

nw 25 Observer

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PTI lands Boom Supersonic for \$500 million jet factory



Photos by Chris Burritt/NWO

N.C. Gov. Roy Cooper (left) and Kathy Savitt, Boom Supersonic president and chief business officer, speak to reporters at a press conference Jan. 26 when it was announced that Boom plans to build a \$500 million Overture Superfactory on 65 acres at PTI airport for the manufacturing of supersonic jets.

by CHRIS BURRITT

NW GREENSBORO – Boom Supersonic, a startup aviation company, selected Piedmont Triad International (PTI) airport as the location of a \$500 million facility where it plans to manufacture passenger jets traveling faster than sound.

The announcement last week by Boom Supersonic President Kathy Savitt, Gov. Roy Cooper and other state and local officials capped a year-long recruiting effort that will reportedly create more than 2,400 jobs by

2032. Average pay is estimated at \$68,792 a year.

“This afternoon, we are launching the future of flight,” Gov. Roy Cooper told the crowd gathering in PTI’s parking lot, marking the official Boom announcement after recent press reports said the company had selected PTI.

Boom, based in Denver, said it plans to create 1,761 jobs by 2030. North Carolina economists estimate that Boom’s operations, including final assembly,

...continued on p. 25

IN THIS ISSUE

- Heritage Farm Park funding gets boosts... 2
- Summerfield open to selling properties... 3
- Your Questions 4
- News in brief 8
- Pets & Critters 9
- Agility sport brings joy to owner, dogs ... 10
- NWO Kids' Korner 13, 18
- Obituary / Bits & Pieces..... 14
- Youth Sync: Mobile Makeover Update .. 19
- NWHS Cheerleaders 20
- Community Calendar 22
- Crime/Incident Report 23
- Grins and Gripes 24
- Classifieds 27
- Index of Advertisers..... 31
- NWO On The Go 32

Landowner releases details of plan for nearly 1,000 acres

Summerfield Farms owner David Couch seeks support for his proposal balancing higher residential density with a range of housing, green space and an extensive trail system

by CHRIS BURRITT

SUMMERFIELD – Developer David Couch has begun sharing details of his proposed

...continued on p. 6



Photo courtesy of Dover, Kohl & Partners

Summerfield resident David Couch hopes to develop 1,000 acres surrounding Summerfield Farms on Pleasant Ridge Road with a range of housing options, common open space, tree-lined streets with sidewalks and several miles of trails.

PLAN DETAILS

...continued from p. 1

development of almost 1,000 acres in Summerfield in a bid to persuade opponents and Summerfield Town Council to support his plan.

Couch is starting to meet with Summerfield leaders, six months after withdrawing his application for a text amendment to the town's development rules. His original proposal drew criticism from some residents for its lack of specifics, fueling opposition to higher density housing he proposed for Summerfield Farms and several other tracts cutting a wide swath from Summerfield Road to Interstate 73.

"This land is calling upon me to do it right, and that is, provide access, provide connectivity, provide an outdoor lifestyle with multiple different options for people to be here in Summerfield," Couch said in an interview earlier this week.

While his overall plan for developing

973 acres remains largely unchanged from previous presentations, he's revealing details sought by Summerfield residents and members of the town's Planning Board and Town Council. He plans to talk to reporters this Thursday, Feb. 3, in a press conference at Summerfield Farms where he's begun meeting with town staff, council members and residents.

Couch is aiming to present his proposal for a new text amendment to the Planning Board during its March 28 meeting, followed by the council's consideration April 12. He plans to hold a community meeting before the council's vote.

Couch, who sees himself more as the founder than the developer of his proposed community, wants to build a mix of housing – estate and traditional homes, cottages, townhouses, duplexes and apartments – in 11 villages clustered on his property. The project is far larger than any in Summerfield, and it differs from the

traditional layout of subdivisions within the town that offer houses on lot sizes of one acre or more.

Its design also veers from what Couch calls "transactional" development and instead, he's pursuing the "transformational" development of his property, preserving the most scenic views as a first step, followed by the placement of building lots.

Couch is proposing another first for Summerfield: construction of apartments, a lightning rod in the divisive debate over higher housing density.

Practically speaking, the addition of rental units and other multifamily housing on Couch's property would push density higher than Summerfield's zoning rules allow for single-family houses on lots with minimums of 30,000 and 40,000 square feet. Such RS-30 and RS-40 zoning sets the maximum overall gross density of one unit per acre, according to the town's unified development ordinance (UDO).

Over the next 25 years or longer, Couch said he envisions 3,796 homes being constructed on 973 acres, resulting in density of 3.9 units per acre.

By comparison, the proposed density of his development is similar to density in Greensboro subdivisions such as Sunset Hills and New Irving Park, according to designers working for Couch.

Even so, Couch said he's prepared for opponents of his plans to seize upon the proposed higher density as

a reason to reject his proposal. At the same time, he's betting that other residents and council members are going to be more open to increasing density in exchange for the benefits his design will offer not only to residents of the development, but to the Summerfield community.

A map with the working title "Summerfield Villages" shows housing clusters surrounded by rolling pastures preserved as green space and winding, tree-lined streets with sidewalks where "it feels right to go 8 mph," said Victor Dover, a founding principal of design firm Dover, Kohl and Partners of Coral Gables, Florida, hired by Couch to design the project.

Couch points out that more than eight miles of trails for walkers and bikers would connect the villages and the shopping center he plans to build on N.C. 150 at I-73. The trails would also connect to public trails such as the Atlantic & Yadkin and Piedmont greenways, enabling residents in his development to hop on bikes at home and cycle to Greensboro or Winston-Salem.

Single-family homes, including townhouses, would make up about two-thirds of the total number of dwellings, Dover said. He cited Habersham, an award-winning community in Beaufort County, South Carolina, as an example of a successful, well-designed development with a variety of housing types.

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Couch said apartments would be limited to four of the 11 villages in his development. They would be located on the site of the shopping center near I-73 and N.C. 150 and two other corners of the interchange.

The fourth site for apartments would be the eastern-most village, located between Summerfield Road and Pleasant Ridge Road across from the entrance to the Farm at Summerfield, a subdivision developed by Couch about 20 years ago.

Construction of rental apartments and smaller houses and townhomes for sale would enable people with more moderate incomes, such as young families, to move to Summerfield, while allowing empty nesters to downsize and continue living in the town, according to Couch and his designers.

The text amendment being sought by Couch would create a new zoning district, called OSM-V, or open space mixed use – village. It would allow for higher density housing than

allowed by the UDO.

Couch said he's paused discussions with the city of Greensboro about extending water and sewer lines to his property until the council votes on his text amendment request.

If the council approves creation of the new district, Couch and town officials would negotiate a development agreement for enforcing design and construction standards. It would also regulate the types of housing allowed in the villages.

Couch reiterated that his plan embraces all key concepts of Summerfield's comprehensive plan, which encourages construction of moderately priced houses and preservation of green space. While the UDO adopted by the council last year loosened density regulations in some zoning districts, the rules don't allow construction of apartments.

Last year, Couch said such limitations put Summerfield at risk of housing discrimination lawsuits, a concern



Rendering courtesy of Dover, Kohl & Partners

This rendering for the development of Summerfield Farms shows a village with a mix of housing anchored by a courtyard.

echoed by Town Attorney Bob Hornik.

If the council rejects his proposal, Couch said he won't give up on his efforts to develop his property with housing options that are affordable

to more people.

"My question to the town is, 'if not this, then what is your solution for the unfairness that is going on in this town?'" he said.

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