



West Valley VIEW

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Buckeye's Douglas Ranch to have about 100,000 houses

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It may take 35 years to complete, but the largest master-planned community in the state is up and moving.

Douglas Ranch - Buckeye's 53-square-mile development northwest of the White Tank Mountains - soon will come before the Buckeye Town Council to ask for community master-planned changes that would increase jobs and houses in the development.

Douglas Ranch is scheduled to start building in 2009.

"Douglas Ranch is bigger than Tempe, and it is only 15 percent of Buckeye," said Tom Hennessy, Douglas Ranch General Manager with El Dorado Holdings.

The Town Council already has approved 83,266 homes and 24 million square feet of commercial and office space for Douglas Ranch. But in April, developers will come before the council again asking to increase both of those numbers.

Not a bedroom community

Developers will ask for a significant increase in the amount of commercial, office and retail space in the development to help provide jobs, Hennessy said.

"None of us want this to be a bedroom community," he said.

Currently, the development is approved for 24 million square feet, but "that is only .7 jobs per home, and that is not enough," Hennessy said.

Instead developers are hoping to provide 1.8 jobs per house, and will ask the council to approve an increase of commercial and office space to 50 million square feet.

Developers are targeting providing some 150,000 jobs in Douglas Ranch, Hennessy said.

The amendment also would increase density, mostly in the town center area near the commercial development, from about 83,000 homes to 100,000 homes.

Other aspects of the proposed amendment encourage mixed-land-use areas and maintain open spaces, and reduce the number of golf courses - because they are in less demand and take a large supply of water to maintain.

The amendment also would incorporate the latest transportation plans from the Maricopa Association of Governments as well as rail or light rail rights-of-way next to arterials.

Amenities, green and otherwise

Among the proposed 100,000 homes, developers of Douglas Ranch also are planning to provide large amounts of open space, including a large

central park as well as "green" villages.

"We are planning on a 300-acre central park, which will be the biggest in Arizona," Hennessy said.

The park would have areas for cultural and entertainment events as well as sports fields and both active and passive open space.

In addition, there will be approximately 5,000 acres of natural washes preserved in the development and approximately 2,000 acres of other community and neighborhood parks.

"We are planning for a quarter-of-a-million residents at build out," he said.

Douglas Ranch developers also will design entire "green," or environmentally friendly and efficient, areas in the development that would require every building to be Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) certified.

"It is the wave of the future and it will attract companies to the development," Hennessy said.

Entire villages of office and commercial space would be designed so that every building in the village is LEED certified, he said.

Education also will be emphasized. Along with some 27 elementary school sites and several high school sites, Douglas Ranch developers also want to offer higher education.

"We will have a university in Douglas Ranch - no doubt about that," Hennessy said.

Putting up a good front

Douglas Ranch developers also will have a fronting on Sun Valley Parkway in the future.

The Trillium development, recently acquired by El Dorado Holdings, JDMD Investments and Apollo Real Estate Advisors, fronts the parkway and is "further along" than Douglas Ranch, Hennessy said, adding he hoped to see major construction on that project start this year.

Hennessy did not know for sure yet if Trillium would be an additional development of Douglas Ranch or a separate entity altogether, he added, but said both developments would be of the same caliber of quality.

As with all large developments, Douglas Ranch will be built in phases, with the first planned phase to be approximately 85,000 acres and some 25 percent of the total property, he said.

Despite the distance from downtown, Douglas Ranch developers want to be a part of the community, Hennessy said.

"We realize that Douglas Ranch is a part of the town of Buckeye," he said, adding that the developers also have made a \$1million commitment to downtown revitalization efforts in Buckeye.

"It is important to be a part of the fabric of the town," Hennessy said.

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