

Developer plans neighborhood retail center at 83rd and Happy Valley Road

Property includes former site for a proposed Islamic mosque

By Cecilia Chan
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A developer has his eye on a piece of prime real estate at the southeast corner of Happy Valley Road and 83rd Avenue with the intention of putting in restaurants and shops.

Mark Cavan, president and founder of MDC Land Development in Scottsdale, said last week he expects to close soon on the property, which consists of three separately owned lots, totaling roughly

nine acres.

One of the lots is owned by the Islamic Center of Peoria, which had planned to build a mosque on the site. The project raised concerns of safety and falling property values from nearby residents. A Islamic Center official declined to confirm if the property was under contract for sale.



Mark Cavan

"Any past proposal on the property does not have anything to do with us," Mr. Cavan said. "We are proposing a neighborhood retail center. We are talking to current chains.

"The community is starving for more restaurants and shopping in the area," he added. "It is a major corridor and the best use of the property. And with the expansive growth happening in the area we thought that was the best use for it."

Mr. Cavan, who previously lived in the Westwing neighborhood, said the company will seek to rezone the land from residential to commercial and anticipated holding neighborhood meetings by the end of January.

Mesquite District Councilwoman Bridget Binsbacher, who represents the area, said she was encouraged that there is interest in developing that land.

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"The preliminary concept looked nice and depicted a unique community social experience that many Mesquite residents have expressed interest in," she said. "At this time, however, no official applications have been filed with the city, and we do not have the benefit of formal citizen input."



Bridget Binsbacher

"My primary concern is that our residents — especially the people who live around the proposed site — must have an opportunity to voice their opinion on any proposed development projects in our neighborhood," she added.

City Planning Director Chris Jacques said staff met with MDC in a pre-application meeting Dec. 9 to discuss the idea and the city's process should the proposed project moves forward.

"We don't have an opinion on it right now," he said. "It's premature right now, just a proposal."

Mr. Jacques said a rezoning request would need a general plan amendment and approval from the city council, which takes time. He also said MDC will have to justify the need to rezone the lots.

Mr. Jacques said he is unsure what the market is or the need is for the proposed commercial project.

"Until there is some information to demonstrate that, it's hard to say we need

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commercial there," he said. "They will have to demonstrate that for us."

He noted farther north land that was zoned commercial at Westwing and Lak Pleasant parkways was rezoned to residential because an economic study showed an abundance of commercial in the area and that neighborhood commercial is not needed in the location.

In considering the rezoning request the city also must be careful about maintaining the health of existing commercial center and not dilute existing centers, he said.

Located less than a mile away at Happy Valley Road and Lake Pleasant Parkway is the Lake Pleasant Pavilion and across the street is the Lake Pleasant Towne Center.

Mr. Cavan said the only thing that would stop the project is if the rezoning was denied.

"I've been working on this property for the past couple of years at least," he said. "We finally got all our ducks in a row and it's full speed ahead and moving forward for us."

The proposed location for the commercial project is surrounded by more than 4,000 homes within a two-mile radius.

A project taking root in the area at 2473 N. Lake Pleasant Parkway is a Fry's Market place and fuel center. The market is anticipated to open next year.



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