
Industrial park eyed

By Master site admin

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San Angelo economic development officials are negotiating with a "retail-entertainment venue" that has an interest in nearly 40 acres of the city's industrial park along U.S. Highway 67.

The business, which would employ roughly a dozen people, could be another break in the city's long-range plans to remake what is perhaps its principal entrance into a retail-commercial center.

"That is probably the premiere gateway coming into San Angelo," said Kathy Keane, executive director of the San Angelo Development Corp., which unanimously authorized her Wednesday morning to continue negotiating with the business and to work with City Hall to convey about 37 acres in the industrial park back to the city. "We want to make sure economic development is congruent with ... the city's comprehensive master plan."

The Comprehensive Plan calls for a continuation of the heavy commercial districts that dominate the city's northeast side. But proposed updates to the plan instead encourage mixed-use development focused on a retail and residential center where U.S. highways 67 and 277, Loop 306 and Pulliam Street converge.

The area has seen commercial development just outside the city limits, booming residential growth in the nearby Paul-Ann subdivision, and industrial expansion with the imminent arrival of a Martifer Energy Systems wind-turbine tower manufacturing plant.

Retail development east of the South Concho River and Bell Street, however, has been virtually nonexistent, despite the presence of an expanding Goodfellow Air Force Base and the surrounding neighborhoods it supports.

"Having entertainment-related venues often encourages retail development," said Development Services Director Shawn Lewis, "which is sorely needed in the Paul-Ann area."

The industrial park - the San Angelo Business and Industrial Center - sits between Pulliam and U.S. 67 at the city's northeast edge. It has sat mostly vacant since its inception in 2002.

Officials in the past year have discussed whether to dismantle it, city consultants have dubbed it an "outdated failure," and the City Council last year chose to prioritize San Angelo Regional Airport for industrial growth over the park.

The SADC vote Wednesday seems to indicate a further decline in confidence that the park will ever be used for its intended purpose.

Land in the industrial park is zoned for industrial use only, requiring the conveyance to the city so it can be rezoned and sold, Keane said.

"It's a very exciting project," she said, declining to comment more specifically about the nature of the business. "It's something that's new and different for the community."