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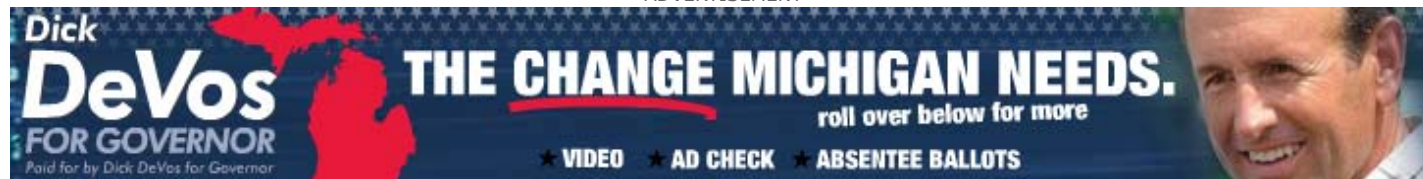
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Mall almost didn't happen

By Jim Totten
DAILY PRESS & ARGUS

With its fountains, fine landscaping, lighted trees and sharp-looking stores, it's hard to imagine Green Oak Village Place being anything but a mall.

However, Livingston County's largest shopping center came very close to being an industrial park.



Developer Bill Clark had everything lined up and already spent hundreds of thousands on engineering plans to build an industrial park at Fieldcrest and Lee roads in Green Oak Township in the spring of 2004 when national retail developers — including big names like The Taubman Group, REDICO and Lormax Stern — began calling him.

The calls surprised him, but not wanting to miss out on something, Clark began talks with those retail developers. Within several months, he inked a deal with REDICO and Lormax Stern to create Livingston County's largest

⊕ Zoom Photo



Photo by ALAN WARD/DAILY PRESS & ARGUS

Developer Bill Clark talks about the Green Oak Village Place mall on Tuesday. The mall at Lee Road and U.S. 23 almost didn't come to be, Clark says, because he had been investigating the prospect of an industrial park at the location — but that was before national retail developers came knocking.

State roads chief: Partnership ahead of its time

By Dan Meisler

DAILY PRESS & ARGUS



mall, a lifestyle design with 550,000 square feet of retail and restaurant space.

Clark's company, Wixom-based Quadrants Inc., broke ground on June 15, 2005, and 15 months later, some of the mall's first stores began opening. The mall will host its grand opening celebration on Oct. 27.

In the end, the retail mall proved a better deal than an industrial park, considering how the state's industrial sector has tanked and been losing jobs.

"Fortunately, we decided not to make a rush decision with the industrial park," Clark told a group of business and government officials at a special luncheon Tuesday. "Otherwise, we'd be sitting here with a half-empty industrial park."

The decision to switch gears did come with a cost for Clark, who spent \$300,000 on engineering plans for the industrial park. He scrapped those and paid the same company more money to develop a retail mall.

"I never thought about it because I didn't want to feel bad," Clark said.

He adds the switch turned out to be a "wonderful thing."

Under the agreement with his partners, Clark owns 40 percent of the mall, and REDICO and Lormax Stern each own 30 percent interests.

"We're in it for the long haul," Clark said.

After an attempt to receive some public funds failed, the group spent \$6 million of its own money on the roundabouts and interchange improvements to improve traffic flow. He said the team also spent \$1 million in landscaping at the mall, including features such as fountains, walkways and an outdoor fireplace.

Clark said the industrial sector is down, and he's looking to pursue retail for new business. He's involved in a residential and shopping center in the works a few miles south on U.S. 23 called Mission Hill.

When he's not busy with his development company, Clark said he enjoys spending time with his family. He and his wife, Anne, have two children, Austin, 3, and Alexis Muriel, who is 7 weeks old. He also has three sons from a previous marriage; they are Matt, 22, a senior at the University of Michigan, Kris, 20, who is launching the company's construction business in Baton Rouge, La., and Aaron, 18, a senior at North Farmington High School.

While the new double-roundabout configuration of the Lee Road/U.S. 23 interchange is unusual, so were the funding and planning arrangements to get it done.

But the public-private partnership between Wixom-based developer Quadrants Inc., the Michigan Department of Transportation and the Livingston County Road Commission to plan and build the roundabouts could be the wave of the future, said MDOT Director Kirk Steudle.

Speaking at an invitation-only luncheon to celebrate the completion of the Green Oak Village Place mall, Steudle said that the practice of having developers foot the bill for road improvements may become more common.

"This is the model for the future," Steudle said. "There's nobody that has enough money to do everything that needs to be done ... together, we've got something that works."

