

**Project proposal is off the table
Developer ends plan to build at U.S. 158, N.C. 66**

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Michael Kelley

WALKERTOWN

A developer will not build a McDonald's restaurant and a Walgreens pharmacy on the southwest corner of U.S. 158 and N.C. 66 after town officials rejected his rezoning request last week.

Developer Michael Kelley said he would consider his options after the Walkertown Town Council voted 3-1 to reject his rezoning request for the two businesses. Some residents have urged Kelley to consider another site for the project.

The council rejected the rezoning because of some residents' concerns about the proposed location for the businesses and their effect on traffic on U.S. 158 and N.C. 66.

Opponents said they supported two businesses coming to Walkertown but want them on a different site.

Walkertown is experiencing a boom in development since the completion of a sewer system in 2003.

The council's vote on McDonald's and Walgreens came with this new growth as a backdrop. Some residents predicted that the completion of Whitehall Village, a large housing development off N.C. 66, would increase traffic near the proposed corner businesses.

Kelley had offered to pay to widen N.C. 66 between Whitehall Village and the U.S. 158 intersection.

Dot Duggins, a former council member, supported the rezoning during last Thursday's public hearing. She said that the road improvements made the project worthwhile.

Harry Boles, a resident, said that if the town didn't approve the project, town officials "ought to have a plan to solve the congestion problems."

Opponents cited the problems they saw on their residential streets if the developed built the restaurant and pharmacy. Harold Warner of Walkertown said he got about 25 signatures on a petition against the rezoning by talking to people on Bellaire Circle and Martin Street.

Those streets would receive more traffic if the McDonald's and Walgreens came to the corner, some residents said.

Coleman Alderson, a resident, said that the council's rejection of the rezoning wouldn't settle the question of whether the businesses would come to town.

"If it is denied, it doesn't mean it will go away," Alderson said.

Alderson didn't think traffic projections used by proponents would hold up given the amount of possible future growth.

Council member Sarah Welch voted for the rezoning. Council members Wayne Hester, Ralph Landreth and Brenda Mabe opposed it.

Council members agreed they should consider involuntary annexation if that is the only way to give the town control over another busy interchange.

The path of the proposed Northern Beltway crosses U. S. 158 outside the Walkertown town limits and in between Winston-Salem and Walkertown.

The council should consider annexing the area to ensure that Walkertown and not Forsyth County has zoning control over the area near the interchange, Mabe said.

In the past, the town has grown through involuntary annexation. The town would make an effort to get the landowners to come in voluntarily, but involuntary annexation of the area is possible, the council said.

"We need to cover our bases," Mabe said.

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