

Rock & Roll Fantasy

Marty West has found a way to show his passion for a unique theme park and Arizona.

Story by SUSAN RANDALL

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Marty West and his partners found the land and part of the money for his dream amusement park. They hope to find the rest after convincing the state Legislature to extend the law on theme parks to include Pinal County.

Peter Alexander, left, commercial real estate developer Greg Sherman and creative director Marty West relax behind the model of Decades Music Theme Park in the office of DeMenna & Associates.

West said he grew up in Scottsdale and loved Legend City, Compton Terrace and trips to Disneyland.

He didn't understand until he was older that Arizona had no theme parks like Disneyland because it didn't have enough population.

Well, now it does. And through a series of what West calls "weird coincidences," he has met and joined forces with people who share his dream.

-- Phoenix/Tucson is the largest market in the country without a theme park.

--The town's proximity to Arizona 87, Arizona 287, I-10, I-8, and the town's airport.

-- Land is cheap.

-- 16.6 million tourists projected around the Eloy area by 2012. Commercial real estate developer Greg Sherman, the other principal in the project, attended Coronado High School as did West, but they didn't meet until recently.

Why Eloy?

Spokesman Jason Rose realized that he had grown up in the same neighborhood as West, and "Hockey Marty" had recruited him to play street hockey.

Others on the team are lobbyist Kevin DeMenna; attorney Jordan Rose; landowner/developer Chuck Sorensen; President Nancy D'Anna of Summit Title Agency; and President Peter Alexander of Themed Future Concepts LLC, former project manager for Disney's Epcot Center and Disney Tokyo and former vice president at Universal Studios, Orlando.

Alexander just finished a feasibility study and five-year operating model for "Decades Music Theme Park" and will be chief executive officer, if it becomes reality.

They plan to build the park in Eloy between Houser Road on the south, Shedd Road on the north, Eleven Mile Corner Road on the east and Tumbleweed (Tweedy) Road on the west.

Why Eloy?

"It's a blank canvas," West said.

Rose said the area including Phoenix and Tucson is the largest market in the country without a theme park.

The site is located in a good transportation corridor between Arizona 87, Arizona 287 and Interstate 10 and is near Interstate 8. It also is adjacent to Eloy Municipal Airport, home of the largest skydiving facility in the world with 180,000 visitors a year.

A lot of land can be assembled there at a reasonable price, Jason Rose said. They cannot locate on an Indian reservation, he added. Theme park legislation restricts it because of gaming concerns.

Alexander said that by 2012, the 150-mile radius around Eloy is expected to have 5.9 million residents and an annual tourist population of 16.6 million.

He believes the park could attract more than 6 million visitors a year, provide 3,000 jobs and create a hub for other commercial development in Pinal County.

The team plans to talk to Eloy about providing water.

"Anything we do waterwise will be good for Eloy and good for the environment," Rose said.

The Eloy City Council is expected to approve a resolution Tuesday urging the Legislature to change the law to allow it and Decades to create a Theme Park and Support Facility District.

Rose said this would allow the group to issue revenue bonds to repay the investors, and repay the revenue bonds with an additional 9 percent sales tax on all transactions inside the park. It would not displace current city, county or state sales taxes or affect sales taxes outside the park.

'Fun, fun, fun'

West's vision is to incorporate four decades of rock 'n' roll.

The 1950s area would be reminiscent of Palisades Amusement Park in New Jersey and include rides like Bill Haley & His Comets' "Rock Around the Clock" Ferris wheel, Ritchie Valens' "La Bamba" carousel, Jerry Lee Lewis' "Whole Lotta Shakin' Goin' On" roller coaster and Danny & the Juniors' "At the Hop," an overview ride.

Every decade would have overview rides with tours of music and memories - like the History Channel if it were a three-dimensional, whole-body experience.

The 1960s area would include The Beach Boys' "Little Deuce Coupe," miniature cars that visitors could drive down a winding road to a real hamburger stand at an artificial beach.

Well she got her daddy's car/
And she cruised through the hamburger stand now/
Seems she forgot all about the library/
Like she told her old man now/

The '60s also would include John Fogerty and Creedence Clearwater Revival's "Green River" rapids ride with passengers in crafts that looked like large inner tubes; Jimi Hendrix' "Are You Experienced," a tour of the '60s in miniature yellow submarines; and The Doors' "Riders on the Storm," a dark ride starting in a Victorian house like Phoenix's Rossen House and taking riders in miniature 1956 GMC trucks down and under the park.

Dark rides, Rose explained, are indoor rides that move the passenger through a story like the Pirates of the Caribbean at Disneyland.

The Who's "The Kids Are Alright" would be a small amusement park for children with rides like Sammy Hagar's "I Can't Drive 55," Ratt's "Round Round About" tea cups, and the Steve Miller Band's "Jet Airliner" plane rides.

The '70s would include the Eagles' "Hotel California," a log flume ride with miniature, floating Mercedes Benz cars instead of logs. The last, long drop of the ride would include a screaming guitar: "You can check out anytime you like / But you can never leave."

The '70s also would include Supertramp's "Breakfast in America," a ride of spinning coffee cups circling a waitress like the one on the album cover; and Kansas' "Point of Know Return," a pirate ship water flume ride with a 56-foot drop.

Visitors would pass through Pink Floyd's "The Wall" to reach the 1980s and a dark ride with the same name.

Bob Seger's "Fire Lake" would be a pyrotechnic lake for stunt shows. Ozzy Osbourne's "Crazy Train" would be a steel mule coaster that wrapped about a miniature Picacho Peak. The Grateful Dead's "Fire on the Mountain" would be a log ride in a country setting.

Grand Funk Railroad would surround the park, with stations in every decade. In the center of the park would be an Arc de Triomphe shaped like the "M" for MTV with two corporate suites on top.

Also inside the park would be "Compton Terrace," an outside concert arena for 16,000 to 17,000 spectators, a 5,500-person indoor Spirit of the Radio Concert Hall and an 850-room condo-hotel, whose guests could leave and return to the theme park whenever they wished.

Near the entrances to the hotel and theme park would be retail shops, nightclubs and restaurants.

West said he spent almost 20 years planning this theme park.

"It's not research," he said. "It's my life."

To learn more about the proposed theme park log on to www.DecadesUSA.com.