

Details emerge for huge development at Circle T ranch in Westlake



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Turner Lake will have to be rebuilt to make way for a mixed use development at the Circle T ranch in Westlake. Hillwood

By Gordon Dickson

Last week's announcement that The [Charles Schwab Corp. plans to build](#) a 1,200-employee corporate campus on the former Circle T Ranch was apparently just the beginning for the fast-growing area of northern Tarrant and southern Denton County.

Hillwood, one of the region's largest real estate developers, and The Howard Hughes Corp. announced plans Wednesday to move forward with a 130-acre mixed-use development that includes the \$100 million Schwab campus at the intersection of Texas 114 and Texas 170 near the Westlake-Roanoke border.

The project will include restaurants, retail shops, day care and a fitness center, said Mike Berry, president of Hillwood Properties, known for creating Alliance. It will also include residential areas and a 200-room hotel. Work at the site is expected to begin this fall and continue for several years, roughly following Schwab's plan to open its campus by early 2019.

“There’s not a lot of 130-acre campus developments surrounded by a lake and open space,” Berry said. “Developing this mixed-use project at the Circle T Ranch represents a watershed moment in the 27-year history of AllianceTexas.”

ADVERTISING

For more than a decade, the area known as Circle T has been considered a prime location for development. Dating back to the 1990s, it was considered a good spot for a regional mall — until consumer habits changed and mega-malls fell out of favor compared to town center-oriented developments that encourage walking between stores.

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Mike Berry, president, Hillwood Properties

A name hasn’t been selected for the development, Berry said, although the Circle T brand could be used. No tenants or brand-name partners other than Schwab have been announced.

The main drive through the development will be dubbed Schwab Way, he said.

Westlake lies about 20 miles north of downtown Fort Worth, yet much of the town and surrounding area remains pristine, rolling Texas prairies. The Hillwood/Howard Hughes development promises to be one of the largest and most noteworthy components of [Hillwood’s AllianceTexas development](#), which includes Alliance Airport and Alliance Town Center in far north Fort Worth. Preliminary plans for the project were filed with Westlake late last year.

The new project will include more than 2 million square feet of mixed-use office, retail and entertainment space, comparable to Southlake Town Square about eight miles to the east. However, Berry said the Westlake development will likely have somewhat less retail than Southlake’s featured destination.

He said another comparison would be the Legacy development in Plano north of Dallas.

Combining a corporate campus and mixed-use development provided retailers with a captive audience of prospective shoppers during work hours. At the same time, placing such a development in a growing area allows those same stores and restaurants to also serve residents of a wide swath of the Metroplex. In this case, that includes the quickly growing areas of Roanoke, Trophy Club, Haslet, Keller and far north Fort Worth.

The architecture at the Westlake development will resemble the ranch/contemporary Hill Country designs seen at other public buildings in the city, including Westlake Academy, Deloitte University and the nearby Vaquero development.

Land for parks, open space and creeks will also be integrated into the development, officials said in a press release.

The initial work will include rebuilding Turner Lake to make way for both the Schwab campus and surrounding development.

The Schwab campus will feature roughly 70 acres along the lakeside, while the adjacent Hillwood/Howard Hughes development will abut Texas 114 and 170.

“We have to rebuild the lake, and then we will start early next year on the infrastructure — the roads, water and sewer,” Berry said. “And by that time hopefully consistent with Schwab starting their development we will have secured the tenants for the restaurants, fitness, daycare and hotel and start construction late the second quarter of next year.”

The Hillwood/Howard Hughes development will not use government benefits to cover any of its costs, Berry said.

The Schwab campus, on the other hand, received a \$6 million grant from the Texas Enterprise Fund, Gov. Greg Abbott announced last week. Schwab is also set to receive 10 years of local property tax abatements, as well as a sales tax reduction on construction materials, Westlake town manager Tom Brymer said.

This report includes material from the Star-Telegram archives.