

City of Peachtree City
BRIEFING ON GA 54 WEST
Minutes of Meeting
January 25, 2006
8:00 a.m.

The City Council of Peachtree City met in a workshop session on Wednesday, January 25, 2006, at 8:10 a.m. Council Members attending were: Mayor Harold Logsdon, Steve Boone, Cyndi Plunkett, and Judi Rutherford. Staff members attending were: City Manager Bernard McMullen, Assistant City Manager Colin Halterman, and City Planner David Rast. Doug McMurrain, RAM Development Group and Capital City Development, also attended.

Rast gave an overview of what had been going on in the GA 54 West corridor and how it started. McMurrain discussed the current and future plans for the area. Rast continued that there had never been a master plan for the West Village, so there had been the potential for a hodge-podge of individual developments. McMurrain's company acquired the Huddleston property and brought in plans for Wal-Mart and Home Depot. Rast said there had been a lot of contention, but the project was good. The developers also made some road improvements that seemed to help the traffic problems at the time. McMurrain started acquiring outparcels on the north side of the highway. In the meantime, the Atlanta Regional Commission (ARC) started the Livable Centers Initiative (LCI) program. The City was one of the initial communities selected to receive funding from the LCI program to help develop a master plan for 54 West and the west side. A consultant was hired to work with an advisory group that came up with a plan for a mini-Buckhead. The plan was presented to Council, who did not like it. The consultants were dismissed, and the project was taken on at the staff level. Another advisory group formed and McMurrain and Jerry Peterson served as members. The group developed a vision for the corridor. A master plan was ultimately adopted and submitted to the ARC for approval.

Rast continued that the advisory group had looked at architectural controls and design standards for the area. Council provided funding for a consultant to help with the standards, and McMurrain's company paid 50% of the cost. The consultant and City staff worked with the main property owner and the advisory group with funding assistance from the City. The design guidelines and an overlay district for the 54 West corridor were adopted. The City had secured close to \$2 million in funding for projects in the corridor from the LCI construction program.

McMurrain said that Rast had given about two years of history. He said his partnership had agreed to delay their development to give the City time to go through the process. The delay was almost a year and a half. It was arduous, but the end product was very nice and they were very proud of it. McMurrain said leasing had been a little slow, but he was also ready to pull four permits. General contractors were bidding on four buildings, and one contractor would be chosen to complete the project on the north side. He showed the locations on the map.

McMurrain gave an overview of the master plan for the area. Office Depot and the San Francisco Bread Company would be coming on soon. The courtyard area would have a Caribou Coffee and Johnny's New York Style Pizza. AutoZone was coming. A discount tire store would go in the area originally reserved for a gas/convenience store. McMurrain added that the Wynnmeade residents had not been happy about a convenience store. Applebee's had killed the deal for the parcel they were interested in.

Plunkett asked about the frontage road that was in back of the commercial development. She said it was not very safe and was very crooked. Rast said the road had been designed to be crooked. He explained that there had been 15 curb cuts on GA 54 at one point. The City did not want that. The developer gave up his curb cuts. The plan for the access road was to have an alternative way to get to the businesses without getting back on GA 54. There was a concern if the road was straight, that people would go too fast. Plunkett said people just made the road straight. McMurrain said that once the development was completed, they would complete the frontage road and add tables instead of speed bumps for traffic calming. Rast continued that a lot of issues in the area would be resolved once the road widening was completed.

McMurrain said his company would complete their projects on the north side of the highway within 160 days, with the exception of a 20,000 square-foot building that would be built when he found a tenant.

Plunkett asked McMurrain if he had any property on the south side of the highway. On the south side of the highway, McMurrain said the Days Inn property and another tract were under contract with another developer. He said he had all the area under contract at one time and was prepared to bring in a plan, but was asked not to by a previous elected official. He respected those wishes.

McMurrain continued that he had asked for the meeting with Council. The City was tightening up its ordinances. He said he had enough history with the City that Council knew the end product would be something everyone would be proud of. He wanted to finish the project if the City wanted it finished in the manner proposed by the advisory committee and the overlay district. He did not want to fight. McMurrain said the south side of GA 54 could be put together as nicely as the north side of the road. There were tenants that wanted to be in the City. He was willing to commit the time and money and put forth a project the City would be proud of. If Council wanted to see something else there, then he would leave it alone.

Rutherford asked what the zoning was for the area. Rast said everything was General Commercial (GC), and that 54 West had always been zoned and land used commercial, including Planterra, Summit Apartments, and Cedarcroft. The Land Use Plan said that intensive retail should be in the GA 54 West corridor. There had been litigation in the 1990s that resulted in the Summit Apartments and Cedarcroft subdivision residential developments in the general commercial area. Cardiff Park was also rezoned from GC to Limited Use Residential (LUR), which assured to Planterra Ridge that there was a

transition between the commercial area and their subdivision. Rast said he met with the development group that had the Days Inn and Adamczyk tracts, and they were working on a site plan for an upscale retail development. Rast gave a brief overview of the tracts on the south side of the highway. The Adamczyk tract was approximately six acres. The Days Inn tract was three acres. Next to the Days Inn tract, there was the Oglethorpe transmission easement, a small City-owned tract, the one-acre Buckner tract, and a variety of tracts in the Line Creek commercial park. There were City-owned tracts on either side of the Planterra subdivision entrance. There were some tracts between Planterra and Huddleston Road that had been identified for re-development.

