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Church Plans for Mixed-Use Residential \$40M Project

CONSTRUCTION PREVIEW



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Texas Construction News from Virtual Builders Exchange

Posted: 12-5-2016, 3:55 p.m.

by Adolfo Pesquera

Missouri City (Fort Bend Co.) – Christian Bible Baptist Church and its development partner secured a Missouri City Planning & Zoning Commission recommendation for a high-density mixed-use residential development, despite considerable opposition from neighbors.

For the past year, the church has been collaborating with Gardner Capital Development to develop vacant land on the 23-acre campus where the church built its \$8 million church facility. The proposal now on its way to City Council includes a senior living apartment community (**Gala at Texas Parkway**) on 5.5 acres that would have from 96 to 120 units; a multifamily apartment community (**Provision at Texas Parkway**) on 7.5 acres that would have 120 units; and a 2-acre retail center on the northwest corner.

Gala at Texas Parkway would be age restricted to renters aged 55 and older. Construction would be three-story wood frame with an exterior finish of stone, brick and stucco. Total development cost is estimated at \$20 million. There would be several common areas, including community rooms, media, fitness and business centers, a resort style pool, community gardens, pavilions with BBQ grills, a library.

Provision at Texas Parkway is a garden style apartment complex, three-story wood frame with stone, brick and stucco exterior finish. Development costs are also at about \$20 million.

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The 40,000-square-foot church building at 3222 Texas Parkway, completed in 2012, is centrally located in the south-center position of the property.

Neighbors opposed to the development live in single family residences within view of the property. Complaints varied from a concern about increased traffic, the aesthetic/architectural quality of the proposed development, concerns about crime, and they complained that they would lose green space to which they have been accustomed.

The commissioners, however, were primarily concerned about the traffic, since the property fronts a curve on a heavily-trafficked state highway that is due for expansion.

Vice Chair **Timothy Haney** pointed out that complaints regarding green space could not overcome progress. Haney noted the vacant land west of the church property is zoned residential and will no doubt also be developed some day. It was Haney's experience in his own neighborhood that green space he once enjoyed the view of has long since been replaced with housing.

Gardner Capital Senior Vice President **Jervon Harris** assured the commission at the Nov. 15 hearing that the development will be well maintained since Gardner Capital holds onto its developments longterm.

"We develop, we own any investment we make here. We're not a merchant developer. Anything we build, we're looking to own it for 15 to 20 yrs," Harris said.

According to the city staff report, Gardner Capital had originally intended chainlink fencing around the properties it would purchase from the church, and was offering less green space than was required. The city is insisting and the developer agreed to decorative fencing and something that would approximate the 30-foot-wide green buffer the city requested.

The rezoning request to mixed-use development is intended to integrate the residential developments architecturally with the masonry and color style of the church construction, and to share detention pond and utilities infrastructure.

Pastor **Rudolf White Jr.** said the intent of the congregation was to improve the community. He argued that high density, quality development was what he told City Council he intended for the land when the church was considering purchasing the site.

His wife, **Valerie White** went point by point in rebutting the critics. She noted the church reserved rights of approval on everything. She noted how the church was built beyond the base standards required and how the church expected the same of Gardner Capital. The detention pond, for example, would not just be functional but an amenity with fountains.

She was especially critical of the lack of senior housing in Missouri City, where a comparable project has a waiting list and congregants of the church have few choices for housing their elders.

“We have a view that we want to see, too, and that view is to see families thriving, being able to have a happy place to live, full of amenities—pools and parks. My father lives in Missouri City. If he wanted to host a gathering with other people in the community, he cannot afford to have a place where he can have a pool table, a movie theater, and all of those things that this is going to provide,” White said.

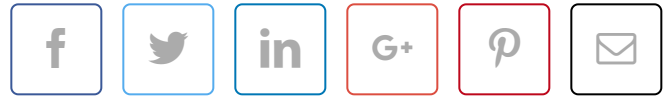
The project was scheduled to be on the Dec. 5 City Council agenda, but it has been set for hearing at a later date.

Cross Architects of Plano has the design contract with Gardner Capital.

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About the Author: Adolfo Pesquera

Adolfo Pesquera (Reporter/Editor) is a veteran news journalist. He has worked for Hearst Corp., American Lawyer Media, News Corp and Freedom Communications. His work has been published in newspapers and magazines across the USA. He is a journalism graduate of UT-RGV. He writes, edits and creates digital pages for VBX.

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