

# Hamilton OKs zoning changes for Rt. 130

Wednesday, May 20, 2009  
BY RYAN TRACY

HAMILTON -- More large commercial development could be coming to the township's Route 130 corridor now that the township council has approved zoning changes along the highway.

The council voted 4-0 last night in favor of new rules designed to give builders more leeway in developing two Route 130 parcels. (Councilman Kevin Meara was absent during the vote.)

Hotels and certain large commercial developments will now be permitted in the two spots, meaning the planning board (not the zoning board) will likely review the projects.

The town hopes that change will attract more interest in construction along Route 130: builders have a higher burden of proof if they are seeking the zoning board's approval to deviate from land use rules.

One of the impacted parcels is located near Interstate 195 and the town's border with Robbinsville, while another is located across from the Shoppes at Hamilton. Both are on the southbound side of the highway.

The zoning changes permit a maximum of 500,000 square feet of retail space in a "planned commercial development," up from 75,000 square feet under old rules. Only 25 percent of that space must be set aside for large "magnet" or "anchor" stores, down from 80 percent.

Some residents have questioned whether development on the formerly rural highway corridor the best thing for a town that is already peppered with empty storefronts, but Hamilton's current leadership wants to make Route 130 a "destination."

The vote on the twin land use ordinances had been delayed for procedural reasons, but township attorney Lindsay Burbage said last night no further public notice was required. The ordinances were a late addition to the council's agenda.