



Centennial Village proposal includes big-box retailer, hotel

MARCH 07, 2015 5:26 PM • [JIM MASTERS TIMES CORRESPONDENT](#)

MUNSTER | The 45th Street grade separation project will pave the way for a mixed use commercial and residential development.

But before the Centennial Village project gets off the ground, town officials will have to reconcile their vision for the former Munster Steel site at the southeast corner of Calumet Avenue and 45th with that of developer Matthew Kimmel, of Schererville.

According to Munster Town Councilman John Reed, who also sits on the town's Plan Commission, the development proposal includes an unnamed "high-end," big-box retailer and hotel. It also includes several retail outlets configured in a "walking lifestyle mall" concept where customer parking would be in the middle of the development, rather than a linear strip mall pattern. The three-story building would feature condominiums on the second and third floors with underground parking.

To accommodate the development, the soccer fields at Centennial Park will be relocated to nearby Westlakes Park, where five new fields are to be built. However, Reed has balked at a proposal to use the land where Centennial Park's playground equipment is or building too closely to the playground.

"I don't want to give up more parkland than we've already agreed to," he said. "I think we can find a better, less intrusive way to do the development. I've come to love that park."

Reed said the first phase of the 45th/Calumet grade separation project is scheduled to begin this summer with the extension of 45th 900 feet eastward up until the point it would intersect with the railroad tracks running parallel to 45th. Eventually, the project will create a two-bridge overpass for Canadian National trains and an underpass for cars to break the traffic gridlock at Calumet and 45th.

However, the town is yet to secure the \$30 million needed to fund the underpass construction, but money for the 900 feet of roadway is in place, as construction on Centennial Village can begin this year, according to Reed. Munster applied for a Transportation Investment Generating Economic Recovery discretionary grant, which ideally could fund the entire project, but was turned down in its first attempt and will reapply.

Reed believes town officials can arrive at a workable solution with Kimmel in the near term, describing him as a "classy developer with a good reputation."