

Developers submit plan for \$180M mixed-use project that would transform U.S. 27 corridor in Haines City

By LAURA KINSLER

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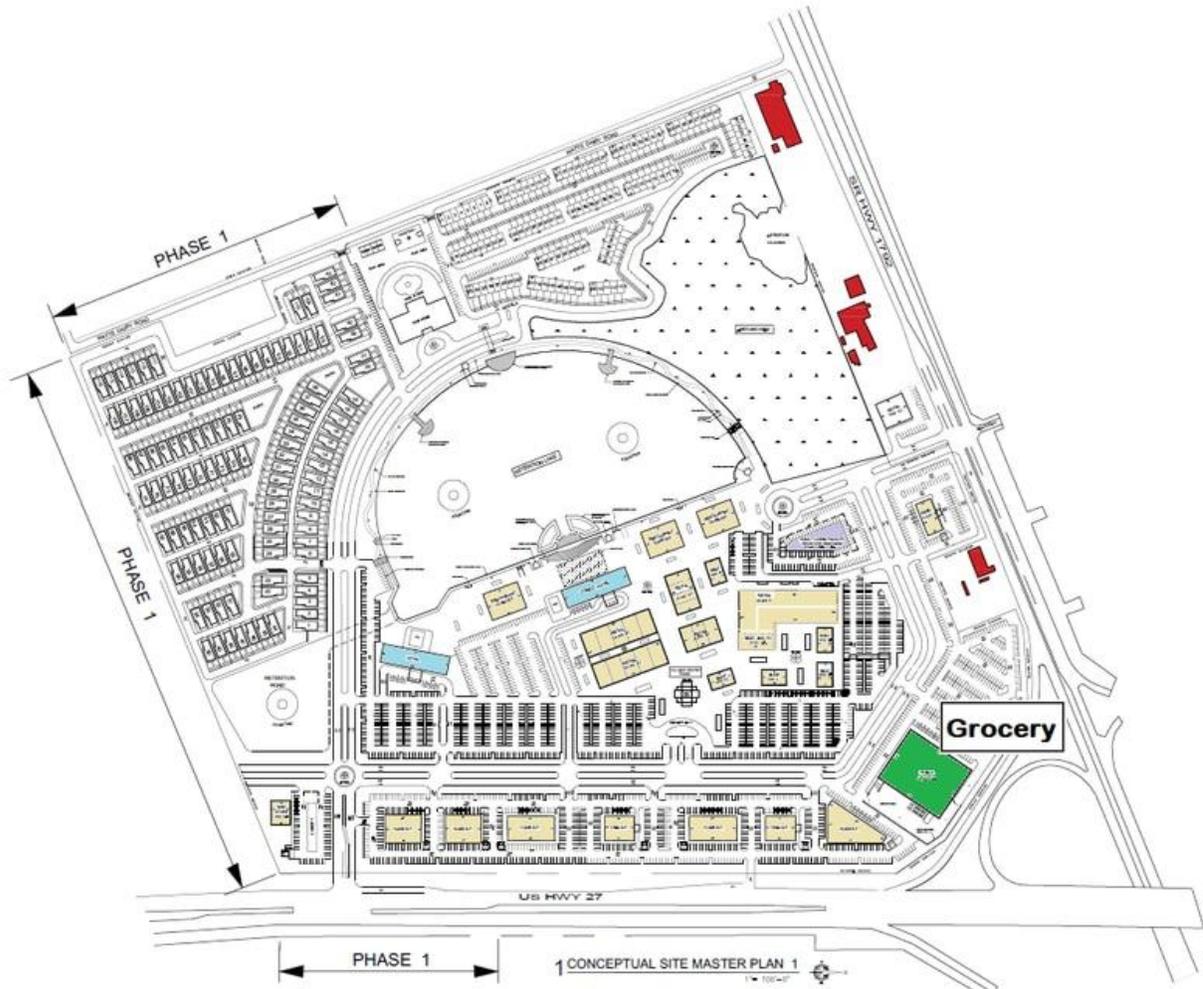
The 120-acre Crossroad Village Center mixed-use district would be at the intersection of U.S. 27 and U.S. 17-92. (Polk County Property Appraiser)

An Orlando real estate development firm has big plans for 120 acres of vacant land at one of the busiest intersections along the U.S. 27 corridor in eastern Polk County.

