

## Lakeside homes may replace gravel pit

By Denise Ruttan

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A former gravel pit in Turner could get new life as a major housing development — which in turn could breathe new life into Turner, city officials say.

The 169-acre site, owned by JC Compton Co., is on the north edge of town.

It is poised to become a development with a ring of approximately 350 mixed-use single-family homes and condominiums surrounding a 70-acre man-made lake, Turner city officials said last week.

The gravel excavation mine was operated by River Bend Sand and Gravel and stopped operating as a mine in December 2007.

City Administrator David Sawyer said the redevelopment proposal from JC Compton could boost Turner's economic viability in challenging times.

In recent years, the city has struggled to retain and attract businesses, and this year instituted an extra police services surcharge to keep its general operations budget in the black.

"For the city to have a downtown, we need more homes. As the project develops, it has the potential to draw businesses to town," Sawyer said. "The added tax base and water and sewer users will help water and sewer rates in Turner and greatly help tax-funded services like police."

JC Compton originally submitted a proposal more than 10 years ago as part of the state's aggregate mining planning process, and since then the plan has been revised to make way for higher-density development.

"When we originally set up redevelopment plans, the city of Turner didn't have sewer and you couldn't develop anything less than 3 1/4-acre parcels for a septic tank and drainage field," said Jay Compton, president of JC Compton. "Now that the city is serviced by a sewer system, that has changed density requirements. That's more economical because the market is going for smaller lots."

The company submitted its application to the city Friday. The city has been meeting with JC Compton for the past two years, Sawyer said.

If approved, the company's timeline for construction depends on the economy, Compton said.

"Right now the city of Salem and surrounding areas are sitting on a plethora of undeveloped subdivisions that aren't selling," Compton said.

Turner Mayor Carly Strauss, who has lived in town since the mid-1990s, said the

### What's next

The project's first public hearing before the Turner Planning Commission is 6:30 p.m. July 21 at Turner Fire Hall, 7605 Third St. SE.

JC Compton Co.'s application is available for public viewing at city hall before the hearing.

redevelopment proposal is a positive transition for a mining operation that had seen its share of controversy.

"Obviously, the benefit is turning a mining site into something that will benefit the whole community," Strauss said.

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