

Orlando Sentinel

LATEST BUZZ: TARGET STORE IN WORKS SOME CLERMONT COUNCIL MEMBERS ARE WORRIED ABOUT TRAFFIC PROBLEMS, BUT OTHERS SAID RESIDENTS WANT OPTIONS.

[FLORIDA Edition]

Orlando Sentinel - Orlando, Fla.

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Date: Dec 7, 2000

Section: LAKE SENTINEL

Text Word Count: 573

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CLERMONT -- The city could be home to another big-box retailer along one of its busiest thoroughfares.

SOLO Development Corp., owned by Daryl Carter and his father, Maury Carter, wants to build a 203,000-square-foot center on 40 acres at Hancock Road and State Road 50.

The word is out that a mega-retailer -- rumored to be Target -- would be the center's anchor. The issue won't be voted on until after a public hearing at next month's City Council meeting.

The Carters are asking for a variance to the city's "big-box" ordinance, which states that no single store can be larger than 100,000 square feet. The proposed anchor store would be 187,000 square feet, nearly double the ordinance limit.

Although officials at Target's corporate headquarters in Minneapolis and the Carters would not confirm that Target will be the retailer, council members and city officials say that is the word they have received.

"The buzz is that it's a Target," said council member Jeff Biddle. "I don't want to come to any conclusions about it until I hear the good and the bad of it, and what the public thinks."

Tonight, the council will have a workshop to discuss revised plans for the center. They first heard about the plan back in October, but the developer has changed the design.

Council members are interested in hearing the details.

"I heard it was going to be a SuperTarget," said council member Elaine Renick. "My initial reaction when I hear super-anything is the traffic. I don't think people think about the car trips and the amount of traffic you are generating. We're talking [S.R.] 50 here."

Target operates about 900 stores in 44 states, including Target Greatland stores, which are generally larger versions of standard Target and SuperTarget stores. SuperTargets include a grocery store, pharmacy, restaurant and bank, among other services.

The average Target store is 90,000 to 125,000 square feet; Greatland stores are 135,000 square feet; and SuperTarget stores average 177,000 square feet.

Whether or not the proposed store is a Target, it is certainly a big box. Similar proposals in the past have made folks in Clermont uneasy.

The biggest controversy hit two years ago with Wal-Mart. The world's largest retailer purchased land at the city's busiest intersection -- U.S. Highway 27 and S.R. 50. Residents and businesses in Clermont rallied against plans to build a 287,000-square-foot supercenter, and the City Council killed those with the "big-box" ordinance.

The biggest problems with the Wal-Mart proposal, according to city officials, were the proposed location and traffic worries.

Biddle agrees traffic is a concern in the city, but the community appears to want more shopping options.

"Whether people like it or not, the people are here," he said. "Everyone wants restaurants and things to do. Are we going to make them drive to Ocoee, or are we going to have something in Clermont?"

Some people in the surrounding area of the proposed center don't appear too worried about traffic.

Nick Condorousis, regional president for Levitt and Sons, the builder of Summit Greens -- a 55-and- older development being constructed just east of the proposed center -- said he has been working closely with the Carters and likes the proposal.

"They've told us they want to integrate it into the community, and I should be happy with the user," he said.

The workshop will be at 6 p.m. at the Clermont Police Department, 865 W. Montrose St.