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Mixed-use building planned next to Meadows Field

By Ryan Schuster, The Bakersfield Californian

May 5--A large commercial development firm has announced plans for a 107-acre mixed-use office, industrial and retail development adjacent to Meadows Field.

The Allen Group, which is headquartered in San Diego and has offices in Bakersfield, Visalia and Dallas, plans a blend of office space, lodging, industrial uses, airport-related businesses, dining and retail options.

"We see a great opportunity at the airport with the new terminal opening up," said Luke Allen, director of corporate development for The Allen Group.

"We think that area is going to fill up." The proposal is part of a larger picture of growth that will drastically change the face of the area surrounding the airport. Assuming developers are able to clear rezoning and other hurdles, open fields will soon be replaced by everything from hotels and stores to warehouses.

"As you take dirt that's farmland and develop it, that's an obvious change," said Kern County airports director Ray Bishop, who will present a master plan covering the airport's next two decades to the county Board of Supervisors on June 20. "In the next 20 years we expect this all to be developed." The parcel is at the southwest corner of 7th Standard Road and Airport Drive, across from the entrance to the new terminal.

The land was purchased from two local families about a year ago for about \$14 million, according to Larry Montgomery, The Allen Group's Bakersfield-based Central California director of development.

Allen said his company probably would have eventually bought land at the airport, but plans for the \$36 million William Thomas Terminal, which opened in February, were "a catalyst." Allen said the land will need to be rezoned and his company will need to procure various permits before construction can begin.

The Allen Group expects to finish up a master plan for the development within two months.

Meadows Field has 34 flights a day with direct service from the new terminal to Los Angeles, San Francisco, Las Vegas, Phoenix, Salt Lake City and Houston.

Teresa Hitchcock, an analyst and marketing manager with the county Airports Department, said international flights out of the old terminal could start as soon as late fall, when the customs facility is complete.

The Allen Group has completed several local projects, including the International Trade and Transportation Center in Shafter and office buildings in Bakersfield, such as the University Square building on K Street downtown.

"Bakersfield is one of our key markets," Allen said.

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