

WestGate project in works

Groundbreaking held for commercial development on primary route to Springs airport



A Candlewood Suites would be among the initial projects at WestGate, to be developed northwest of Powers Boulevard and Airport Road and just west of Peterson Air Force Base. Developers and community leaders broke ground on WestGate on Thursday.

By Rich Laden
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South Powers Boulevard – which runs along Peterson Air Force Base and serves as one of the primary routes to the Colorado Springs Airport – has plenty of warehouses, industrial businesses and defense contractors.

What it lacks are stores, restaurants and coffee shops to serve the thousands of workers, vendors and air travelers who drive Powers each day.

The new WestGate commercial project at Powers and Airport Road could help change that.

On Thursday, developers and community leaders broke ground on WestGate, which will include a 96-

room Candlewood Suites hotel, an Arby's restaurant and a Kum & Go convenience store in what's expected to be the first wave of development at the 70-acre site. The hotel is targeted to open in about a year.

A coffee shop, such as Starbucks, is likely and two buildings with a combined 23,000 square feet are planned for additional retailers, said Al Cohen, whose Signature Reality Capital Corp. of Irvine, Calif., is developing the site with Stillwater Equity Partners of Salt Lake City.

Longer term plans envision medical space, apartments and office space tailored to accommodate the security needs of defense contractors, Cohen said. WestGate is expected to have a

total of 400,000 square feet.

"There's 40,000 people working within three miles," Cohen said. "If they want to get something to eat, there's a McDonald's across the street or they have to go roughly three miles to (the First & Main Town Center) or they have to go 10 miles south of us, near Fort Carson. So there's a big need to service the people that are working in the area now. That's what we hope to do."

The Colorado Springs Airport and its commercial aviation industry are economic drivers in the area, said Tammy Fields, chief economic development officer for the Colorado Springs Chamber of Commerce and EDC.



Two retail buildings totaling 23,000 square feet are envisioned at the WestGate commercial project, along South Powers Boulevard in Colorado Springs.

“One of the key things that we need, though, to support those type of businesses, they want to know where are some of the services that are close by?” she said. “There really isn’t much in this area unless they start going farther north. This is going to really be a great addition to this corridor right here. ... We think that’s going to help us sell this part of the community to some of those employers that are looking for those key services that they may need.”

WestGate also is being counted on to help inject life into southeast Colorado Springs. City officials and business leaders have targeted the southeast side – where household incomes are lower and crime rates are higher, among other problems – for upgrades,

said Fields and Bob Cope, Colorado Springs’ economic development officer.

“We want all our city to flourish, not just the downtown, not just the north end of town, but we want this south, this southeast part of the community to flourish as well,” Fields said.

A commercial project has been envisioned for about a decade at Powers and Airport, but the site needed improved access and traffic flow to make it viable, said Cohen and Rich Walker of First Properties Inc., a commercial brokerage marketing the site.

CDOT added lanes in each direction on Powers and Airport, along with acceleration and deceleration lanes to access the site, Cohen said. Without those additions, retailers were cool to the project, he said.

Troy Hill Road, running north-south through the site parallel to Powers is expected to become a collector road – collecting traffic from hotels, restaurants and other businesses and delivering it to another destination

or a major thoroughfare, said Kathleen Krager, the city’s traffic engineer. Collector roads – such as Tutt Boulevard on the city’s northeast side – play key roles in the city’s transportation network, she said.

In a few years, traffic signals are planned on Airport, just west of Powers, and at Platte Avenue and Space Center Drive on the north side of WestGate, she said. Troy Hill Road also would be realigned to connect with Space Center Drive.