

PRESS-REGISTER

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Editorials

Spring Hill 'village' can coexist with CVS

MANY COMMUNITIES and civic groups talk a great deal about wanting planned, livable neighborhoods where growth is controlled and people can walk and visit the way they used to do in the old days.

In Mobile's Spring Hill community, they aren't just talking about it — they are gathering support, putting the plan together and trying to put the brakes on a new CVS Pharmacy they think will hurt the effort.

The Village of Spring Hill group deserves the support of the Mobile City Council in its quest for a temporary moratorium on new construction at three of the busiest intersections — the commercial corridors at Old Shell Road and McGregor Avenue, Old Shell and Bit & Spur Road, and McGregor and Museum Drive.

CVS representatives can proceed with the new building under current regulations, and say the deal will fall through if the moratorium goes through. But the Press-Register editorial board believes that this doesn't have to be a case of developers vs. civic planners or preservationists, with one winner and one loser.

The Mitchell Company, the developer of the proposed CVS at the southwest corner of Old Shell and McGregor, can build a CVS Pharmacy that will be an asset to Spring Hill and fit in with the character and concept of the Village. It need not look like the standard CVS pharmacies of suburbia, with most of the parking paved in front of the familiar cream-and-red-block building.

Representatives of the Village of Spring Hill have rounded up multiple examples of CVS pharmacies that fit right in with the surrounding business districts, in both new construction and renovations of existing

buildings. From South Carolina to Massachusetts to Arizona, the neighborhood CVS blends in instead of looking like a piece of suburbia set down in the middle of town.

We hope that the Village of Spring Hill and The Mitchell Company can agree on a similar look for the new pharmacy; a Mitchell representative has said the company is preparing a new site plan and alternate designs.

However, to ensure that the Village group has enough time to get its plan through the city approval process, and to give everyone affected by it enough time to study and offer their opinions on it, the City Council needs to enact the six-month moratorium.

The Village wants to create a walkable community with buildings set close to the streets and sidewalks, and with a business district resembling that of Fairhope. The concept is gaining traction in many parts of the country as people recall the lifestyle and sense of community of the cities and towns in which they grew up. Environmental concerns also favor that kind of growth — it saves gasoline and promotes exercise if someone can walk down to the drug store and back.

Village supporters have raised some \$1 million on their own and worked to gain broad support throughout Spring Hill. This isn't a group that came to the city and asked that city officials do all the work; the group is driving the movement itself. But the proposals will require extensive changes in city building regulations affecting the area.

This is the kind of smart growth that city leaders should be supporting. If the end result is a more attractive community where people want to live, that's also good for business.