



City Planning Commission OKs plat for project's initial phase

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Making plans for an October ground-breaking, developers for the CottonMill Market Place wasted no time in seeking their first plat approval from the Starkville Planning and Zoning Commission.

The commission on Tuesday unanimously approved a preliminary plat for Phase I of the commercial center so that developers, which include Comvest Properties LLC and Nicholas Properties LLC, can meet their funding deadlines. Phase I of the project involves property along the 600 block of Russell Street.

Wendy Barthe Peavy, Comvest's marketing and public policy director, said that this funding involves both Mississippi Development Authority incentives and tax increment finance (TIF) bond agreements.

"This preliminary plat is the culmination of an intensive effort by the staff," said Clyde Pritchard of Pritchard Engineering. "I've worked on this for six months, give or take a few, and even I am impressed."

To be built on a total 22.58-acre site, the development features a full service hotel, a cinema, a shopping center, restaurants, housing geared toward students and a convention center.

The historic E.E. Cooley Building on Russell Street will be renovated to serve as a conference center with an adjoining hotel.

The Marketplace will be bordered to the east and south by Highway 12, to the west by Spring Street and to the north by Russell Street and existing commercial property there. Developers, who cannot yet disclose which retailers could possibly come to Cotton Mills, project a \$90 million impact on the City of Starkville.

"This thing has got to succeed," said Commissioner Jerry Emison as the commission reviewed the plat. "This will be a defining feature of a large portion of Starkville."

After the Board of Aldermen give final approval for the plat, the next step for developers is demolition and grading.

City Planner Ben Griffith said that the construction of Phase 1 will require an 18-foot change in elevation on the site.

“There’s a lot of dirt work required,” said Griffith, referring to an embankment on Highway 12, where the development will sit.

“The entire spot will be graded to nothing more than 5 percent,” said Pritchard.

Developers will also begin doing the necessary infrastructure work, such as installing a main sewer line and leveling a water line on Highway 12.

Representatives from CottonMill Marketplace have suggested a town hall meeting for discussion of the development but have yet to set a date, Griffith said.

The commission’s decision will go to the Starkville Board of Aldermen next week for approval.

Groundbreaking is said to take place in October.