LOOKING TO THE FUTURE

Photography By: Christine Cain
Spurred on by several economic development projects that continue to move forward despite the economic downturn, the City of North Las Vegas remains focused on the future. By all accounts, as economic recovery begins to take hold by 2010, the infrastructure and dozens of key developments will be completed or nearing completion in areas such as the Northeast Industrial Corridor, Cheyenne Technology Corridor and a Downtown Master Plan.

Upon completion, the City of North Las Vegas, situated at the northern edge of the Las Vegas Valley, will barely resemble what it did twenty years ago. Since tripling its population from 1990 and annexing over 14,000 acres four miles northeast of the Las Vegas Speedway last May, it already looks reborn.

The Last Major Industrial Corridor in Southern Nevada

One reason for the dramatic change in landscape is Apex, a 20,000-acre, master-planned area located west of Interstate 15 and U.S. Highway 93. In July 2008, it broke ground on the first phase of the Mountain View Industrial Park. As part of the greater Northeast Industrial Corridor, Apex Industrial Park and several new industrial developments promise to drive economic diversification within the city.

“One of our projects is the Speedway Commerce Center, a 40-acre development just west of the Las Vegas Motor Speedway. The first phase will include a 470,000-square-foot commerce center, consisting of mom and pop shops and light industrial,” said John Ramous, vice president of operations for Harsch Investment Properties. “About 20 to 30 percent of the tenants are race-related, but we expect non-race related units and light industrial to pick up as vacancies near The Strip become less available as early as late 2009 or early 2010.”

Ramous sees the industrial corridor as having an exceptionally bright future with its transportation and rail access.

Harsch Investment Properties is also building the second phase of Cheyenne Commerce Center (located in the Cheyenne Technology Corridor), a three-phase, 18-acre project that contains 202,716 square feet of smaller-bay product.

Harsch Investment Properties is not the only developer seizing opportunities in North Las Vegas. Two distribution buildings are also being developed by Centennial West LLC on the 10 acres bordered by Centennial Parkway.
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and Mt. Hood Street, which is part of a 40-acre industrial complex. Thomas & Mack Development is proceeding with its Northern Beltway Industrial Center, which will accommodate large warehouse and distribution users needing immediate access to local businesses and the interstate highway system. Manheim Auctions is also continuing its expansion. “Economic development is a vital component of North Las Vegas’ goals. We are proud to encourage the development of business parks that will attract new companies and bring new jobs,” said City of North Las Vegas Mayor Michael Montandon.

Becoming a Logistics Center

“The primary goal of the city’s economic development program is job creation,” said Michael Majewski, director of economic development for the City of North Las Vegas. To this end, he envisions encompassing the undeveloped properties in the northeast sections of the city in a coordinated effort to brand itself as a logistics center. This effort will be a public-private partnership involving property owners, the real estate community, local business groups and other local and state organizations. An outreach will also take place to coordinate activities with entities such as, the U.S. Department of Commerce, Office of Homeland Security, District Export Councils, West Coast Port Authorities and transportation companies. Mr. Majewski went on to say, the establishment of a Foreign Trade Zone will be a keystone to these efforts.

“As the ports of Los Angeles and Long Beach grew, they maxed out and now have hundreds of millions of dollars in containers sitting on the dock in gridlock,” said Somer Hollingsworth, president and CEO of the Nevada Development Authority. “The concept of moving those containers to Southern Nevada, to a customs facility, and processing them was alive and well but no one stepped up to the plate until the City View Business Park came into existence.”

The City View Business Park project, which is a 365-acre development with accessible rail service and I-15 as its southern boundary, is designed to help manufacturers and distributors deliver their products to customers faster by avoiding the gridlock that occurs in California. In addition, several independent studies confirmed that as a Foreign Trade Zone, Southern Nevada is one of the most cost effective areas in the country for storing and distributing goods.
“Since diversification is the key to growing a stable economy, we see the potential for hundreds of businesses involved in warehousing, manufacturing, distribution and research and development moving into the area,” said Mason Harvey, broker and principal of Prudential Americana Group, REALTORS. “Several factors such as air transportation, rail service, ease of access to several highways and direct frontage onto I-15 all play an important role.”

According to Harvey, Apex is especially suited to be used as an inland port after most of the industrial land was rezoned between 2003 and 2006. The few parcels that remained after rezoning were priced substantially higher, as much as five times higher, than the parcels available in the Apex Industrial Park.

