

Rural Osteen faces crossroads

Another developer wants nearly 3,000 acres to become part of Deltona.

By Lisa Emmerich
Sentinel Staff Writer

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DELTONA -- Another major residential development may soon call the city home. A real-estate developer who purchased nearly 3,000 acres just outside the city last month applied this week for annexation into development-friendly Deltona.

The Carter family, a major player in Central Florida development for 40 years, bought the land in rural Osteen for almost \$12 million. The name of national homebuilder Centex Homes was stamped on the application for annexation into the city, but Daryl M. Carter would not comment on the company's involvement.

As Deltona pushes east into what Volusia County has designated as an environmental corridor, many Osteen residents dread watching the rural character of their community disappear. But others support the growth in an isolated area where they must drive 20 miles to find a good steak.

City officials have high hopes that development in the Osteen area could add diversity to the city, which consists almost entirely of residential property.

"To deal with the growth that we see coming this way, we do need some room to grow," City Development Services Director Bob Nix said. "And that's why the annexation issues are important to us. We need to provide a reasonable mix of development."

Carter said the property, which consists of pastureland, wetlands, planted pines and flat woods, would likely become a residential master-planned community with commercial areas to support the neighborhoods. He said city officials had been eager to work with him to develop plans for the property, and that becoming part of the city made more sense than remaining part of unincorporated Volusia County.

The county has frequently fought major development in rural areas but recently has shown signs of softening its stance. Council members voted last week to drop a challenge against Deltona's annexation of a proposed 500-acre equestrian village, also along the city's southeast edge. But many landowners still see Deltona as a better value.

"The reception we've gotten has been very positive," Carter said. "They think it's good for their city. We think we can work well with them."

His family, including development mogul Maury Carter, has had a big hand in developing the Clermont, Lake Nona and Eagle Creek areas.

Sitting on the east side of State Road 415 just north of Maytown Road, the property does not adjoin city's current limits, but it could be connected in the future by other proposed annexations.

Denise McCabe, president of the Osteen Preservation Society, called the plans for the Carter property "terrible."

"I think it would be the beginning of the end of Osteen," she said. "Osteen is open land, one home per five acres. For them to put in a subdivision is more characteristic of Deltona."

But Mark Pell, a 50-year Osteen resident who runs a nursery there, called the growth inevitable.

"The whole area is going to be a lot different," he said. "This is the next area. That's what it boils down to. It's a crossroads."

Lisa Emmerich can be reached at lemmerich@orlandosentinel.com or 386-851-7923.

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