

CONSTRUCTION ZONE

Welcome center to signal Jerome Village progress

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BY MIKE PRAMIK

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With all the bad news in the real-estate industry, planning a massive residential community now seems like the ultimate risk-seeking play.

But a developer plans to begin infrastructure work this fall on Jerome Village, a 1,500-acre expanse that will include homes, condos, offices, stores and a town center northwest of Dublin in Jerome Township.

By extending Hyland-Croy Road north past Brock Road, developer Highland Management is taking the first step in carving a path through township woods into its new community.

"Certainly this is a challenging time, but this is a 15-year plan," said Scott Mallory, Highland's chief executive. "It was never about 2008 for us."

Still, the small firm wanted to show present and future residents of the township evidence of progress after a lengthy effort to win approval of the project. That signal comes in the form of a welcome center just west of the intersection of Hyland-Croy and Brock roads. Mallory said the center should be open by mid-September.

"We're trying to bring a real change in terms of lifestyle here," he said. "It's not just a neighborhood. We're trying to bring community and a mix of services to Jerome Township."

Jerome Village could have as many as 2,200 rooftops when it's built out in about 15 years, Mallory said. Nationwide Realty Investors has taken an advisory role and is backing the project financially.

Jerome Village is being built in three phases.

The first will cover the southern third of the development, between Brock and Wells roads. It will include two housing developments, a condo development, elementary and middle schools, a community park and an amphitheater.

Mallory said he thinks this phase will take three to five years to complete. The first development, which will be west of the welcome center, will include homes in the \$250,000-to-\$400,000 range. A smaller development, east of Hyland-Croy Road, will offer homes that begin in the \$400,000 range.

The second phase is the northernmost portion and will have a town center, which Mallory likens to old Grandview and old Worthington. In addition to a town square, there will be multifamily and single-family housing, offices and stores. Part of this section of the development extends east of Jerome Road. The northernmost boundary is Harriott Road.



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Developer Highland Management is creating a welcome center for Jerome Village by converting the 1849 home of Jerome Township pioneer Henry Fox. It should be open by mid-September.



Mallory hopes to begin work on this phase in four years.

"We're trying to recapture what Jerome Village would look like if you were able to turn the clock back 100 years and this area developed," he said.

The third phase, which incorporates Eversole Run, will have executive-style homes. Work there should begin by 2015, Mallory said.

The development will have 22 miles of paved, public trails that will link to Glacier Ridge Metro Park.

"We're pleased there appears to be the financial backing there that they don't have to go in and try to make a quick dollar to pay the expenses," said Jerome Township Trustee Bob Merkle. "This is planned for the long run. They have kept the community informed. It's been very transparent all the way."

Residents of the village will pay to support a community authority, the first one in Union County. It will raise money and administer parks, fire services and the like. County commissioners are scheduled to hold a hearing on terms of the authority on Aug. 28.

Water and sewer service would be provided by Marysville.

Of course, like most developments, the success of Jerome Village depends on the housing market, which is struggling. The Columbus Board of Realtors said home sales in central Ohio were down 14.3 percent this year through July.

Nevertheless, Mallory said several builders are interested in Jerome Village, including M/I Homes, Romanelli & Hughes, Sovereign Homes, Fischer Homes, Olympus Homes and Schottenstein Homes.

They could have marketing space in the new welcome center, which includes the converted 1849 home of Henry Fox, a township pioneer. Highland worked with Jerome Village master planner Bird Houk Collaborative to redesign the structure into a showplace for the village, where potential residents can not only plan their house but also learn some history of Jerome Township.

"Henry Fox raised 10 kids in there," Mallory said. "It's really got a lot of character."

Mike Pramik covers development for The Dispatch. Contact him at mpramik@dispatch.com or by fax at 614-461-5107.

Construction Zone is a weekly look at construction, development and real-estate news in central Ohio.