

ST. TAMMANY

SECTION

B

Tuesday,

September 22, 2009

NOLA.COM/NEWS CONTINUOUS BREAKING NEWS

DEATHS • B-8
EDITORIALS • B-4

North Covington shopping center OK'd

*Airport Road junction
may be improved*By Jeff Adelson
St. Tammany bureau

Covington Planning Commissioners approved the first phase of an 89-acre shopping center at the north end of the city, supporting plans for an athletic club

and a realignment of Airport Road that some hope will relieve problems at its intersection with Louisiana 25.

Covington Commons will eventually convert a par-3 golf course into a commercial center, though only the first phase along Louisiana 25 was up for approval Monday night. This section will be built around a Franco's Athletic Club and involve the addition of a round-

about and additional turn lanes to ease traffic flow at the intersection of Airport Road and Louisiana 25.

Julian J. "Rod" Rodrigue, attorney for Covington Commons LLC, said the realignment of the roadway was supported by every expert the developers have shown it to.

"We're stepping up to the plate to do that," Rodrigue said. Commissioners approved the

plans for the first phase unanimously.

The project will reconfigure Airport Road, which now meets Louisiana 25 at a sharp angle, by adding a roundabout that will allow the two roads to be joined at a right angle. The project will also add additional turn lanes at the intersection.

Commissioners had few comments on the project at Monday's meeting, though Chair-

man Keith Duet specifically noted the elimination of the tricky intersection of Louisiana 25 and Airport Road as a benefit.

"I think the proposed design is about the best we can get," Duet said.

Residents in the area said that while the plans seem to address some of their concerns about traffic, they hope the development will eventually in-

clude a traffic signal at the intersection.

The steady flow of cars along the state highway, which carries vehicles from St. Tammany Parish to Washington Parish, makes it difficult to make a left turn onto the roadway, said Rob Mingo, who lives on nearby River Road.

"They don't slow down until

See COV, B-2

Roundabout proposed at Louisiana 25

COV, from B-1

there's something to slow them down, and that's the signal at (U.S.) 190," Mingo said. Only another traffic signal can ease problems at the intersection, he said.

Rodrigue said Covington Commons also supports the addition of the signal, and will pay to have it installed, but needs to get approval from the state

Department of Transportation and Development.

"The state has indicated to us that the current traffic level does not meet requirements for a traffic signal," Rodrigue said. "You have to just stay on them and continually badger them from every government agency and say, 'I don't care what your numbers say, we need it.'"

Conceptual plans for the remainder of the development in-

clude a second roundabout that would provide another outlet to Louisiana 25 and an intersection at Branch Crossing Drive.

The first phase also includes five smaller plots, most of which front Louisiana 25, that will be occupied by other commercial projects, Rodrigue said.

Jeff Adelson can be reached at
jadelson@timespicayune.com or
985.645.2852.