

Gateway plans wind through City Hall as project take shape

by [Gary Nelson](#) - Jun. 4, 2008 07:08 AM
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The planning room at DMB Associates' Scottsdale headquarters looks big enough to accommodate an entire theater of the Second World War.

It has enough maps for that, too, so many they now spill into a second room after a portable wall was moved back as far as it could go.

Funny thing, though: The maps and charts don't cover whole continents the way Eisenhower's did. They all focus on one five-square-mile area that could become the linchpin of Mesa's future prosperity.

In not much more than a year, DMB expects to begin moving dirt on that tract, which it bought in 2006 and now leases to General Motors while the giant automaker wraps up more than 50 years of testing cars there.

Plans are in flux and DMB officials say development will take decades. But Mesa residents can get a snapshot of where things stand now when the company hosts two open houses next week to showcase the project. Although several such events already have been held, DMB officials said new exhibits will be on display this time out.

City officials are getting their share of data as well.

DMB and Pacific Proving LLC, which bought the southern portion of the GM property in 2004, are moving ahead on several fronts at City Hall to acquire what real estate people call "entitlements" - legal permission to build

their hoped-for developments.

The companies are seeking major changes in the general plan that Mesa voters approved in 2002. While the plan doesn't have the legal teeth of a zoning ordinance, big developments must comply with its overall vision.

Those requests come before the Planning and Zoning Board in a special hearing July 31, and the board will vote on them after its Aug. 21 regular meeting.

They then move to the City Council for action that is likely this fall.

Pacific Proving is expected to file soon for annexation into Mesa, a step DMB already has taken. DMB also recently filed an inches-thick application to rezone the property under new rules that allow intensive urban development with a mix of uses.

Planning Director John Wesley said Mesa wants all these legalities done by the end of the year.

"We're trying to time all those so they

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happen pretty close together," Wesley said of what is likely to be the biggest single planning project in city history.

DMB is pushing for the approvals because it wants to get going as soon as possible on at least the northern part of its tract, along the south side of Elliot Road. Company officials have said repeatedly that major resort and golf facilities there are likely to be among the earliest portions of their project.

Eventually, as the Gateway area develops, DMB thinks the southeastern corner of Elliot and Ellsworth roads could become one of several high-rise urban cores in an "aerotropolis" tied to Phoenix-Mesa Gateway Airport.

If you go

What: Open houses to explain DMB Associates' plans for its portion of the General Motors property south of Elliot and east of Ellsworth roads.

Where: Desert Ridge High School, 10045 E. Madero, Mesa.

When: June 11, 5-7 p.m.; June 14, 8:30-10:30 a.m.

Reservations: Online at www.dmbmesaprovinggrounds.com or by phone at 480-367-7631 at least two days in advance.

Information: Kathleen Donahoe, 602-617-1951 or tbdon@aol.com.

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