

# Valley Free Press

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## Plans may increase Plano by 50 percent

by Frank Vaisvilas

(Click "Full Story" to read more and scroll down to the online extra.) PLANO-Plans for a large subdivision that would eventually increase the city's current population by 50 percent were presented and negotiated last week. Although subject to a final vote by the city council and a public hearing, the Robert Arthur Land Company could start building in two years with the first people moving in by 2010.



The 727-acre site lies south of Galena Road with Little Rock Road cutting through the middle. It will consist of mostly single-family homes, town homes and age-targeted homes for older residents with no children.

“We're not all one flavor,” said Arthur Zwemke, developer for the Robert Arthur Land Company. “There's a lot of variety in here.”

About 10 percent of the units will be age-targeted, not age restricted. Many of the homes will be ranch-style or have the master bedroom on the lower level.

But when one alderman questioned Zwemke on what is to stop families with children from moving in, he said it was not fully age restricted and made a little softer and open because people want to mingle with other age groups.

He assured many of these residents would be Baby Boomer retirees, but not be segregated from the rest of the population.

“We ask that you have an open mind,” Zwemke said.

The North County development will feature a natural look, according to Zwemke. A total of 1,538 units are planned and expected to bring a population of about 4,500 people within seven to 10 years. But this is dependent on if the market picks up again after its recent slump.

“We think the market's bottomed out,” Zwemke said.

The site also will feature condominiums, where people can purchase, instead of rent, apartment-style dwellings, which are popular in Chicago.

“This is a product that's becoming more popular in the suburban market for retirees and young families,” Zwemke said.

The development could bring as many as 824 school-age children. Since many of the homes will be age-targeted with no children, Zwemke said the fees from the development should be more than enough for the schools.

“When you have a mixed community like this we should be an evergreen here for the school district,” Zwemke said. “Intuitively, I know this supports the school system.”

More than 32 acres have been set aside for a new school within the development.

“It hasn't been decided what type of school would be built there,” said School Superintendent William Woody.

But he said the school district is interested in the site.

The development also sets aside nearly 27 acres for commercial buildings. These include offices, retail and service and a three story, 150,000 square-foot building for assisted living. Zwemke said the retail buildings will be more like neighborhood stores since the site is far enough from Route 34, it is not considered part of that corridor.

No affordable housing

In a development half the size of the city's current population, Alderman Melody Herreid questioned why there did not seem to be any units set aside for senior citizens living on a fixed income.

“There are those people that need somewhere to go,” Herreid said.

Zwemke said some of the condos may run between \$115,000 and \$135,000.

“We think that's pretty strong price,” Zwemke said.

But that was not good enough for Herreid.

“That's a pretty strong price for someone that's living on nothing but Social Security,” Herreid said.

Zwemke said the development is away from the city center and virtually everyone would need a vehicle living out in what he considered to be the country. He added subsidized housing will not be offered.

“We have not provided anything that's affordable,” Zwemke said. “...That's just not our target here.”

A public hearing on the development was set for the Feb. 20 city council meeting.

(Online Extra)

Taller buildings

As the city council considered Robert Arthur's annexation agreement, Zwemke had one request.

“The only variance we're asking for in your ordinance is on height,” Zwemke said. “...We'd like the ability to go up three stories.”

He said is only asking for 10 feet more than city's ordinance of 25 feet.

Less park space, but less cost

Because the developer's current plans do not meet the city's request for park space, Zwemke said they will pay about \$1.5 million to develop the 29 acres of park space they are donating.

“We're short a little on the park donation, but we're making it up with the cost,” Zwemke said.

The \$1.5 million is based on \$1,000 per unit in the proposed 1,538-unit subdivision.

The dollar value of the park acreage that is not being donated is estimated to be about \$800,000, so the developer is proposing to give about \$700,000 more than what is required.

In an effort to avoid a situation similar to Lakewood Springs, the council discussed making sure the buyers know exactly what kind of parks are going where. Parks on the north and south ends of the proposed development are designed to have organized teams.

Furthermore, Zwemke said they would like to put the parks in early, even before many people begin to move in, to help establish the neighborhood. So, people would know what they are getting into.

In other news, Alderman Scott Mulliner was concerned language in the annexation agreement may give the developer the opportunity to bypass the planning commission with its final plans. Zwemke wanted to make the process more streamline, otherwise risk revisiting the plan dozens of times.