

192nd Avenue Is “The Hottest Road Out There”

By Courtney Sherwood

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A decade after 192nd Avenue began emerging as a major Clark County commercial center, business along the corridor is showing no sign of slowing down. If anything, the growth that began when 192nd was joined to State Highway 14 seems to be accelerating.

With more than half a billion dollars invested along the avenue in the past few years, and millions of dollars in new construction planned, the only thing limiting the corridor’s development in the near future may well be available land.



“It’s the hottest road out there, in east Clark County,” said Barry Cain, president of Gramor Development, which owns Costco-anchored Lamas Crossing.

“With more housing going up in Camas, 192nd is becoming more of a corridor,” Cain said.

Jim West, who is working on one of the newest projects coming to the road, agreed. He said the area’s proximity to higher-income Prune Hill and good-paying high-tech jobs was already a draw, but growth in east Clark County has made 192nd even more attractive.

“You have great demographics, drawing everyone between 164th and 192nd,” West said.

Lowe’s, Costco and the retailers that have sprung up along 192nd bring out local residents.

“And employers are also locating in the area,” West added. He cited PeaceHealth, which moved its headquarters into the former Nautilus space in the Tech Center office complex, and Fisher Investments, which has hired hundreds of people to work at its Camas campus, with room to grow.

“A lot of people who work in the Columbia Tech Center also want to live nearby,” West said. “It’s become an area with good paying jobs, and that is a continuing trend.”

The door to development

The door to development opened in 2002, when road crews connected Southeast 192nd Avenue with 134th Street. Several early retail projects followed, and Walmart opened in 2006, but the Great Recession brought a temporary chill to the region.

“It slowed down a bit because everything slowed down,” said Cain. “But, boy, it’s picked up now.”

The current boom began in 2010, when 192nd Avenue Plaza opened at the intersection of 20th Street. The same year, Clark College unveiled its \$30 million tech-focused satellite campus on East Mill Plain Boulevard near 192nd.

In 2011, more projects came, including the \$40 million Lacamas Crossing complex, located at 19206 SE First Ave., which brought Clark County its second Costco store. Also in 2011, Providence completed its Camas Medical Plaza at 192nd and 31st Street. Add PeaceHealth and Fisher Investments to the mix, along with smaller projects, and developers have reported more than \$500 million in building along the corridor.



Last year, many Camas residents gained even easier access to the stores and offices along 192nd when the city extended its Northwest 38th Avenue to connect with Vancouver's 20th Street.

More to come

Developers have been buying up available land to get in on the action, said West, who expects to break ground in July on a project near the 192nd Avenue Walmart. When Camas dentist Sanjeev Sharma bought the 0.8 acre parcel in 2012, it was one of the last open properties available, West said.

Eugene, Ore.-based restaurant Café Yumm has signed up to open its first Clark County location at Sharma's project, and Verizon will house a cutting-edge retail store there as well, West said.

"That leaves 3,200 square feet to fill," he said. "We're not sure whether Dr. Sharma will locate a dental clinic there." That was the original plan, West said, but with other businesses expressing interest, Sharma is evaluating all his options.

Meanwhile, Cain hints that Gramor will soon have news about other developments coming next door to his company's Lacamas Crossing.

"We have a piece of property just to east of it, at First and 192nd, that we'll be doing something on it pretty quickly," Cain said. He declined to provide further details.

With so much growth in the neighborhood, West said local schools are likely to add to the construction boom before long.

"School districts will need more space because of all the growth," he said.

Even if all the currently available land along 192nd fills in, two rock mines along the corridor will one day open up space for still more development. One is at First Street and 192nd, the other at State Highway 14. Once mining operations end at those sites, city officials want to see houses, stores and offices – though it will likely be years before anything changes at either of those sites.

With jobs, shops and residents all clamoring to locate nearby, West said today's booming 192nd Avenue has a rosy future.

"The corridor has done well, and there's no end in sight," he added.

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