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**\$450 million mixed-use development proposed
Site near Town Center would be Cobb's largest
CRAIG SCHNEIDER – staff**

Hoping to create the largest mixed-used development in Cobb County, a developer has proposed 4.1 million square feet of housing, office, hotel and retail space near Town Center mall.

"We are intrigued by the idea of creating a new town," Developer Stephen Arms, a partner in Town Center Associates, said Wednesday.

Sitting on a 45-acre site, the Cityside at Town Center would be nearly the size of three Lenox Square malls. Though massive by Cobb standards, the development would be less than a quarter the size of Midtown's Atlantic Station mixed-use development, both in acreage and square footage. The tallest building proposed in the Cobb development is a condo that could reach eight stories high.

The \$450 million development will likely face opposition from residents concerned about traffic. Many locals already complain of the traffic choking the largely commercial strip on Barrett Parkway, where the mall sits.

Grace Amato, 19, who works at Claire's Boutique in the mall, regularly struggles with the traffic there. Another giant development nearby would not be welcome, she said.

"It's pretty nasty," Amato said of the traffic. "It would make it worse."

Arms said the mostly residential project will be close to four interchanges of I-75 and I-575, and he said he is willing to pay for some road improvements that would address existing as well as future traffic problems.

Cityside will undergo its first review Monday by the Atlanta Regional Commission, which has deemed the project a "development of regional impact." The ARC will judge whether the project will strain the area's traffic infrastructure as well as review its environmental, water, sewer and housing impact. The project must also pass muster of the Georgia Regional Transportation Authority and receive a zoning change, from residential to urban village, from the Cobb County Board of Commissioners.

Cityside would be on Big Shanty Road, and include 2,700 condos and apartments in buildings of about five stories — no single-family detached houses — 300,000 square feet of office space, 300,000 square feet of retail and the 200-room hotel. The project would also include 100,000 square feet for nonprofit and religious uses, aiming to help create a sense of township there, Arms said.

Arms said he hopes to start construction next year and complete the project by 2015.

Cobb County Commissioner Tim Lee, who represents the area, said he is excited about the proposal. He said the project will let people walk from their homes to shops, jobs and restaurants.

"From a location perspective, it's perfect," Lee said.

He also noted that the county government plans several road projects in the area, such as widening and improving the conditions on Big Shanty Road, which will help alleviate traffic problems.

Lee also said the county will carefully review a traffic study on the project.

The project is among a growing number of mixed-use developments proposed in Cobb and around the metro area. It would also add to a spate of construction going on in the Town Center area, which already features a major mall, Kennesaw State University and numerous big box shopping centers.

A few months ago, a developer broke ground on another major project called The Village at TownPark in this north Cobb area that will include office and retail space, townhomes and a hotel on a 13-acre site. In addition, another 60 acres nearby was recently placed on the development market.

Lanie Shipp, executive director of the Town Center Community Improvement District, a public-private partnership to improve the area, said Cityside will provide needed residential development to support businesses there.

"This is just the kind of development we like to see," she said.