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Rogers Council Approves Downtown Plan

By Teresa Moss - July 15, 2015

ROGERS -- The City Council unanimously approved a downtown plan during its meeting Tuesday with no discussion from members.

The plan has been in the works for more than a year following the city signing a contract with Gateway Planning of Texas to develop it.

"I am excited for Rogers," Scott Polikov, Gateway president, said. "I think the way that process went and the involvement from the people of Rogers reflects well on Rogers."

No one spoke against the plan during a public hearing.

Bill Watkins, a lawyer with an office downtown, was one of two that spoke in favor of the plan.

"I am heavily invested in the future of downtown Rogers," Watkins said. "I am excited to see this and I hope the council approves it."

Watkins also said he hopes the city continues to spend money supporting the plan in the future.

The plan calls for infrastructure improvements to streets, utilities and greenspace. Revamping alleys and Frisco Park along First Street are some of the suggestions in the plan.

Mayor Greg Hines said there will be some need for investment from the city on infrastructure improvement in the future. He mentioned the need for expanding water and sewer capabilities. He didn't reveal a time-line on when that could happen.

Approving new zoning laws is the next step for the city, Hines said.

Two public hearings will be held to rezone the downtown region per recommendation of the plan. More than 500 property owners were informed of the hearings via certified letters.

The downtown region will be rezoned from eight zoning types to four, Derrel Smith, Rogers senior planner, previously said.

The four zones proposed include: "core mixed use," "commercial mixed use," "industrial arts" and "neighborhood transition."

Smith has said the new zoning will align better with a pedestrian-friendly environment. He said set-backs for buildings will be closer. He said this will make businesses more attractive to pedestrians. Parking lots and other unsightly obstacles will be placed behind buildings.

Zoning changes also will allow for industrial, commercial and residential to be in the same area in certain regions of downtown.

Hines said the city also will play a role in supporting the investment of private businesses in downtown.

"This has been a formal process but it has taken on a life of its own," Hines said. "We are already seeing the benefits."

A company affiliated with the Walton Family recently bought the Lane Hotel for \$1.6 million. The 1929 building has sat vacant since 2003. Plans on how the building will be developed have been kept quiet.