



Proposed \$1.3 billion retail development in Decatur could impact Huntsville, Tennessee Valley region



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DECATUR, Alabama - The cities along the I-65 corridor in north Alabama, including Huntsville and Madison, could all benefit from a possible \$1.3 billion retail development being negotiated by Decatur city leaders with an unidentified company.

The project could bring about 4,000 jobs to the area in what would provide a major economic boost to the Tennessee Valley, said Decatur City Council President Gary Hammon.

In a special-called meeting tonight, the Decatur City Council unanimously approved a resolution authorizing Mayor Don Kyle to continue negotiations with the tenant on the west side of I-65 where I-565 veers to the east.

The property is in the Decatur city limits.

"Absolutely," Hammon said when asked about the potential for regional impact. "We're really blessed right here where we're at. Anything we do positive here should have a positive effect on Huntsville, Athens, Madison, Hartselle. I don't know how far reaching it could be. But it's just good news."

Not much is known publicly about the project because Kyle and the council have signed confidentiality agreements. Hammon said after the meeting he did not even want to put a dollar amount on the project for the sake of confidentiality, even though he joined the council in approving the resolution that called for a "projected investment of \$1.3 billion."

The resolution describes a "developer who wishes to remain anonymous at this time, who has proposed a major development in the area" and "should be a catalyst for further development of a larger portion of the project area."

Afterward, Hammon acknowledged that the project could lead to affiliated projects that could provide more economic growth.

"We will see tangential growth around it also, not just this one (project)," he said.

Kyle was out of town and not available for comment.

The proposal provides for 1.35 million square feet of retail development, according to the resolution.

Asked about a timetable for the project, Hammon said, "That's not up to me."

The project must come back to the council for final approval once negotiations have been completed.

"My job as president of the council and all the council, we're not supposed to get down to the nut cracking," Hammon said. "We're supposed to look at the overall project. The skeleton as it stands is acceptable. If it gets a little too meaty one way or the other, we may have to back off. But there's a structure that I can live with (right now)."

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