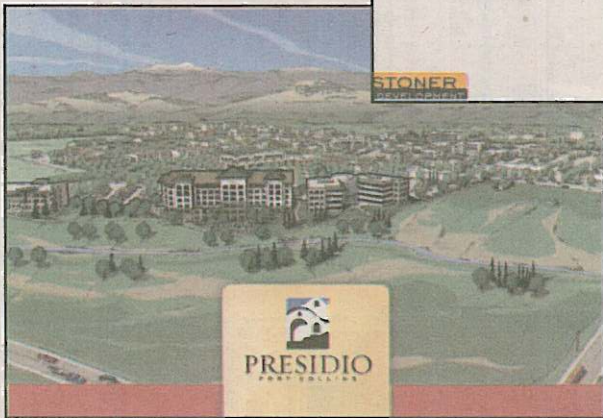


Bold New Developments The Antithesis Of Sprawl

by Juliette Fardulis
Forum Correspondent

It won't happen overnight, but when it does, the eastern landscape of Fort Collins at Interstate 25 and Harmony Road will never be the same.

Jay Stoner of the Stoner Homes team in Fort Collins is the developer behind Riverwalk Fort Collins, locat-



ed at the southwest corner of I-25 and Harmony. Local real estate developer Les Kaplan and his partner for the project, M A V

Development Inc. (MAVD) of Ann Arbor, Mich. is the creators of the Presidio project on the southeast intersection of Lady Moon Drive and East Harmony Road.

Both developers are major players in the monumental transformation of the "Gateway to Fort Collins," as the area has been dubbed by the city. The

see DEVELOPMENT page 7

DEVELOPMENT

from page 1

two developers are brewing groundbreaking ideas, similar in some ways and diverse in others in their proposed mixed-use communities.

Riverwalk Fort Collins is still in the approval process with the city, but once full approval is granted, buildings will begin to be erected by 2009 or 2010, Stoner hopes, though the site is in the floodway and does not yet have sewer or fill dirt necessary to begin vertical construction.

The key concepts of Live, Work and Play are the heart of the visionary project. "It is a bold new concept being proposed...based on the principles of Transit Oriented Development (TOD)...encouraging pedestrian-oriented, mixed-use villages which are rich in detail, providing vibrant, walkable communities," said Stoner.

The way the term "mixed-use" is used in the project is a first for Fort Collins, Stoner said. A single building in the proposed 300-acre community might house a retail shop on the main level, offices on the second and third floors, and residential apartments on upper floors, similar to structures in large metropolitan cities. No single-family homes will be found; instead, both affordable housing and luxury dwellings will co-exist, much like the thriving metropolises in other states. "It is amazing how much exercise I get when I visit my daughter in New York City," Stoner said, referring to an article he read about longevity of people living in high-density cities.

"Unlike the traditional development pattern... Riverwalk envisions a rich tapestry of uses woven together around an abundant mix of urban amenities. In the purest sense, Riverwalk builds an urban environment where residents can walk to many traditional services such as the grocery, dining, employment, church, and parkland," Stoner said.

A 30-acre water feature is the crown jewel of the design, transforming the former gravel pit into a new community of footbridges crossing picturesque canals and a continuous water body, providing an inviting atmosphere of water features connected by peninsulas.

The look is inspired and modeled after the waterways of Amsterdam, Pike Place Market in Seattle, Granville Island in Vancouver, and the Riverwalk at San Antonio, Stoner said.

Numerous outdoor areas will include the marketplace, the grand canal, the riverwalk, the town center, and the residential towers, though titles are not yet formalized. Stand-out features include a pedestrian promenade, lined with open air markets and stores, including an enclosable walkway in cold seasons. "Plaza areas will be further animated with outdoor

street activities such as mimes, street performers, improvisational performances, and programmed festivals," said Stoner.

The cornerstone of it all is the easy access to I-25 from Harmony Road, a transportation hub of the near future. The TOD reduces dependence on automobiles by encouraging walking to most amenities, work and recreation; yet when attractions in Denver beckon, alternative transit such as specially designed bus systems in separate lanes on I-25 will be available in the next two years, Stoner said, referring to the Enhanced Travel Corridor (ETC) the city has identified as Harmony Road.

Today we imagine alternative transit as primarily buses and carpooling. But Stoner sees light rail working its way north as well. "Maybe even monorail or a hovercraft someday. Who knows—I watched the Jetsons growing up. It could be a lot of things," he laughed.

