

Planned Clintonville apartment buildings called 'extended-stay hotels' to avoid rezoning

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Developers have proposed building 552 apartments as part of three Clintonville projects.

The largest development would be on a 10-acre site on Indianola Avenue immediately south of the T. Marzetti Co. plant. Vision Development of Columbus proposes a 300-unit apartment and four commercial buildings on the property, which is home to the Dixie International trucking terminal.

According to plans submitted to the city, the development would include two connected buildings and a parking garage behind one retail, one restaurant and two office buildings fronting Indianola Avenue. The proposal calls for the trucking terminal to be demolished.

The project would include a few studio apartments with the rest roughly divided between one- and two-bedroom units, said Vision Development President Brent Wrightsel. The apartment building will include a pool, lounge and fitness center.

Vision is looking for a gastropub or tavern for the main restaurant building, and a coffee shop and deli for the other building, Wrightsel said.

"This will be a true urban mixed-use project," he said.

Even though the project will function as an apartment building, it is being presented to the city as an extended-stay hotel, which is allowed under the current zoning. An apartment building would require a zoning change, which Wrightsel said is too restrictive for the plan.

"The existing zoning allows this urban mixed-use product type that is critical for our urban core and a missing component for Clintonville," he said. "If you go to straight apartment zoning you lose all the flavor of mixed use."

Down the street, the Columbus apartment developer Preferred Living has taken the same approach for its proposal for a 52-unit residence in a three-story building at the northeast corner of Indianola Avenue and Cooke Road.

Some officials say the developments are exploiting a loophole to avoid the scrutiny of the rezoning process.

"I'm sure that's the case," said Kristopher Keller, chairman of the Clintonville Area Commission. "It does concern me because it takes the power away from the community to have any input to what's being built."

In another Clintonville development, Columbus developer Casto has proposed building 200 apartments in six three-story buildings on the southwest corner of Graceland Shopping Center between the Kroger and LA Fitness buildings.

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