

THE CABELA'S EFFECT

Impact of giant outdoor retailer sparks rezoning



Amber King/Daily News Staff

The digging continues in the snow this week at the future site of Cabela's in Richfield. Construction of the outdoor retail store has sparked interest by at least one developer to request rezoning land nearby to commercial.

By PHILLIP HERMANN
Daily News Staff

TOWN OF RICHFIELD — A developer of business parks in the towns of Richfield and Polk is shifting gears somewhat based on the impact of the Cabela's development near the intersection of highways 145, 45 and 41.

Helsan Development Co. wants to rezone nearly seven acres near the Cabela's site from industrial/manufacturing use to commercial. The company already has 15 acres zoned for commercial use in its Endeavor Business Park and is considering other rezoning to accommodate the needs of commercial users.

"What can you say? Cabela's is going to draw 3 million people here once it's built. They don't have enough out-parcels to accommodate the projected interest. This is a great opportunity," said Dean Gunderson, president of Helsan Development.

The company is to appear before the Town of Polk Planning Commission in early March to request rezoning two tracts from industrial to commercial. Those sites are in the 3000 block of Highway 145, across from the future entrance to the Cabela's store.

Gunderson said the land contains two structures, one with 23,000 square feet and the other with 31,000 square feet, which

Next step

- The Town of Polk Planning Commission is scheduled to consider the rezoning request at 7:30 p.m. March 7 at the town hall, 3680 Highway 60.
- Final approval would be needed from the full town board.

house the Helsan offices and warehouse space and an industrial user.

"We're preparing for the future and we expect the interest to grow now that Cabela's is preparing their site. It's one thing to read that a major retailer like this wants to build here, but it's another thing in terms of the interest when you actually start seeing the land being cleared and construction beginning," Gunderson said.

Across Highway 41 in the town of Richfield, the company has cleared land for its 140-acre Endeavor Business Park. Gunderson said that park has about 15 acres fronting the highway zoned for commercial use. In addition, the company's Helsan Business Park across the street has sufficient acreage and existing structures that could serve commercial uses.

"It's all about what the clients want and being prepared to serve

Nuts and bolts of Cabela's project

In November, the Washington County Board of Supervisors and Cabela's Inc. reached an agreement that will provide \$4.5 million in county funds to pay for infrastructure improvements to accommodate development of a 165,000-square-foot outdoor goods retail store.

The project, which will have an estimated value of more than \$49 million at build-out, will be on 60 acres in the towns of Polk and Richfield, between highways 41, 45 and 145.

Highway 145 will become the frontage road for the commercial complex planned by the Sidney, Neb., retailer.

The state also will contribute \$5.4 million to the project, mostly for highway improvements at the site.

As part of the agreement, Cabela's has agreed not to build another facility within 50 miles. The retailer has a small retail and large distribution center in Prairie du Chien on the Mississippi River.

Cabela's also agreed to create a minimum of 180 full-time jobs.

The store is expected to be open in late summer or early fall.

— Phillip Hermann

those needs when the time comes," Gunderson said.

He didn't rule out the potential for expanding the amount of commercially zoned acreage in the Endeavor Business Park.

In the past, Gunderson has said the company's prime location near major highways means attracting business, office, manufacturing and commercial users makes logical sense in terms of land use.

Town of Polk Chairman Willard Heppie said although the Cabela's project is in the town of Polk, its impact on nearby land uses will continue.

"We're certainly going to consider this in our Smart Growth land planning for the area around those major roads. That's where you want to put the business and commercial projects. We don't want to put businesses in our residential areas," Heppie said.