"Transportation-oriented development requires high-density living. Compressed high-density communities work well—think Boston and New York—where you don't find acres of asphalt, but hidden garages in multi-story buildings," Stoner said.

Stoner explained the City of Fort Collins Transportation Master Plan identifying Harmony Road as an Enhanced Travel Corridor (ETC), which in transportation terms is roughly equivalent of the Mason Corridor concept in Fort Collins by 2010.

"As an ETC Harmony would eventually be served by a specially designed bus rapid transit vehicle. The Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) would run the length of Harmony and connect the currently existing transit station at Harmony and I-25 to the proposed new transit station to be located at Mason and Harmony Road. Once implemented this would allow passengers to connect from virtually any location in Fort Collins to the Riverwalk Fort Collins project," Stoner said.

Residents of Riverwalk would have the option to take a BRT along Harmony, and take a transfer onto the Mason Corridor line where they could commute directly to the heart of Fort Collins at Mountain Avenue and Mason. "Alternately, a resident could take a BRT from Fort Collins directly to Denver for a Colorado Rockies Game, dinner or some other urban activity. All of these trips could be accomplished without ever getting in a car," said Stoner.

A pedestrian way will connect the project directly to the Harmony Transit Station, enabling residents and employees to almost never have to drive. A yellow bike check-out system will be offered, similar to the program in downtown Fort Collins that allows cyclists to "check out" a bike at point A, ride to point B

and drop it off for the next rider.

Riverwalk is not about mega-shopping centers or big subdivisions. It is something we don't have here in northern Colorado, Stoner said. "TOD is not sprawl; it is a paradigm shift. Central Park in New York City was created due to the density around it. Harmony and I-25 is central to the future of northern Colorado—it's the center of the bulls-eye around Timnath, Windsor, Severence and Loveland, and in two to three generations, it will not look as it does now," he said.

Riverwalk Fort Collins, a green-friendly project, will be influenced by "a local and international team of experts who will refine designs over the coming years and will incorporate low energy, renewable energy, and low impact site designs..." said Stoner. The project will showcase 30 acres of bike trails and open space, and 35 acres of water on a mile-long stretch. Ponds, waterways, umbrella-covered tables, quaint shops, residences and offices will create an urban lifestyle ideal for cultural events and building a sense of community.

A design review committee will ensure the "Six Cs" are upheld; namely, Complex, Compressed, Contrary, Complementary, Consistent and Cool, Stoner said. "Basically the intent is to develop a very hip, cool and chic ambiance and yet retain the Colorado feel. The great idea is to allow individual expression but contain the overall look to reflect the uniqueness of a town center," he continued.

Shops and restaurants invited to be a part of Riverwalk will center on regionalism. "Rather than catering strictly to the national scale retailer or office user, Riverwalk will focus initially on attracting local business owners to open an additional store. This concept is based in part on the philosophy of regionalism. In opposition to globalization Riverwalk seeks to establish a

unique regional influence recognizing and celebrating the uniqueness of our region. This is not to say there will be no national scale business located on the site but the initial thrust will be to build the local influence," said Stoner.

A health and wellness complex, providing fitness training, wellness monitoring, and a world-class culinary institute will be significant features at Riverwalk, a healthy living environment.

Located at the southeast intersection of Lady Moon Drive and East Harmony Road across from the Hewlett-Packard campus is the proposed Presidio, Spanish for "fort." The 85-acre master planned mixed-use infill development project, still under city review, will boast a four or five story full-service hotel and convention center, 80,000 square feet of banking, shopping and dining.

MAVD owns the west side of Lady Moon Drive - named after the sassy Larimer County pioneer woman, while Kaplan's turf, Presidio, is on the east, including 500,000 square-feet of class-A office space in Presidio alone.


Like Riverwalk, a full-spectrum wellness complex will be on site at Presidio, covering 40,000-square-feet. Developer Les Kaplan sees Presidio as a place where "old-world charm meets urban energy in a truly integrated community."

The location is prime real estate, as 121,000 vehicles per day travel down I-25, Harmony Road and Lady Moon Drive. With "location, location, location" in mind, Presidio will claim 825 feet of direct frontage on Harmony Road, a major arterial road.

A whopping 30,000 employees live within seven miles of the project, providing a deep well of potential employees, Kaplan pointed out. It is located in range of the highest census

see DEVELOPMENT page 11

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