

## Consultant: Make north Davidson an eco-industrial center

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DAVIDSON – At no charge to the town, an international consulting firm brainstormed about what to do with an underdeveloped, underserved portion of north Davidson that touches Lake Davidson but also shares space with Ingersoll Rand and could be home to hundreds of single-family homes.

And the team from GHD Consulting suggested the town try to partner with Ingersoll Rand and adjacent property owner Ralph Clontz to create a center for “eco-industrial urbanism.”

The idea is nothing more than that, but town board members took time during a meeting Tuesday, Nov. 10, to listen to GHD’s vision. Stan Leinwand, a representative of GHD Consulting, an Australian company that operates in 16 countries, said the firm’s Charlotte office brought together professionals from as far away as Australia who represented a number of disciplines.

Three key components GHD experts considered were:

- About 18 acres the town owns on the west side of Beaty Street, including the Beaty Pond, which has a dam that is severely eroded.
- 19 acres that belongs to Clontz on the east side of Beaty Street and stretching over to Lake Davidson.
- Ingersoll Rand, a major employer that owns about 120 acres north of the Clontz and town properties. The company has a light industrial operation on 40 acres now and about 80 acres of undeveloped land.

Kris Krider, the town’s planning director, pointed out that the land falls in a watershed, and any development would have to preserve about half the land for green space.

In conceptual terms, GHD suggested trying to attract businesses that could work with Ingersoll Rand’s existing light-industrial operation in what Leinwand called a “symbiotic” relationship. One ecological arm of the development calls for capturing stormwater run off as well as “gray water” from the industrial operations and recycling them, thus reducing the participating companies utility bills and also protecting Lake Davidson from runoff.

The green core in the middle of the industrial area could be used as baseball fields that the town would like to develop in north Davidson, which could serve the nearby, expanding Community School of Davidson, Leinwand said. With parking already created for the surrounding industrial uses, it could accommodate cars at night coming to athletic events.

The green core also could connect to the town’s Beaty Street Pond, which needs to be preserved and strengthened as a catch basin for stormwater running off most of that land. An environment specialist suggested building more wetlands around the pond and also smaller catch basins along the stream that connects the pond to Lake Davidson.

Students from the school could also use the pond and wetlands as a living classroom.

The consultants also suggested the town build a "gateway building" on N.C. 115, which could have classroom and "civic space" for meetings.

Another road through off N.C. 115 from the north side of Ingersoll Rand's property would make that land more accessible and also open up the Clontz property to possibly smaller light-industrial or commercial centers near Beaty Street and also higher-density condominiums along the Lake Davidson shore.

The consultants envision the "green corridor" continuing along the street from the town's pond all the way to the lake.

Town Manager Leamon Brice told town board members that current zoning on the land essentially allows for any development, including possibly hundreds of single-family homes. And Brice and Krider noted that commissioners have a goal of diversifying the tax and avoiding more large-scale residential developments that strain roads and other public services.

Krider reminded town board members that an economic development consultant will soon bring another idea of how to better plan development on the northern tip of the town. He said two different visions from two consultants might give the town commissioners a good comparison and prompt them to develop their own plan.

**In other business Tuesday night:**

Commissioners debated changing the town's affordable housing ordinance to give people who purchased homes in the program flexibility in making improvements to the homes. An affordable housing committee proposed allowing residents to make "updates" such as adding insulation or more energy-efficient windows and allowing them to recover those costs if they later sell the home.

But commissioners worried that if homeowners in the program are allowed to make such improvements, the resale value of the homes will soon no longer fit in the "affordable" program. Right now, the homeowners are entitled to recover as much as 10 percent more for "capital improvements" to their homes when they sell them.

Commissioners sent the proposal back to the town's affordable housing committee.

Commissioners recognized former longtime Commissioner and Mayor Randy Kincaid, who received an award from the N.C. Chapter of the American Planning Association. Former Planning Board member Rogert Lentz, who now lives in Wilson, presented Kincaid with the Marvin Collins Award for distinguished leadership by an elected official.

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