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Park Cattle Co. moves ahead with massive development

By Jill Lufrano

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Times have changed for longtime Carson Valley landowner Park Cattle Co. The family-owned company wants to exit the ranching business and begin developing its 4,500 acres of prime land holdings.

Park Cattle Co. submitted plans this week asking the county to change the rules that apply to its property to pave the way for nearly 5,000 new homes and retail, schools and other developments.

Instead of one house per 19 acres, the company wants to change the county's master plan to allow a mix of clustered neighborhoods, larger one-acre home sites, and retail and commercial development.

Final approvals hinge on the company completing a proper traffic study, said Harmon Zuckerman, principal county planner. The traffic study was due Thursday. If deemed complete, the application will head to the county planning commission in August.

The company has already met with several community groups and interested parties to create an acceptable plan that is sensitive to the community's needs, said president Bradley Nelson.

"The idea is to take time and talk to people," Nelson said. "This is just the way it should be done. It's part of (the family's) stated goals -- respect for the environment, respect for the community."

Development plans

Within 20-30 years, the company hopes to develop the land into 4,995 homes, create 6,000 permanent jobs with new commercial and retail centers and set aside land for parks, recreation and a hotel. They also plan to set aside land for a new middle school, churches, an after-school children's club, senior center, fire, police and college sites, Nelson said.

Lower cost "workforce housing" will make up 15 percent of the development, Nelson said. The price range will be \$250,000-\$850,000.

"It's important to police and fire departments that their staff live close," he said. "We think providing housing in these price ranges is important for the community."

The plan also calls for leaving open 2,800 acres on the west side of U.S. 395 to preserve public access to the Carson River, and conserve wetlands and open space, Nelson said.

One project will be an equestrian Home Ranch Club with 50 lodge rooms and 100 bunk houses. The guest ranch would offer hiking, biking, fishing, rafting and ranch activities, Nelson said.

End of ranching

The land "has been run as a ranch but times have changed," Nelson said. "It's the end of the ranching business as we know it. We want to maximize the values of the water and land."

Plans are to transform the company's 3,200 acres immediately west of SR 88 and U.S. 395 from near Mottsville on the south to Genoa Lane on the north. The East Fork of the Carson River cuts through the middle of the land.

On the east side of U.S. 395, the company owns Park Cattle Ranch, a 1,370-acre holding that runs north and south sides of Buckeye Road, between the Minden Elementary School and Western Nevada College. This land is where most of the residential, commercial, retail and public development is expected.

The company projects the development will add \$5 million per year in net revenue to the county.

The Park family is one of the oldest and largest land holders in Douglas County. The family first arrived in the valley in the mid 1800s and now owns Edgewood Tahoe Golf Course, Park Ranch, Park Ranch Storage, Edgewood Water Co. and the Pine Frost Inn. They also own the land on which Horizon, MontBleu casino resorts sit.

Traffic, growth impacts

Some residents and officials fear the plan might destroy the valley's lush landscape and natural vistas, and add too many vehicles to the roadways.

"I definitely have concerns with amendments to the master plan in general and especially of this magnitude that would have a dramatic impact on our rural character, infrastructure and demand for public service and the impact to the overall population," said county commissioner Dave Brady. "You're talking about an increase of 10,000 in population over and above what the master plan has already accounted for with the growth ordinance we have in place."

Growth is capped at 2 1/2 percent compounded each year. But with the slow economy, the county has not yet met that rate, Brady said. Brady is also concerned about additional vehicles the project might put on county roads, he said.

"In particular, the most observable measure is going to be traffic," he said. "It's huge."

Part of the idea possibly would be to partially fund building a downtown bypass called Muller Parkway. At Muller Parkway and Buckeye Road, the company plans to develop a retail, office and business park where open space ranchland now exists.

"It's ideal for commercial and offices on that corner," Nelson said. "We're pushing for that though we know some people won't like it."

Other projects

Besides the valley development, Park Cattle Co. plans to build a five- or six-star hotel on Edgewood Golf Course property "as close to the lake as is allowed," Nelson said. Nelson projects the hotel would have 180 rooms.



Photo by Jill Lufrano/Douglas Ti/Reno Gazette-Jour

Park Cattle Co. Ranch along Buckeye Road, seen here, will be developed into mixed housing and commercial properties, according to an application filed by the company.



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Park Cattle Co. Chief Executive Officer Bradley Nelson is spearheading the company's plan to develop 4,500 acres in the Carson Valley.

TENTATIVE HEARING SCHEDULE:

If Park Cattle Co.'s plans are deemed complete this week, several public hearing will be set for the next few months.

Aug. 5: Gardnerville Town Board hearing starts at 4:30 p.m., Gardnerville Town Hall, 1407 U.S. 395.

Aug 6: Minden Town Board hearing set for 7 p.m., call 782-5976 for meeting information.

Aug 12: Douglas County Planning Commission hearing, 1 p.m., call 782-9020 for meeting information.

Sept. 4: Douglas County Commissioners hearing, Douglas County Administration Building, Old Courthouse, 1616 Eighth St., Minden. Call 782-9020 for information and schedule.