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POLK COUNTY DEVELOPMENTS NEWS

Seller weighs offers for 44-acre development site across from Legoland

By J. KYLE FOSTER
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This 44-acre site is a half mile from Legoland Resort in Winter Haven and has zoning entitlements for commercial and multifamily development.(Handout)

Developer Carlos Yepes, owner of **Belleair Development Group**, has owned 44 acres of land in Winter Haven for 20 years. Now he’s weighing two purchase offers for the entitled property right across the lake from Legoland Beach Retreat, Yepes told **GrowthSpotter**.

“It’s already zoned and we have the entitlements to develop it,” Yepes said. “It was a long-term investment and now is the time to develop it or sell it.”

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The Pinellas Park-based developer considered building out the parcel but has had the property listed for sale, he said. The site at 6305 Cypress Gardens Blvd. is about a half-mile from the entrance to Legoland Resort, which attracts 1.6 million visitors per year.

“The current purchaser has defaulted under the PSA and are trying to come back under contract to purchase all of it,” Yepes said. “It is up to me to allow them to come back; however, another large group is very interested to take it all.”

Two groups interested in the property is a pretty good spot to be in, Yepes said.

“This is the only large parcel left in this sector with an amazing (land use) of Community Activity Center overlay, which allows us to develop the property in a great number of ways,” he said.

The property is split into two tracts. The parcel fronting on Cypress Gardens Boulevard is zoned C-3, while the northern half of the site has an approved Planned Unit Development entitled for 240 residential units.

“It’s kind of the last unique pieces of property there of that size,” Yepes said. “It can handle hotel, retail, any type of attraction there.”

Yepes declined to disclose prices or the name of the potential buyers. The parcel is located in **the growing Legoland corridor** and has 1,800 feet of shoreline on Lake Dexter.

“We may modify that to come up with a different plan to more compatible with all the things we are doing,” Yepes said. “It will be more retail and more entertainment in the front. And some things on the lake. Maybe a boardwalk on the lake. We’re just playing with some different things to see what works best.”

Yepes previously sold an outparcel that is now occupied by car dealers Hyundai, Honda and Nissan and another where a **Courtyard by Marriott was built in 2018**. Nearby communities include Beaute Vena and Della Vita Apartments. Also along Cypress Gardens Boulevard are restaurants, a Publix supermarket in Winter Haven Square and an assisted living facility.

POLK COUNTY DEVELOPMENTS

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Belleair has built mostly on the west coast of Florida. The 23-year-old company primarily focuses on **commercial retail developments** – projects from single-tenant banks and gas stations to

medical facilities, hotels auto centers and repair centers, Yepes said.

About 8 miles east at U.S. 27, Lakeland-based Century is planning **Cypress Landings**, a possible 183,000 square feet of retail space, 210 apartments and a hotel. Next to that is **Ashton North**, an approved 84-acre PUD also slated for a mix of commercial and multi-family development.

Yepes said he is confident the property will be under development within 12 months – even with the expected slowdown caused by the Covid-19 pandemic.

“This little bump in the road with the coronavirus is putting everyone in a place to rethink some things but I think long term, (the development) will be a good thing,” he said. “We’re very much in conversations. They (potential buyers) know this is very temporary. You have to look beyond the 60-90 days and then takes two years to build. “

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