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## Commission authorizes high-rises

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LAWRENCEVILLE — Gwinnett will grow up, literally.

Commissioners on Tuesday approved the first high-rises in the suburban Atlanta county. With the decision, officials are hoping two 25-story towers on Steve Reynolds Boulevard are the spark needed to help revive the aging Gwinnett Place Mall area.

"Just as Gwinnett Place changed forever the farming community on Pleasant Hill Road 30 years ago, the development that Yamasaki is bringing will completely transform the area again," said Joe Allen, the executive director of the Gwinnett Place Community Improvement District. "It will truly be another Buckhead, another Perimeter Center right here in the heart of Gwinnett."

Commissioner Lorraine Green, who represents the area, said she wasn't a fan of the high-rise ordinance when it was created last year, but she made the developers jump through a lot of hoops to make sure the project was a success.

She said the developers came up with "ingenious conditions" and the support of the community meant she couldn't vote no.

"I believe projects like this are key to the revitalization of this area," she said.

Green tacked conditions on to the project to limit the number of residential units to 263 and to balance the size of the units between small condos and larger ones.

She also stipulated that the development, which will also have some commercial/retail space have two access points — one on Steve Reynolds Boulevard and another from either Club Drive or Shackelford Road — and the developers must participate in road and sewage improvements in the area. The building must only take up 60 percent of the nearly 5-acre lot, a condition Green said would ensure a certain amount of greenspace on the site.

The developers also agreed to give \$60,000 to the CID for tree planting or parks development, and have to show evidence of a financing commitment and sale reservations of at least 40 percent of the units before development

permits are issued.

Attorney Lee Tucker, who represented Yamasaki in negotiations, said the county treated his clients fairly.

"I think Yamasaki's very excited and ready to move forward," he said.

"We've had great input from the community. It'll be a great asset to our community."

In the past several years, business owners have become active in trying to revive the mall area, an older section of the county where some storefronts have become dark.

But CID board president Mark Williams said he believes the high-rise project will help turn the situation around.

"This is tremendous for our area," he said. "This is going to stand out. This is the new Gwinnett coming."