



Project renderings, Viridian



[INSIDE THE DEAL]

THE DEAL: A 2,000-acre riverfront property that will be transformed into a 5,300-unit residential community with 500,000 square feet of office and 200,000 square feet of retail.

IMPACT: Up to 5,000 jobs will be located on site, and the value at build-out is expected to top \$1.5 billion.

KEY PLAYERS: Huffines Communities; Peter Calthorpe and Associates; EDAW; Applied Ecological Services; Graham & Associates; 505 Group; Michael Woodley Architecture and Design; MilesBrand; Dr. Robert Cluck and council, City of Arlington.

Viridian

BY KAREN NIELSEN | CORRESPONDENT

Twin brothers Donald and Phillip Huffines, owners of Huffines Communities, are never ones to shy away from a challenge.

Their latest project, Viridian, is certainly that; the massive undertaking is expected to take about 14 years to complete.

It involves transforming a 2,000-acre riverfront property from reclaimed flood plains into a vibrant, residential community with 500,000 square feet of office and 200,000 square feet of retail space.

Its prominent location — just five minutes south of Dallas/Fort Worth International Airport, smack-dab in the center of the Metroplex — was a big selling point, said Donald Huffines.

“We chose it for three reasons: location, location, location,” he said. “That and the city staff in Arlington were so positive about what could happen on the property. They really bought into our vision.”

At full build out, the \$1.5 billion Viridian will have 5,300 dwelling units, mostly single-family homes. The remainder will be condominiums and apartments located

above the office and retail space. Huffines expects initial housing models to open in fall 2009 and plans a grand opening in the spring of 2010. Home prices will range from \$200,000 to more than \$1 million.

With an infusion of 15,000 residents, two Hurst-Euless-Bedford elementary schools and a middle school are planned for the development.

Viridian will also include a 135-acre town center, anchored by a hotel. In addition to the office and retail space, a 35-acre medical complex also is planned. The developer anticipates that up to 5,000 jobs will be created at Viridian.

“We want this to be a true live-work environment,” Huffines said.

The community will be fully integrated with mass transit, complete with a rail stop for the Trinity River Express, and eight miles of hike and bike trails. It also will feature a 20,000-square-foot clubhouse, four swimming pools, eight tennis courts,

indoor basketball courts and a large amphitheater.

The project’s name, Viridian, a shade of green, was deliberately selected.

“This community is going to be the greenest master-planned community of

this size ever done in Dallas-Fort Worth and probably in Texas,”

Huffines said. “We have applied for the Audubon International Gold Standard certification; it will be the only such community in the state of Texas.”

Viridian will boast more than 1,200 acres of protected wetlands and open spaces and 450 acres of lakes.

Everything about the project is green, Huffines said. He and his brother are examining ways to recycle rain water and well water, and will co-generate electricity on the property. They’re forming an on-site gas partnership with General Electric, and plan to use geothermal heating and cooling systems in public buildings.



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To help, the brothers hired Peter Calthorpe, a prestigious land planner out of Berkeley, Calif. They also tapped Ducks Unlimited to design some of the wetlands and are planting thousands of trees.

“The project is really massive in scope,” Huffines said, noting that once construction starts, 5 million yards of dirt will be moved to finish the reclamation — three times the amount of dirt moved from the World Trade Center. “The property has been a problem for many years; we’re the third developer to tackle it.”

Floodplain properties require numerous permits, and it took Huffines Communities more than a year to obtain them from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and the Federal Emergency Management Agency.

It also took some time to negotiate mineral rights for 10 oil and gas drill sites located on the land.

“We felt the time was right for the property,” Huffines said. “We like the value creation (that results from) problem properties. We felt it was a niche for us. We like creative projects, and this is a good one.”

NIELSEN is a Plano-based freelance writer.