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Eloy News

Robson Ranch retail center breaks ground in January

By TEMPLE A. STARK, Editor December 07, 2006

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Toltec Buttes will remain

A satellite office of the Eloy Police Department will likely be the first tenant in place at Robson Ranch Eloy's new commercial center.

With construction and sales running ahead of projections, other plans for the active-adult community are continuing apace.

The commercial center is scheduled to break ground in January, said Steve Soriano, executive vice president of Robson communities, who is overseeing Robson Ranch Eloy's development.

The Robson Ranch shopping center will be developed in nine phases. It will be located closest to Jimmie Kerr Boulevard / Highway 84, off of the development's main entrance, Robson Boulevard.

The first phase is 16,200 square feet of retail space. No commercial tenants have confirmed their presence at the site. Soriano said Basha's has been a frequent partner at other Robson communities, but at this time the grocer has not signed a lease.

Soriano said the two companies work together well for two reasons: "Both offer high quality and Eddie Basha and Ed Robson are friends."

A golf course and a grill restaurant already exist, with the golf course open in Dec. 2005, before anything else.

Jim Hood, with DeRito Partners, will work to bring in national companies as tenants. Also planned since the beginning are several other smaller retail stores, such as coffee and sandwich shops.

Part of that first phase is about 700 square feet for a satellite office of the Eloy Police Department, at the lease cost of \$1 a year. What Soriano called a "clerical opportunity" will give the police department a presence near a large populated area its officers are now expected to patrol. It is not large enough for a jail cell.

The officers there will not be expected to be working only within Robson Ranch. Police Chief Bill Pitman has indicated before that he would like to move his desk out there. Soriano said it's up to the police department to decide exactly what they will do with the office.

Plans have been submitted for this part of the commercial center, and a building

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permit is expected within the week, Soriano said.

The shopping center - also considered a power center in the language of development marketing - will have access in front of the development's security gate before the homes begin.

Soriano said the company's Eloy site has become "a hidden vein of gold" and "a bright spot" during a real estate downturn in the Phoenix-metro area.

He said with the high interest for Robson Ranch Eloy property, the home sale prices have also increased above expectations. Previously, the average expected sale price was \$325,000.

House sales in the development started closing soon after it was approved for annexation in February and became official in March. Since then about 300 additional acres of Robson-owned property has also been annexed.

"The success of the Eloy project has been an absolute lifesaver for Robson Communities," Soriano said. "As everything else slowed down, Eloy has picked up."

The company had expected 310 home sales to be closed at this time, but instead it is 425. At the end of October, 73 homes had been completed. Soriano said since then the number of fully constructed homes is likely closer to 100.

Toltec Buttes

With one of the small hills, or buttes, on the Robson property almost completely gone, Soriano said the other three Toltec Buttes will remain.

The Buttes, which provide a third dimension to the flat desert, existed long before the first shack was erected in Pinal County.

Soriano said Robson continued digging into the hillside that the state Department of Transportation had already dug into deeply decades ago for work on Interstate 10. The soil can be used for landscaping and the rocks are used to make concrete.

"Three remain, but they will be left alone," he said.

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