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LAKELAND CITY COMMISSION

Approval Expected for Huge West Lakeland Project

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LAKELAND | A project that has been planned for years is on the verge of being built. The 724-acre development will be predominately warehouses and distribution facilities, but also could include offices, stores, a hotel and some homes.

Lakeland Central Park will be north and east of the Polk Parkway, south of Old Tampa Highway and west of Airport Road.

The main reason the big project will be built at that location is the proximity to the Polk Parkway, said Celeste Deardorff, Lakeland's long-range planning manager. The good news, she said, is the project will generate plenty of jobs and tax money for Lakeland.

The plans of Jacksonville-based Flagler Development Company are expected to be approved July 21 by the Lakeland City Commission.

The development will be built in three phases. The first phase, to be built in the next five years, will include 3.4 million square feet of warehouse and distribution space and 120,000 square feet of offices.

Because it's so big, the project was deemed a development of regional impact by the Central Florida Regional Planning Council. The CFRPC has imposed a long list of



requirements and restrictions on the project, which will be voted on by commissioners.

During the first phase, Flagler will be required to widen about a half-mile stretch of Airport Road from two to four lanes. They must also make significant improvements to County Line Road at U.S. 92 and U.S. 92 at Wabash Avenue. The cost for the road improvements is \$11 million.

Jim Studiale, the city's community development director, said rather than the city collecting money and hiring workers for the job, Flagler is directly responsible for the improvements.

The second phase of the development will likely include more offices and stores. The third phase includes 300 apartment units and a 125-room hotel.

The CFRPC has imposed requirements that protect the environment and wetlands on the site.

Deardorff said the city is asking the developers to build a mulch walkway through the undeveloped area for workers on the site and for the public.

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