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Glynn Avenue design back under consideration

By TYLER H. JONES tjones@thebrunswicknews.com Aug 23, 2018



Cars travel along U.S. Highway 17 Wednesday in Brunswick. The Glynn Avenue Design Framework discussed by the city could mean future development along the corridor must follow specific design standards.

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It's back to the drawing board for a plan to impose new development design guidelines for a stretch of U.S. Highway 17 from the Sidney Lanier Bridge to Golden Isles Parkway.

City staff again Wednesday met with property owners and stakeholders to address concerns surrounding the plan after city commissioners Aug. 15 deferred action on the Glynn Avenue Design Framework amid a contentious discussion. Commissioners previously deferred the framework in April.

The 61-page document is aimed at sprucing up the corridor by establishing new development guidelines that affect everything from streets to buildings to parking lots and lighting. It would be the first major ordinance change for the area since temporary rules were set in place more than a decade ago.

Several property owners have concerns the framework is too restrictive and will scare off potential developers who might want to buy their land. Other stakeholders say the plan doesn't go far enough at addressing environmental issues.

About 20 people came together Wednesday at Old City Hall to hash out their concerns and speak with Denise Grabowski, a consultant with the Savannah-based firm Symbiocity, which helped the city craft the plan.

"Nothing in this plan will get developers excited," said John Dow, the registered agent of D-4 Enterprises, which owns the former Golden Isles Inn at 3302 Glynn Ave. Dow suggested the framework places too many limits on developers.

Ron Adams, another stakeholder who owns the former Dixie O'Brien paint factory at 2700 Glynn Ave., lodged similar concerns. Adams, who is also the Glynn County Clerk of Superior Court, brought concerns about a proposed setback from the marsh and limits to parking lot sizes.

Grabowski said the design framework was based on building scale, best practices in urban design and promoting walkability and a sense of community. She explained the intent is to give the city more options and leeway when dealing with developers.

She asserted that the framework was also about preserving marsh views for the public, which is part of the city's comprehensive plan. She pointed to Blueprint Brunswick plans from 2003 and 2008 that were precursors to the design framework, and noted that if the city wants to keep marsh views in the public domain, the framework would achieve that.

Rachael Thompson, project manager for Glynn Environmental Coalition, was among those who thought the framework didn't go far enough. She noted a joint city-county meeting with the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency on Tuesday and said the framework should more actively encourage cleanup of the Terry Creek Superfund site. The site is contaminated with the carcinogen toxaphene and the EPA is formulating a site remediation plan.

Thompson encouraged adding “language to say the cleanup is required” to the framework. Under the current EPA cleanup plan, new top soil would be dumped atop existing contaminated soil and a concrete ditch would be built to transfer runoff directly to the marsh.

The Glynn Avenue Design Framework is an overlay district, meaning it does not change existing zoning requirements. Rather, it would impose more stringent guidelines on development.

What those guidelines may look like if the plan is approved is still under consideration. The city plans to hold another public input meeting for anyone interested in commenting on the plan; a date has not been set. It is scheduled for another vote by the city commission in October.

Guidelines in the framework were crafted over a two-year period that began in May 2016. The process included public sessions for community members to give input. The city engaged Symbiocity for \$76,100 to help create the plan.

Most of the comments city staff received during the planning stages were in favor of the framework’s passage.



The screenshot shows the preface of the Glynn Avenue Design Framework. It includes sections for 'PURPOSE', 'GOALS', and 'DESIGN PRINCIPLES'. The 'PURPOSE' section states that the City of Brunswick created the framework to guide development and redevelopment along U.S. Highway 17 in Glynn Avenue, which serves as a gateway to the City of Brunswick and the Gateway City of Georgia. The 'GOALS' section lists three main goals: 1. Create a sense of place, 2. Encourage sustainable development, and 3. Provide a design framework for organic, predictable growth. The 'DESIGN PRINCIPLES' section lists seven principles, including: 1. The Glynn Avenue should reflect sustainable architecture appropriate to coastal Georgia, 2. Use materials, materials, and colors that are natural resources that should be available and available to all, 3. Responsible development should maintain respect to the sensitive natural environment, particularly along the eastern edge of Glynn Avenue, 4. Access to properties along Glynn Avenue should be safety and easily accessible for pedestrians and cyclists, as well as vehicles, 5. Individual development should respect and contribute positively to the public realm, 6. Glynn Avenue should include low-carbon energy systems that is complementary to, but not competitive with, downtown Brunswick, and 7. Investment in the public realm should guide and advance private sector investment.

Glynn Avenue Design Framework
Apr 18, 2018



City set to vote on Glynn Avenue guidelines

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