

## 'High-rises are in the future of Gwinnett Place'

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LAWRENCEVILLE — High-rises will come to Gwinnett Place Mall whether or not a proposal that was denied by planning commissioners Tuesday meets the Board of Commissioners' muster this week, a revitalization leader said. "High-rises are in the future of Gwinnett Place," said Joe Allen, the executive director of the mall-area Community Improvement District. "They're still in the plans for the Gwinnett Place area."

Last Tuesday, planning commissioners declined to table The Grand at Gwinnett for the fourth time, saying instead that they were tired of waiting for more information about the project.

County Commissioner Lorraine Green said the high-rise in the former Macy's parking lot at Gwinnett Place Mall was on the board's agenda for Tuesday's session, and she expected it to go forward. At 4 p.m. Friday, she said she had still not heard from the applicant.

"It was April 2005 that they announced the project for the first time, and here we are in January 2007 and there are still a lot of questions," Green said. "We met with the applicant's representatives in early October, but we have yet to receive answers to our questions at this time."

Attorney Michael Sullivan said a plan book that was finally completed on Monday did not get to planning commissioners before their Tuesday meeting, but that if they had wanted time to review the details, the planning commissioners could have tabled the rezoning request further.

Allen, with the CID, said he was excited about the proposals that were submitted, but would have liked more information as well.

"I'd like to know everything, from the color of the carpet to the paint that's going down," he said. "Like everything, I would like to see more information."

Allen described developer George Thorndyke as a visionary, saying he had first brought up the idea of building high-rises in the area.

Thorndyke unveiled his plans for the pair of 25-foot residential towers in early December, a day after the project was tabled by planning commissioners for the third time. Then, he said he expected the project to infuse new life into the area.

Sullivan said regardless of the result of Tuesday's rezoning, Thorndyke, who owns the land at the mall, will have to do something with his investment. Allen said he doesn't think a rejection of this high-rise will hinder other developers from trying their hand at similar projects in the area. Another project, known as Global Station on 42.5 acres bounded by Pleasant Hill Road, Old Norcross Road and Satellite Boulevard, is undergoing a Development of Regional Impact study and one high-rise called La Belle Verde has already been approved by commissioners and is due to break ground this spring.

"It's still virgin territory for high-rise development," Allen said. "Some of them will be accepted, and some will not be."