

City moves ahead on development rules for casino area - Columbus Dispatch

Written by Administrator
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Columbus is moving ahead with development rules for W. Broad Street that neighborhood leaders say will help make the business district near a planned casino more attractive as it grows.

Mayor Michael B. Coleman's administration sent the rules, called a zoning overlay, to the City Council in early February and the council is to vote on them on Monday. Council members heard a first reading of

the overlay last night.

The rules specify a neighborhood business district that would look more like N. High Street in Clintonville than Morse Road in the Northland area. New or significantly renovated buildings would have to be close to the street, have screened parking lots in the rear or at the sides, and meet limitations on signs.

"This is kind of a pre-emptive strike for what is hopefully to come," said Chuck Patterson, chairman of the Hilltop Area Commission, which supports the overlay. "We want to recruit and encourage new business along that corridor, but we want it to have a look and an appeal that fits with the neighborhood."

The Coleman administration and casino developer Penn National Gaming are in a stalemate over annexing the casino property - the former Delphi auto-parts plant in Franklin Township - to the city, as Penn had promised. Still, said Coleman spokesman Dan Williamson, the mayor pledged city help for development near the casino and this is one more step toward fulfilling that promise.

"It's the right thing to do, regardless," Williamson said.

Franklin County is working on a similar overlay for portions of the neighborhood in Franklin Township, which is expected to go before commissioners this month, according to a city news release.

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The council is expected to support the changes.

"The Broad Street overlays will help drive economic development in a highly populated area of Columbus that has been identified as having the resources to sustain strong retail growth in the years to come," Councilman Zachary M. Klein, who leads the council's Development Committee, said in a statement.

The council and the mayor also joined forces last night to oppose state legislation that would limit collective-bargaining rights for public unions. The mayor signed a City Council resolution opposing Senate Bill 5.

Both Coleman and City Council President Andrew J. Ginther have said they oppose the legislation. Last night, with city union members packed around the dais, the council unanimously approved the resolution officially opposing it.

They pointed to their successes in negotiating with the city's unions, and with workers taking on some pension and health-care costs, which is expected to save Columbus \$115 million through 2019.

"The nation has to review how we did it and how it works here," said Councilman A. Troy Miller.

The council also approved the first package of street work in a planned \$30 million program this year to resurface 141 streets and 60 miles of alleys. Shelly & Sands Inc. was the low bidder, at \$4.9 million, on a project to resurface 34 streets by the end of July. With inspection fees, the total cost of the project is \$5.4 million.

"It would be far more expensive to let these streets decay to the point where we had to spend millions to replace them entirely," said Councilwoman Eileen Y. Paley, who leads the council's Public Service and Transportation Committee.

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