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# Developer finds sweet spot for growth on far W. Side

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He calls it Donut Hole, Texas.

It is a stretch of 10 square miles of land on the far West Side. The site is roughly bounded by U.S. Highway 90 on the south, Westover Hills on the east, Government Canyon State Park on the north and the Bexar County line on the west.

"Donut Hole earned its name because of the huge demographic demand in (far) West San Antonio being focused on a limited supply," explains developer Chip Field about his moniker for this area. "That is, the desirable land is boxed in by various barriers to development on all sides."

Field, who has been active in this area since 2004, is getting ready to take his biggest bite yet out of Donut Hole.

He has inked a contract to purchase 3,224 acres of land west of Loop 1604 between Culebra and Potranco roads for a new master-planned development called Westpointe.

This is the project that Field, who is the founder of Cumberland Investments, believes will be the new hub for the corporations wanting to do business in San Antonio.

Indeed, the area has already proven itself, thanks to Westpointe's neighbor, Westover Hills.

And with Westover Hills slowly reaching build out, Field is betting that corporations will want to go west.

Right into Donut Hole, Texas. Right into Westpointe.

### **Prime for growth**

The 3,224 acres that Field has under contract is presently known as the Village at West Pointe. The land is owned by a partnership led by Laredo-based investor Hugo A. Gutierrez, according to Jamie Sullivan, president of locally based Sullivan Commercial Realty and the partnership's exclusive listing agent.

Westpointe is divided into three different parcels, explains Deborah Bauer, president of San Antonio firm **Drake Commercial Group LLC**. She is representing Field in this latest deal, and will be marketing Westpointe for him.

Westpointe West and Westpointe North span 1,417 and 265 acres, respectively. The western tract lies adjacent to another large-scale development along State Highway 151 called Alamo Ranch. Westpointe North fronts Culebra Road and is just north of Alamo Ranch.

Both sites are prime for more rooftops, says Bauer, who points to the success of Alamo Ranch as proof of the demand for homes in this sector of the city. Westpointe, she adds, will give many of the builders already active in Alamo Ranch a chance to build more product in the area -- at a site that is even a little further out of town.

The remaining 1,542 acres that Field has under contract make up what is known as Westpointe East. This site is bordered by Talley Road, Wiseman Boulevard and Loop 1604.

It is this land -- the "cream piece" as Bauer calls it -- that has been carved out for the bulk of the commercial development for Westpointe.

About 250 acres fronting Loop 1604 have been set aside in Westpointe East for retail development -- including plans for what Bauer calls a restaurant row.

The lion's share of Westpointe East is being targeted to large-scale employers. Both Field and Bauer expect that the project will be ideal for the corporate-campus type users -- companies looking for a site similar to what others have found in Westover Hills.

"Given the fact that Westover Hills is so highly successful as a campus community -- with companies like **QVC**, (JP Morgan) Chase -- there is a need for that continuation for those companies that will be looking for a campus-style location," Bauer says.

"There are 40,000 white-collar jobs on the ground today in the greater Westover Hills area," adds Field. "In recent years, the sites for development in Westover Hills have been acquired and largely developed.

"Therefore, Westover Hills needs a replacement, a 'phase two' if you will, in order to satisfy the demand for office/campus which can no longer be accommodated in Westover Hills," Field continues. "Westpointe ... is, in fact, actually Westover Hills phase two."

### **Tale of a city**

To date, there remains 500 acres of land still available for development in Westover Hills, according to its founder Charles Martin "Marty" Wender. The largest of these tracts is about 92 acres.

Given the growth in far West San Antonio, Wender expects that acreage won't be left untapped for long.

"This is a new city in formation," says Tom Rohde of San Antonio's far West Side.

The area's perfect storm of jobs; a major expansion by area institution Northwest Vista College; and new facilities by Christus Santa Rosa Health Care and **Baptist Health System** make far West San Antonio unlike any other area in Texas, adds Rohde, who is the vice president of Rohde Ottmers Siegel Commercial & Investment Realtors.

"Why all the job growth in (far) West San Antonio? The prime investigators are superb access, affordability, availability and momentum," Field says. "No other market in all of San Antonio can boast all four of those attributes -- none."

Since 1980, West San Antonio has been the number one market in new housing production, says Jack Inselmann, vice president for the U.S. Central Division of **Metrostudy** -- a leading provider of housing information.

"The area continues to average a little bit better than 30 percent of the new-home production in San Antonio," Inselmann continues. "You have a lot of employers, lot of new schools ... it will continue to be a very attractive, very active area."

Commercial development, including retail projects in the area, have done well. Case in point is the massive retail center that Irving-based **Archon Group** is developing as part of the Alamo Ranch community. Also christened Alamo Ranch, the 900,000-square-foot project will bring several noted names to the area -- including Lowe's, PetsMart, a SuperTarget and **Best Buy**.

Tom Sineni is the president and a principal in United Commercial Realty (UCR) of San Antonio. His firm is marketing Alamo Ranch for Archon.

"Alamo Ranch is going gangbusters," says Sineni, who points out that, to date, all of the anchor and junior-anchor sites in the project are already gone -- not bad for a retail center that only got under way last summer.

But what about Westpointe and its potential as Westover Hills, part two?

"What (Field) is doing makes sense," Sineni says. "To be able to continue to attract these campus users, that's great for San Antonio."

With its accessibility to major thoroughfares like Loop 1604 and Highway 151, and its proximity to Westover Hills, an investor would be hard pressed to find a site that is better primed for development than Westpointe, says Sullivan.

"It has all the prime assets you look for in a multi-use development tract," he adds. "There is nothing like it in this part of the world."

And there is nothing better suited as Westover Hills' successor.

"Where does the development go next (after Westover Hills is built out)?" Sullivan asks. "Westpointe is the extension of Westover Hills."

"I know (Field). He's a quality developer," adds Wender. "I'm glad that other people are out there doing quality developments."

"This is a great story," sums up Bauer of the far West Side. "We've just scratched the surface."

## **Westpointe**

**What:** A new master-planned community in the works by Dallas-based developer Chip Field

**Where:** The land is located west of Loop 1604 between Culebra and Potranco roads.

**Raise the roofs:** The northern and western portions of Westpointe have been set aside for residential development.

**Go west:** The eastern tract, which is located just west of Westover Hills is being dubbed by Field as "Westover Hills phase two," and will be targeted to large employers.