

Developer hopes Renaissance becomes reality

By Seanna Adcox, The Herald, Monday, May 10, 1999

A proposed village named Rock Hill Renaissance will offer residents a “people-friendly” combination of shops and living space, development planners said.

“We’re trying to achieve something that’s not normal,” said Duane Christopher, a Rock Hill land planner and landscape architect working for the Monroe, N.C.-based Williams Co., which bought the land late last year.

“We’re doing a shake and bake, combining residential and commercial together,” he said.

The proposed development is located on 65 acres near the intersection of Dave Lyle Boulevard and Springdale Road, across the street from a Food Lion, which under construction.

“Christopher, along with Williams Co. representative Ed Reule, will present the Renaissance plans tonight during a joint meeting of the Rock Hill Planning Commission and city Council.

The City must rezone the property as “neighborhood mixed use” before the developers can continue with their plans. Most of the property is zoned for multifamily and institutional use.

The remainder is zoned as general commercial.

If all goes well, rezoning could receive final approval by late summer, after planning-commission approval and two readings by the City Council.

Construction could start in late winter or early spring, Christopher said.

“All these different ideas and dreams are only opportunities until the rezoning goes through,” he said.

Those dreams include shops, restaurants, medical offices, a theater, a branch library, a fire station and a chapel.

“We’re creating a village concept – a neighborhood center,” Christopher said. “I hope someday people will say, ‘Hey, let’s go down to the Renaissance.’”

Narrow streets, patterned in a grid will allow for more walking.

“Most streets now are engineered for speed and cars, but not really people,” he said.

Commercial space would stay mainly on the first floor, with apartments or parking garages on the upper floors. Other parking would be limited to basement-level and there would be a few parking spaces on the street.

“This is a better use of the land,” Christopher said. “First-floor parking is so ugly, even with landscaping.”

Renaissance also will feature patio-homes and about 15 acres of green space and parks, including a possible fountain, a lake and even swans.

Opponents worry the concept will lure people away from downtown. But Christopher disagrees.

“This won’t do anything to downtown,” he said. “We’re just creating another place for people. Rock Hill will eventually be made up of little villages, like Charlotte.