

Commission OKs 2 big retail centers

This story appeared in the Antelope Valley Press on Wednesday, April 20, 2005.

By JULIE DRAKE
Valley Press Staff Writer

LANCASTER - Two large, separate proposed retail centers, one with a La Quinta Inn hotel, received the approval of the city's Planning Commission on Monday.

Martin Properties of Westlake Village plans to build a 177,830-square-foot retail center, dubbed Lancaster Spectrum, that will include a 102-room, 52,000-square-foot La Quinta Inn and Suites hotel.

The project will be built on 15 acres on the southwest corner of 20th Street West and Avenue J-8. The land will be subdivided into 11 separate parcels with major tenants and shops on the site's west side, with six pads for restaurant and retail use on 20th Street West.

The commission approved a conditional-use permit for the project on a 4-1 vote, with Commissioner Scott Idleman dissenting. Idleman expressed concern about safety and motioned for the commission to add a condition of 24-hour security but the motion failed to garner a second.

"I can't see us burdening the project with that motion," said Vice Chairman Kenneth Mann, who called it a "first-class" project.

Developer Rob Martin, president of Martin Properties, scheduled a meeting with residents who live about 165 feet west of the western property line to explain the project and ensure adequate privacy.

A condition of approval will require the developer to restrict westward facing signs for the hotel and commercial retail project, which could include a grocery store, and add landscaping.

"We feel that Lancaster is ready for a development featuring high-level architecture using high-quality materials," Martin said.

He added his development team includes the architect behind the Amargosa

Commons shopping center in Palmdale. His leasing agent, Vince Roche of CB Richard Ellis, brought Trader Joe's, Circuit City and Panera Bread to Palmdale, and Lowe's to Lancaster.

"This project is very impressive to us," said former Assistant City Manager Dennis Davenport of Lancaster, who lives near the proposed project.

Davenport added that he and his wife knew the land was zoned for commercial development when they bought their house.

"We like the La Quinta hotel, we like the other potential shops, we like the design and look and we like Rob Martin as the developer. We think he's a reputable man who will do a good job."

Homeowner Jesse Zamarripa, who also lives to the west of the project, expressed concern about lighting for the development. Other homeowners expressed concerns about trash, unauthorized use of the parking lot by residents or visitors of a nearby multi-family unit, security and a swath of vacant land to the project's rear, also zoned commercial, but not owned by Martin.

"We would be very concerned about security and trash," Martin said. "We would certainly make use of security cars to make sure that (unauthorized) parking doesn't occur in our shopping center."

The commission also approved without dissent a conditional-use permit for a 152,249-square-foot commercial retail center with a 92,849-square-foot grocery store on approximately 17 acres near the new Lowe's home improvement center at Avenue K and 10th Street West.

Idleman expressed concern about security for the center and unsuccessfully moved to add a condition requiring the developer to have on-site security during business hours.

The property is owned by San Francisco-based Seabury Lancaster Investment Co.

The project is the "second phase of the overall development of this great corner in Lancaster," said Village Properties' Daniel Schalit .

The project also would include two retail buildings totaling 13,400 square feet and four additional future retail pads totaling 46,000 square feet.

"We're very excited about this shopping center," developer Rob Isackson said.

Isackson said Village Properties is looking for quality tenants for the center and is in negotiations with businesses such as Jamba Juice and Chinese restaurant Pick Up Stix.

Resident Michael Rosales expressed concern about the as-yet-unconfirmed grocery store that will go into the center with regard to pay level and other employee benefits as well as how it will affect neighboring stores.

"Will the company provide benefits to its employees?" he asked.

Schalit responded Village Properties is in negotiations with a "well-paying grocer" that does not hire a lot of part-time employees and that offers health benefits on a scale of union paid jobs.

jdrake@avpress.com

© 2005 Antelope Valley Press, Palmdale, California (661) 273-2700