

THE ROANOKE TIMES

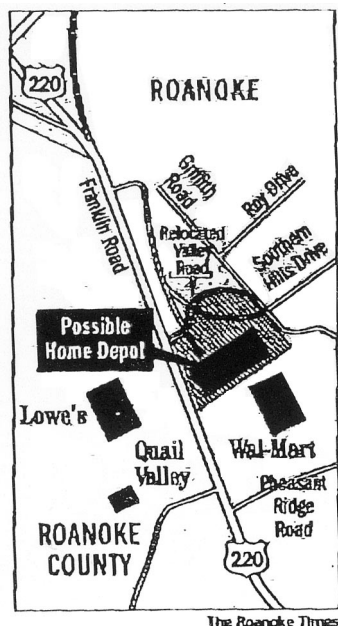
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Home Depot revives plan for 220 site

The proposal revises a 2002 plan to build a store on U.S. 220 across from a Lowe's store.

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For the second time since 2002, home improvement giant Home Depot is considering opening a store on U.S. 220 across from chief competitor Lowe's and in the backyard of the Southern Hills neighborhood.



Neighbors got notice of Atlanta-based Home Depot's renewed interest in an invitation to a meeting with developers set for 6:30 p.m. May 24 at New Hope Christian Church on welcome Valley Road.

The 220 development is essentially the same plan Southern Hills residents saw at meetings in 2002.

"I think it was well received and we've been working on it and getting it better and better," said Jim Douthat, attorney for the property owner, Faison-Southern Lane LLC.

Douthat said the plan stalled

two years ago over the high cost of making the 13-acre site usable. "It's a difficult site to put in," Douthat said. Home Depot began reconsidering the site about six-months ago.

The 220 plan centers upon a store of about 120,000 square feet on the southern side of property, near Wal-Mart. The plan also calls for realigning Southern Lane and creating an entrance from 220 at the current traffic signal at the entrance to Lowe's.

Two smaller commercial buildings of 5,000 and 7,500 square feet would be built at the northern end of the property.

The land will also be drastically regraded so the building will be beneath the level of the houses above it, allowing for a view across the top of the store and not into the side of it, Douthat said.

The development will also bring improved water, sewer and storm water collection pipes up to the back of the property, so the neighborhood can get the benefit of them as well, Douthat said.

In addition, Douthat said, developers will add a second box culvert to carry the stream called Ore Branch across the property underground.

All of the storm water runoff from the Home Depot, as well as from the proposed Wilton in South Roanoke upscale residential development farther up the mountain, will flow onto Ore Branch after being held in detention ponds, Douthat said.

The property is owned by a group that includes Valley View Mall and Wachovia Tower developer Faison Enterprises and the owner of the Save-X gas station on 220, which would be demolished if the Home Depot is built.

The owners would develop the

property and provide a building pad for Home Depot, which would lease the land and put up its own building, Douthat said. Under the earlier plan, Home Depot planned to buy the property.

The property is already zoned for commercial use, but the approved zoning is for a group of small outparcels including fast-food restaurants and a hotel. That plan and associated conditions would have to be changed and the changes approved by the Roanoke Planning Commission and the city council.

Douthat said he hopes to file plans with the city by the beginning of June, in time to have the project considered at the June 16 planning commission meeting.

In 2002, some Southern Hills residents expressed frustration and concern over how the store might affect their property values and quality of life. They wanted to know what the city was doing to improve the long-term viability of the area.

Residents of the predominately black neighborhood have been feeling the crush of booming development along 220 for years now. A Wal-Mart, Outback Steakhouse and other businesses have popped up, along with residential development at Pheasant Ridge and Southmont.

Most recently, Roanoke developer Boone, Boone & Loeb announced plans to put an upscale housing development called Wilton in South Roanoke on a 50-acre tract behind Southern Hills. Some residents were outraged to learn their streets would be used for noisy, dust-stirring construction traffic, but then would be closed off from the subdivision after a main gateway opened on Peakwood Drive in South Roanoke.