

Waxhaw plan draws big crowd

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WAXHAW The Waxhaw Board of Commissioners, town staff and representatives from Clarion Associates looked to town residents Monday to give input on a plan that Mayor Daune Gardner called a "guiding document" for future development in Waxhaw.

That document generated a lot of attention, drawing a standing-room only crowd to the Museum of the Waxhaws.

"People love Waxhaw," Gardner said. "People of Waxhaw really do care about our community."

After the plan was presented, residents had an opportunity to share their opinions on what they thought the plan needs.

Ed Rumberger, who lives within walking distance from downtown, said that while he supports the historic aspect of downtown, he wants to see major retail shopping available slightly north of town as well. He said a big-box store would not negatively affect downtown merchants because he called them mainly "specialty shops," that would not be impacted by major retailers.

Rumberger then said he would like to see something happen with the old mill site, suggesting that a group of small shops locate there.

"That could really revitalize downtown," he said.

Doug Brown, who operates a financial planning company in downtown Waxhaw, built on what Rumberger said by adding that Waxhaw needs more of an economic base. "The town does not have an economic reason to exist," he said.

Brown explained that the town was essentially built around the mill, but with it no longer operating, many residents now work to the north of Waxhaw. "That's not healthy," he said.

Others who attended the presentation were slightly more skeptical of the plan, not looking as closely at current Waxhaw corporate limits, but at areas directly around it.

Jim Pohlig, who lives near JAARS south of Waxhaw, said he was concerned about seeing his property involuntarily annexed and his property tax increase without any added benefits.

The Board of Commissioners recently dealt with an involuntary annexation that saw significant opposition from Heathwood residents. The board annexed some areas, but decided to leave Heathwood out.

Still, Gardner stayed focused on the plan.

"This is just the beginning," she said, calling it a "living document," that needs to be revisited often, possibly even on an annual basis for the first few years.

Clarion Associates will review comments, possibly amend the plan, then present it to the Planning Board next Monday before a public hearing is held Dec. 9.

If it is adopted, the plan will serve as the benchmark town staff can look to when developers come to them with development plans.

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