

AFTER 3-YEAR WAIT, CENTER CLOSE TO GETTING OFF GROUND ORANGE CITY OFFICIALS ARE ENTHUSIASTIC ABOUT THE COMMERCIAL DEVELOPMENT, BUT ITS NEIGHBORS AREN'T SO SURE.

[VOLUSIA Edition]

Orlando Sentinel - Orlando, Fla.

Author: Gwyneth K. Shaw of The Sentinel Staff

Date: Jan 11, 1997

Section: LOCAL & STATE

Text Word Count: 663

Document Text

(Copyright 1997)

An old development plan is new again, and moving forward as rapidly as its backers can go.

It has been more than three years since the Orange City Council approved the site plan for a 21-acre commercial center adjacent to the Saxon Boulevard and Interstate 4 interchange. But changes have come fast after a lot of waiting.

The property, 69 acres, got a new owner last fall, Maury L. Carter and Associates. Since then, much of the land earmarked for development has been cleared and contracts for tenants will soon be in the works.

City officials and the property owners are looking forward to what they say will be an impressive addition to Orange City.

"It could be very, very attractive. That's what I certainly hope it will be," City Manager Bruce Behrens said.

Daryl Carter, president of Carter and Associates, said his company isn't sure yet what direction the center will take. The zoning allows for everything from medical offices to retail stores to restaurants. One thing he is promising is that it will be both easy on the eyes and kind to the environment.

Behrens' vision of the Saxon corridor as the "Emerald City" is shared by the developers, Carter said.

"We recognize that the property kind of sits at the gateway to the Emerald City and we recognize that in that corridor it's important visually and aesthetically that high-quality projects be developed there," Carter said.

"We are seeking to put high-quality uses in that are going to be worthy of the property's position and the city's plans for that area."

Carter wouldn't give details on the estimated cost and worth of the project, saying only it would be in the "millions and millions of dollars."

The site plan includes filling in 6 acres of Goose Lake, which runs up against I-4, to make the strip that fronts on Saxon wider. The St. Johns River Water Management District, which granted the permits for the border changes, is requiring Carter to create 12 more acres of wetland on the property to make up for the loss.

Once the new parameters of the lake have been fixed, efforts to attract wildlife to the area will be stepped up, Carter said. A binding agreement that was included in the site plan requires a 75-foot buffer of trees on three sides and that most of the back of the property be dedicated to conservation.

The sudden clearing of the land has raised a few eyebrows in Orange City and Deltona, which lies just over the highway bridge. While close neighbors of the project hadn't forgotten it was coming, their anger at its existence has been renewed.

Residents of Orange City Estates, which is in unincorporated Volusia County, acknowledge that Carter's company is sticking to the rules laid out in the permits. But they still hate the development as much as they did in 1993, when a group of them got a lawyer and demanded to be heard by the city.

"What irritates me more than anything is that they can take a natural wetlands and there's birds and beasts and so on, fill that all in, then dig a hole somewhere else that's twice the size as the original one, and that makes it all right," said Pete Wells, who has lived across the street from the property for 34 years.

"It's aggravating. I know development happens, but I don't have to like it."

Orange City Council member Dennis Brown - who, citing environmental concerns, was the lone dissenting vote when the site plan was approved - said there's nothing that can be done now but trust the developer.

"I still have reservations about it, but they have their permits," he said. "The controversy happened when the site plan was reviewed and the site plan was approved. There's no new controversy here.

"I think if you go up there and look at it, you'll find the developer is doing exactly what they were permitted for."

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction or distribution is prohibited without permission.

Abstract (Document Summary)

The site plan includes filling in 6 acres of Goose Lake, which runs up against I-4, to make the strip that fronts on Saxon wider. The St. Johns River Water Management District, which granted the permits for the border changes, is requiring [Daryl Carter] to create 12 more acres of wetland on the property to make up for the loss.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction or distribution is prohibited without permission.