

# The Capital

## South County

### Edgewater development moves along

By E.B. FURGURSON III, Staff Writer

After years of negotiations between the owners of Lee Airport in Edgewater, neighboring communities and county officials, a Florida developer has submitted a plan to build a shopping and business center along Route 2.

The Village at Lee Airport would include 13 buildings and nearly 900 parking places in a shopping center anchored by a 60,000-square-foot grocery store and featuring two office buildings, shops, a bank and possibly restaurants, according to the proposal filed by Regency Centers Corp. of Jacksonville late last month.

The company's plan calls for moving the Maryland Avenue service road, built during the recent widening of Route 2 to maintain access to communities along Beard's Creek behind the Lee property. Its current path would put it in the middle of the shopping center's parking lot, so it will become one of two primary entrances to the complex.

"This is a huge step forward in the process," said Van Lee, whose family owns the 160-acre property that includes the airport.

"The best thing out of all this is the relationship our family has built with people around us," he said of over five years of talks with neighbors in surrounding communities, including Southdown Shores, two Edgewater Beach communities, London Towne and South River Park, to establish covenants to guide the development. "There have been a lot of people on board ... who have spent a lot of hours, just a tremendous amount of personal time invested."

The community associations supported rezoning some 30 acres of residential property along the highway to commercial while keeping the remainder of the property residential. The covenants limit to nine the number of homes that can be built on the remaining land north of Maryland Avenue. The airport occupies most of the land south of that road.

Members of the conservancy formed to make sure development adheres to those guidelines approved the plan before it was submitted to the county.

"Essentially the plan seems to accommodate (our concerns)," said Bill Edmonston, a member of the conservancy who formerly sat on the county Board of Appeals.

One particular concern was the amount of impervious surface, hardening of the ground by buildings or pavement that exacerbates storm runoff that the project would create. The covenants restrict the developer to 54 percent impervious surface. County rules would normally allow 80 percent coverage.

"The plan comes in just under that. We are right up against it," said a senior Regency

official, who asked not to be identified. "No matter what happens, we are committed to making sure we are less than 54 percent, we are not going above that."

The plan submitted computes 13.71 acres of impervious surface, or 53.5 percent of the parcel. "Regency agreed to a runoff number that we have been advised is twice as good as what the county would require," said Peter Quirk, who had led a last-minute charge against rezoning the Lee property. "From our perspective the main (concerns) are runoff protection and the impervious numbers."

Calls to Regency for comment on the record were not returned.

The Lees were attracted to Regency, which is in partnership with the J. Donegan Co., by its willingness to put the plan before the community and its experience in managing the properties it develops.

"That is why we stuck with Regency, they keep what they build," Mr. Lee said. "This has my name on it and I want something I can be proud of."

The plan will face a first round of questions and comments from county planners at a March 10 meeting.

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