



Central Park team to begin rapid talk stops

By Chris Roark, Staff Writer

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Developers for the River Walk at Central Park project have been on a fast-paced schedule to draw up some ideas for Flower Mound officials to consider.

And, for the next few weeks, their schedule is about to get even busier.

Following Thursday's meeting with the town council, the development team is preparing for a blitzkrieg of presentation stops with various boards and commissions.

The next step is the developers' meeting with the Planning and Zoning Commission on Monday, one of three meetings they expect to have with the commission. Developers will have about 10 meetings with different town boards through April.

Councilman Al Filidoro said the developers' goal is to have a final presentation ready for the council by late April.

The proposed project, which was brought to the town by developer Cole McDowell in October, would give Flower Mound a town center that includes a hospital, a hotel, a river walk and various residential and commercial units. The site is located north of FM 1171 and between FM 2499 and Morriss Road.

The council showed optimism for the progress being made in the project following the meeting that featured presentations from McDowell, Bobby Dollak, a civil engineer for G&A Consultants and Michael Swartz, a representative for the David M. Schwarz architecture firm.

Filidoro said he was happy to hear how McDowell's team has quickly responded to the council's suggestions.

"Cole hasn't cast this in stone yet," Filidoro said. "The town and the developers both want to do the right thing."

Filidoro said one example of the developers being flexible was with the amount of retail stores along the river walk. In original discussions, the river walk was heavily lined with residential units, but the board wanted more retail in the area.

"We're still looking at that aspect," Filidoro said. "But, the developers came back with more retail there. The council is still interested in high-end retail that's accessible so the river walk could remain vibrant."

The river walk is expected to be the main attraction on the 160-acre site.

"The river walk will be a rare jewel in Flower Mound," said Mayor Jody Smith. "In the 24 years that I've lived here, we'll finally have a town center. The development is being handled by a team that is very open. They're posting details on the town's Web site and have addressed every concern publicly."

Along with the river walk, plans call for a Presbyterian hospital and medical center, which is would be included in the first phase of the seven-phase plan.

"The fact that the hospital and medical center are included in the first phase is worthwhile because it means it will happen sooner, and that the residents don't have to go to another community for treatment," Filidoro said. "I think it will be a major anchor."

The plan also calls for residential areas that feature a variety style of condos, townhomes, lofts over retail and office buildings, multi-family housing, a hotel and, following suggestions from council members, senior and assisted living units.

Commercial uses would include medical, office, retail and dining locations.

Centering it all would be a crescent-shaped central park, which developers and town officials envision being host to community events.

Swartz touted several aspects of the design, ranging from connectivity of the roads, to ability to easily walk through the north-south boundaries of the site in 20 minutes.

"This will be a destination for people in Flower Mound and other places in North Texas," said Mayor Pro Tem Jeff Tasker. "It's consistent with the high standards we have set in the town."

Information on the project will be updated on the town's Web site regularly. For information, go to www.flower-mound.com and click on quick links, then click on River Walk at Central Park.