Steudle described the three ingredients needed for a successful partnership: partners who want to participate, flexibility, and an openness to new approaches.

With more developments planned along U.S. 23, including one at Silver Lake Road also being done by Quadrants, Steudle said he expects additional partnerships to arise down the corridor.

"We look forward to doing a lot more along 23," he said.

Steudle was followed at the podium by Mike Craine, managing director of the Livingston County Road Commission. He said another key to successful partnerships is "picking your partners wisely."

On a more serious note, Craine said he not only expects public-private partnerships along U.S. 23, but also on Interstate 96.

Quadrants footed the entire bill for the interchange work — excluding some staff planning time from MDOT and the Road Commission. But it sought an even greater partnership with the county during the planning stages, when the company proposed a downtown development authority that would have raised millions in property taxes for the road work. The Livingston County Board of Commissioners refused.

Although he's not a golfer, Clark said he's a huge baseball fan and plans to take his entire family to the first two games of the World Series featuring the Detroit Tigers and the winner of the New York Mets-St. Louis Cardinals series in the National League.

At Tuesday's luncheon at Johnny Carino's Italian restaurant in the mall, Green Oak Township Supervisor Mark St. Charles said the mall would make the area a "destination place for the state."


St. Charles said he's proud of the project and how local, county and state officials worked with the developer to make it happen.

"Bill Clark and his partners have set the bar very high for retail development," St. Charles said..

WHAT'S COMING

Here's list of the stores that have opened or will be opening in Green Oak Village Place.

DSW Shoes, Jos. A. Bank, Select Comfort, Buffalo Wild Wings, CJ Banks, Christopher & Banks, Coldstone Creamery, Coldwater Creek, Dick's Sporting Goods, Johnny Carino's Italian, Little Archie's restaurant, American Eagle, Ann Taylor Loft, Barnes & Noble, Bath & Body Works, Bombay, Chico's Children's Place, Claire's, Comp USA, Deb Shops, Gingiss Formal Wear, J. Jill, JC Penney (spring 2007), Journeys, Justice, Kay Jewelers, Lane Bryant, Men's Wearhouse, Nails & More, Old Navy, Pacific Sunwear, Ritz Camera, Sport Clips, Sunglass Hut, Talbot's, Ulta Cosmetics, Victoria's Secret, White House Black Market and Yankee Candle.

STORYCHAT  [Post a Comment](#) [View All Comments](#)

Comments by: **DTD** Posted: Fri Oct 20, 2006 2:47 pm
 This is the first I've read where it was originally planned to be an industrial park.

Good thing that fell through and it's just another huge mall with benefit-free, low-paying service jobs instead of a technology park for higher-paid professionals.

Our elected officials should be proud!

Comments by: **lugemachine** Posted: Wed Oct 18, 2006 4:21 pm
 Um.. more projects along US-23, eh? Among them is an enormous residential project. As a twice-daily participant in the parking lot that is US-23, I vote NO until the highway is widened.

Livingston County's been the fastest-growing county in the state for how many years? Now funding has only just recently been reestablished that will allow for a study of how to solve the problem.

The north/south commute on US-23 is going to get much worse before it gets better. The study hasn't even begun, which means that meaningful improvement is many years down the road.

A classic case of infrastructure falling woefully behind development.

Comments by: **yorkark** Posted: Wed Oct 18, 2006 10:13 am

 Zoom Photo



Photo by ALAN WARD/DAILY PRESS & ARGUS

Workmen pull off last-minute cleanup as they prepare for the official

I am so glad that our elected officials over lunch express their pride in this project. I am sure they could have done it at their desk in the Township Hall, but anything for a free lunch. I wonder if State Representative Chris Ward was present at this little gathering.

I am sure if it had been put on the ballot the citizens may not have been so happy with, especially with another proposed mall a mile down the road and one right across the street. Not only another mall but another double roundabout, oh goody goody.

Our officials are doing anything they can to make the term Urban Township fit the township, since except for population we didn't really meet the discription. But I am sure that between now and 2008 all of these projects will be completed and hopefully not white elephants sitting empty. For their careers they had better hope they are not white elephants, but except for the lost to the township it may be what this board needs to wake up to what the real needs are in the Township.

I could have lived forever without all of these malls in my back yard.
A green Oak Citizen

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grand opening of the Green Oak Village Place mall. Not to be ignored is the Quadrants Inc. water tower, which looms over the mall site. Quadrants is a Wixom-based company behind the project.

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Originally published October 18, 2006

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