



## Cabela's project draws retailers, hotels

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WALKER -- As plans for a Cabela's store in Walker begin to firm up, other retailers and hotels are beginning to follow it into the Orchard Park project.

Developer Jim Bossenbroek said he is in talks with a group that wants to put a \$35 million hotel and water park near the Cabela's site.

Although he did not say who would run the 35,000-square-foot, 200-room hotel and water park, plans show Splash Universe -- the same group that built a similar resort near the Cabela's store in Dundee.

"Within the last month, they approached me to be near Cabela's," he told city officials at an informational meeting Wednesday.

The speed at which the Cabela's plan is proceeding is forcing the developer to make some changes to the site. Cabela's wants to build on the southeast corner of Orchard Park, with visibility along Int. 96, Bossenbroek said. The original plan calls for Cabela's in the center of the project.

Bossenbroek is asking the city to change a preliminary plan that previously was approved. He wants to start the Cabela's portion first and build out the development's town center later.

The Planning Commission could hold a hearing on the changes as early as July 18.

Bossenbroek has a letter of intent from Cabela's, but not a purchase agreement. He still is trying to hammer out the deal.

"There are 18 Cabela's in the country. There are 18,000 communities in the country that want them," he said, describing the difficulty of attracting the Nebraska-based outdoor giant that is so critical to the project.

Yet Bossenbroek said Cabela's wants to open the store by fall of 2009.

"We are confident we're going to have a project here," he said.

The developer also updated city officials on the income tax they could collect from the project. When the project is completely built, Walker could collect more than \$1 million a year in income tax. The first phase of the project, which would include Cabela's and other smaller retail sites, could bring in about \$204,000 in added income tax annually.

City and planning commissioners said they are more at ease about the project following Wednesday's presentation. Last month, city commissioners were surprised when the developer outlined changes to the original plan.

"I think it went well," Mayor Rob VerHeulen said. "I think the Planning Commission and City Commission have a much better understanding of what's happening there."

Although the town center portion will be put off, the developers say it remains part of the larger plan. The residential part also will stay, but will not be part of the first phase of construction.

"The look and feel of the project is going to stay the same," said Gary Smith, the project planner from Bird Houk Collaborative in Dublin, Ohio. "Nothing in the quality standards is going to change."

"This is not going to be another Alpine Avenue."

Still, developers have a long way to go.

Critical to the deal is a land swap plan that is a key to secure funding needed to clean up the land and pay for roads and other infrastructure improvements.

The proposal combines creative financing and what's called an Act 425 revenue-sharing plan.

Wyoming would get the Orchard Park land and collect its share of taxes. Walker still would get its taxes. And the developer would get site improvements paid for with the additional taxes.

While not directly giving the developer a loan, the deal essentially would act the same way.

The bonds issued to pay for the improvements would be paid back through higher taxes collected on the developed land.

The development, bordered by Int. 96, Walker Avenue, Four Mile Road and Bristol Avenue NW, could have a wide-reaching economic impact on the area.

Cabela's said the Walker store would employ 118 full-time and 145 part-time workers in the first year with a payroll of \$6.58 million.

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