

The Kaufman Herald

Racing toward development

Thursday, June 22, 2006

By Justin Jones

HIRAM - Can you imagine being at a beautiful county club, except it doesn't have 18 holes to play golf?

Instead of fairways, greens and sand traps, there are approximately 3.4 miles of asphalt, which club members, and their guests, use to drive and enjoy high-end sports cars, in a safe environment.

That's the vision Bill Georgas and his Racers Ranch Inc. partners have as they prepare to build Racers Ranch, a 1,566 acre site in far eastern Kaufman County in Hiram.

"It's certainly not a big oval that's going to have lots of people and it's not a spectator thing," Georgas said of the site that will feature an exclusive motor-sport country club and ranch facility. "It's nothing like Texas Motor Speedway. It's like you are coming up on a country club but instead of where there are 18 holes, you have a small ribbon of asphalt where you can enjoy your car in a safe, controlled environment."

Not everyone, however, is excited over the site south of Interstate 20, as some home-owners, near the future site, have a few concerns.

"I commute 40 miles to be out in the peace and quiet and, from what I've read, not only will I think there will be a noise issue but what about the exhaust that will create odors?," Tammy Martin said. "I know it's for residents and guests, but I really don't know what to expect."

Georgas said, at Racers Ranch, customers can expect to find drivers of high-end motor-sports vehicles learning what their cars are capable of doing in a safe, controlled environment.

The course also will be at least a half of mile away from the edge of property and that will help with noise concerns, according to Georgas, who said he and his partners are aware of some of the concerns from neighbors.

"We believe most of our customers are going to be driving pretty new sports cars that are street legal and meet standards," Georgas said. "So we really don't expect them to be loud. A loud car is going to be the exception rather than the rule but we will control that pretty closely. We also will control the time frame of when people can be on the track."

According to Georgas, there will be no night time usage and the main operating hours will be from 9 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. on Friday through Sunday.

Georgas also said, the cap for the club's membership will be at 250 and he never expects to have more than 15 cars driving at one time.

"Think of 75 people owning very nice ranch houses on 1600 acres," Georgas said. "All the rest of it will be protected ranch, which will be committed to a land trust, which will be protected for ever. We will only allow up to 75 ranch owners and they will basically share that entire piece of property and be protected for ever."

Each share of the ranch will sell for \$250,000 to \$275,000 and that will entitle people to their share of the ranch, plus a five-acre build site, Georgas said, noting he and his partners have began meeting with those living close to the site.

Another concern for Martin, who recently was about to put her house on the market, is will the value of her home drop because of the Racer Ranch Country Club?

"I'm sure there are other people out there like me and I know it's good for the economy and will bring in money but they should take the people that are going to live around there into consideration," she said. "I was about to put my house on market because the roads are so bad out there but I know now, once people find out they are putting up that strip, nobody is going to want the land. Is it going to keep my house from being marketable?"

According to Georgas, the property value of homeowners close to the site won't be affected.

"Everybody asks us, what will this do to property value?," he said. "I believe it will enhance the property value in that area of Kaufman County. We are actually building an equestrian center and other ranch amenities. Just in terms of the land value, what that's going to mean to the tax base in that part of the county is pretty dramatic."

Groundbreaking for the ranch is scheduled for July 11.