

Area Focus | Suburban St. Louis



A tale

of



two cities



Since the days of the ancient Greeks, societies have sought to build cities that are planned and that will provide an idyllic existence for the residents. In suburban St. Louis, Chesterfield Village and Winghaven started from large tracts of open land and grew to create different models of the modern master-planned community.

By Bob Craig



When Bob Hardcastle moved his office to Chesterfield Village, in Chesterfield, Missouri 22 years ago, the area was considered to be on the very western fringe of St. Louis County's development.

"I remember my clients saying, why do you want to go way out there," says Hardcastle, the president and CEO of Delta Investments. "I told them I thought it was the leading edge of where the area was going to grow."

Hardcastle was right, and so was Louis Sachs, chairman of Sachs Properties, who took a rural area west of

St. Louis along US 40 and created a new community from scratch.

In 1967, Sachs looked at the area and saw opportunity.

He had come to the area with the idea of developing an apartment complex on a 60-acre parcel adjacent to the intersection of U.S. 40 and Clarkston Road.

During the acquisition process, Sachs discovered that other parcels nearby were available and the idea of a planned community began to shape.

"There was attractive land there at the top of the hill that was great for apartments," says Sachs. "We were able to get that and then there



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were other parcels available and we just went from there.”

During the planning process, Sachs travelled to other planned communities in the United States, including Reston, Virginia—one of the nation’s premier master-planned developments—and brought back ideas that he would incorporate into his plans.

He felt retail was one key to creating a successful community and sold the original parcel to Richard Jacobs of the Cleveland-based retail developer Richard E. Jacobs Group. Jacobs built the Chesterfield Mall on the site.

Team Four Architects devised the master plan for Chesterfield Village in conjunction with Sachs. The plan was designed around a central roadway, Chesterfield Boulevard, which would encircle the U.S. 40/Clarkston Road interchange.

“I looked at it as a community, not residential or commercial,” Sachs says. “In the St. Louis area, it had not been done before. None of the developments had been planned developments.”

Sachs assembled 60 parcels of land and developed the master plan before going to the St. Louis County zoning board. Yet, the idea of planning an entirely new community was a shock for the rural area.

“When he went to the county to rezone the parcels, it scared them to death,” says Kathy Higgins, president of Sachs Properties.

The county, however, was anxious for the area to be developed and much of the development at the time was residential.

“We weren’t the only ones doing development out here,” says Higgins. “We were the only ones doing major commercial development though.”

Sachs Properties has taken its time to create the vision started in 1967 and invested more than \$500 million in the project.

Along the way, Sachs has sold all of his other real estate investments to focus solely on the quality of Chesterfield Village. To keep development consistent with his vision, Sachs has kept architectural control over the parcels he has sold to other developers.

Chesterfield Village is now 1,500 acres with a population of more than 25,000 people. It also includes more than 2 million square feet of office space and 200 businesses.

The Chesterfield Mall is now owned by Westfield and the 1.4 million square foot center is known as Westfield Shoppingtown Chesterfield.

One of the largest business developments in Chesterfield is Pfizer’s 900,000 square foot facility and includes 250 laboratories, 26 greenhouses and 123 environmentally controlled plant-growing incubators.

The Chesterfield Village master plan is scheduled for completion in 2010. The city of Chesterfield was incorporated in 1988.

“There’s still a lot more to be done,” says



Sachs. “I’d like it to be something different, something that’s well-done, looks good. Something that’s not just the same.”

The remaining development area, about 400 acres, includes the downtown portion of Chesterfield Village. St. Louis-based HOK architects has been brought in to make some slight revisions to original plans and when complete Chesterfield Village is projected to have a cumulative value of \$3 billion.

While Sachs was focused on the creation of Chesterfield Village, his planned community was bringing more residents, jobs and attention to the U.S. 40 Corridor and other developers began to look seriously at the area.

“If you follow Highway 40, that’s where a lot of major development has taken place during my career,” says Jerry Gidlow, a vice president with Grubb and Ellis|Krombach Partners, whose career stretches back to the late 1960s. “Chesterfield Village was fairly far west at the time.”

“Sachs was a real visionary and he was really looking forward,” says Gidlow. “He had a vision of what he wanted and he stayed with his thoughts and didn’t vary. He wasn’t in a hurry.”