“Apex remained the last bastion of developable land suitable for industrial and R&D use at an affordable price anywhere in the Valley,” said Harvey. “Our development’s close proximity to residential housing, shopping, schools and recreation all play an important role in attracting the future employment base for City View Business Park.”

Changing the Residential Landscape

One residential development set to reshape the city is Park Highlands, a 2,700-acre, master-planned community located north of the I-215 Beltway with a 300-acre wildlife preserve. Currently, the Olympia Group is developing the first 600 acres on the westernmost portion of the development.

“We’ve slowed the pace of the project, but we anticipate that homes will be built by the fall of 2010,” said Marc Bolduc, senior vice president of development operations for the Olympia Group. “Now is the time for builders to reserve their space alongside Astoria, America West and Standard Pacific who all anticipate building here. So, for the long term, we love this parcel in North Las Vegas.”

While the Olympia Group originally planned for a denser population than its neighbor community Aliante, Bolduc now said he is not so sure. Given current land and housing valuations, the market might be right for home-builders to offer larger lots within the community, he said.

“The elementary school is on schedule to be completed in 2010 and we believe the rest of the development will take off in that time period,” said Bolduc. “As the rest of the market stabilizes, home buyers will quickly take note of the accessibility of the I-215 Beltway, interchanges and direct access to several amenities which adds tremendous value.”

Park Highlands has several interesting features planned, including three over-sized parks, ranging from seven to ten acres each. The park closest to the planned elementary school will carry a space exploration theme with moon colonies, solar system play areas and spaceship play structures in addition to traditional features such as a baseball field and basketball, tennis and volleyball courts.

The addition of such parks, whether built by private developers or the city, has become a focus for North Las Vegas in recent years. While there have been previous challenges in park planning related to the availability of funds for capital projects, North Las Vegas has succeeded in phasing more parks into master plan projects to increase recreational facilities for the community. “We want to create more parks and activities that will bring families to our community. Having a regional park will enhance our residents’ choices,” said Councilwoman Shari Buck. One such success story is the Craig Ranch Regional Park.

The Craig Ranch Regional Park (Craig Ranch), the first regional park in the City of North Las Vegas, is the type of destination to bring unity to a community. Located at 628 West Craig Road between Commerce Street and Revere Street, the 132-acre property is currently in use as a public golf course operated by the city.

In 2006, however, it was recognized that the goal of the master-planning process was to develop a park that would best serve the diverse recreational needs of the community. Phase One of Craig Ranch is scheduled to begin construction in the spring of 2009 and Phase Two is scheduled to begin in 2010.

“These new park amenities at Craig Ranch will provide a very different recreational experience compared to what you typically find at our neigh-
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This past November, the City of North Las Vegas began the construction of a water reclamation facility capable of treating 25 million gallons of wastewater per day; the estimated amount generated by 300,000 people. Presently, North Las Vegas is home to approximately 215,000 people.

“This construction project will boost economic development in North Las Vegas, while extending our precious water resources,” said Gregory Rose, city manager.

Construction of the facility, expected to be complete in 2011, will cost $257-million and will create up to 500 new jobs for the city.

The 41-acre parcel for the project on Carey Avenue, just south of Nellis Air Force Base, is being leased to the city by the U.S. Air Force. An official groundbreaking ceremony will be held at the site sometime this month. Under the enhanced use lease agreement, the city paid the U.S. Air Force $25-million to renovate and expand the Nellis Fitness Center.

“Through the collaborative efforts of the Air Force and the City of North Las Vegas, an opportunity was identified that benefits both the base and surrounding community,” said Joe DiRosario, 99th mission support deputy for installation support at Nellis Air Force Base.

The water reclamation facility will use state-of-the-art wastewater treatment technology to prevent odors. In addition, it will not generate noise for nearby residential areas. The environmentally friendly technology for treatment will use sodium hypochlorite, an industrial strength bleach, and citric acid.

This water reclamation facility will help the city accommodate population growth. Having their own water reclamation facility will also help the city avoid the rising cost of wastewater treatment.
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...borhood or community parks, it will have a lot more adventure and play for everyone,” explained Jon Jainga, parks planning and development manager for the City of North Las Vegas Parks and Recreation Department. “In 2009 we will begin to update the 2004 Parks and Recreation Comprehensive Plan, which will help us evaluate our existing parks and facilities as well as the level of services we are providing to the community in North Las Vegas.”

