



NEWS

FICO gives more details on development[Print Page](#)**By Philip Franchine
The Sahuarita Sun**

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The plan for developing 5,700 acres of Farmers Investment Co. property in Sahuarita would turn the Santa Cruz River from a source of stormwater sheet flooding into a 12-mile greenway including trails, revegetated river banks, other open space and soccer fields.

That vision of the river was included in the Sahaurita Farms Land/River Master Plan as presented to about 45 residents Tuesday night by FICO owners Dick and Nan Walden.

The 50-year plan will be presented today to the Green Valley Community Coordinating Council at 10 a.m. at Desert Hills Social Center, 2980 S. Camino del Sol, and for the Quail Creek HOA at 2 p.m. at the Madera Clubhouse in Quail Creek.

FICO expects to submit its plan to Sahuarita town planning officials in the first quarter of 2011 and is seeking public comment in the meantime.

The plan sets as a target 16,500 homes, or fewer than 3 homes per acre, and for flexibility sake would allow a maximum of 19,000 homes, or 3.3 homes per acre. Both figures are well below the 3.8 homes per acre in the town's other master planned communities, Rancho Sahuarita, Quail Creek and Madera Highlands, Mark Reddie of LVA Urban Design Studio of Tempe told the crowd.

The density figures drew applause from Brice Elliott of Rancho Sahuarita, who said he moved to the area for its rural character but found it to be very densely populated, though it does not feel that way.

There would be 1,000 acres of open space along the river and another 1,000 acres of open space in other places, including 50 miles of trails and parks within a quarter mile of every home.

The plan does envision leaving some pecan groves between Nogales Highway and the river even as the rest of the land is developed, Nan Walden said. The plan would include pecan trees to provide shade along boulevards in residential neighborhoods as well.

Asked when development would start, the Waldens said it will depend on market forces and the needs of the community.

It is unlikely any buildings will be built in less than five years, planners said, but in the next two to three years, FICO hopes to donate land for an Anza Trail and River Park trailhead, including a parking lot north of Sahuarita Road on the west side of the river.

Dick Walden gets requests almost weekly from churches and others seeking to buy land, and that is part of the reason for developing this plan now, even though the economy is down, Reddie said. The other reason is that having a 12-mile stretch of undeveloped riverbank under the ownership of one entity is a great opportunity to create a community amenity.

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