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Commissioners approve controversial land-use plan

By [Karen Cimino Wilson](#) | Independent Tribune

CONCORD — Residents for and against a plan that will down-zone 24,500 acres to preserve agricultural and open space and restrict development in Concord's eastern growth district spoke Tuesday during the Cabarrus County Board of Commissioners meeting.

The proposed Central Area Plan was developed based on input from residents during a series of more than 18 community meetings. Most of the proposed changes would allow one to two houses for every three acres, which is too light for residential development. More than 100 residents came forward last year to say they opposed the plan just as the planning commission was preparing to consider it.

Commissioners voted 3-1 in favor of the proposed plan. Commissioner Coy Privette voted against the plan. Commissioner Grace Mynatt, who is planning a small, upscale residential development for land she owns within the identified area, recused herself from voting on the land-use plan or rezoning for the plan.

Jerry Newton, who lives on seven acres that would be affected by the proposed plan, said he opposed the plan. He spoke on behalf of several residents at Tuesday's meeting. Under the plan, Newton would be allowed to only add one more residence to his property.

"My real concern is the fundamental rights of property ownership," Newton said. "I don't like the idea of having my ownership rights taken by the government and then have to pay taxes as if those rights have not been taken away."

He asked the commissioners to remove the plan's prohibition on zoning adjustments and to include a provision that does not allow Concord to annex in the area.

The Central Area Plan is the result of a unique agreement between Concord City Council and the County Commission. The two government bodies hired a consultant who studied 39,200 acres to the south and east of Concord last spring to develop a land-use plan that would help manage growth. The two bodies also OK'd an agreement that set utility boundaries for the planning area and required the city to keep the new, proposed zonings for the area if it annexes within the proposed planning area. Several residents came out in support of the plan, saying it would help preserve the rural charm of the 24,500 acres in question.

"I don't want to see people who can reach out of their bedroom window and slap their neighbor," said Jim Hayes, who represented four families who live in the area and will be affected by the plan. "I do not see that as controlled growth."

County Commissioner Chairman Jay White urged the board to approve the area plan but to first remove the proposed changes to industrial properties, which they did.

"We don't have sprawl from industrial development," White said.

White said the plan would provide continuity so residents know what to expect for the area they live in as it grows.

Commissioners were required to consider the downzoning plan as a "de novo" item so they could not base their decision on the planning board findings. Commissioners had not yet voted on the plan at press time Tuesday.

â € Contact reporter Karen Cimino Wilson: 704-789-9141

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