

Mixed use development at Ridge-Cherry intersection recommended for approval
written by Newspark Team | September 10, 2009



Rendering

William Taylor Plaza
Charlottesville, Virginia

Train & Partners
ARCHITECTS

Charlottesville currently has three historical markers recognizing William Taylor as one of the area's first colonial settlers dating back to 1737. If the Charlottesville Planning Commission's recommendation to approve a rezoning at Ridge Street and Cherry Avenue holds, Taylor will be honored at a fourth location by construction of Southern Development's proposed "William Taylor Plaza."

On Wednesday, the Commission held another public hearing on the project which would create up to fifty apartments or condominiums along Ridge Street and 100,000 square feet of commercial space along Cherry Avenue. While final approval will be up to City Council, the forested corner across from Tonsler Park has been on their agenda previously. In October 2008, City Council approved the sale of two parcels of city-owned land that are now incorporated into the development proposal.

Eight residents spoke at Wednesday's public hearing and seven of them voiced concerns about matters that included increased traffic, building heights, the protection of trees, and the potential to disturb a family graveyard. Charlottesville resident Antoinette Roades was among those telling the Commission she opposed the development.

"I oppose this massive project. It will literally crush my very old, very fragile neighborhood," said Roades. "But even if I thought this project was great, I would oppose your advancing it because of the overriding concern of Allen Woodson Hawkins' family graveyard."

Roades has collected evidence which she says proves the family graveyard will be impacted by the project. Charlie Armstrong, a Vice President of Southern Development, told the Commission that his company has had archeological experts look at the site, but so far no graveyard has been found. He pledged to excavate the site carefully and respect any evidence of human remains. The Planning Commission was told by Deputy City Attorney, Richard Harris, that even if the graveyard does exist, the matter was outside their purview with respect to the act of just rezoning the property.

"These lots can be built on right now by right," said Harris. "A rezoning will simply allow a different

type of development on that property.”

If approved by City Council, William Taylor Plaza would be a Planned Unit Development on 2.9 acres. The conceptual plan by local architect Kirk Train shows two-story residential buildings along Ridge Street and commercial buildings up to five stories in height along Cherry Avenue. At least twenty percent of the land will be undisturbed and include a public arboretum.

✖ Since the Commission’s review of the rezoning last month, Armstrong said he had responded to concerns about traffic, bicycle storage, and pedestrian safety. City staff said they were supportive of the rezoning. While Commissioners continued to express concerns about additional traffic in the neighborhood and pedestrian safety, City staff concluded that Armstrong had appropriately mitigated the impacts of his development.

Commissioner Jason Pearson said that traffic was an issue that the City already needed to address throughout the Cherry Avenue corridor as it seeks to promote mixed-use development.

“It is currently zoned to be much more intense in density than current construction would suggest. There will be a lot more cars on Cherry Avenue if that zoning envelope is truly built out,” said Pearson. “We would do well as a Commission to think more comprehensively than this single project.”

“We think it is a great project for the city,” said Charlie Armstrong after the commission’s 5-2 vote to recommend the rezoning. Commissioners Bill Emory and Genevieve Keller voted against the project. “We hope to start engineering as soon as rezoning is complete. It will be a year or two before any construction activity begins.”

City Planner Ebony Walden said she expects Charlottesville City Council to review the rezoning in October.

✖
Charlie Armstrong (left), VP Southern Development, addressing the Charlottesville Planning Commission