The Craig Ranch Regional Park seems to exemplify future planning, with many features and amenities going beyond typical park offerings. For example, the 3.5-acre “Destination Playground” inside Craig Ranch will include, a children’s sand and play area, interactive play stream, a water sculpture “lizard” and spray plaza, a large group picnic shelter, a forest play structure that includes rope net bridges, climbers and a tree house, a large hillside slide, climbing wall, swings, archeology dig, arbor and bench areas and a large plaza overlooking the existing pond.

Other features will include a new off-leash, fenced dog park, four new restroom facilities, 12-foot wide walking trail with connections to the regional trail system and an interim performance area. Phase Two will include two baseball fields, volleyball, tennis and basketball courts, an expansive dog park and a skate park.

By blending development with redevelopment, several people see the dynamic of the city changing. For example, most envision Lamb Boulevard (between Interstate I-15 and the I-215 Beltway) becoming a vital roadway for the city. What most are unaware of is how this strategically planned roadway connection will be critical in serving the residents who live in the area today, but also stimulate several large scale, mixed-use developments that have been in planning stages for many years.

“Eventually, Lamb Boulevard will transform these huge vacant parcels that you see today along both sides of the corridor into a mixed-use destination development with much higher pedestrian traffic than we traditionally see,” said Qiong Liu, public works director for the City of North Las Vegas. “The length of this connection might seem short compared to some other major roadway projects, but it is a multi-million dollar project, one of several occurring in North Las Vegas. It’s a very exciting time to be part of this transformation.”

A Master Plan to Redefine the North Las Vegas Downtown

In addition to Lamb Boulevard, which recently received $34.2-million in roadway and flood control improvements, the redevelopment of Downtown North Las Vegas is being done with a refined and coordinated vision. At its center, the new North Las Vegas City Hall will consolidate all city services into a new $135-million, value-engineered and energy-efficient facility.

“The biggest change that residents will see is the one-stop development services shop on the first floor, which we modeled after the plan developed by the City of Henderson,” said Liu. “All development related services including planning, public works, fire, utilities and building permits will be located in one place to help facilitate development.” We want to make the development and the permitting process as easy as possible while still keeping our businesses safe, said Councilman William Robinson.

In addition to breaking ground on this state-of-the-art design as early as May 2009, the plan includes the integration of under utilized areas, pedestrian bridges and landscape, as well as the introduction of a park civic plaza for community events.

“One of the catalysts for redeveloping the entire Downtown area is the new North Las Vegas City Hall, which demonstrates a commitment by the government, that they are structured to serve the city well into the future,” said Frank Fiori, director of planning and zoning for North Las Vegas. “I think the new civic building will offer a type of anchor to our community.”

The North 5th Street Corridor, which is being improved in cooperation with the Regional Transportation Commission of Southern Nevada, will enhance the entire section between Owens Avenue and the I-215 Beltway. Like many redevelopment plans, an emphasis is being placed on improved pedestrian mobility, reduced traffic congestion, public transit and multi-use trail facilities. “It is our intent to revitalize the Downtown area, to stimulate economic growth and create new jobs,” said Councilman and redevelopment chairman Robert Eliason.

“One of the main ideas found in the Downtown Master Plan, and in particular, the North 5th Street Corridor, is to help create a transit-oriented development area,” said Fiori. “Once you have any outstanding issues worked out and are able to introduce and develop mixed-use properties, you can successfully advance the vision of the entire city whether you’re talking about the new police substation, civic node or City Hall.”

The benefactors will not only be residents and city government, but also a combination of developments both inside and outside of the master plan, all of which are poised to help spark the local economy.

Developing Pedestrian-Friendly Destinations

Located in the heart of the Downtown Master Plan, at Las Vegas Boulevard and Hamilton Street, the $100-million, 32-acre Las Flores
shopping center (350,000 square feet) has already signed La Curaçao, a major furniture and electronics retailer, as its first big tenant. Two other leases were expected to be complete in December.

“We anticipate regional and national retailers to express their interest immediately following their focus on the holidays. Everybody wants to be part of it,” said Michael Townsend, chief operating officer for the Montecito Companies, the developer on behalf of The Legaspi Company. “As an infill project, it’s not tied to the same economic stresses as other projects. It keeps moving forward because the need already exists in the area.”

Townsend said that while he typically projects the center will be responsible for 750 full and part-time jobs, he sees that figure increasing to as many as 900 with La Curaçao employing approximately 100 to 120 permanent employees. In addition, the center is expected to provide a $35-million boost in sales revenue.

