

# Update on City Center Project

## City of Casselberry

Date: Monday, January 21, 2013

### OVERVIEW

After six months of extensive study and research, City Commissioners were presented last week with recommendations regarding the selection of candidate companies for development of the City/CRA owned commercial properties along 17-92 near the municipal complex. Enthusiasm for the project is strong, but until an agreement is reached, plans remain preliminary and not final.

The City will begin negotiating with CASTO Southeast Realty Services and Integra Land Company, which will form the development team. It is anticipated that negotiations will be completed between 90 and 120 days.

In an effort to keep residents informed below are the key highlights associated with this project thus far.

- The City Commission began the process by adopting “guiding principles” to express what they thought the community would like to see the land used for.
- The proposed developers were selected after an extensive process managed by the City and community growth experts from ACi, a Winter Park consulting firm. ACi, which conducted economic and environmental feasibility analyses and oversaw the developer selection process which included defining an investment framework and oversaw the ultimate developer candidate review and selection phase. ACi will also assist in establishing design criteria as the project moves forward.
- After staff considered five offers, one team of two developers was recommended to the City Commission. After presentations from the two bidding developers, the City Commission directed the City staff to begin negotiations with the developers as the next step for creating the public/private partnership for the City Center project. City leaders said both companies, which have done significant work in Central Florida, were chosen because of their understanding and commitment to the City’s guiding principles for planning and growth.
- The developers were selected based on the merit of the design concept and how they would embrace and incorporate the City’s guiding principles, and their design elements that would ultimately create a new and inviting “front door” to Casselberry.
- Under the proposed plan, CASTO Southeast Realty Service and Integra Land Company would work together with the City to design and create a multi-phase design concept that would create in essence a new “front door” for Casselberry. Both firms have extensive experience and are recognized for innovation and integrity.
- This project is a continuation of the City’s long-range initiative for smart growth that showcases Casselberry’s existing assets which include parks, exhibitions, art events and music festivals and which contribute to the City’s overall economic growth. The City has been recognized for successfully redesigning its parks and frontage along 17-92 and which has resulted in transforming Casselberry into a popular destination for jazz concerts, art shows and other community activities.
- The proposed public-private partnership is intended to present a 21<sup>st</sup> century blend of residential and lifestyle development designed to transform this parcel of land and leverage Lake Concord as the backdrop for residential dining and cultural amenities. The City will negotiate a fair offer for the agreed upon development uses. The offer is expected to be made with the presumption that the site is development ready. The City has already invested to assemble the land considered. The City will need to invest further in the site to remediate the muck and make improvements to the remainder of the property
- Assisted by community growth experts with ACi in Winter Park, the City implemented a carefully executed six-month planning process which included an extensive economic and trend analysis as well as the review of

numerous nationally recognized candidate developer from across the country before opting to negotiate with CASTO and Integra Land Company.

- The City has taken a thoughtful and phased approach to its growth management with the intent of preserving the city's environmental assets and citizens' valued suburban lifestyle while further enhancing the community's walk and live lifestyle to include new amenities and entertainment for residents and neighboring communities.
- The proposed project innovative design converts the land parcel's muck-impaired area into an asset with the small area of Lake Concord serving as the backdrop for residential, dining and cultural amenities.
- The proposed City Center distinguishes Casselberry from other communities in its innovative mixed land use according to guiding principles and how the city's face will be rejuvenated further. Casselberry is unique from many other municipalities in its strategic and careful planning which has already resulted in gradually fortifying the City's economic base with renewed commercial growth.
- Casselberry has strategically worked to transform the City to a destination for start-up and high-tech businesses as well as several major chain stores, a strategy that has proven successful with the addition of the Aviation Mechanics Institute and several digital and web development businesses that have located in the City.

**CITY OF CASSELBERRY  
CITY CENTER  
GUIDING PRINCIPLES FOR DEVELOPMENT**

**May 14, 2012**

**Introduction**

These guiding principles are the result of a City Commission Work Session held on March 29, 2012 and a Commission Retreat held April 13, 2012.

*Location & Scope:* The primary area of the Casselberry City Center encompasses the properties currently owned by the City of Casselberry along the east side of U.S. Hwy. 17-92 beginning at the Community United Methodist Church north to the Home Depot property. Included in this area are:

- Vacant land located south of Triplet Lake Drive,
- Properties that comprise the existing structures of City government; City Hall, Public Works/Fire Administration Building and the Police Administration Building & associated parking lots
- Lake Concord Park
- Black's Auto (proposed contract to be purchased)
- Lake Concord property

All total the property comprises 25 acres of land.



For planning purposes, a larger secondary area can be considered as detailed in Appendix A.

