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Parkland OKs changes to mixed-use development

Plans altered for mixed-use village

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PARKLAND

The City Commission has agreed to allow a developer to lower the residential component of Parkland's first mixed-use project from three to two stories.

Parkland Village Square — a combination of residential and commercial properties — will create a "little village" in the heart of the city with shops, cafes and lofts.

Because the housing market is dictating lower-priced homes, the developer now wants to build loft apartments rather than two-story townhouse units. These would be atop first-floor shops.

"We'll keep the units smaller and more reasonably priced," said developer Barry Ross.

The 10 lofts will be two- and three-bedroom units. They will be 1,800 square feet each and cost between \$500,000 and \$600,000.

The project has been talked about for years — the site plan was first approved in 2005 — and groundbreaking is expected this fall.

"We wanted to see a pedestrian-friendly type of village," said Mayor Michael Udine. "That's what I think we've gotten — open green space with fountains, and it's ideally set up for an ice cream store and place to sit and the family can Rollerblade or ride their bikes. There will be an open, flowing feeling.

"I'm very excited. I think it's going to fit in well."

Village Square will be an 8-acre project on Pine Island Road north of Trails End. Ross' portion of the project is estimated to cost about \$20 million. One building will be three stories, consisting of retail on the first floor and offices on the second and third.

The second building will have lofts on the second floor with 18,000 square feet of retail on the first

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floor. A third one-story building will include two restaurants.

Ross called the project "quaint."

"A lot of older cities have rejuvenated their downtown areas with mixed-use projects, but this is a first in the Parkland suburban area," he said. "Parkland has such tremendous growth, yet the city and county determined there are precious few portions of commercial available. As residential units get completed, there are more and more cries for 'boutique-y' little shops, restaurants; there's not enough for this residential growth."

The project, lined with cobblestone streets, will become Parkland's "jewel, their little village," said Carlos Gonzalez, of Barranco Gonzalez Architecture in Fort Lauderdale, the project's architect.

"It's very unique. It's going to be catering to the residents of Parkland, being designed with the village square, a town square, where the residents can come and spend a day," he said.

He said buildings will be constructed with balconies, wrought-iron gates, traditional lanterns, arches and an overall Mediterranean feel that would not "look like one big box you usually see on a strip."

Village Square also will include 177 single-family homes and 70 age-restricted town homes. That portion, to be built by Touse Inc., is on hold because of the slow housing market. There is no timetable for construction.

As part of Village Square, there will be a 12-acre elementary school. Elementary School "Z" is one of the projects planned in Broward County School District's \$3.4 billion five-year construction program. It will relieve overcrowding at Park Trails and Riverglades elementary schools.

The developer donated the 12 acres to the School Board in lieu of school impact fees. The donated school site was one of the reasons the project was approved by the City Commission.

Groundbreaking is expected within weeks and will be completed August 2009.

Commercial areas are still a novelty for Parkland, which is primarily made up of homes. The few shopping areas consist of the Waterways Shoppes on State Road 7, the Town Center on Parkside Drive, and soon there will be a Publix north of City Hall with other stores in the plaza.

City Manager Caryn Gardner-Young said the concept of mixed-use "fits in" with the city's environmentally friendly initiatives.

"The purpose of mixed-use is to prevent vehicle trips," she said. With this project, people can walk from their homes to the dry cleaner, out to eat, or to work, she said.

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