“There are several exciting features that will help change the feeling of the area, including an emphasis on increasing pedestrian traffic by 20 to 30 percent,” said Townsend. “Las Flores also has a 45,000-square-foot plaza that will complement and link to the Civic Center plaza being developed by the City of North Las Vegas. It will allow us to co-host seasonal events at two locations, connected by a pedestrian bridge.”

Once the permit process is complete, Townsend anticipates the center will break ground in the 2nd Quarter of 2009. It is expected that completion of the center will also boost traffic to the Silver Nugget, which is anticipated to undergo a massive expansion that will include the casino, movie theaters, restaurants and hotel tower.

Other destinations are also planning major renovations and expansions such as Jerry’s Nugget, which has been part of the local community since 1964. As the North 5th Street Corridor becomes a reality, Jerry’s Nugget intends to serve the additional traffic by expanding the property to include multi-use meeting space and a parking garage.

“For the first time, we’ll have easy access and an expanded demographic as the entire Downtown area is reshaped into a city center,” said Peter DeMangus, general manager of Jerry’s Nugget. “I really think that continued infrastructure improvements in our area combined with the pro-business attitude of the City of North Las Vegas will mean many positive things for our businesses, our employees and our customers. It always seemed to me that the rapid residential development would draw commercial development, but I’m still stunned how quickly everything has occurred.”
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Such prospects are also what prompted Aliante Station Hotel Casino to open last November. The new Station Casinos property was developed on a 40-acre site within the Aliante master-planned community, located at Aliante Parkway and the I-215 Beltway. In addition to a Scottsdale-modern architecture themed 202-room hotel and casino, the property includes a 600-seat concert showroom, 5,000-square-foot bar and Regal Cinemas with 16 screens and the IMAX experience.

“We look at every project from the perspective of the parent company and the opportunity to position ourselves as the premier local’s casino,” said Joe Hasson, general manager of Aliante Station Hotel Casino. “When you look at the rate of growth in the area, not just today, but over the medium and long term, this is the right place to be at the right time.”

According to Hasson, North Las Vegas is poised to succeed as a major city in Nevada and Station Casinos, along with the Greenspun Corporation and several regional and national brands, wanted to be part of that compelling story. At opening, the new property’s contribution to that story included 1,400 new jobs, 350 of which were filled by employees who worked at other Station Casinos properties.

“When you consider proximity to the Las Vegas Motor Speedway, only 8 to 9 miles away, or the economic outlook of North Las Vegas, it makes great sense to present a compelling formula of business and pleasure,” Hasson said. “We’re also experimenting with new entertainment offerings such as the Ultimate Fighting Championship, which tested our community banquet facility by hosting 700 guests.”

Looking to Become Regional Leaders

Developing and redeveloping an entire city from the last remaining large scale industrial region in the northeast to the city center in the southeast is not a small task. Yet, for North Las Vegas, every detail seems to have fallen into place.

Very soon, it will become home to what many are considering a new medical anchor for the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), which includes a $600-million hospital, nursing home and outpatient center located at Pecos Road and the I-215 Beltway. The project, once called the “crown jewel” of the VA infrastructure by James Peake, VA secretary, will include a 90-bed hospital and 120-bed long-term care center.
This new state-of-the-art facility brings many of the new concepts and trends in delivery of care to our veterans with the design being a ‘patient first’ approach in all aspects,” said Steve Stern, chief asset manager for the VA Southern Nevada Health Care System. “Our focus throughout planning and design has been on the patient and on the staff to create a healing environment.”

Among the facility concepts highlighted, Stern mentioned private patient rooms with space for the spouse and family, adaptable acuity critical care rooms, natural lighting in public areas, outside courtyards with quiet areas and “zero lift” safety designs to protect patients and staff. Phase three is currently under construction with the entire project on schedule for completion in 2011.

In the interim, veterans are still being served by an existing system of ambulatory care facilities located throughout the Las Vegas metro area, with inpatient services provided at the Mike O’Callaghan Federal Hospital, a VA-U.S. Air Force joint venture facility. However, upon completion, the new medical facility promises advancements that will elevate healthcare in the region.

“The combination of a new hospital with all modern state-of-the-art equipment, a thriving research program and educational opportunities for healthcare providers and staff are excellent recruitment tools as we seek the best and brightest in their fields from our relationships with college and university mutual training and residency programs,” said Stern. “It is also the first step in developing an educational, medical and research zone in the north part of the Valley. We are working with the City of North Las Vegas and educational representatives from several schools to coordinate future plans.”

