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Developers in two-part Harmony

Hotel, conference center plans about to take main stage at Presidio project

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FORT COLLINS — Owners of two strategically located land tracts on East Harmony Road are cooperating on a development plan that will accommodate 2.7 million square feet of new development, with a full-service hotel and conference center first in line.

If the projects move ahead as the two principals hope, they will together create a dramatic new skyline in southeast Fort Collins.

Longtime real estate developer and former city planning director Les Kaplan is lining up users, including the hotel-conference center complex, for his 85-acre Presidio project across Harmony Road from the Hewlett-Packard Co. campus. Meanwhile, MAV Development Inc. of Ann Arbor, Mich., is poised to build an 80,000-square-foot office building on a spec basis, but with prospective users expressing interest.

Kaplan and MAVD will join in seeking city



NEW SKYLINE — The view to the southwest from high above the junction of Harmony Road and Interstate 25, depicted in this architect's rendering, shows a skyline dominated by a six-story hotel and conference center and adjacent office buildings located in the proposed Presidio development.

Of pickles, gloves

The project also brings the resources of two companies bearing some of the nation's best-known brands together. The "V" in MAVD stands for Vlastic, the multiline food-product company known mostly for its pickles promoted by a cartoon stork. The developer that intends to build both hotel projects is an

or Hilton Fort Collins.

"We're still in the feasibility stage with the conference portion of that," said Steve Pfister, who is representing Lamont in the negotiations with Kaplan and MAVD. "They're thinking of phasing in that space depending upon need."

The South Dakota developers have also agreed in principal with the two owners that Kaplan has also secured a verbal agreement from Miramont Sports Center owner Cliff Buchholz to develop a health club and wellness center that would occupy a prominent corner in the middle of Presidio, Spanish for "fort."

Buchholz said the center would differ significantly from his neighborhood-oriented sports center three miles west of the new development site.

"I think the clubs today are moving more toward the 'wellness-center' concept," Buchholz said. "This location will also require more of a corporate-style fitness center," one that is oriented toward the needs of employers.

Buchholz said the center would most likely fall between 20,000 and 30,000 square feet in size — about a third the size of the tennis-dominated Miramont sports center.

The mixed-use Presidio is also designed to accommodate:

- Retail uses, including restaurants and service businesses.

- Up to 800,000 square feet of office space, most designed for smaller, class-A users.

- 450 units of multi-family housing, with potential for retirement and long-term care uses.

The proposed hotel would dominate the project's eastern skyline, perched on the highest point overlooking the Harmony Road/Interstate 25 interchange.

"You can see this location from anywhere on I-25 within five miles," Kaplan said. "It will define the skyline for Fort Collins."

The HP history

The 105-acre Harmony Technology Park, as

the MAVD-owned portion of the combined projects is known, was for decades owned by Hewlett-Packard Co. In 2000, the company announced plans for an expansion that would have put as many as six new buildings on the site.

But the tech-sector downturn beginning in 2001, combined with a shift in the company's strategic planning, caused HP to put the land on the market. MAVD bought the land for \$14 million in February after a two-year, nationwide search for prime development land.

Realtec Commercial Real Estate Services Inc. broker Larry Stroud, who listed the land and now represents MAVD in brokering the property, said at the time of sale that the Michigan company's decision represented a weighty endorsement of Fort Collins.

"They went through a very methodical analysis of the United States, the metro and secondary service areas," Stroud said.

"They looked at their core strength, which is quality, campus-style office development. Their criteria were educational attainment, presence of a university, technology-based businesses, recreation and quality of life," he added. "They had it all, and it came down to Fort Collins, Boulder and Colorado Springs. This piece of ground fits their profile better than any other."

MAVD president Rob Aldrich said the company would begin moving earth in the spring to make way for a four-story, 80,000-square-foot spec office building, and that several potential tenants had expressed interest.

In addition, potential buyers are considering the purchase of land parcels totaling nearly 30 acres, Aldrich said.

"When you have so much interest concentrated in one area, it seems that we really ought to move quickly," he said. "But we're going about this very deliberately. We have a handful of users who are interested in the primary use, and we are vigorously pursuing them."



Courtesy Vaught Frye Architects

STREET-LEVEL VIEW — A boulevard that extends eastward from Lady Moon Drive, just south of the Hewlett-Packard Co. headquarters, would wind through the Presidio development toward the hotel and conference center, flanked by retail and office space.

approval for minor amendments to a master plan for the two properties that together span 195 acres. If those changes go forward, it's likely another limited-service hotel project will become part of the commercial mix.

"I don't know that there is another agreement like this in the city's history," Kaplan said of the collaboration with MAVD. "All the work that's been done on this over the past eight years has set the stage for cooperation and coordination."

off-shoot of Wells Lamont Co., the world's largest manufacturer of gloves.

Aberdeen, S.D.-based Lamont Cos. Inc., a relative newcomer to the hospitality development industry, has about a dozen hotel projects to its credit, most under the Holiday Inn flag.

A letter of intent that the developer signed with Kaplan would provide for a 150-room, full-service Holiday Inn hotel and conference center, on the scale of the Fort Collins Marriott