



THE FLOWER MOUND Messenger

Friday, Feb. 29, 2008

Building Blocks

River Walk at Central Park Ready for FM 'Steeplechase'

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Submitted Artwork

A tree lined view of a proposed street in the business district of the River Walk at Central Park development.

The recently renamed River Walk at Central Park development – previously known as The Forums – has started the bureaucratic trip through the Town of Flower Mound's various guidelines, restrictions, ordinances, committees, commissions, councils and public meetings.

Developer Cole McDowell and members of the architectural firm David M. Schwarz Architectural Services, Inc. of Washington, D.C., presented plans for a 158-acre "downtown" Flower Mound to a joint meeting last fall of the Planning & Zoning Commission and the Town Council.

Prominent components include a hospital, 3,200 foot-long river walk, 40 acres of parks and a 10-story building with an Italian-influenced plaza at the heart of the development.

"The plan has really shaped up," McDowell said. "We'll start with these initial phases and what will happen is we will build off of those."

The first phase is expected to include the hospital, some residential, a grocery store and 600,000 square feet of retail, restaurants, and office space mixture. The south-end retail area has "really come out nice," McDowell said.

"I'm excited about the site plan of the southern retail. While that corner could look like any other typical strip center, it's far from that," he said.

A main element of the development, bordered by Cross Timbers, Long Prairie and Morriss roads, will be five different types of residential that will be mainly located along Morriss Road. The various

residential structures will include senior living, condominiums, town houses or duplex and some multifamily.

According to the town's zoning map, the property is zoned for multifamily use, office and retail. That will need to be amended to create a new zoning district for the development tentatively referred to as the Central Business District (CBD). An amendment to the town's master plan will also be needed to create the CBD. McDowell and his team have asked for the town's approval for the development by April.

"It is possible to bring this project forward within their time-frame, but a lot of work needs to be done over the next month to make that happen," Flower Mound's Executive Director of Development Services Doug Powell said.

When asked about plans regarding the trees on the development, McDowell responded: "We are still on target with what we presented council in the workshop that we did. We will be at 70 percent minimum tree canopy replacement and my goal is to get us to a one to one," or in other words, 100 percent tree canopy recovery, he said.

"I'm sensitive to trees, too," he said, "and I realize that they're an asset to the project and to the community."

The urban forest is included in the tree canopy and "we're creating a 130-foot tree buffer on the north and east side of The Forums subdivision," McDowell said.

In his initial presentation last fall, McDowell stated, "I've told the gas company 'get the wells in before we get the people in.'"

In a recent interview, he said the gas wells are still first priority and that the northern part of the 158 acres has been identified.

"This is the only location where the gas can be drilled to get to this 1,000 acre pool of gas which will benefit the citizens in the surrounding area significantly," McDowell said.

Red Oak Gas is being considered for the project and they told McDowell they will start drilling in July of next year, he said.

Construction of the hospital will start this summer McDowell said, and the retail component will start late summer. The residential will begin in early fall and some medical offices will be started in late fall, he added.

The total project upon completion will be \$1.1 billion on the tax roles, he said. McDowell believes that the project will be completed in a seven or eight years.

"That's a lot of construction and a lot of things that's going to happen. But it will be like no other town center project in this country," McDowell said.