

STATE EDITION

NORTH CAROLINA

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North Hills project moves forward

Raleigh council approves rezoning

By SARAH LINDENFELD HALL

STAFF WRITER

RALEIGH — Plans for the 45-acre North Hills East leaped one big hurdle Tuesday, winning near unanimous support from the City Council for a rezoning request.

But developer John Kane, who built the popular North Hills across the street, still is waiting for a decision on his request for \$75 million in public financing to help pay for parking decks to support the project at Six Forks Road and the Bellline.

City and Wake County staffers are researching how similar financing is used across the county to help officials put rules in place before a decision is made on Kane's request.

City Manager Russell Allen said he'd like to get a proposal to the council at the end of the year. Kane proposes that the money would be paid back by higher

property taxes generated by the land's redevelopment.

Kane said Tuesday that he can get started on some development now, but is eager for a final decision on his request.

"There's certainly things we can do now," Kane said. "We're anxious for that to get resolved."

The rezoning gives Kane flexibility. It allows him to build between 400 to 1,800 residences, between 200,000 and 1.3 million square feet of office space, and as many as 850 hotel rooms.

He also will be able to build between 120,000 square feet and 450,000 square feet of retail space. Kane reduced the maximum amount of retail space by 150,000 square feet so that the area wouldn't top a cap on retail for the area.

Kane has said he wants to build 875,000 square feet of office space, more than 250,000 square feet of shops and restaurants, a 200-room hotel, more than 1,000 condominiums and apartments and a 300-unit continuing care retirement community, if he is able to get public help to build the park-

ing decks.

Kane said Tuesday he doesn't necessarily intend to develop the maximum allowed. The ranges allow some leeway depending on what the market calls for, he said. "That was really the idea of the flexibility," he said.

Council members raised concerns about the maximum height of some buildings — which could soar as tall as 35 stories — and their proximity to a neighborhood. Kane pointed out that the tallest buildings will sit along Six Forks Road and step down as they get closer to the neighborhood. A 5.4 acre park also will serve as a buffer to the neighborhood, which has supported the plans.

The lack of any major neighborhood opposition and the popularity of Kane's early project helped the project win easy approval at the council table.

"The fact you have no neighborhood opposition to this project is one of the most salient points," council member Phillip Isley said. Council member Thomas Crow-

der was the only council member to vote against the project. He raised several concerns, including the density of the project.

"We may be having the cart before the horse," he said.

In other business, the council ■ asked its public works committee to consider locations other than Horseshoe Farm Park for a community center and basketball courts. Alternative locations include the existing 241-acre Durant Nature Park, among others. The committee will report back to the full council in 30 days.

■ sent plans to redevelop Kidd's Hill next to Crabtree Valley Mall to the comprehensive planning committee. Plans call for terracing the hill to build a mix of shops, restaurants, offices and residences. Some oppose the project saying the amount of grading and tree cutting doesn't meet the intent of the city's land-use guide for the area.

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