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City OKs new land use map

By Rudolph Bell
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Greenville City Council on Monday night approved a new land use map over the objections of some city residents who worry it will encourage apartment complexes and other high-density development in their established neighborhoods.

"I think we need to take a serious look here at the door we're opening up," said John Rodgers, a resident of the Vista Hills subdivision off Wade Hampton Boulevard. He was one of three speakers at a public hearing who objected to a new residential category shown on the land use map.

Four other speakers, however, praised the map during the meeting at City Hall.

The map is proposed to be included in the first update in a decade to the city's comprehensive plan, the document that guides where city development goes.

City planners have been working on the update for the past year and a half, and council members are scheduled to vote on a completed version in May. State law requires local governments to update comprehensive plans every decade, and the city's plan was last updated in April of 1999.

Members of City Council joined the Planning Commission in approving the map, with the exception of Mayor Knox White, who said he wasn't comfortable with what it might mean for development in neighborhoods.

A planner for Greenville County schools praised the map, as did the education director for Upstate Forever, a local environmental group.

But Bruce Polhamus of the White Oak Homeowners Association said he was concerned about a new residential category that would permit residential development as dense as 15 units per acre. He asked for people in the meeting who shared his concern to stand and nearly 15 people did.

City planners said any high-density development would still be subject to special plans for individual neighborhoods and a new zoning ordinance that have yet to be drawn up.

Council members Amy Ryberg Doyle and David Sudduth joined the mayor in questioning how the map might affect neighborhoods, with Doyle saying resolution of the issue was "really critical" to passage of the comprehensive plan update.