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Setting Standard for success

Area near Highways 99, 65 sprouting with new commercial development

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Bulldozers hummed and growled as they churned up land recently off 7th Standard Road near Highways 99 and 65 -- Bakersfield's hottest new commercial zone.

PHOTOS:



Photo by Casey Christie

Bakersfield Harley-Davidson in the 7th Standard Road area.



Photo by Dan Ocampo

Trench lines for utilities are dug at the future site of the Bill Wright Toyota dealership on Industry Park Way.

"It's been pending for quite some time. It's just taking off now," said Robert Sawyer, Kern County's principal building inspector.

Hotels, restaurants and banks have started flocking to the area.

Bill Wright Toyota and Three-Way Chevrolet are about to start construction on new dealerships.

Bakersfield Harley-Davidson co-owner Debbie Irvin said business has been brisk for the motorcycle dealership after it moved from a cramped downtown location to a more than 30,000-square-foot showroom just south of 7th Standard three months ago.

"We have the freeway traffic," she said. "We have a lot more people stopping in."

A self-storage facility, office building and auto parts distribution center have also sprouted nearby.

"It seems like a logical extension of what has been happening in the city," said Jim Eggert, Bakersfield's principal planner. "Seventh Standard is becoming much more traveled."

La Quinta Inn & Suites recently opened just south of 7th Standard next to Highway 65. A Hampton Inn & Suites is planned by J.G. Bailey Corp., which also plans to add other hotel chains in the area.

Freeway access, high visibility, the residential growth of north Bakersfield and proximity to the new William M. Thomas Terminal at Meadows Field have helped fuel the transformation.

"There is interest from people who want a north Bakersfield location with highway access," said real estate agent Duane Keathley of CB Richard Ellis.

There are also plans for a new freeway interchange and a widening of 7th Standard and eventual plans for a beltway highway system nearby.

"I think we will see a steady growth of industrial uses in that general area," said Ted James, the director of the county's planning department.

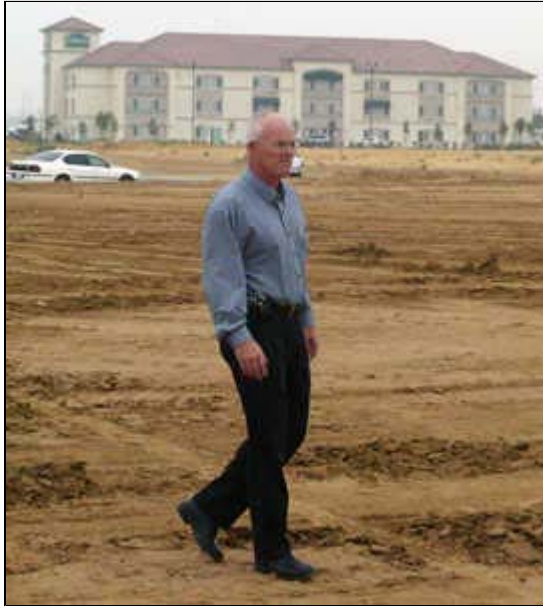


Photo by Dan Ocampo

Kern County principal building inspector Robert Sawyer walks on the future site of the Bill Wright Toyota dealership on Industry Park Way.

Sawyer said as the area between Highways 99 and 65 fills in, more commercial development will surround the airport itself.

The airport has a master plan for growth over the next 20 years, which could include a new runway, air cargo facilities, warehouses, restaurants and stores being added north of the airport.

County airports director Jack Gotcher said the master plan was presented to the county Board of Supervisors during the summer. He said the board did not object to the plan and it next must receive Federal Aviation Administration and environmental approval before going back to the board for final approval.

Gotcher said it's only a matter of time before growth eventually connects Shafter, 7th Standard and the airport.

"There's a tremendous amount of land around the airport that has not been developed," Sawyer said.

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