

# Verde next vista on growing Eastside

Haywood Road is historic retail hub, but development pushing to the east

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Jacci Upton pushed a stroller through Haywood Mall Thursday as her stepmother, Brenda DeYoung, walked alongside with Upton's 2-year-old son, Bo.

They were shopping for a birthday gift for the toddler, and they chose the mall because they wanted to avoid the traffic along Woodruff Road — a choice they make quite often, they said.

"I just think there's too much over there," said Upton, 31.

With big-name stores such as Barnes & Noble, ToysRUs and various smaller shops and restaurants, the commercial area along Haywood Road has been bustling with shoppers for years.

Much of that is attributed to Haywood Mall, which has anchored the commercial area since it opened in the early 1980s. At nearly 1.3 million square feet, it is one of the state's largest malls and draws more than 11 million shoppers annually.

And while the boom in businesses just east of the city limits



BART BOATWRIGHT / Staff

**Growing:** A bulldozer clears a lot on Haywood Road to build commercial property.

along Woodruff Road has prompted some businesses to move from other parts of the city, there are few vacant storefronts along Haywood Road, one city official said.

"There's a lot of stability," said Nancy Whitworth, city economic development director. Even when there are closures, others have moved in.

If Haywood Road represents the tried and true of Greenville's shopping districts, then Verdae Boulevard could represent the future of commercial development.

Running nearly exactly the same length as Haywood Road, the pine-tree-forested strip bisecting Woodruff and Laurens

Roads is seen by city officials and smart-growth advocates as a prime spot for both housing and pedestrian-friendly shopping.

The idea of mixed development is to avoid the sprawl that occurred along Woodruff Road, said Whitworth.

"We're not saying we don't want development to happen — we do. We just want it to be well-planned and make sure the infrastructure is there to support it," she said.

Avoiding lines of strip malls along Verdae would suit Diane Eldridge of Upstate Forever just fine. The local nonprofit group advocates conservation through planning, and Eldridge said a development where people could

both live and shop without having to get in their car would be ideal.

"Let's hope that 25 years from now Haywood and Woodruff are retail centers and Verdae is not," she said.

At Verdae Greens golf club Thursday, Chip Callaham walked to the driving range with a handful of clubs to practice his swing during his lunch break, which he does a few times week.

"It's a great stress reliever," he said.

A lifelong resident of Greenville, Callaham, 40, said he would like Verdae to stay the way it is — with maybe the exception of adding nine holes.

"But I'm a little biased," he said.