

Large new Lake Norman community planned by Simonini Group

By Joe Marusak

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Simonini Group of Charlotte plans to build a large mixed-use community near Lake Norman in eastern Lincoln County, in yet another sign that the unincorporated Denver side of the lake can expect significant post-recession growth.

Simonini's Rivercross subdivision will include 220 detached single-family homes, 240 apartments and 100,000 square feet of retail, according to the developer's plans on file at the Lincoln County Planning and Inspections Department in Lincolnton.

The 116-acre community would sit on vacant land on the west side of N.C. 16 Business, south of Triangle Circle. Simonini anticipates Rivercross being built and occupied by 2020.

Another large development and an industrial park already are in the mix for that area of North Carolina's largest man-made lake.

In March, Lincoln County commissioners unanimously approved a rezoning for what will be the county's largest subdivision – 1,650 homes geared to adults 55 and older.

Arizona-based Shea Homes intends to build its Carolina Ridge development on 589 primarily wooded acres on the south side of N.C. 73 west of Little Egypt Road, near N.C. 16.

"It's going to put Lincoln County on the map, and I'd like to thank y'all for considering us," commissioner Carl Robinson told Shea Homes representatives after commissioners approved the plans.

Carolina Ridge, several miles southwest of the lake, will be one of the largest older adult communities in the Charlotte area. The largest, Sun City Carolina Lakes in Fort Mill and Indian Land, S.C., has about 2,900 homes, with plans for 3,400 eventually, a spokeswoman has said.

An industrial park, meanwhile, is planned to the west of Rivercross on Optimist Club Road.

Airlie Park Phase I is scheduled to include a million square feet of industrial space on the south side of Optimist Club Road along Airlie Parkway, extending to Rufus Road.

Some retail developments finished in the area at the front-end of the recession continue to struggle finding tenants, however. The most glaring is a retail center at Grassy Creek Road and N.C. 16 Business that still has no tenants.

Simonini's plans need rezoning approval from the Lincoln County Planning Board and Lincoln County Board of Commissioners.

The land is zoned neighborhood business and transitional residential. The developer wants the acreage rezoned for planned development mixed use.

Simonini Group has scheduled a "community involvement" meeting for 6:30 p.m. Aug. 6 at Unity Presbyterian Church, 8210 Unity Church Road, Denver. The developer plans to provide more details of the project and receive public comment at the meeting. Simonini officials couldn't be reached Monday.

Lincoln County will schedule a public hearing before the planning board makes a recommendation to the commissioners, who have final say on rezonings. The earliest the hearing could be held is Sept. 8, Zoning Administrator Randy Hawkins said.

Simonini Group, meanwhile, has also revived plans for a 200-acre Lake Norman mixed-used community at Slanting Bridge Road and N.C. 150 in Catawba County. Charlotte-based Crescent Resources planned to develop the land before the recession hit.

"We've been working some with them," Jacky Eubanks, Catawba County Planning and Parks director, said Monday of Simonini.

The developer, however, has yet to submit formal plans, Eubanks said.

The Villages at Sherills Ford calls for a mix of single-family homes, including ones geared to the 55-plus market, along with apartments and retail space, according to the developer's website.

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