of the overlay district was to remove obstacles that might have prevented redevelopment from taking place. He said he hopes the district’s creation will lead to some creative developments going into that area.

“I’m very excited about it,” he said. “There was a lot of input into it from business owners, the (Gwinnett Place Community Improvement District), builders and developers, from staff, our consultant and I think we have an excellent product now and I look forward to hearing some proposals.”

Developments would include 10-foot-wide sidewalks, and developers can obtain a special administrative permit for new construction or renovation of more than 60 percent of principal structures. "Blocks" were added in the revised ordinance as a way to require connectivity.



Developments must also meet a requirement of at least 20 percent of the property devoted to open space.

The ordinance was amended to remove a maximum height requirement of 225 feet for any building erected in the district.

"Talking to the consultant, he had no issue with us removing it and letting the market dictate what goes in there," Brooks said. "I don't anticipate a mad rush of 20- to 30-story buildings, but we're open to whatever the market wants to suggest."

The overlay district is located within the Gwinnett Place CID, and its officials have been eagerly waiting for months to see whether it would be approved. The CID's director of operations, Glenn Wisdom, was the only person who addressed commissioners during the public hearing on the matter Tuesday night.

"We're looking forward to the opportunity of having this in place and seeing what will happen with it," Wisdom said. "We hope something positive, something great, will happen."