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RESIDENTS, DEVELOPERS, OFFICIALS GET A LOOK AT INNSBROOK PLANS

BY LUZ LAZO - PUBLISHED: MAY 5, 2010

Victoria L. Allen likes the idea of changing the Innsbrook area to keep it as a strong economic generator in western Henrico County.

But Allen, an attorney who lives at the Village at Innsbrook, also has some concerns with a plan that looks at turning the Innsbrook Corporate Center and its vicinity into a small village.

"There has to be a lot of review of what a change of density will do to the area," she said yesterday during a community meeting where Henrico planning officials presented a land-use study of Innsbrook, the county's largest work district.

The study of the 1,185-acre area, including Innsbrook Corporate Center's 630 acres, supports creating a walkable community with a mixture of office, retail, entertainment and residential development.

The majority of the Innsbrook area is designated for office use under the 2026 Comprehensive Plan adopted in August. The study recommends changing the land-use designation to urban mixed-use.

Yesterday's meeting drew more than 70 people -- including residents, business owners, developers and public officials. Some had questions about the impact of additional housing and retail on county services and traffic.

Ben Sehl, with the Planning Department, assured residents that if the Board of Supervisors approves the urban mixed-use designation, the county still would need to assess the impact on traffic, county services and infrastructure for each development.

He said a recommended transportation system would address traffic concerns. The development, he said, is also not going to happen at once, but more as a long-term process.

Joan C. Sewell, a county resident who works in the commercial real estate industry, said the plan makes sense because of a national growing interest in walkable communities.

"People want to be where there is a lot of activity. A lot of people want that urban feel," she said.

The Planning Department, which conducted the study, welcomes public input. Plans are to hold public hearings and work sessions on the study that will go before the Planning Commission and then before the Board of Supervisors, tentatively by September, county officials said.

The board could then vote on the land-use designation change, and some developers say work could begin as early as next year.