

Promise and challenge: Plight of West Las Vegas redevelopment

By Lés Pierres Streater
Sentinel-Voice

Driving through the heart of the community, one may wonder if West Las Vegas is missing in action as the city experiences growth and development opportunities.

Not at all, according Las Vegas City Councilman Lawrence Weekly who represents the West Las Vegas area that lies within Ward 5. Weekly is excited about future development and revitalization plans for his ward. He spoke candidly recently about growth coming to the area.

"We have some great projects underway, including the F.B.I. headquarters that will be located in the Enterprise Park, a groundbreaking for the McDonald's training facility located on Martin L. King and Lake Mead boulevards. Around the beginning of the year, in February, will be the groundbreaking for the new home of the Urban Chamber of Commerce, the expansion of the Andre Agassi College Preparatory Academy and the completion of a senior citizen housing complex called the Grande Housing Project," Weekly said.

The councilman talked about wanting to improve infrastructure in the area. "One of the things I want to focus on is getting lights, gutters, streets and curbs improved and installed so people would have smoother travel while driving through West Las Vegas."

There has also been an effort to clean up the community and attract more development from several new applicants who have come forward to discuss some potential development ideas, Weekly said. Growth is coming to the corner of Vegas Drive and Martin L. King, with a new tenant planned for the building once occupied by the A.D. Guy Veteran's Ambulatory Care Clinic. Just across the street, a dormant convenient store is being renovated and the landscaping shaped up.

"Although the governmental process appears to be slow at times, we're making some headway and we've had conversations with the neighborhood residents about wanting the redevelopment agency expanded and possibly including residential, but they decided not to include residential in the building expansion efforts which I support 100 percent,"

Weekly said.

"This should allow for more incentives to attract potential developers, especially on the commercial development of the 10-acre site at Martin L. King and Lake Mead where there are five developers waiting to build commercial and retail development which is something that the neighborhood has been asking for and needed for a long time."

It is estimated that more than \$20 million will be spent on growth and revitalization projects in Ward 5.

Weekly listed costs for some of the projects, noting \$8 to \$10 million earmarked for the F.B.I. complex, \$5 million for McDonald's training facility and \$5 million for the Las Vegas Urban Chamber construction, Weekly said.

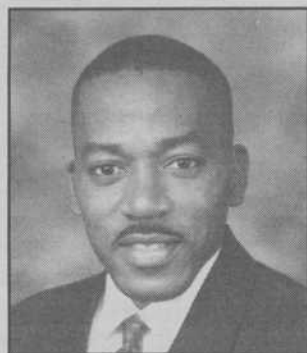
He anticipated that the rebuilding of Booker Elementary School, an early childcare development center and a community park at Carey Avenue and Martin L. King would drive job creation and job training avenues for residents in the community.

He also alluded to entrepreneurial opportunities, specifically to residents become manager or owners of businesses such as McDonald's.

While Weekly talked about projects that were slated to come online in the near future, he was hesitant to talk about the status of the Edmond Town Center development project that has been on the table for a couple of years.

Weekly said, "Right now the commercial development on Owens between 'H' and 'J' street is being handled by a private developer, John Edmond, and he is meeting with his people trying to come up with some means to finance his project. I can't speak any further about this matter because we have an agreement with Mr. Edmond, and until that agreement has been terminated it would be disrespectful for me to start forecasting what's going to happen. However, I do have my own visions on what we can do with the property if that project doesn't pan out."

Edmond did not return calls seeking his comment. However, at a recent press conference addressing a letter sent to Edmond by the city stating that he has not meet the requirement of the DDA (disposition development agreement), Edmond replied, "The city has sent us



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—Lawrence Weekly
LV City Councilman

a letter stating that we manned the site but haven't poured any foundation to secure the property. We have been

working the land since September 1, 2001, putting financing in place for \$14 to \$20 million. An extension has

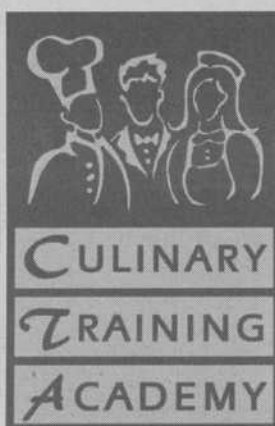
been granted by the city council to allow the project to continue. There have been challenges to getting major investors to invest in this community and we are scheduled to complete this project by July 7, 2005. We have signed leases for 85 percent occupancy of the project by tenants such as a 99 cents store, Footlocker, Chatham Beauty Store, J-J Fish Market, a smoke shop, a nail shop, Discount Apparel, E. B. Gaines, and Executive Cuts that will employ 200 to 250 people

and generate a payroll of \$2.5 million when the project is completed."

A separate development matter, with a long running history and difficulty getting its foundation set is the Moulin Rouge.

The historic property, the first integrated casino hotel in Las Vegas has changed hands many times.

Its newest development team has produced a beautiful conceptual plan and is negotiating financing to complete the project, Weekly said.



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