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SPOTLIGHT

TOP STORY

Scope of Mormon Temple-area project in Mesa to be doubled

By Jim Walsh, Tribune Staff Writer
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Tribune file photo

City Creek Reserve is planning to nearly double the size of the redevelopment project west of downtown Mesa’s iconic temple of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

City Creek Reserve, the church’s real estate division of the church, will expand the redevelopment project from the original 4.5 acres to 8.2 acres, according to spokesman Dale Bills.

“City Creek Reserve is expanding its mixed-use, transit-oriented redevelopment at Mesa and

Main to include additional residences. New townhomes and single-family homes will be constructed on land already owned by CCRI affiliates, increasing the total number of redeveloped acres from 4.5 to 8.2,” Bills said in a statement.

The expansion also will involve demolishing more World War 2 era bungalows in the project’s path, he said.

“To make way for these new homes and townhomes, six existing houses will be demolished,” he said. “As with other homes being replaced by new construction in the project, a historical profile will be produced for each home prior to demolition.

“Also, City Creek will offer the houses at no cost to anyone who has the desire and means to relocate them. A \$10,000 allowance will be offered for any home that is relocated.”

Construction has already begun on the project, which Bills said is aimed at creating “a neighborhood with diverse residential unit sizes, comfortably scaled buildings, Mesa-authentic architecture, and landscaped streets and gardens.”

It is scheduled to be completed in two years – coinciding with completion of a major renovation of the Mesa Arizona Temple and its grounds.

The expanded project was not unanticipated by Mesa preservation officials, who always suspected that there might be a Phase II added to the project. They noted that the church owns additional property south of the original project’s boundary.

Carl Duke, City Creek Reserve’s vice president, is scheduled to brief the Mesa Historic Preservation Board on Tuesday about his plans to demolish the seven historic homes covered by the original demolition permits requested by the company earlier this year, and discuss six additional homes that would be demolished as part of Phase II.

City Creek has authority to demolish the original seven homes because the 180-day moratorium required by Mesa city ordinances to create an opportunity for compromise and negotiation, has expired.

Bills said in his statement that City Creek recently filed for six more demolition permits that were rejected by the city.

That would mean another 180-day moratorium covering the additional homes, said Greg Marek, the board's chairman.

"There's virtually nothing we can do to stop it," Marek said. "It's just doing the best we can."

Marek praised Duke for discussing his plans with him in advance. Marek and other board members were disappointed when they did not learn about Phase I of the project until the last minute.

Marek said that by adding Phase II, the church will be redeveloping all its properties on Udall street, between Main Street and First Avenue.

Duke has said in the past that City Creek plans to preserve the historic bungalows along First Avenue and to enhance its historic appeal.

"They will be removing those homes along Udall. Essentially, everything will be developed north of First Avenue."

First Avenue originally served as the main entrance into the temple after it was built in 1927. The temple itself is closed for renovations, a separate project that is expected to take two years.

The church's original intent was to coordinate the re-opening of the temple with the completion of the redevelopment project, which features a new family history and visitors center along Main Street, near the Mesa Drive light rail station.

The original Visitors Center was demolished this summer because it blocked the view of the temple. Commercial buildings along Main Street and Mesa Drive, owned by City Creek Reserve, also were demolished.

Marek said that Phase II will have more of a single-family character, as opposed Phase I, which features two- and four-story buildings offering a mix of apartments, townhouses and retail space.

Phase I includes 240 apartments, 12 townhouses and 7,500 square feet of retail space. A 450-stall underground parking lot creates room for 70,000 square feet of open space, which will include landscaped gardens.

But while the underground parking garage removes unsightly street-level parking, it also created the need to demolish the historic homes, built in the 1940s and viewed as an early example of Mesa's suburbanization.