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Ivy District gets go-ahead

Split city council approves zoning application for massive mixed-use development west of Texas 288

By Robert Stanton Published 4:00 pm, Tuesday, September 30, 2014



IMAGE 1 OF 3

Pearland City Council members were divided between those who see the Ivy District's potential to boost the area economy and those worried about the project's multifamily residential component.

One of the largest land development projects in Pearland's history - the \$300 million Ivy District on a site west of Texas 288 and south of Beltway 8 - is poised to move forward.

Approval of a zoning change needed for the project squeaked by last month with a 3-2 vote by **Pearland City Council** after debate over the multifamily residential component of the project.

Modern **Green Development**, the Beijing-based developer, plans to transform the 48-acre site into a mixed-use project that will include residential and office development and a hotel and conference center. The development is MGD's first U.S. project and only its second in North America.

A similar mixed-use project was planned for Pearland's Lower Kirby area around 2007, but stalled during the economic downturn and the property was taken over by a bank. That project, to be called the Water Lights District, was to include a park to display 43 presidential busts by local artist **David Adickes**.

"When viewed as a whole, we're finding that the community feels supportive about what the development will have to offer the city of Pearland because the development is multiuse," said **Donal Hayes**, marketing specialist for America Modern Green Development. "There will be retail, upscale residential, a conference center, hotel - things that are not only needed but what the city itself said it needs for the Lower Kirby urban planning."

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Councilman **Gary Moore** said that while he supports the business aspects of the development, he voted against it because it would bring more multifamily units to the city.

"I've been out knocking on doors quite a bit, and all the residents I talked to told me they were not for apartments," Moore said. "With this project having more multifamily units, I'm listening to what the constituents told me."

Moore added, "I'm not antidevelopment. We have a lot of property in Pearland still to develop. We need to develop our city, but we also need to be careful on how we do it."

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Councilman **Greg Hill**, who voted yes on the zoning application, said the development is the right fit for the city.

"I think it's the best thing for Pearland," he said. "It's a development that passed Planning and Zoning, the city staff recommended it, and it fits our comprehensive plans. So, there's no reason to vote against it, in my opinion."

Some residents initially opposed the development, Hill said, because of misinformation about the project's details.

"No. 1, it's not just some big apartment complex, and two, it's in (the **Houston school** district), not Alvin (school district), so it wouldn't impact zoning," he said.

The developers agreed to reduce the number of leased residential units to 350, he added.

Most residential projects will be condominiums priced from \$200,000 to \$400,000.

The city's Lower Kirby area - 1,200 acres of mostly undeveloped land facing Beltway 8 to the north - is a prime site for development. Already there is a Bass Pro Shop, a medical device manufacturing facility by [Cardiovascular Systems and Pearland Surgery Center](#).

Much work has to be done before the Ivy District project breaks ground, said [Matt Buchanan](#), president of the [Pearland Economic Development Corp](#).

"They have to do a traffic impact analysis, a drainage study, and conduct a preliminary plat of the property," Buchanan said of the developers. "Once they have those steps done, they might have to make public improvements."

The improvements, he said, could include building streets, constructing acceleration/deceleration lanes, installing traffic signals and street lights, laying water and sewer lines and installing fire hydrants. The EDC has endorsed the project.

[Carol Artz-Bucek](#), president of the [Pearland Chamber of Commerce](#), also supports the development.

"I think that the commerce that it is projected to bring to Pearland is outstanding," she said.

The project will be constructed in phases over a projected six to 10 years, said [Kevin Cole](#), vice president for development with American Modern Green. He said the growth of Pearland calls for more office, retail and residential in the next five to 10 years.

The rendering of early stages of the district show land for a 150-room hotel and conference center, a community center to hold local meetings and banquets, 160,000 square feet of retail space and 140,000 square feet of office space. Another block will be designed as an entertainment area. About 20 acres will be left as green park space.

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