

# Retail, industrial development planned for Big Lake

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by Sam Black

An Elk River company wants to construct a \$50 million to \$80 million retail and industrial development in Big Lake in large part so it can develop a larger adjacent site into single-family homes.

Dynamics Design and Land Co., which is primarily a home builder, has proposed the Big Lake Market Place on a 170-acre site about a mile east of downtown Big Lake. The project would include 400,000 to 500,000 square feet of industrial space, some retail space that doesn't include big-box users, restaurants and possibly a hotel.

The site is bordered on the north by Highway 10 and on the south by the main line of the Burlington Northern Rail Road.

The company also has under contract a 200-acre site on the north side of Highway 10 where it hopes to build a 200-acre residential development, said Jim Thares, Big Lake development director.

But Dynamics Design can't get zoning approval to build the residential project because the city requires orderly development and annexation and doesn't allow what is known as "leapfrog" development, Thares said.

Dynamics Design officials couldn't be reached for comment.

Regardless of the motivations for the commercial project, Big Lake Market Place is good news for residents of Big Lake who want more shopping choices near their homes, Thares said.

Big Lake has 8,000 residents, or twice that number if you count the surrounding Big Lake Township, he said. Residents must drive seven miles to Elk River or three miles to Monticello to shop for their most basic needs, Thares said.

"Now, people are saying, 'We're just as big as those towns, why can't we have those things?' " he said.

Another project on the horizon in Big Lake will help the retail base as well. Minnetonka-based Oppidan Investments has proposed a \$16 million development called Big Lake Market Square.

Oppidan is working with St. Cloud-based Coburn's Inc., which plans to take over a 15,000-square-foot family-owned grocery store on a site on Highway 10 near downtown Big Lake.

Oppidan would then build a new 43,000-square-foot store across the street from Coburn's and convert the old store into a modern strip shopping center. Two traffic studies, one paid for by Oppidan and another by the city, are under way and should be complete by mid-July, allowing for construction to begin this fall.