

New Alton Business District Moving Forward After Public Hearing

by Dalton Brown, News Reporter
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ALTON - The proposed Route 3 and Buckmaster Business District in Alton is moving forward after a public hearing about the proposal was held on Wednesday night. The city's goals for the district are to incentivize development and fill vacancies in the area while generating more sales tax revenue.

The new district is set to be bordered by Homer M. Adams Parkway to the north, Buckmaster Lane to the west, Oakwood Avenue to the south, and to the eastern edge of the property currently occupied by Big Lots and Goodwill. Planning & Development Director Greg Caffey said potential new tenants have been identified, and while he

couldn't disclose them publicly yet, he said he expects the district to be at full occupancy.

City Clerk Cheryl Ingle said at the public hearing that “the goal of installing this business district is to provide an incentive for a developer to renovate a shopping center within the district boundary and bring the property back to full occupancy, generate tax revenue for the city, expand the commercial base in the area, and provide additional amenities to city residents and visitors.”

The city plans to offer incentives to attract developers which would be funded by a combination of levying and an additional 1% sales tax on all taxable items sold within the boundary of the new business district. That tax revenue will begin collection by the start of next year.

At the hearing, one member of the public raised concern that the city plans to impose higher sales taxes on two of its largest discount stores, Goodwill and Big Lots, both of which fall within the new business district boundary. Their concern was that higher sales taxes on the goods these businesses sell would negatively impact them and the lower-income residents who rely on them most. They also noted that the new Starbucks would be exempt from the higher sales tax because it was carved out of the new business district boundary despite being built on the same piece of land.

Caffey said Starbucks is not part of the proposed district because the property is under different ownership. He also said he didn't anticipate new retail businesses to have any adverse effect on residents, but did not address what impact a higher sales tax might have on businesses like Big Lots and Goodwill or their customers.

After the public hearing concluded, the City Council unanimously voted to approve the business district plan and impose the 1% sales tax increase within its boundary.

A full recording of the Sept. 13 public hearing and City Council meeting can be watched at the top of this story, on the [Riverbender.com Facebook page](#), or on [Riverbender.com /video](#).