

VBH BOT FYI Land Use

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What Vegas can bring Hoffman Estates
Development on upswing, officials say
By Ashok Selvam | Daily Herald Staff
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Development in Hoffman Estates could pick up if village officials enjoy success next weekend in Las Vegas where they'll meet with national retailers and restaurant representatives.

Trustee Karen Mills and Village Manager James Norris said after Monday's board meeting they were surprised with the number of scheduled meetings village officials have at the International Council of Shopping Centers annual RECON convention. In recent years, interest has waned as developers remained reluctant to invest in the poor economy, but this year it appears things are turning around.

Village officials attend the annual conference in hopes of bringing national stores and restaurants to the village. Hoffman Estates is sending Mayor William McLeod, Trustee Gary Pilafas, Norris, Director of Economic Development Gary Skoog, Assistant Village Manager Mark Koplin and Tourism and Business Retention Coordinator Linda Scheck. Mills intended to travel but may not due to a family illness. That's why there's no board meeting next week.

While not a product of connections made at the convention, the village did announce a new tenant for the building for the La Strada restaurant, which closed more than a year ago. Kole Digital Systems, which installs high-end home theater components including surround sound systems and high-definition televisions, intends to occupy the 85,000 square-foot space off Barrington Road and Lakewood Boulevard.

Bob Kole, president of the company, said he wants to open the store in November. They're sinking \$600,000 for remodeling. Kole predicts \$2 million in annual sales which would bring the village \$20,000 in sales taxes.

"Welcome to our town, sir, and we're glad to have the sales-tax revenue," Pilafas said.

That area off Barrington Road hasn't been developed as planned, as the construction of a Meijer store never materialized. One of the only businesses in the area is Jersey's Pizza. The promise of hungry store customers was one of the lures that attracted Jersey's owner, Greg Majewski, to build and open the restaurant in 2005. The economy has hurt, but Jersey's isn't in danger of closing. Majewski said he's happy with the arrival of the new store, but said it isn't enough.

"Small businesses should be given the same type of deals they are willing to give the big boxes, otherwise the smaller players aren't going to be around," Majewski said.

The village has offered businesses, like Cabela's inside the Prairie Stone Business Park, incentives to build their larger stores, seen as destinations that could bring mass consumers. Majewski said the village denied his request for a sales-tax break. The village did start a residential discount program to encourage those living in the village to eat at neighborhood restaurants.

Growth: Village officials heading to Las Vegas for convention