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News

Bristol plans for development of new corridor

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BRISTOL — In a rare example of preparing ahead of time, the city put a plan in place five years ago to try to make sure that the new Route 72 extension doesn't become a commercial free-for-all following the same pattern that transformed Farmington Avenue during the past half century.

A Route 72 corridor plan adopted in 2005 recognized that "whenever a road changes significantly, so too does development pressure" in the community around it.

"It is an all-too-familiar scenario that a new or substantially improved road is followed by unchecked development, resulting in sprawl and the deterioration of local character," the plan said.

Basically, the city hopes to see commercial growth between downtown and Emmett Street.

Mike Nicasastro, who heads the Central Connecticut Chambers of Commerce, said the prime commercial spots are probably at the corner where Mountain Road meets Pine and Middle streets.

One corner already has an Aldi supermarket. Another has a gas station. A third has a former school where Autotote Enterprises plans to put a new Off-Track Betting parlor. The final corner's owner is angling to get a CVS and a bank branch.

Nicasastro said the new road should help spur growth at the city's new industrial park beside the former Superior Electric factory, whose owner is also eyeing expansion.

He said that he's not sure what will happen along the existing Pine Street, where there are already many small businesses. Most lots are too tiny to allow for large enterprises.

Nicasastro said, though, that there will be growth near the Route 229 portions of the new project.

The trick for the city, he said, will be to find a way to pull many of those businesses and potential patrons downtown, including the city-owned former mall site that Renaissance Downtowns aims to revitalize.

Figuring out how to get a share of the growth that's sure to come "is where Renaissance is going to earn its

money,” Nicastro said.

The western end of Pine Street, the area where construction is focused this summer, is also likely to see major changes in the years ahead.

“It is inevitable that the character of Pine Street in this area will change with the heavy traffic flow,” the city’s corridor study found.

“This may well impact the quiet residential character of the abutting neighborhoods,” it said.

It also said “the presence of much more traffic will also invite redevelopment of land along Pine Street for quick-access retail outlets and services such as banks, restaurants, and convenience stores.”

The city is aiming to focus any redevelopment on the north side of Pine Street in order to protect as much as possible the residential neighborhood to its south. The street will keep its name, but portions of it will also be part of the new Rt. 72.

On the south side of the road, the city wants to “limit commercial development between the vicinity of Benham Street and the vicinity of Bishop Street to low-intensity, small-scale uses that serve as a transition/buffer between more intensive commercial uses in the area and the residential neighborhood to the south.”

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