

# St. Cloud adds 2,020 acres to city after approving development

By Rachel Christian | Staff Writer May 1, 2019



St. Cloud City Council

A major new development is headed to St. Cloud after a nearly five-hour meeting last Thursday and a narrow 3-2 vote approval by City Council members.

City limits also grew 2,020 acres after the Center Lake Ranch property was annexed into St. Cloud.

The site falls in the city and county's joint planning area, between

Narcoossee Road and the future Sunbridge development. That means the developers can only get water and sewer service from the city.

The Center Lake Ranch development calls for over 2,200 single-family homes, 170,000 square feet of retail uses, 70,000 square feet of offices and 10,000 square feet of civic space. The master plan also details a kindergarten through eighth-grade school and a new fire station, along with plans for 1,000 acres of conservation or park space, including a major park on Lake Center and seven miles of trails.

Center Lake Ranch is not a new project. It has been fully entitled as a Development of Regional Impact (DRI) granted by Osceola County since 2011 and that status was re-confirmed in 2013. Last year, the city rejected the annexation request by a margin of 3-2.

The property is being sold by Jimmy Caruso, vice president of Pineloch Management Corp.

“We’ve had numerous meetings with city staff and residents, and believe we have addressed most of their concerns,” said Caruso, whose family has owned the property for over 70 years.

Six different items came before City Council members April 25, including the annexation, a mixed-use zoning designation and approval for the Center Lakes master plan.

The project first went before the council in March, and the city and developer worked to implement new revisions before bringing back final details last Thursday. Plans call for a minimum 8-foot buffer between Center Lake Ranch homes and a nearby subdivision called Starline Estates. The two parties also agreed on an additional emergency access point for a total of nine access points for the development, and developers moved the fire station to a more central location, per a request from fire rescue staff.

But many residents spoke out against the proposal, raising concerns about impact to roads, apartment housing and the wall between Center Lake and Starline Estates.

“A vast majority of residents are against this until the schools, the infrastructure, et cetera are in alignment,” said Eddy Dempskey, a St. Cloud resident representing others in the Narcoossee Overlay District. “Common sense must prevail.”

She went on to express concerns about the apartment units planned for the mixed used project. The developers addressed this by reducing the number of units from 1,000 to 800 and restricted the height to three-stories.

Councilman Chuck Cooper raised questions about the lack of a nearby high school and championed the on-going concerns of residents.

“OK, you’re going to go to eighth grade,” Cooper said in reference to the K-8 school planned for the area. “What happens for ninth through 12th? Where are we going to put them? You tell me where the money is going to come from.”

He also voiced frustration at the many changes brought forth since the last meeting in March, and last-minute changes suggested by officials such as Councilman Keith Trace.

“There’s so many questions right now, and you’re pushing so much stuff through here,” Cooper said. “We haven’t had time to digest half of what you’ve got here...I have a problem with that.”

Discussion about the appearance of minute details and permitting allowances concerning Center Lake Ranch lasted over two hours. Ultimately, the six items – including the development’s annexation into the city – were approved 3-2, with Cooper and Linette Matheny opposing.