

Leaders discuss \$100M development

By **AARON W. JACO**
ajaco@dmreg.com

'Green' initiatives emphasized in 157-acre project

An estimated \$100 million development could bring new businesses and homes to the north side of Indianola beginning as early as late 2009, project leaders announced Dec. 8.

The proposed 157-acre project east of U.S. Highway 65/69 and north of Hillcrest Drive would emphasize bike paths, open spaces, permeable pavement, environmentally friendly design standards and other "green" initiatives.

Preliminary drawings by William J. Ludwig and Associates in West Des Moines show a higher education building, hotel, medical clinic, technology-based business such as a data center, and senior housing facility.

A central retail plaza, potentially decorated with artistic sculptures, would serve as the primary entryway to the devel-

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opment, Ludwig said.

"It would be really something different from anything in the central Iowa, Des Moines area, as far as I know," Ludwig said.

A number of unnamed businesses informally agreed to open shop in the development if it were to be built. No contracts have been finalized and the developer, Randy Bray of Three-Sixty Group in Des Moines, declined to name any of the potential businesses.

"This is more than just dreaming about it," Bray said. "These are people we've been talking to for the past several months."

Ludwig and Bray presented initial drawings of the proposed mixed-

use development to the Indianola City Council and Indianola Municipal Utilities Board of Directors on Dec. 8.

No official action was taken at the Dec. 8 meeting, but Indianola Mayor Jerry Kelley left project leaders with this bit of advice: "Build it."

Ludwig's firm designed the 97-acre, 511-unit Village of Ponderosa community in West Des Moines and the 2,000-acre Green Meadows project in Johnston. The group has also designed commercial, residential and mixed-use projects in central Iowa locations including Norwalk, Pleasant Hill and Urbandale.

It isn't known how many people could live inside the new Indianola development, what living facilities would be built or how much they would cost to buy or rent.

"We just aren't far enough along," Ludwig said. "Within two months we might have a handle on the types of units we might have and price ranges."

Kathleen Picken, owner of the agricultural land that would house the project, has agreed to sell her property to developers. However, she hasn't signed a contract of sale.

Indianola City Council would need to approve a final site plan before construction on the development could begin. Project leaders plan to ask for the host property to be rezoned from agricultural to a mix of commercial and residential.

Leaders also plan to ask for a designated Tax Increment Financing district that would redirect property taxes gathered from the area back into the businesses there for a period of time — probably about 10 years, Ludwig said.

If all goes to plan, construction on first phase of the project could begin by spring 2009, Bray said.

Unlike McClure Engineering's recently halted proposal to build a 1,200-acre development northwest of Indianola, the cur-



ILLUSTRATION COURTESY OF WILLIAM LUDWIG AND ASSOCIATES, LT

This preliminary drawing shows a proposed \$100 million development east of U.S. Highway 65/6 and north of Hillcrest Drive in Indianola. The center of the development would potentially include retail businesses, a civic gathering area, a college or university and a community recreation area. A senior housing facility neighbors a pond at the north end of the development. Seven commercial businesses — which could include a hotel, clinic or technology-based enterprise — are clustered in the southeast corner. Project leaders say construction could begin by spring 2009.

rent proposal doesn't face the hurdles of annexation into Indianola and hooking up to utilities like sewer and water.

Utilities are installed up to the neighboring properties and would need only to be connected to the development, Bray said.

"The biggest part would be getting the roads in," Bray said.

Indianola City Councilman Bob Kreamer said he'd lived in Ludwig's Green Meadows subdivision for a number of years. Based on his experience there, he expressed his

initial support for the Indianola project.

"It turned out just beautifully," Kreamer said of Green Meadows. "You couldn't be any happier with a project. If the Indianola development could turn out anything like that, we'd be set."

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