

River Line Master Plan Public Meeting - September 14, 2009, 6pm

Questions & Answers

Q1: Mixed-use Overlay concept - Was the Mixed-use Overlay concept created to be adopted if the property owner chooses to use at his/her discretion?

A1: Yes, the overlay district would be available for property owners so they could develop as mixed-use if they met some predetermined criteria and benchmarks.

Q2: If property is assembled for mixed-use development, can I opt into the Mixed-use Overlay?

A2: Yes, but it is more of a choice than an opt-in policy. Mixed use can be used as long as a series of specified criteria are met. There would be no requirement for individuals to develop or not to develop as mixed-use. It will be a choice of individual property owners.

Q3: Buffers – who is providing buffers between industrial & non-industrial properties?

A3: Buffers are placed on individual properties by the property owner, as the person who is redeveloping.

Q4: If I am an industrial user and sell to another industrial business, do I have to install a buffer?

A4: No, the buffer would only be required if you were developing in a non-industrial manner within this industrial district.

Q5: Won't this master plan create spot zoning?

A5: No, because this is a comprehensive planning effort that helps to ensure that a development occurs in a way that is consistent with a specified vision for the community, as developed with participation from the community.

Q6: Buffers – How would the mixed-use buffer get introduced on a property?

A6: The mixed-use buffer would be requested during the rezoning process; government will not arbitrarily mandate that you change your buffer status. There would need to be a triggering mechanism, which, in this case, would be a rezoning.

Q7: Mixed-use overlay - is that an opportunity to define buffers as the group needs it?

A7: The River Line Master Plan is the vehicle that says this is a policy that is needed to protect industrial property owner investments. As we generate the specific language for the Mixed-use overlay concept, we would establish and set the specific criteria that would need to be met by the development community.

Q8: How is the overlay policy written and who administers it?

A8: It will be decided through a public process and would go through the normal comprehensive plan change process. It would be administered by Community Development as properties come in for rezoning.

Q9: So defined buffers are decided after the plan is approved?

A9: The master plan is a concept document, not a detailed urban design manual. The buffer details will be established through a public process.

Q10: By not specifying the specific design guidelines will this be a hindrance to development?

A10: Not specifying guidelines will provide Cobb County and the

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community the opportunity to look at criteria that is already established within our code to ensure that the protections that are being offered industrial property owners as in-line with other requirements within the Cobb County code. This will be necessary so that we are not being arbitrary in developing the standards, thus opening up ourselves to potential legal action.

Q11: Will the Mixed-use Overlay look at streetscape standards or will that be done in the Veterans Memorial Livable Centers Initiative (LCI) process?

A11: It will be addressed in the LCI process.

Q12: Would it make sense to wait for the LCI to be completed before any changes to the Comprehensive Plan are made?

A12: No, if we don't move forward and a rezoning proposal is submitted, we will not have the necessary benchmarks and policies in place to protect the existing industrial property owners that want to continue to exist and prosper in this area.

Q13: I don't see how the Mixed-use Overlay would protect an area?

A13: Doing nothing is the least amount of protection that you have available. You can see from the numerous residential incursions that have occurred in this area, thus, creating land use conflicts. By establishing the overlay criteria, we will be able to make sure that land use change occurs in a manner that will not put existing businesses at risk from complaints. This can be done by requiring that developers in this area establish protections that can buffer these new uses from the businesses that

want to stay and prosper in this section of the county.

Q14: Is there a percentage of the amount of heavy industrial property in Cobb that the County will protect?

A14: No, property owners have the right to request rezoning on their property.

Q15: Timeline on when master plan will be finished? When will the Veterans Memorial LCI process begin/end?

A15: The completion of the master plan is up to the Planning Commission and Board of Commissioners. The public hearing dates are October 6, 2009, and October 27, 2009, respectively. The exact schedule for the LCI process has not been set but we estimate that it will begin within the next couple of months.

Q16: What is current plan for Oakdale Road regarding truck use/traffic?

A16: *Oakdale Road is not restricted to commercial trucks. It is not on the Georgia State Highway System, National Network of Truck Routes (federally designated), nor is it designated as a Surface Transportation Assistance Act (STAA) Access Route. As of 2006, Oakdale Road had less than 4% of its traffic comprised of commercial trucks. However, based on an analysis conducted as part of the Cobb CTP, Oakdale is recommended for designation as a truck route. This recommendation was based on a mapping exercise that involved depicting location of commercial and industrial land uses, the County's 2006 MTP, the Georgia State Highway System, ARC's RSTS, and intermodal facilities (i.e. Norfolk Southern's Whitaker Terminal).

(*Note: All information included in

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this response was derived from the Cobb CTP)

Q17: What are the incentives for industrial owners to aid in property beautification?

A17: This will need to be explored further. The Master Plan provides this as an idea for further investigation and the county would be responsible for determining the exact way that it would be implemented. Possible tools are tax allocation districts (TADs), Opportunity Zones, or developed through a streetscaping program.

Q18: Earlier in this process, a sanitation plant was proposed for the area. What is the status on that?

A18: This was a petition for a Special Land Use Permit and was for a waste transfer station/recycling center. It was denied by the Board of Commissioners.

Q19: Is there a truck weight limit of Riverview Road because it is not listed as a state truck route?

A19: Weight restrictions and the associated regulatory postings are used for bridges. Since Riverview Rd. does not have any weight restricted bridges weight restricted signs are not installed.

Q20: I am new to Cobb County, what is the purpose of this master plan?

A20: It is to set policy for the future of this area by ensuring coexistence between the existing industrial property owners and new residents/businesses in the area. It is also intended to protect valuable historic resources, expand recreational opportunities, and allow the community to be reconnected to the Chattahoochee River.

Q21: In order to make Riverview Road safer, it needs to be restriped? Requests have been made to Cobb County to address this issue.

A21: This will be reviewed again to determine if further changes can be completed.

Comment 1: Change is inevitable. Cobb County staff & consultant team have done a good job listening to the community.

Comment 2: Cobb County should state that they are interested in industrial property for tax purposes. If this area transitions to another use, residential property taxes will increase.

Citizen Q1: What's wrong with putting the trails along the river?

Citizen A1: It would go through industrial property, and due to the nature of the businesses, the area is noisy, dusty, and unsafe for pedestrians/trail users.

Cobb County Answer: An easement would be needed or property would need to be purchased from the property owner. The county would not be interested in developing a river trail in an area that would be unsafe for the users of the trail. So the trail would need to be designed in a way that provides river front access while also respecting existing businesses and making sure we are not putting the public at risk due to their on-going operations.

Q22: Concern about village area – there are already plenty of empty shopping centers, trees being torn down for development that is not selling, and plenty of live/play communities built. Why are we building more?

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A22: People are looking for different types of communities to live in: pedestrian friendly neighborhoods, those with micro-urban qualities, and areas with a distinct sense of place. There is a new national trend among younger and older consumers for villages and town centers. There will always be a segment of the market that wants a traditional suburban neighborhood, but there are also people that want to live in a different type of environment. Studies have shown that the two largest segments of the home buying market (young adult and older adult populations) are leading this change with their housing choices. Also, macroeconomic concerns have taken a tremendous toll on the market, including mixed-use center, strip development, residential subdivisions, and even industrial area expansions.