Councilwoman Stephanie Smith added, “We work closely with our new and local businesses to help them expand the gateways for economic growth.”

Northern Beltway Industrial Center (NBIC) is a master-planned 97-acre development located at Range Road and El Campo Grande Avenue in North Las Vegas, just east of the I-15/215 interchange. At its completion, the project will consist of 11 buildings totaling approximately 1.9 million square feet. Currently, there are six big-box industrial buildings ranging from 145,600 square feet to 500,000 square feet in size. In addition, four of those are mid-bay buildings which are being offered for sale or lease. The project can accommodate large industrial and distribution users needing immediate access to local businesses and the interstate highway systems.

NBIC has attracted large tenants including the General Electric. Earlier this year, the company leased 83,772 square feet of Building B to house its production line used to rebuild locomotive electrical drive combos. The combos are 12,000 lb. units consisting of steel axles and wheels with an electric drive motor attached and require a large space to assemble. At one end of the building the units are separated and sent through the two lines, then joined again at the other end and shipped out.

Kevin Higgins, senior vice president of Voit Commercial Brokerage and the leasing agent for the project, says tenants like General Electric are attracted to the project because of its size, its easy access and Thomas & Mack Development Group’s reputation and long-term commitment to the project.

“There were not many options in the valley for a company like GE who needed a large warehouse area with very specific operational requirements,” Higgins said. “This tenant was looking for first generation space so they did not have to rip out any pre-existing structures to fit their needs. They wanted to sign a long lease and knew that Thomas & Mack would still be their landlord in 5, 10 or 15 years. The project was also attractive because of the developer’s plans to continue building large spaces that could accommodate the future growth of the company and its facilities.”

Thomas & Mack is the developer of McCarran Center, Las Vegas Technology Center II and Beltway Business Park, and has been contributing to the growth of Las Vegas for more than 50 years.
and enhance their services. We want to be the community of choice for businesses as well as residents.”

One such partner may be North Vista Hospital, a 185-bed community hospital that has been serving North Las Vegas since 1959. In the last few years, the hospital has been five-star rated for bariatric surgery and recently became the only hospital in Nevada to receive HealthGrades’ five-star rating for maternity care services.

“Southern Nevada has always had some of the best VA medical services in the nation,” said Vince Variale, who was named CEO of North Vista Hospital in November. “Just as we’re committed to serving as a strategic partner with the community, we’re always ready to assist the VA as needed to improve medical care throughout the Valley and restore trust in the local healthcare industry.”

As strategic partners with the community, Variale said they remain committed to keeping pace with the growth of North Las Vegas in order to best meet community needs. While it is challenging to predict during an economic downturn what future expansions might include, especially while residents postpone healthcare, one of his first actions as CEO is to begin evaluating hospital resources to accommodate those in need.

“One of our most immediate needs include finding qualified nurses. As the community grows, we look forward to filling some of those positions to help expand the medical profession,” he said. “Long term, we recognize that the City of North Las Vegas is experiencing something remarkable in changing its image to become a vibrant community where development, economic diversification and quality of life have taken hold.”

One answer to continuing to provide educational opportunities for the growing workforce in North Las Vegas might also be around the corner. The University of Nevada, Las Vegas (UNLV) recently introduced legislation to the U.S. Congress that would ensure the development of a North Las Vegas campus on 2,009 acres.

“UNLV has a great interest in becoming a research-oriented university and the North Las Vegas campus would provide that opportunity,” said Michael Sauer, UNLV’s associate vice president for administration. “While it’s still preliminary, and would take years and years to develop, it would certainly inspire some to consider what future students might be able to achieve over the long term.”

According to Sauer, research activities could be paramount for future economic development and diversification in North Las Vegas. In considering the scale of the proposed project, he also expressed a desire to see mixed-use developments help shape the entire campus community once approved.

“Cooperative projects always lead to great ideas and I can see how all the stakeholders could work together to build a unique campus experience,” said Sauer. “There really is a tremendous opportunity to become a major research and educational employer for the community. If we’re looking to the future, it’s a great place to start.”

Rich Becker is a freelance writer based in Southern Nevada.

For more information, please visit cityofnorthlasvegas.com
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North Las Vegas, one of the fastest growing cities in the U.S., has now taken on a new light. With over 15,000 acres of newly planned development, an emerging technology corridor and a cost-of-living that rivals nearby cities, North Las Vegas is turning heads of those choosing a better community to call their own.