

Richmond Times-Dispatch

HENRICO BOARD BACKS MIXED-USE IN INNSBROOK

BY LUZ LAZO - PUBLISHED: SEPTEMBER 15, 2010

Henrico, Va. -- Henrico County's largest work district is officially envisioned as a mixed-use community.

The Board of Supervisors voted yesterday to change the land-use designations of an area that contains 1,351 acres and 8.6 million square feet of office and commercial space to urban mixed-use and traditional neighborhood residential. The change affects the Innsbrook Corporate Center and areas generally bounded by West Broad Street, Interstate 64, Gaskins Road, and areas west of Sadler Road, east of Interstate 295 and south of Dublin road.

Elected county officials backed a plan to turn the Innsbrook area into a walkable community with a mixture of office, retail, entertainment and residential development. The area is primarily office space.

The change will be made in the county's 2026 Comprehensive Plan, which was approved a year ago.

The designation will serve as a guideline for development in the region, Planning Director R. Joseph Emerson Jr. said. He reiterated that it did not mean that Innsbrook will be turned into a village overnight.

The planning department recommended the land-designation change after conducting a land-use study of the Innsbrook Corporate Center and nearby areas.

"We are looking at 30 to 50 years in terms of total buildup of what could happen here," Emerson said.

"A land-use plan is a guide," he said, noting that developers would need to come forward with a rezoning application for any development and that each application will be looked at individually.

Some residents, however, asked the board to postpone the vote and said the plan does not address residents' concerns, including issues of traffic, safety and infrastructure that would arise with higher density in the area.

Mike Normansell of the Sadler Green Owners Association said the 188 homeowners represented by that group oppose the plan.

"We moved into this area because it does not resemble downtown. If we wanted to live downtown, we would have moved downtown," he said, adding that additional high density would only degrade the area.

But board members agreed with planning staff members that planning for the future of Innsbrook is important because it is a major economic engine in the county.

"This is a huge project and has a huge impact on the future of Henrico County," said Supervisor David A. Kaechele, whose Three Chopt District includes Innsbrook. He said the plan is necessary for the county to remain competitive.

Paul W. Kreckman, president of the Innsbrook Owners Association and vice president of Highwoods Properties, a major property owner in Innsbrook, said yesterday that there could be an additional investment of \$1 billion in office, residential and commercial development in the area.

Mixed-use development is not a new concept in Henrico. Such development in the county includes Rocketts Landing in eastern Henrico, as well as West Broad Village, just a couple of miles from Innsbrook, which offers urban living, shops and restaurants.