

County readies to send notifications to residents for central area rezoning

By Eric C. Deines

edeines@independenttribune.com

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CABARRUS - Landowners in the unincorporated part of the county included in a recent, major land-use plan can expect rezoning notifications from Cabarrus County. And judging from phone calls to the county office Wednesday, officials said letters began arriving this week.

Jonathan Marshall, the county's commerce director, said he expects even more public comment and queries to come from the notifications than were given during the land-use planning process, which received significant community participation.

"We're going to get a good volume of comments from people with questions," Marshall predicted. "We're going to get folks who may not have heard about the land-use plan."

He said about 1,900 mailings have been prepared for landowners in the unincorporated area in the south and west of Concord city limits. Landowners with more than one parcel of land are sent only one letter.

Approximately 2,895 parcels are being rezoned across approximately 24,548 acres.

The Cabarrus Planning and Zoning Commission will host a public hearing on Sept. 18 for the rezoning before consideration of the plan.

Marshall said most of the down-zonings included in the plan generally see land zoned for low-density residential changed to agricultural/open space zoning. The latter zoning prohibits extension of water and sewer utilities and allows for less residential density.

"We're not rezoning in any areas where the city will be extending water and sewer," Marshall said.

During two months of community input sessions in May and June, many residents in the 39,200-acre focus area said they wanted most of the area to be preserved as open space, with little to no new development - leading to the proposed down-zoning.

Officials have said the land-use plan will help control the rapid growth and strain on the county's public services.

Because the land-use plan includes parts of Concord's future growth area, the Concord Planning and Zoning Commission will consider the plan and its concepts in September, said Concord City Manager Brian Hiatt.

Concord City Council and Cabarrus County Board of Commissioners entered into a zoning and utilities agreement in June directly related to the land-use plan.

"Really, the agreement that's already entered into is the main agreement," Hiatt said. "It didn't specifically talk about density, but it pretty much dictates what we can do."

The June agreement set a boundary for Concord utilities across which the city may not extend

utilities - or allow developers to tap onto utilities - unless approved by commissioners.

And if an area is annexed, the city must retain the zoning as indicated in the proposed plan.

If the land-use plan is approved by Concord's planning board, City Council will give it a final consideration, Hiatt said.

- Contact Eric C. Deines: 704-789-9141