

News

More retail shops could be coming to Frederick's Kingsbrook

Attorneys

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Retail shops and commercial businesses could soon be coming to the Kingsbrook Planned Unit Development in Frederick's Ballenger Creek area.

The Frederick County Board of Commissioners voted unanimously at a public hearing Tuesday night to allow commercial businesses on the 16.9 acres in the Kingsbrook community.

The land currently only allows for offices, but developers asked the commissioners to change that because they say it is difficult to sell office space in that area.

"You realize out there, there are empty pockets of land designated for office space," said Bruce Dean, the Frederick land-use attorney representing the developers. "We've been trying for 20 to 30 years to [sell] office space, but it has just not been successful."

Since any proposed development would still have to be approved by county planners, there are no immediate dates as to when construction would begin.

The Kingsbrook Planned Unit Development currently also has 983 homes. There are no plans to build more homes, Dean said.

The developers, R & R Frederick Associates and Ballenger Creek Partners LLC, still want to build office space in the area, but adding commercial to the mix gives them more flexibility, he said.

The commissioners agreed.

"You can look at the empty office buildings out there," Commissioner Kirby Delauter (R) said. "This is just a reaction of the market, and I think it's the right thing to do."

Commissioner C. Paul Smith (R) said the change is "relatively minor" because office buildings are still allowed in a commercial area, under county planning rules.

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“[Adding commercial] will relieve traffic in other parts of the county because [residents] will now have someplace to go,” Smith said.

Smith, Delauter, Commissioner Billy Shreve (R) and Commissioners’ President Blaine R. Young (R) voted for the change. Commissioner David P. Gray (R) was not at the meeting.

Three residents from the Kingsbrook community testified at the hearing, noting that several of the shopping areas surrounding Kingsbrook are vacant and should be filled before new retail outlets are built. For example, a former Blockbuster and Superfresh grocery store along Ballenger Creek Pike are empty, they said.

“I’m also concerned with the additional traffic,” said Kay Cunningham, the president of the Kingsbrook Community Association. “I’m concerned about pollution. And, I’m not sure I like the idea of adding more commercial. “

Representatives of the developers said they recognize there are vacant properties, but they believe there is still a demand and market for retail.