

EDA, residents work on Meadowville compromise



Page Dowdy/Chesterfield Observer

The Chesterfield Economic Development Authority wants to revise its master plan to allow for taller buildings in the Meadowville Technology Park. Some nearby residents are concerned the change may impact the appearance of their community.

By Greg Pearson
STAFF WRITER

Members of the Chesterfield Economic Development Authority (EDA) and residents of Mount Blanco subdivision may be near a compromise that would allow taller buildings in the Meadowville Technology Park and a smaller buffer on North Enon Church Road. The EDA says it needs to revise its master plan so the park can convert from industrial uses to a mixed-use development with more office buildings. Mount Blanco residents are concerned about how this shift at the 1,300-acre park off Route 10 and I-295 will impact their community.

The compromise under study by the EDA and nearby residents would allow 150-foot-tall buildings (up from a 75-foot maximum) and a 50-foot buffer along North Enon Church Road with another 100-foot setback before any buildings. The 1996 rezoning required a 200-foot buffer, but on June 29, the EDA filed an amended zoning application with the planning department to increase the building height and reduce the buffers.

A Sept. 5 meeting with residents turned testy when some residents felt the county was renegeing on the original terms. "You had to be wearing a flack jacket," commented one county official.

A smaller group of residents met with EDA representatives last week to hammer out a compromise proposed by Bermuda Planning Commissioner Jack Wilson. The residents plan to discuss the proposed compromise with their fellow neighbors.

"We're evaluating the consensus to make sure it meets our needs and the cost of en-

hancing the buffers," said Faith McClintic, development manager for Meadowville. The EDA wants the buffers to have a "park view" rather than the current dense undergrowth, but the former would have to be paid for by the EDA since there are not currently enough tenants in Meadowville to cover the costs of maintenance.

The residents wanted significant buffers to deaden the sound and visually conceal the park.

"To max out our densities, we have to build up and not out," added McClintic. "There are some wonderful views of the James River if the building height is increased, making the site more valuable."

The EDA has an "active prospect" in the bio-pharmaceutical field that might need a 150-foot building. As an office building, that would be 10-12 stories. The EDA has also retained a developer to build a five-story speculative office building.

With Northrop Grumman already operational in its 192,000-square-foot building on 29 acres, Chesterfield is trying to maximize its opportunity to sell more land. In 2005, Virginia awarded a contract to Grumman for a significant portion of the state's information technology outsourcing efforts.

The EDA is still attempting to find funding to pay for a direct interchange with I-295, which could substantially increase the park's marketability. A cloverleaf would cost about \$28 million while a diamond exchange would be around \$15 million. Currently, the county has a \$4 million commitment for federal funding, but no additional funding or funding mechanism has been identified for the interchange.

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