Affiliates of **Black Mountain Group** bought the land at the southwest corner of U.S. 27 and U.S. 17-92 two years ago for \$1.6 million. Now the firm is mobilizing its plan to bring a mixed-use project that combines a new residential subdivision with shopping, dining, and hotels at the project they're calling Crossroads Village Center.

"It's going to have a man-made lake in it, which is a 17-acre lake, and the development is built around that lake," BMG partner **Syed Raza** said. "The lake will feature activities which can be enjoyed, not just by the residents of the community but the overall residents of Haines City and anyone who visits. The development also will have an amphitheater on the lake with a small park where outdoor events can take place."

BMG has applied to Haines City for a Land Use Plan Amendment to go from commercial and agricultural to City Regional Mixed Use. The master site plan calls for development to occur over five phases, starting with the entrance road from U.S. 27, two commercial outparcels, a hotel and 119 detached homes ranging from 2,000 to 3,000 square feet. All of the homes are on 40-foot-wide lots and have 2-car garages. Buyers will have a choice of three exterior elevations.



The Crossroad Village Center site plan shows a grocery store in green, shops and restaurants in tan, hotels in blue and a senior living facility in lavender. The community will be build around a new man-made lake with an amphitheater and activity docks. (Dave Schmitt Engineering)

“It’ll be a contemporary, modern design for those homes,” Raza said. He said smart features would be included among the five floorplans. Construction on the models is expected to start in early 2022.

Desing-build firm [Design Construction International](#) is leading the planning effort.

Raza told GrowthSpotter the entire site will be mass graded during phase 1, and the lake, which serves as stormwater retention for the entire site, will also be constructed. Raza said BMG has a deal with Marriott for the hotel that will overlook the lake. “Most likely it will be a Towneplace Suites,” he said.

The townhouse portion, 169 units along Watts Dairy Road, would follow in a later phase. Both neighborhoods would be served by a centrally located amenity center with a clubhouse, pool, basketball courts and tennis courts.

A grocery store would occupy the prime spot in the village center closest to the intersection, giving it visibility from both highways. The site plan by **Dave Schmitt Engineering** creates 10 additional outparcels for various retail uses, including a fuel station/convenience store, a quick service restaurant with drive-through, a bank and other stand-alone stores and restaurants. “Our team has just started to negotiate and approach different grocers,” Raza said.

The proposed Village Center Plaza would add more restaurants, shops, a 4-story condo-hotel and an adult living facility with structured parking. The entire project lies within a qualified opportunity zone. Raza said BMG is getting close to securing the financing for phase 1.

“We are talks with multiple lenders, and we’ll have that all finalized in the next 60 days to 90 days,” he said.

The LUPA request goes to the city’s Planning Commission on May 10. The project already has the full support of Haines City Mayor Morris West, who wrote a letter endorsing the plan, which he said the among the largest proposed in the city over the last 20 years.

“This type of project will be quintessential to the forward movement already taking place in our city and build upon the partnership we already have with members of the Black Mountain Group team,” he wrote.

BMG is led by Raza, real estate attorney **Carlos Bonilla** and developer Dan Harper. The trio also manages investment funds targeting distressed properties and agricultural properties.

The Crossroads site is across U.S. 27 from **Balmoral Resort**, which is home to the **Feltrim Sports Complex** and is slated to get its own hotel. Master developer Garrett Kenny told GrowthSpotter he first heard about the

Crossroads Village Center last December and is pleased to see the project moving forward.

“I don’t see it as competition,” he said. “It’s a tremendous opportunity for Haines City, and it’s a great location.”

Just north of the site, Richmond American Homes is near close-out of its **Seasons at Forest Gate** community on 17-92.

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