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Thursday, May 20, 2010 |

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## County approves North Woodbridge makeover



By Roger Snyder/For the News &amp; Messenger

Aerial image of the area in North Woodbridge approved for rezoning.

By [Cheryl Chumley](#)

Published: May 19, 2010

Updated: May 19, 2010

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WOODBIDGE, Va.—Six years of debate over the development plan for northern Woodbridge came to an end Tuesday, as Prince William supervisors finally approved language that establishes a business friendly environment and a preference for mixed-use projects.

“I think it’s the right vision, I think it’s the right plan, at the right location at the right time,” said Supervisor Frank Principi, D-Woodbridge, just prior to motioning to approve.

With a 6-1 vote – Supervisor Wally Covington, R-Brentsville, opposed and vice chair Michael May, R-Occoquan, abstained due to concerns over a conflict of interest with land ownership – the board agreed to a comprehensive plan amendment to the Potomac Communities Revitalization Plan “that sets the vision for the redevelopment of the North Woodbridge Urban Mixed Use area,” according to background documents on the issue.

The vote means the 160-acre area located north of Occoquan, south of the Occoquan River, west of U.S. 1 and east of Interstate 95 – known informally as the Route 1 Corridor—can potentially grow to include between 500,000 and 750,000 square feet of office space; 2,500 to 3,500 multifamily housing units; between 250,000 and 500,000 square

feet of retail; and up to 260 hotel rooms.

That area is now home to used car dealerships, rundown strip malls and boarded up buildings.

“I think we’ve come up with a good compromise here,” said Chairman Corey Stewart, R-at-Large, right before Principi made the motion to approve the plan. “There are challenges all along the Route 1 corridor all the way down to Florida” and now the biggest obstacle will be to bring all the affected property owners on board with the redevelopment vision.

“We have so many property owners there in north Woodbridge it’s going to take a tremendous amount of leadership ... to get them to come together for the common good.”

Future project developments will still have to go through the normal zoning change process. Supervisors amended only the plan Tuesday; they did not approve any actual construction project.

Both this board and the last had already discussed various versions of the proposal in previous meetings and during numerous public hearings, but could never arrive at a firm consensus. Even Tuesday’s vote on the latest revised text seemed – for a few tense minutes, anyway – on thin ice, after Supervisor Martin Nohe, R-Coles, brought forth a last-minute substitution.

In brief: Staff sent out a couple of revisions Tuesday that included language about phasing in the various development mixes – business, residential and infrastructure. Nohe saw that reference to “phasing” as incompatible with the Comprehensive Plan section that establishes Centers of Commerce, of which this 160-acre Woodbridge parcel is one.

“We’ve identified this area as a Center of Commerce in our comp plan,” Nohe said, “and specifically excluded the need for phasing plans.”

Nohe instead suggested changing the “phasing” language to “infrastructure implementation plan, ... so it’s more consistent with the Centers of Commerce,” he said.

Staff characterized Nohe’s suggestion as semantics and said such a language switch would not change the way the county evaluated future development plans. Still, Nohe sought a friendly amendment to the motion on the table brought by Principi, and was denied. The initial vote on the plan motioned by Principi ended with a 5-2 vote, with May abstaining and Covington and Nohe opposing.

Nohe then indicated he would like to change his vote, and the board voted 7-1 to reconsider the measure. That’s when the board ultimately approved the plan, 6-1, with May abstaining.

*Staff writer Cheryl Chumley can be reached at 703-530-3903.*

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