

City OKs developments amidst growth concerns

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Content

Several new developments in the city are moving closer to reality as Lancaster City Council approved future plans, while noting that existing areas need to be maintained and improved.

Cluster development

Council unanimously passed first readings to rezone three parcels of land, totaling 113.17 acres, from B-3 (general commercial) to R-15 (residential with a minimum lot size of 15,000 square feet).

All three parcels, on the east side of U.S. 521, were annexed into the city in September 2022. Developer D.R. Horton plans to build a 273-home cluster development on the property at the northern edge of the city limits.

Three different ordinances were brought to the floor for votes. The first, a 71.59-acre parcel of land, is across the street from Red Rose Village, a nearly 72-acre mixed-use residential and commercial development expected to begin construction around the same time.

The second ordinance was for a 12.58-acre parcel, adjacent to the first parcel. The third, a 29-acre parcel, is also connected to the others.

The developers also own the 13.5 acres where the Crow's Nest driving range is at the entrance of the Arrowood subdivision, across the street from the rest of the property. That parcel is zoned B-3 general commercial and was not rezoned.

Lancaster building official Louis Streater said that parcel generated the most concern at the city's public hearing on the rezonings Dec. 6.

"We did have a few folks show up, and the biggest concern was development on the property where the Crow's Nest is," he said.

Streater said Arrowood residents expressed concern about a possible development obstructing the view and blocking the bypass. He said the Crow's Nest lies in a special flood hazard area and he does not foresee any development there.

Streater said the developers are considering donating it to the city, so it can be used for something like a park.

"In general, in a special flood hazard area, that's where you place your parks, so I think if we can develop it, it would be a great location for a park," Streater said.

D.R. Horton representative Spencer McNabb said they plan to leave it as a driving range until they figure out the donation part of it.

"The next step in the process, once we complete the rezoning of the property, they (D.R. Horton) will submit a preliminary plat for a major subdivision and that will go to the city's Planning Commission for review," Streater said.

"Hopefully, we get the approval for it, and the next step would be to take this to the Board of Zoning Appeals for a special exception to allow the cluster development that they're proposing."

University Drive apartments

Council unanimously passed second reading Jan. 24 on the annexation of the University Drive apartments project.

"We had a lot of comments and people excited about the possibility of apartments here in the city, especially for younger people," Lancaster City Mayor Alston DeVenny said, regarding the University Drive apartments.

The 21.8-acre apartment complex will have 192 market-rate units and a nature trail that connects to the Lindsay Pettus Greenway, dedicated to special operations military veterans. It is expected to be completed by the end of 2025.

Don't forget rest of city

After the votes, District 3 Councilwoman Jackie Harris reaffirmed the importance of growth planning.

"We can't forget about those areas of the city that have been productive to us for a number of years as we look toward developing," Harris said. "We don't want to end up with a city that's very prosperous (in one area), and another part of the city that's very dilapidated and worn down.

"We need to consider as we go along and make plans for how we're going to help these other districts that are represented by members of council be just as prosperous as what's new we have coming in."

DeVenny said these plans have shown how much the city needs increased private investment, because that is what drives large developments.

“This private investment is absolutely what is driving improvements and additions, and you see on our side of the equation where we can help use our tax credits,” DeVenny said, noting recent housing on Miller Street, behind McDonald’s and in Willow Lake, all of which use the tools the city has available.

“We (council) don’t have capital, we don’t have that private development piece, but we’ve seen again and again — like on Pleasant Hill Street, three new homes that will help the whole area. It just gives us more opportunity when we have that mix.

“This city has a diverse, diversified integrated housing — homes and businesses. And that’s what makes us an exciting It’s what makes this an exciting city. That’s what makes us a city that’s a good place for all folks.”

DeVenny also said working with private developers brings a level of expertise that council does not have that can serve the city for years to come.

Harris also pointed out issues with sidewalks in some areas of the city.

“If you look at some of our districts, there are sidewalks that, for some individuals that have to use mobile wheelchairs, they have to go into the road in order to get to the next block,” Harris said. “You look at the ability of the community members there, a lot of them walk and ride bikes, and that safety issue with the lack of sidewalks, the lack of safe sidewalks.

“As we continue to develop, we can’t forget about what else got us to this point,” she said.

Child images

LANNWS-02-01-23 LCC DEVELOPMENT 1



LANNWS-02-01-23 LCC DEVELOPMENTS 2



