

Patience pays dividends for E. Mesa developer

By Art Thomason

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With breathtaking views, freeway accessibility on the way and high-end housing nearby, an east Mesa site would have been an easy sell for retail development earlier this decade, its developer says.

“I’m glad I didn’t put retail in there five years ago because it would have closed its doors by now.”

Bob McNichols

Developer

Now Bob McNichols is counting his blessings for resisting that temptation and waiting until last week to win City Council approval of rezoning the 49-acre tract for shops and restaurants.

“I’m personally glad I didn’t put retail in there five years ago because it would have closed its doors by now,” he said. “I’m much better

off looking at the future with the zoning in place for emerging retail tenants with healthy credit. Some places have dark stores up and down the line, and we will not have to deal with that.”

McNichols was putting a positive spin on the retail component of a 313-acre commercial and business park that he’s wanted to cradle around the 18-hole, Longbow Golf Club for nearly a decade.

It will be the first major retail project for the area and the traffic-laden interchange at Recker Road and the Red Mountain Freeway/Loop 202.

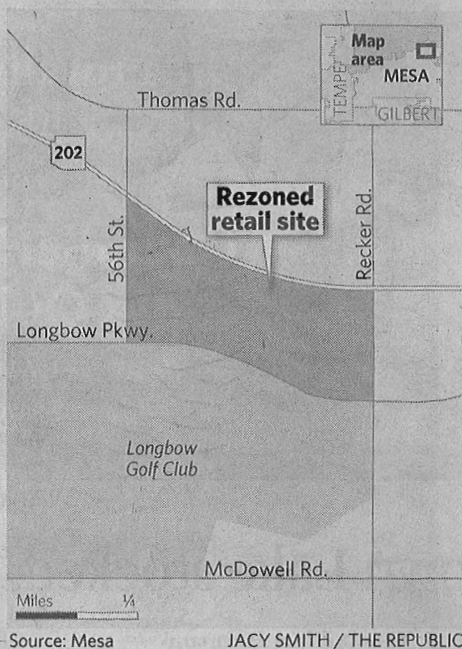
The project also would be Mesa’s first golf course and business park mix while adding upscale facilities for such uses as medical offices and research and development to the rapidly growing aerospace industry near Falcon Field Airport.

The City Council gave its blessing to the project Nov. 17, a move that McNichols can take to prospective tenants to accelerate development.

With the exception of the award-winning golf course, the entire project is still just outlines on planning papers and drafting boards.

Though the proposal won praise from Mesa business leaders and Chamber of Commerce President Charlie Deaton, it

Golf-course business park rezoned to permit retail use



moved slowly through the planning process while commercial development near McDowell and Power roads took off.

“The golf course is doing very well,” McNichols said. “It is getting some national recognition, which is very important in a very competitive market.”

“There are a lot of bright lights for this area,” he added. “This property has great accessibility because of nearby freeway off ramps, it’s highly visible and an ideal location for retailers serving the northeast Mesa area.”

The Longbow Corporate Center layout is consistent with the Falcon Field Sub-area Plan and will include office buildings that won’t exceed 90-feet and that are within Federal Aviation Administration limitations.

Shorter buildings will be located along the perimeter of the project with taller structures toward the middle.

The buildings will be located on parcels along the edge of the golf course.

McNichols said the golf course was designed to preserve a clear area required for flight operations at Boeing Co., just west of the project and Falcon Field near the southwestern corner of the property.