

TODAY NEWSPAPERS

LANCASTER

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That's \$2.4 billion, with a 'b'

By Steve Snyder

"Huge tracts of land."

The city of Lancaster is not in some Monty Python skit, offering "the biggest tracts of open land in Britain," but it does have plenty of open land. And it's getting "married off" to two sets of developers, one being the Argent Property company in conjunction with ProLogis, and the other being The Allen Group.

The Argent-ProLogis group has started work on a 204-acre, \$100 million business park at the northeast corner of Danieldale and Houston School roads. Lancaster drivers who see 30 or more pieces of earthmoving equipment kicking up dust are seeing the groundwork for that site underway.

The Allen Group has bought 4,500 acres of land in Lancaster, Dallas, Hutchins and Wilmer for a planned 6,000-acre, \$2.4 billion - billion with a "b" - business park which will generally be north and northeast of Lancaster airport.

"Grooms" from the three companies were the guests of the Lancaster Chamber of Commerce at its April membership luncheon April 13.

All three were visionary at times in their comments about how they thought this would affect Lancaster in particular and the southern part of the Dallas side of the Metroplex in general.

Dan McAuliffe of The Allen Group spoke first, and immediately struck that visionary tone.

"We're glad to be here in the community with such a great project that will change southern Dallas forever," he said.

"Richard Allen saw the Union Pacific intermodal facility and saw enough that he decided a 2,500-acre investment would be good."

Well, that 2,500-acre investment has now expanded to 4,500 acres of land being bought, with plans for nearly 1,500 acres more by the time the company is done.

McAuliffe cautioned that the company's buildings wouldn't spring up immediately.

"We've got four cities, four transportation master plans, four master land use plans and four zonings to try to manage. It's not going to be built out overnight," he said.

In addition to the UP facility, McAuliffe said The Allen Group was excited about the possibilities of how the Lancaster Airport might boost its business.

Gary Anderson, managing director of ProLogis, spoke next.

ProLogis is a leading provider of distribution facilities and services, with more than 1,990 facilities owned, managed and under development in 72 markets throughout North America, Europe and Asia. It is partnering with Argent Property in the development of its "small" 200-acre business park.

www.allengroup.com



He, too, hit the vision note to start.

"In all my travels, I've seen very few opportunities as good as this one. This is going to be the jewel of § all our property in Dallas," he said. "Over the past 20 years, there's been a lot of talk about this section of Dallas. It's time for action."

And, speaking of action, that crown jewel is already starting to be formed and faceted.

Last month ProLogis and Argent started earthwork on their site; a casual eye can count more than 30 pieces of earthmoving equipment there. Anderson provided more details of the companies' timetable.

"Over the next 60 days, we will start our first inventory building, a 650,000-square-foot spec building," he said. "Somewhere in the area of 8-9 months we'll open up."

Anderson later said he did not have any outside prospects yet lined up as tenants, but added, "Within our portfolio, there are prospects."

Doc Cornutt, CEO of Argent Property, wrapped up the session.

"(Our site) will be one of the jewels in the ProLogis network," he said. "These buildings have all the bells and whistles."

He then listed four reasons why Argent was in Lancaster. They were that the area was path of good speed for transportation, good distribution speed for products, good transportation infrastructure and good logistics.

Both he and Anderson mentioned the fact that major railroads such as Union Pacific now offered guaranteed shipping times, as compared to years ago, that boosted the importance of having good rail connections as well as highway connections for trucking. He noted that Los Angeles and Long Beach, Calif. were, respectively, the country's No. 1 and No. 2 ports for containerized shipping, and if combined as one, would be the world's fifth-largest port in terms of overall shipping. He said being close to the UP terminal in Hutchins, with its connection to the Southern California ports, was vital.

Cornutt finished by saluting local leadership.

"This only happens with the leadership of the cities. Y'all have jumped off the high dive, and it's going to be successful," he said.