

Village at Magnolia Square Clears Last Hurdle

Work Could Begin This Summer on Proposed \$135 Million Project, Largest in History of Central

CITY OF CENTRAL — The City of Central Planning & Zoning Commission gave final approval to the Village at Magnolia Square TND development on Lovett Rd. at the March 1 meeting.

This was the final stage in the approval process, and the developers are now free to begin drafting construction plans to be submitted to the Department of Public Works for approval. The development will be done in four phases, with phase one set to begin this summer.

Nearby residents in Comite Hills expressed concerns about drainage, but the developer's engineer assured them that their stormwater detention ponds will be designed to handle and store the runoff.

In East Baton Rouge Parish, stormwater runoff is required to be designed to handle a 10-year flood event. However, the developer, Jimmy Nunnally, told the audience that he would see if their drainage system could be designed to handle a 25-year flood event, resulting in more storage capacity.

Residents of nearby Oak Shadows subdivision were concerned about the connectivity of the streets in the TND to Oak Trail Ave. and asked the commission to consider not connecting the streets.



VILLAGE AT MAGNOLIA SQUARE — Central Mayor Mac Watts with Jimmy Nunnally and Steele Pollard after the local developers won approval to build the \$135 million Village at Magnolia Square, a TND on Lovett Road.

The commission members sympathized with their concerns, but stated that the newly-approved TND ordinance states that “the streets in the TND shall be connected to existing thoroughfares”, leaving them no choice but to approve the connection.

The Department of Public Works Traffic Engineers and the Central Fire Department both recommended connecting the streets.

The Traffic Engineering Division also recommended the developer conduct a feasibility study to

see if traffic “roundabouts”, which are large traffic circles, should be installed on Lovett Rd. at the entrance to the TND and at the entrance to the BREC park to help regulate the increased traffic and safety in the area.

These roundabouts are part of the new Traffic Calming Policy being implemented, and have been shown to reduce accidents by up to 92 percent in areas where they have been installed. If the study shows these are not feasible, the developer will be required to install turn lanes on Lovett Rd. at the TND entrance instead.

In other matters, the Commission approved two additional lots to be created at the end of Chanove Avenue in Geo-Je's subdivision at the request of property owner Michael Pizzolato, and denied a request by a property owner on El Ranchitos Ave. to subdivide his lot in half after hearing objections from neighbors along the street.

The proposed SPUD for the Senior Residences of Central duplex development on Hooper Rd. was deferred until the March 29 meeting due to some outstanding issues with EBR DPW, which have since been resolved.

The Commission also deadlocked on a vote to rezone a piece of property at 11115 Sullivan Rd. from Rural to Light Commercial. The motion to approve received 3 votes for and 3 votes against. The matter will be sent to the City Council to decide on March 27.

At the Commission's next meeting on March 29, they will consider an application to approve a 146-lot subdivision on Wax Rd. across from Central High School.

The property is zoned for lots a minimum of one-acre in size; however, the developer is asking for a land-use change to low-density residential to allow an increase in density on the property, which is 100 percent in the flood plain. Low Density residential would allow for up to 4.1 units per acre.