

# Construction of outdoor music venue in Brunswick County to begin soon. Here's what to know



Brunswick County families could be enjoying live music at a serene, wooded, outdoor venue within the next year.

Construction of Cumberland Woods, [an outdoor music venue in rural Brunswick County](#), is set to begin soon, following the approval of a special use permit for the project. Peter Higgins and Steve Shuttleworth, Cumberland Woods owners and New Hanover County residents, hope to bring a family-friendly music and events venue to a

wooded, presently vacant area off Galloway Road in Bolivia.

Higgins said he has a background in sales and marketing, and Shuttleworth is a local developer. Self-proclaimed "deadheads," the two said the venue's name is inspired by the song "Cumberland Blues" by Grateful Dead.



The two have begun winding down in their respective careers and, having "talked about this dream for many years," Higgins said they thought now was the time to do it.

The two acquired 352 acres of land some two and a half years ago and dreamed of developing part of it for this vision. The business partners are looking to bring an outdoor events space between Wilmington and Myrtle Beach, South Carolina. Bolivia, the Brunswick

County seat, sits some 20 miles south of downtown Wilmington and 40 miles east of Myrtle Beach.

Getting the project approved has been a slow process, Higgins said. [After a year and a half of planning and reviewing](#), a special use permit for the project was recently approved by the Brunswick County Zoning Board of Adjustment.



The land is zoned for commercial low density development. While that zoning district allows for the construction of breweries, bars and other commercial and residential services, it does not allow outdoor entertainment. The construction of a live music and events venue required a special-use permit from the county.

Higgins envisions a family-friendly space for live music and other

events, where shows will begin fairly early in the evenings and finish before 11 p.m. The venue will serve beer and wine, he said, but no liquor. Rather than cooking on site, Shuttleworth said they hope to bring in area food trucks for events.

News of the proposed project sparked some controversy in the community. An online petition began circulating earlier this year calling for the project to be halted, arguing there is a lack of demand for such a space, and that the noise and traffic would impact the area's environment and wildlife. The petition has garnered nearly 150 signatures since its start.

Higgins said of the 352-acre property, only 28 acres are set to be developed for this project in hopes the additional space will provide a natural noise buffer. The stage area will face away from Galloway Road and toward the rest of the wooded property. Of the impacted area, the two added, only about 10 have actually been cleared of trees and seeded with grass for parking and seating space.

"We are very cognizant of their concerns, and we want to be good neighbors," Higgins said. "We intentionally bought 350 acres of which we're using 30."

Brunswick County is growing rapidly. [Area residents have been pushing against development of any kind in recent months](#), showing up to planning board meetings to speak out against each newly proposed project. Higgins said the interest in the land has been high, with other developers interested in potentially developing the entire parcel.

"If we hadn't gotten approved and we had sold the land, somebody else was going to develop it," Higgins said. "It's not going to just sit there dormant."

Maintaining the integrity of the property is crucial to the vision for the space, Shuttleworth said, both for the aesthetics and the natural sound barrier.

"Our goal is to leave it as natural as possible," Higgins said. "We're going to have grass parking lots, the venue area is going to be grass. We're leaving as many of the trees as we possibly can."

Nearby outdoor music venues include the Live Oak Bank Pavilion at Riverfront Park in downtown Wilmington and Greenfield Lake Amphitheater at Greenfield Park, also in Wilmington. Live Nation manages both Wilmington venues. Cumberland Woods, Higgins said, hopes to offer an experience different from these nearby venues with other events, such as farmers markets or car shows, in addition to music.

Higgins said they're looking to break ground on the stage and bathroom area in the coming months and hoping to be hosting events by early next year.

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Higgins said he did not yet know what the future of the rest of the property could be.

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