Winghaven |

Sachs’s vision has led to another master-planned development across the Missouri River from Chesterfield in the city of O’Fallon.

Conceived by area developer McEagle Properties LLC, Winghaven is a master-planned community that has brought quick growth in



Boardwalk Market Place, a 26,000 square foot retail center in Winghaven.

(Opposite page, center photo) Standing on land that would one day be Chesterfield Village, Sachs Properties founder Louis Sachs (opposite page, right) reviews plans for the village with a designer from Team Four in 1969. Two aerial views of Chesterfield Village, (opposite page, top left) from the 1960s and (opposite page, bottom right) from 2003 show the development growth. (Opposite page, bottom left photos) An aerial view of Winghaven in O’Fallon, Missouri and a street of Winghaven homes. (left) An ad for Chesterfield Village in the 1970s touts its live, work and play philosophy.

both population and jobs since 1999.

The thought process at the beginning of Winghaven’s planning sounds similar to Sachs’s original thoughts in 1967.

“When you have a huge piece of land, that opportunity doesn’t come along very often and when you can assemble that large parcel you just look at it differently,” says Paul McKee, CEO and owner of McEagle Properties.

Yet, even with the success of Sachs’s Chesterfield Village, the city of O’Fallon didn’t jump in with both feet. The vote on the original proposal for Winghaven passed on a 5 to 4 count.

“Credibility was an issue,” says McKee. “So many people go to cities with these grandiose architectural pictures. It’s a matter of winning their trust.”

When the developers won the approval and trust of the community, they quickly went to work creating what they had proposed—building a place where people could live, work and play.

The guiding principle of Winghaven is a concept McEagle has trademarked called Life-Works™, a knowledge-based infrastructure designed to make the community a place where modern technology can be incorporated into the homes, educational institutions and workplaces of the development.

“The concept was to have the economic diversity in the community so everyone from the secretary to the CEO could find a place to live here,” says McKee.

The 1,200-acre development landed a major employer early in the process.

Winghaven was selected in 1999 as the site of the \$135 million, 520,000 square foot, MasterCard Global Technology and Operation Center, although the site was still a cornfield.

“We competed with 45 other cities to win that project,” says McKee. “It immediately gave credibility to our concept and our community.”

The public/private partnership between McEagle and O’Fallon brought about 2,300 jobs to Winghaven and approximately 60 percent of those workers live in O’Fallon.

Since MasterCard other technology-based businesses have located to Winghaven including Everest/GLA Network Technologies, NORDYNE Inc., Evanston Financial and Xpedius.

Citimortgage, Citigroup’s residential mortgage lending business recently opened its new 515,000 square foot facility in O’Fallon, adding to the growth along the U.S. 40 corridor.

“When we started, O’Fallon was about 17,000 people,” says McKee. “Now it’s 55,000 to 58,000 people. Nobody was bringing jobs our here, it was a bedroom community. We have located businesses close to the people.”

This is typical of the growth occurring in St. Charles County, where O’Fallon and Winghaven area located. According to Keith Schneider, a vice president with Colliers Turley Martin Tucker, there has been a five-fold increase in office space in St. Charles County since 1995.

“It’s the fastest growing office area in the St. Louis metropolitan area,” Schneider says. “It’s pretty dramatic and we’re still considered an emerging market.”

When Winghaven is completed in 2009, it will have 1.5 million square feet of office space, 1.2 million square feet of high-tech along with more than 2,000 homes.

“Winghaven’s absorption has been a lot faster than in Chesterfield Village largely because the MasterCard facility brought a large employment base,” says George Convy, first vice president with the St. Louis office of CB Richard Ellis.

The U.S. 40 corridor is not done yet. Infill development is taking place between Chesterfield and Winghaven. With the opening of Page Avenue (Missouri Route 364) and its new bridge across the Missouri River, more jobs and homeowners should continue to flow farther and farther west into St. Charles County.

Doug Sansone, a partner with Sansone Group agrees, “The success that Chesterfield has experienced in its retail growth has led to future growth going westward. It’s making the market much better from a retail standpoint and the bigger retailers are starting to look at these areas as possible growth areas where before it was considered rural.” | MWREN