



CITY OF KENNER

PRESS RELEASE

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LAKETOWN IMPROVEMENTS PAY OFF WITH NEW DEVELOPMENTS

Kenner, LA. – For as long as he can remember, the vacant land at the corner of Joe Yenni and Williams boulevards has been a source of frustration, and sometimes even an eyesore, Kenner Mayor Michael Yenni said.

That’s about to change. A developer has purchased 7.5 acres, with plans to create an upscale shopping district at the high-profile intersection, Yenni announced on Thursday.

“I’m excited whenever we add a new business to the city, but the development of this piece of land means even more,” Yenni said. “For too many decades this tract of land has been vacant and I’m elated by the fact that we are able to put it into commerce. This, along with the other activity in Laketown, tells me the Kenner 2030 plan to improve and beautify corridors throughout the city is having the impact we anticipated.”

That additional activity includes the recent purchase of a 10,000-square-foot building at 4224 Williams Blvd. by Kenner lawyer Miguel Elias. About 6,000 square feet will be renovated to become the new home to his growing law practice. When the renovations are complete, Elias anticipates spending up to \$1 million.

“My clients are in Kenner, I live in Kenner and I’m committed to the city of Kenner,” he said. Elias said he believes a 4,000-square-foot section of the building, formerly the site of a restaurant, will attract a new restaurateur as Laketown continues to grow.

“That section is a prime place to put in a restaurant,” he said. “We may rent it out now for parties, graduations and weddings, but in the future – with the expansion that is likely for Laketown - I see that spot as something very desirable for a new restaurant.”

The land at Williams and Joe Yenni was purchased by Unfolded Property Development Group, LLC, led by Kenner resident Jason Mobley. Land-clearing has already begun, and the first phase of the project calls for 40,000 square feet of rentable space. There is another 2.5 acres ready to be developed in a second stage, with the goal of attracting a flagship brand hotel, developer Jody Grass said.

Both Grass and Elias said the recent improvements to the Williams Boulevard corridor in Laketown, along with the plans for the other 2030 corridor projects, were strong inducements.

“We see north Kenner as a viable up-and-coming community,” Grass said. “We want to create a destination area for families to bring their children.”

Elias, a lawyer in Kenner for nearly 17 years, said he has been considering buying or renovating an existing building in order to expand his busy practice. He admitted that he first thought New Orleans or Metairie might be a better location.

Kenner at-large Councilman Keith Conley, former Kenner City Attorney, said he urged Elias to consider Kenner. “I urged Elias to look into Laketown and consider its curb appeal and enhancements,” Conley said.

Last summer, about \$1 million in landscaping, lighting and public art was added to the Williams Boulevard median in Laketown. That project, which included a distinctive 16-foot Laketown sign that lights up in different colors at night, stretches from Vintage Drive to Joe Yenni.

Although the money for the improvements didn’t come from the refinancing of sales tax bonds that will pay for about \$28 million in other corridor renovations for Laketown and throughout Kenner, the impact is the same.

“To be honest, my wife noticed all the palm trees and the improvements there and it’s clear the 2030 Plan isn’t just a lot of talk,” Elias said. “I just think Laketown really could be the next big place to explode in the New Orleans area.”

Yenni said there are other reasons to be excited for the future of Laketown. The AVP pro beach volleyball tour announced Kenner will host the first tournament of the 2015 season from May 22-24. The tournament, which will be located in Laketown on land just to the west of the Treasure Chest casino, will be nationally broadcast.

In addition, Yenni and parish and state officials are excited about the enormous potential of a board-walk-type development that could include condos, retail, office, recreation and more overseeing Lake Pontchartrain in Laketown.

Requests for Proposals for that project went out to developers in January and all proposals must be submitted by early May.

“I think we are seeing that corridor investment paying off in Laketown, and as 2030 projects are begun later this year in other parts of the city, we are hopeful to attract more young families and businesses to all areas of the city.”

A hotel developer has already secured a location on Veterans Boulevard not too far from where a new \$650 million airport terminal is being built at Louis Armstrong New Orleans International Airport.

Just last month, NOLA.com published a story detailing the rise of Kenner as a real estate destination because of the low property taxes, great schools and excellent parks and playgrounds – and the Yenni and the City Council.

“It’s exciting to spend years on a detailed plan to revitalize the city – from Rivertown to Laketown – and then to see all of the hard work starting to pay off,” Yenni said. “I truly believe corridor redevelopment works.”

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