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Developer to build 19-acre, big box shopping center on Phenix City's south side



An artist's conception of what the new retail shopping

center could look like on U.S. 431 South in Phenix City.

BY MIKE OWEN

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Phenix City has entered into an agreement with a developer to build a 19-acre, 75,000-square-foot retail shopping center on U.S. 431 on the south side of the city, City Manager Wallace Hunter announced Tuesday.

Hunter said the amount of traffic that travels through Phenix City on 431 represents a lot of potential income for businesses and for the city in sales taxes.

“So many people are coming through here, so there’s a lot of money that’s escaping Phenix City,” he said. “We thrive and live off of sales taxes. For years we have been selling that area saying, ‘What can we do to capture this money that’s escaping Phenix City?’”

Steve Smith, finance director, did a lot of work on the project, Hunter said. Smith said the shopping center will be built around a well-known, big box retailer, but he declined to identify which one.

“They’ve asked us to keep it confidential because they don’t want their competitors to know they’re coming to town,” Smith said. “They operate a little differently than some of the other retailers they’re going to be competing with. They don’t want the competition to do the research on them and know what’s coming to town.”

The development will be on 431 in the area of College Drive and Chattahoochee Valley Community College, Smith said. In addition to the big box retailer, the city expects a secondary large retailer and other smaller businesses and possibly restaurants to locate there. He also hopes to see a hotel established on adjoining property, he said.

"We've had tremendous interest in this shopping center," Smith said. "Shaun (Culligan, city economic development manager) has probably talked to about 20 retailers who are interested in locating down here."

Culligan said a lot of things had to happen to make the development come to fruition, but the end result will be worth all the work.

"It's one of those projects that's taken a significant amount of time," Culligan said. "We're excited about it. It's going to ignite this side of town."

Mayor Eddie Lowe said the announcement affirms something that he has been saying all along.

"I've been saying for the past two years that businesses want to come to Phenix City," he said. "That's why it's so important that we show the kindness to each other because no business or organization wants to go into a place that's divided."

District 3 Phenix City Councilor Arthur Day,

whose district includes the development site, said one of the reasons he ran for his office was to help bring development to the south side of Phenix City.

“I can say to you this will benefit not just the people of District 3, but all the people of Phenix City,” Day said. “Once that takes place down there, you can expect more businesses to come down to the south side of Phenix City.”

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