*Context:* Today, the City of Casselberry is spatially and figuratively at a crossroads. The spatial crossroads refers to its location at the intersection of two of the heaviest travelled roads in the region; U.S. Hwy. 17-92 and State Road 436. Combined, these two roads carry approximately 115,000 average daily trips. So heavy is the traffic that FDOT is in process of constructing two

flyovers. The first of these flyovers is currently under construction at Red Bug Lake Road and S.R. 436 and is scheduled to be completed by fall, 2013. The other fly-over, recently fully funded, will be constructed at S.R. 436 and U.S. 17-92, beginning this fall and completed by year's end 2014. In addition, to these major road improvements, the City is also ready to benefit from the establishment of the region's SunRail commuter rail system with a new station location at S.R. 436 and Ronald Reagan Boulevard, 1 mile from the U.S. 17-92 & S.R. 436 intersection. These major transportation improvements are significant and over time will cause the area to experience new private investment. However, at this time there is much debate as to whether or not the new flyovers will depress commercial activity directly adjacent to these facilities. Regardless, it is strongly believed that the U.S. 17-92 & S.R. 436 flyover will provide an arrival experience for the target City Center property, as it will become the first stop light off of the flyover from the south. Because such road improvements tend to support traffic flow at the cost of local access and because such structures serve to form physical and aesthetic barriers to community placemaking efforts, the City has a greater interest in ensuring that the City Center project celebrates travelers' arrival at an identifiable, unique and friendly place.

The City is also at a crossroads in figurative ways as well. Historically, the City of Casselberry has evolved to its present state as a suburban community without a strong civic identity. Much progress has been made over the most recent decade to rid itself of undesirable influences. Today, the City of Casselberry stands to establish itself as a vibrant, affordable and diverse community with a focus on business, environment, and culture. The City Center should become the physical manifestation of the City's vision. Toward that end, the City has already made significant investment in City Center's public realm including Lake Concord, the Lake Concord boardwalk, Lake Concord Park and the Casselberry Art House. Coming soon will be a new "Fire House Sculpture Center." Future private development will need to address the City's vision as well as its existing public space improvement with sensitivity through complementary uses, coordinated planning and unique design components.

### **Guiding Principles**

1. There must be a proven market demand for the proposed uses, and the proposed uses must include a market anchor or destination activity. In addition, the project should become a catalyst for additional investment on the U.S. 17-92 corridor, as well as the City in general.
2. The proposed project must contribute to, and be synergistic with the existing City constructed place-based improvements including Lake Concord Park, the Lake Concord boardwalk, and Triplet Lake Drive.

3. The proposed project must complete non-vehicular connectivity thru the primary area. (As the City has established such linkages in Lake Concord Park north to Home Depot, it will be the project's responsibility to create additional linkage from Lake Concord Park, across Triplet Lake Drive and through the vacant 15 acre parcel, behind Community United Methodist Church to Piney Ridge.)
4. The proposed project shall be designed in such a way that when completed it shall integrate into the natural fabric of the City, and shall feel as if the on-site public space is truly community space, open to residents throughout the community, not simply as project open space.
5. A phased approach to development of the vision is acceptable, but a master developer is desired and the project must consider an overall vision and strategy for development of the entire City Center area.
6. The City is amenable to considering redevelopment of properties where currently the Police Administration and Public Works/Fire Administration Building are located. The City prefers that City Hall remain in its present location; however, a project could include infill in and around City Hall, providing that existing public parking is accommodated in future development plans.
7. The project must contain elements that make the final development unique and special for the City (place making). In its entirety the redevelopment plan must go beyond the perception that it is "just a shopping center." The City recognizes that there is a multitude of ways to achieve this end result using the entire acreage defined.
8. The City is highly desirous that the project include new destination casual dining restaurants with national and/or regional exposure. All other uses will be considered except for "big box" retail (Kohl's, Home Depot, Wal-Mart) and single-family residential. Mid-box retail anchors (Publix, Whole Foods) will be considered provided that creative parking solutions are considered.
9. The City recognizes that there are natural constraints (muck) to the 15 acre parcel. However, we envision that those areas will become amenities including but not limited to water features and fountains.

10. Land Use and Zoning: The vacant portions of the properties have been designated as “Major Thoroughfare Mixed Use” in the City’s Comprehensive Plan. Under this designation a mix of at least two uses are encouraged. Specific requirements are detailed in the appendices. The companion zoning has yet been attached to these properties. The appropriate zoning is Planned Mixed-Use: Medium Rise (PMX-MID) which provides for a maximum intensity of 1.0 FAR and a gross residential density of 25 Du’s/acre. A maximum height of 6 stories will be allowed. The specific provisions of this zoning are also included in the appendices.

The Commission recognizes that the mixed-use concepts became popular at the peak of the economic expansion prior to 2007. Since that time many market adjustments have occurred, dampening demand for, and making “mixed-use” projects more difficult to finance. Recognizing this market reality, the Commission will consider project concepts that do not meet the mixed-use requirement but will expect that in return other project amenities will be offered.

Properties containing existing City facilities are zoned Public Service. Rezoning of these properties for commercial activity will be supported in context of an overall vision accepted by the City.

## Appendices

Land Use

Zoning Specifics:

Section 2-5.2C2d Planned Mixed Use Medium Rise (PMX-MID)