

BUSINESS

http://www.stltoday.com/business/local/hundreds-of-homes-planned-on-university-of-missouri-owned-land/article_7a6c797b-e8be-5ee9-a38d-c783a2875292.html

Hundreds of homes planned on University of Missouri-owned land around Missouri Bluffs Golf Club

By Jacob Barker St. Louis Post-Dispatch Dec 8, 2017



The company behind New Town in St. Charles — known for its “new urbanist” design — is proposing another distinctive housing development, this one built into the Missouri River bluffs across from Chesterfield.

Greg Whittaker, of NT Home Builders, is asking St. Charles County to rezone nearly 400 acres just south of the Missouri Research Park for a 315-lot housing development built around the periphery of the Missouri Bluffs Golf Club.

The forested, hilly terrain, bounded on the south by the Katy Trail and Missouri River, would give the subdivision “more of a resort feel,” Whittaker told the Post-Dispatch. If it wins the necessary approvals, he aims to make it a “low-impact development,” preserving the elevation changes and trees rather than grading the ground flat before building.

“There is no site like this, unless you go to, like, Branson or Springfield,” he said, referring to the Ozark-like terrain. “I’m trying to think of a project in St. Louis that would be like it, but I can’t think of one.”

Mike Hurlbert, a planning director with St. Charles County, agreed the proposal is unique. The closest comparison would be Augusta Shores several miles to the southwest on Highway 94, but “this takes it to probably another level,” Hurlbert said.

Whittaker has the land under contract from the University of Missouri, which owns it as part of the Missouri Research Park that has developed along Highway 40 (Interstate 64) over the last 30 years.

The research park has become more than corporate labs and offices. For more than 20 years, the university has leased the roughly 200 acres where the Missouri Bluffs Golf Club is to a company affiliated with the Whittaker family’s business. The golf course was originally developed by Greg Whittaker’s father, Bob Whittaker, who died last year.

Greg Whittaker and NT Home Builders’ proposal would develop 315 single-family lots on roughly 200 acres, leaving the golf course unaffected. Whittaker said his company would build the houses, which are expected to be marketed for between \$500,000 and \$1 million or more.

In addition, plans call for about 120 attached housing units, likely villas or cluster homes near the clubhouse, Whittaker said.

Whittaker’s firm is best known for its New Town development on the northern edge of St. Charles, a development in the suburbs with the trappings of urban living, such as shopping and restaurants in walking distance.

While his family's company has developed subdivisions around golf courses before, such as Whitmoor Country Club 30 years ago, Whittaker said this project, known as "The Bluffs," will be "completely different."

"It's going to be more of a resort feel just because of how the bluffs are laid out with the elevation changes and the trees," he said.

He's been eyeing the university-owned property for a decade now. "We've looked at that for probably the last 10 years," he said. "The timing works out with the economy getting better, and the building environment is a lot stronger."

While mostly bounded by offices in the Missouri Research Park, the land also is bounded by the Busch Greenway and Katy Trail and is near the village of Weldon Spring Heights, which shares an access road, Research Park Drive, with the Missouri Research Park.

Village resident Greg Kelly said the west entrance to the research park off of Highway 94, which has no traffic signal, is already dangerous.

"I've personally seen a number of accidents and near misses there," he said. "If the university wants to put a large residential development in the park, they really need to make improvements to that western entrance to accommodate the increased traffic and make it safer for everyone."



Map data ©2017 Google

Jacob Barker

Jacob Barker is a business reporter for the Post-Dispatch. 314-340-8291