

Mesa industrial-park project may signal turnaround

by **Art Thomason** - Jul. 31, 2010 08:12 AM
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On a vacant lot between a busy northeastern Mesa airport and a scenic golf course, earthmovers are kicking up dust and prospects of hope.

"Dirt is moving. It's exciting," said Lois Yates, executive director of a non-profit promoting economic growth in the area. "It's good to see what Bob is doing with this property."

Yates was referring to Bob McNichols, chief executive of Daedalus Real Estate Advisors, a Phoenix-based company with land holdings that are a key in reviving development of one of Mesa's largest jobs centers.

Grading has begun on a Daedalus light-industrial site south of the company's Longbow Golf Club near McDowell and Recker roads, and residents of the area and city officials are wondering if it is a sign that the slowdown of business development may end.

"I think it bodes well as confidence in the economy and the tremendous opportunities along the Longbow industrial park," said Bill Jabiniak, Mesa's economic-development director.

The park is in the 11-square-mile Falcon Field Business District, where continued creation of well-paying jobs is considered vital to Mesa's long-term economy.

More than 17,000 employees work within the district, but there are hundreds of acres of

vacant land pegged to become one of the city's two largest and most prosperous clusters of jobs.

Like her neighbors, Dorothy Puglisi inquired for years what was in store for the vacant lot that rises toward the golf course across the road from their homes.

"I'm surprised that they're even thinking about doing anything right now," the 83-year-old retired homemaker said. "We're just hoping that it wouldn't bring a lot more traffic onto McDowell (Road)."

McNichols is not sure of what business will be built on the 20-acre site. Two of its lots were sold before he acquired the land, and the street that is under construction will accommodate the buyer's plans.

"I was obligated to finish the cul-de-sac and some of the temporary drainage facilities," McNichols said. "I don't think the buyer has specific plans. He'll probably sell them."

"It could be part office, a showroom or warehouse," he said. The uses are determined by the M-1 zoning that is primarily light industrial. You can't have

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retail."

There is a mini-storage facility and industrial buildings along the north side of McDowell near the Daedalus property.

The site has no connection with McNichols' plans for a 313-acre commercial and business park that will cradle the golf course's northern and eastern sides.

It is to include the first major retail project for the area and the interchange at Recker Road and the Red Mountain Freeway/Loop 202.

As Mesa's first golf course and business-park mix, the project is designed to add upscale facilities for uses such as medical offices and research and development to the aerospace industry near Falcon Field Airport.

McNichols is waiting for the market to generate a demand for the project.

City Councilwoman Dina Higgins is confident that will happen because of the area's appealing mountain views and transportation accommodations, including freeway access and the nearby airport.

"Considering the market we're doing fantastic," Higgins said of the Falcon district that encompasses the heart of Council District 5, which she represents.

A few of the district's employers such as WAXIE, the California-based supplier of restroom sanitary supplies, opened recently or within the past three years, she said.

More jobs have to keep coming, Higgins said.

"And hopefully, the earthmovers on the Daedalus site are a good start," she said.

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