

Superior comprehensive plan set for vote

Competing amendments show conflict over growth

By Eric Schmidt

Camera Staff Writer

Conflicting visions of growth and development in Superior will come before trustees Monday as the board votes on amendments to the town's comprehensive plan.

The plan — which was last updated in 2001 — governs land use in Superior and serves as a blueprint for future developments. As part of a periodic revision process, town leaders spent most of last year drafting amendments designed to update the document.

The process has boiled down to a disagreement between trustees — who drafted a package of changes known as a “preferred alternative” — and the town's Planning Commission, which Tuesday submitted its own amendments.

Trustees have scheduled a public hearing and final vote at 7 p.m. Monday.

The conflict reflects a town of about 10,000 that has seen its population grow by more than 3,800 percent since 1990 wondering how much more development is healthy.

“I think that what we have is some of the planning commissioners don't sound like they agree with the idea that we have too much residential in town already, which is what started us on this long journey,” said Trustee Karen Imbierowicz, referring to the amendment process.

The preferred alternative affects about 310 acres on three sections of land, all west of McCaslin Boulevard. Geographic limitations have some on the Planning Commission wondering why the town should even amend the plan this year.

Commissioner Grant Jacobs said the 2001 revision already provides balance between residential and commercial development, and he's not in any hurry to change it. He said the preferred alternative favors office and commercial space because they generate more money for the town — but only if there's a market for it.

“There's no reason why the current (comprehensive) plan can't stay in place and just have people come forward with whatever's necessary to request a zoning change,” Jacobs said.

The preferred alternative would reduce future residential development in Superior by about 71 percent over the 2001 plan. It proposes no new retail space and would cut future office development by 49 percent while adding 28,000 square feet of industrial space.

The most recent amendment

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process reflects a year's worth of public comment and cost Superior about \$143,000 in survey and consulting fees, Town Manager Bruce Williams said. That's a decrease from more than \$200,000 in 2001.

At a meeting Tuesday, the Planning Commission gave only a qualified endorsement of

the preferred alternative, voting to change details on several key developments.

The commission recommended residential use for a parcel behind Superior Marketplace off 76th Street, in contrast to the mixed housing, office and industrial district trustees envisioned. It also voted to rec-

ommend residential and commercial development on the Verhey property — on McCaslin Boulevard south of Coalton Road — as opposed to the agricultural area proposed by the board.

Suzanne Sawyer-Ratliff, a longtime Superior resident who follows growth issues, said she worries about a disproportionate influence from the “developer and real estate lobby.”

“More rooftops do nothing for the financial basis of the town; they're rather a drain on infrastructure,” she said.

A new \$350,000 house costs Superior \$300 in net annual revenue, according to the town. Each 10,000 square feet of office space generates \$3,800 yearly.

In nearby Louisville — which amended its comprehensive plan last year — the process also wasn't easy, and nobody left completely satisfied Mayor Chuck Sisk said. But in reviewing the plan, “You look at yourself in the mirror,” deciding what's important for the city and committing those ideas to writing, he said.

“It was an exhausting experience,” Sisk said. “But it was an extremely valuable experience for us to articulate our future in a document that really is a benchmark for us.”

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