



DAVIE DEVELOPMENT

Change threatens cowboy image

Town's landscape could dramatically change if new building proposals are approved

By Thomas Monnay
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DAVIE · Every month at his U-Pull-It automobile recycling compound on State Road 7, Larry Danielle draws about 25,000 customers looking for used parts and tires.

"It's big business here. It's not a junkyard," Danielle said. "It's a Home Depot of used auto parts."

But he's torn about whether to sell his business, which has been at 4301 State Road 7 for 36 years. The town wants to allow more density in the area, making his 36 acres worth a lot more money. The goal is to transform the corridor from miles of car storage facilities and warehouses into housing, office space and retail.

"Progress is coming up on us," said Danielle, who supports the concept but admits it is tough to walk away from a lucrative business. "They're making our properties more valuable. It's a Catch-22."

While Davie fiercely guards its cowboy image, the town's landscape could dramatically change under several redevelopment proposals. They include:

>The State Road 7 corridor, which spreads over 925 acres between State Road 84 on the north and the Seminole Indian reservation near Stirling Road on the south. This would be a mixed-used development district, where people would work, shop and live. The proposal calls for: 6,400 homes, including condos and townhouses; 750 hotel rooms; and more than 4 million square feet of office, commercial and industrial space. Buildings would be constructed closer to the street, which would be widened and upgraded with lighting, landscaping and sidewalks to encourage bike riding and a pedestrian-friendly atmosphere.

While the project already has the town's blessing, it still needs approval by Broward County and the state, a process that could take up to a year.

In the area by Nova Southeastern University, plans are underway for an academic village with 500 rental apartments, a teaching hospital, a 300-room conference hotel, educational facilities and an office building.

George L. Hanbury, NSU's executive vice president for administration, said construction would begin in spring of 2007 and would be completed in five to seven years.

It would create 5,000 jobs, bring \$2-\$3 million a year in taxes and "would transform Davie [into] the economic powerhouse in Florida for biotech and high-tech research," Hanbury said.

In a 2,200-acre area known as the regional activity center, town officials are paying a consultant \$500,000 to study redevelopment. The area is bounded by Interstate 595 on the north, Florida's Turnpike on the east, Griffin Road on the south, and University Drive on the west.

Although the study is far from complete, Nob Hill Partners LLC has already broken ground on "Downtown Davie" -- a \$50 million development on the southeast corner of Griffin and Davie roads. It has a 2.5-acre lake, 227

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condos, 18 townhouses, 100,000 square feet of retail space and an office building. The town's Community Redevelopment Agency is spending \$2.25 million to spruce up the streetscape and bury utility lines for the project.

At Interstate 75 and Royal Palm Boulevard, formerly known as Arvida Parkway, a developer is proposing a 152-acre western-themed project which would feature horse trails, a 300-room hotel, restaurants and office and retail space. Developer Turnberry Associates said The Commons would create 6,000 jobs and bring in \$3.4 million a year in town taxes.

But its neighbors and the City of Weston have both objected because of traffic concerns.

Mark Berman, who lives north of The Commons' site, said the town must resist it.

"If Davie wants commercial development, the perfect place to put it is the 441 [State Road 7] corridor," he said.

The recent election of Bryan Caletka to the District 1 council seat has made its future uncertain. "My initial gut reaction tells me this is not a popular idea," he said.

However, the project's attorney, Bill Laystrom, said the developer is moving forward.

No matter what that outcome, Davie planner Marcie Nolan Oppenheimer said the redevelopment plans throughout the town "will do more to balance the tax base. As land becomes developed, the tax burden isn't always on the existing property owner."

Jerry Kolo, an FAU urban planning professor, agrees.

"What Davie is doing is absolutely forward thinking and visionary," Kolo said. "It's going to place Davie in a very competitive position within our region to attract viable businesses and households with disposable income."

Thomas Monnay can be reached at tmonnay@sun-sentinel.com or 954-385-7924.

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