Logsdon asked if the area had been originally specified in the Land Use Plan for the type of development McMurrain was asking about. Rast said the end result of the overlay district and the LCI study was what McMurrain and his partners were doing on the north side of the highway. Rast continued that The Avenue had been very successful, and the intent had been to keep the same architectural style in the corridor. He said they also had not wanted to have huge parking lots in the front of the development along GA 54, so the buildings were pushed to the front. Rast said the four-sided front construction was more expensive for the developer. Ultimately, there would be a wide sidewalk between the buildings and the highway that would meander through the development, as well as landscaping. McMurrain said they had not been able to even put up their monument signs yet due to the DOT work. McMurrain thanked Rast for his efforts.

Plunkett asked McMurrain if he was asking for an exemption from the big box ordinance. McMurrain said he had a big box that wanted to there. Rast said the ordinance restricted single tenants to 32,000 square feet, or a combined development exceeding 150,000 square feet. The ordinance was not a blanket denial of big boxes, but required additional impact studies. If Council agreed with the study findings, then Council could grant a special use permit for the development.

McMurrain said he wanted to take Council's temperature. He was 160 days away from completing the first 50% and he did not want to spend hundreds of thousands of dollars for a project that absolutely would not happen. A theater was interested in the parcel. Rutherford told McMurrain she was glad he had come to discuss the matter with Council so Council could think about it. It was not useful for Council to get in the middle of an ongoing wrangle. McMurrain said it was an ongoing relationship that was not always perfect. He would like to finish the next phase if it was something Council would entertain. Logsdon said he liked the theater idea. Rutherford said she did not like the idea of a theaterplex, which was probably what they wanted to put there. Plunkett asked what would happen if a theater was approved, but the theater developer pulled out. Rast said there was a series of documents a developer would have to produce in order to build a single facility over 32,000 square feet, or a combined parcel of more than 150,000 square feet. If Council felt the project met the requirements for the special use permit, then Council could issue a permit for that site. If the developer wanted to change the project after the special use permit had been issued, Rast said the developer would have

to start all over again, according to the draft ordinance. McMullen said the special use permit was an approval for a specific use on a specific site. Rast said the special use permit was similar to a Limited Use Commercial (LUC) or LUR zoning. It was very specific and Council would adopt specific restrictions for the special use permit.

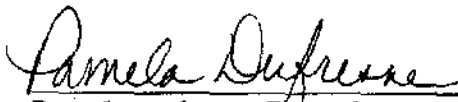
Rutherford told McMurrain Council could not answer whether or not they would make any exceptions at all at this time. McMurrain said he understood that, but asked if this Council was in favor of the vision for the corridor. McMullen asked Council if they wanted to see the south side of the highway develop or re-develop. Rutherford asked how much control Council would have. Plunkett said if she had a choice, she would choose greenspace, but there was no choice since there were individual property owners.

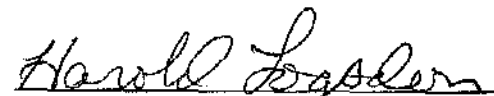
Logsdon asked McMurrain if he would be the sole developer for the corridor. McMurrain said there was a 15-acre tract on the south side that was available. Logsdon said he favored one developer as the best option, because that was how the City developed. There would be more control. If there were half-dozen developers, then the area would look like Riverdale. Rutherford noted the Lexington Circle LUC, compared to other areas such as The Avenue. She said it was a nightmare. All the projects had individual developers. The City was always better off if one developer shared the vision rather than teaming with 22 people with their version of the vision. Plunkett agreed that a unified front was much better. McMurrain said that was exactly what he wanted to know. He did not envision another Avenue going in on the south side, since that development was the right size in the right place. He said he did not build projects that went back to the lenders. The surrounding markets were growing. There was some softness in the market now that would take a while to absorb. Logsdon said anything on the corridor should have a good chance as Coweta County developed.

Boone asked what the objections were from Planterra Ridge. McMurrain said the Planterra Ridge Homeowners Association did not want the project period. The concerns were traffic, crime, and traffic cutting through the neighborhood.

McMullen noted that McMurrain had worked with staff and had been doing extra things to improve his projects. McMurrain said they had done hundreds of thousands of dollars worth of extra touches that had been a wise investment on their part.

There being no further business to discuss, the meeting adjourned at 9:00 a.m.


Pamela Dufresne, Recording Secretary


Harold Logsdon, Mayor