

Friday, July 3, 2009

Thousands of homes pitched to city

Zoning sought for more than 2,700 homes along SH 130

Austin Business Journal - by [Kate Harrington](#) ABJ Staff

More residential development is in store for the State Highway 130 corridor, as a project planned to have more than 2,000 homes gets ready to submit its preliminary plan to Austin's Zoning and Platting Commission, with another adjacent tract slated for about 700 homes also putting plans in place.

The Zoning and Platting Commission postponed a vote in early June on the Eastwood subdivision, being developed by a partnership including longtime Austin developer John Lloyd; it's headed to the commission again on July 7.

That development, which spans 667 acres, includes plans for 2,368 single-family homes, 35 acres of commercial development along FM 973 and Blake Manor road, three amenity lots and 12 acres of multifamily development.

Terry Irion, the lawyer representing the development partnership, said total development costs will likely top \$50 million. Buildout will occur over 10 years.

Irion said the development group behind Eastwood assembled the land about 18 months ago because the SH 130 corridor is shaping up to be Austin's next big spot for development, and the area has access to utilities.

"We think that area is really going to take off," Irion said. "There isn't that much undeveloped land left in Travis County. Eastern Travis County is where it's at."

Eastwood's developers aren't the only group that thinks so. Several plans for residential and commercial projects are in various stages along the SH 130 corridor. Near Eastwood's tract, Taurus of Texas Holdings LP just obtained approval from the Austin City Council for a development agreement that will pave the way for more than 2,300 acres of residential, commercial and retail development.

Irion said Eastwood is in the early stages, working on securing approval for a subdivision plan from the city and Travis County.

"This isn't going to happen tomorrow, and obviously the slowdown in the economy will delay it even more," Irion said. "But there's no reason not to use the slowdown period to look at plans and get entitlements."

During the June zoning and platting meeting, concerns arose from a neighboring landowner, Ed Wolf, who also wants to get plans in motion to develop 730 single-family lots. The Eastwood land surrounds the

Wolf tract on three sides, and Wolf didn't have wide enough roads to meet county standards for the density of the development he's proposing.

Irion said the Eastwood developers have since worked out an agreement with Wolf to give some of Eastwood's land toward a collector street.

Perhaps a larger issue, however, involves concerns raised by the city of Manor. Manor City Manager Phil Tate sent a letter to Travis County officials expressing concern over the number of cars that could be traveling on the two-lane state road and adjacent roads as Eastwood, Wolf and other tracts get built out.

"We don't have any problems with development," Tate said. "But if this is going to be Austin's preferred growth corridor, they have got to make some traffic plans out there."

Irion and Jerry Harris, the lawyer representing the Wolf family, said representatives from several of the larger residential developments either planned or in the works are forming a working group along with Manor officials, and plan to work with the Capital Area Metropolitan Planning Organization on regional transportation issues.

Eldon Rude, director of the Austin office of residential research group Metrostudy, said the Manor and Del Valle submarkets have about 33,000 home starts in some stage of progress, about 20 percent of the home starts active in the entire Austin region.

That's partly because affordable land allows builders to put up affordable homes, which make up nearly 45 percent of the Austin homes being built right now, Rude said. Looking out over the next decades, Rude said much of Austin's affordable areas will be east of I-35, and connectors like SH 130 and State Highway 45 will facilitate that growth.

Variables such as the availability of utilities, quality of schools and where commercial employers decide to locate will come into play in the next five to 10 years and have a hand in the success of many of those residential projects, he said.

Courtesy of JB Goodwin