

FORT BEND SUN

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Johnson Development tries to calm concerns about Imperial development



Photo by AERO PHOTO

The proposed Class A, multi-family units will be condo- and luxury-style according to Shafie.

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In recent months, Johnson Development's swift planning process for the Imperial Redevelopment off of Highway 6 and Highway 90 in the old Sugar Land Refinery location has received a mixed response from Sugar Land residents.

The company has recently taken steps to clear up any misconceptions about the development as it

works to revise its PD application.

After Sugar Land planning staff identified several deficiencies and concerns in Johnson's first application, the company plans to have a revised version completed by the end of May or possibly early June. The application will be re-submitted to the city of Sugar Land after Johnson plans to meet with all area homeowner associations and other groups of residents to receive community feedback about the devel-

opment.

Shay Shafie, the general manager on the Imperial Sugar project, said that while some Sugar Land residents have been opposed to some aspects of the redevelopment, such as proposed multi-family housing, it is Johnson's goal now to reach out into the community and explain the benefits of the development.

"Our goal is just to get the facts out there and overcome the emotions and the misunderstandings,"

Shafie said.

"We think if we can get the facts out there and get people to understand those facts that they'll see that this will be a fantastic project for their area and will be a benefit to the area."

The proposed multi-family units, which have received the most opposition from residents, will cover a 20-acre triangular tract in the

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Imperial ballpark district next to the future minor league baseball stadium. There will be another seven-acre plot in the historic district near the old sugar mill.

Johnson is currently planning on proposing 925 multi-family units - down from an original 1,600 - that will be built in three phases of around 300 units each starting in mid 2012. Shafie said this number is not set in stone, however, and will not be until Johnson has met with all of the community associations.

"We all know there are concerns with multi-family units. We all live in the Houston area, we've all seen what's happened to multi-family markets," Shafie said. "But there are plenty of multi-family markets that do well in the long-term. This is a high-end, luxury, condo-style, class A multi-family development."

Shafie also addressed concerns residents have raised



Photo by AERO PHOTO/

Aerial photos of the Imperial Development show where construction has begun on the new minor league baseball stadium.

about the donation of property to the city, something with which the general manager said Johnson takes issue.

"The property was actually conveyed in three different pieces. There was a 15-acre site and a seven-acre site that were conveyed to the Imperial Redevelopment District ... What we did is we donated two of those properties to the Imperial Redevelopment District, and then the district donated the land to the city," Shafie said.

"There's another I think it was four -and-a-half-acre tract that the city decided it needed after the fact, and we sold that to the city ... It was donated yes, but portions of it were sold. There's donations, but we'll eventually get reimbursed back through the district. There's no expectation at all of any approval of apartments or any approval of anything. That was not the case."

In addition to the higher-end, multi-family units that

JOHNSON DEVELOPMENT HAS PLANS TO STILL MEET WITH THESE HOA'S:

Ragus Lake Estates HOA - April 27th at 7pm

Sugar Mill HOA - May 5th at 7pm

Covington Woods HOA - May 9th at 7pm

Venitian Estates HOA - May 23rd at 7pm

Johnson said it is also currently trying to set up a meeting with Sugar Lakes HOA, Brookside Belknap HOA, the Hill and Mayfield park.

Johnson is proposing, the Imperial development will include residential, single family and assisted living; single-family and patio homes; mixed-use retail, office and hotels; and a future business park district to the north.

"I'm very confident that once it starts going up and people see what it looks like, they'll be happy," Shafie said. "They'll be the first ones out here visiting the shops and the restaurants, and they'll be proud to call it their side of town."