

# Spotsy Supervisors Approve Ni Village Plan

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BY AMY FLOWERS UMBLE

Spotsylvania County could soon be home to a green college.

Supervisors last night voted to approve a rezoning for Ni Village, a proposed development of condos, shops, offices, pedestrian trails and restaurants.

And the project will start with college classrooms.

Andy Condlin spoke on behalf of Luck Development Partners and said the company hopes to start the Smith's Mill Education Center as soon as possible.

That center for environmental research would be a key part of the 333-acre sustainable development near Massaponax High School on U.S. 1.

Overall, the Ni Village project could bring 2,700 jobs to Spotsylvania, Condlin said.

Those jobs could multiply as the development attracts more businesses to the county, said Linwood Thomas, marketing and global business manager for the Fredericksburg Regional Alliance.

"This development would create a strong business-friendly image for Spotsylvania County," Thomas said last night at a public hearing on Ni Village.

He was one of about a dozen speakers at the hearing held during the Board of Supervisors meeting. Most supported the project.

"We have an extremely good plan; we have an extremely good company that's going to build it," said resident Leslie Dickerson. "This will be a benefit to the county."

But some were not enthralled.

The project would also create more traffic, place homes near a quarry and require more public services like schools and fire and rescue.

Supervisor Gary Jackson acknowledged that the project hit "all the new buzz words" but said it was too close to Luck Stone's Massaponax quarry.

"I do not for the life of me understand why we are seriously considering moving 950 residential units within a stone's throw of a rock quarry, pardon the pun," he said. "You hear it all the time: Great project, wrong location."

County resident Diane Kuechler worried about traffic, saying that U.S. 1 is already slow near Cosners Corner.

She said that road could become as clogged as State Route 3 once Ni Village sprouts in the area.

When Ni Village is at its heyday, the surrounding roads would get 19,000 more vehicle trips daily.

U.S. 1 would see a 29 percent increase in use, according to a traffic analysis performed for the county.

Luck Development Partners proffered \$4.6 million toward road improvements.

The company held several community input meetings in the past three years, and met with people living close to the project.

Supervisor Hap Connors said that level of involvement was unprecedented in Spotsylvania.

"When they heard from the community, they went back and revised the project accordingly," he said.

Supervisor Gary Skinner said that Luck Development's responsiveness made him confident that the county and the company will be able to collaborate on solutions to future traffic issues.

Supervisors voted 5-2 to support Ni Village. Jackson and Supervisor T.C. Waddy opposed the project.

Connors said that the project will be a unique development in the region.

"This gives us the opportunity to be a magnet," he said. "I'm excited about everything this project brings to Spotsylvania County."