

Alcovy Road commercial development no more

Project Kitchen Sink has been shut down

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The plan to build a movie theater, hotels, offices and retail stores along Alcovy Road in Covington, known as Project Kitchen Sink, has been shut down.

The Covington City Council received word Friday that The Foxfield Company, developer of the project, has decided to take the project to another county.

"Overall, we just could not come to final terms as far as the performance criteria and building the roads," Covington Mayor Ronnie Johnston said. "It [the project] ended up being a pretty complicated thing because the city was involved, the county was involved."

Ralph Staffins, President of the Covington-Newton County Chamber of Commerce said, "The Chamber is disappointed that it's not going through. It's a project we worked on for over a year."

Part of the land being considered for development was owned privately, but owners had already agreed to sell the properties for the development. In November last year, the city agreed to sell 99.7 acres of land along Alcovy Road to The Foxfield Company for \$1.52 million. That amount would have gone toward the \$2.9 million in infrastructure improvement feeds required by the developer, according to the contract.

Another \$1.4 million would have been needed to pay for roads, and sewage and water infrastructure. Johnston said the city and county were in discussions about a site development agreement. The agreement would have been for the county to pay for the construction of the road into the development, while the city paying for the installation of utilities such as water, sewer and gas.

"We actually never made it to the part where we sat down with the county to work out an agreement on the infrastructure," said Johnston. "We couldn't reach terms that were comfortable for all parties. It's [been] quite a balancing act. Part of the challenge of this, what made it so unique is the

city and county had not had this type of retail opportunity [since I've been mayor]. That's where it became very difficult."

Johnston had high praise for the Foxfield's president Harry Kitchen. "He is a great guy, and the effort was there, but everything just didn't line up. We were fortunate to work with him.

According to the Covington-Newton County Chamber of Commerce Board of Directors, the developer would have invested over \$200 million in the project. The chamber estimated that local governments would receive \$1,316,545 per year in property and sales tax revenues, while the Newton County School System would receive \$1,856,875. The project was expected to take 10 years to "build out." (See article in The Covington News at <http://www.covnews.com/archives/200076/>.)

"We're going to keep working various other retail projects, as well as many industrial projects," said Staffins. "We're going to keep working as hard as we have been working to try to locate future retail development in Covington and Newton County."

Like Staffins, Johnston said there were other retail and industrial development interested in coming to the community.

"Now it's back to the drawing board," Johnston said. "We're still very optimistic about the community; bringing in more jobs and investments."

<http://www.covnews.com/section/1/article/200620/>