

BUSINESS

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Planned shopping center is bet that N. Naples will grow

Many calls already have been made about renting space on the property along U.S. 41 near the Collier line, said the developer, Jack Crifasi

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Naples businessman Jack Crifasi picked a North Naples parcel to develop based on a hunch that its strategic location would attract plenty of interest.

Judging by the initial response, his instincts were correct.

Crifasi said his office receives several calls daily from brokers representing furniture stores, auto parts shops, general merchandisers, restaurants, banks and even a college, who want

information on the planned 70,000 square feet of space.

"It's very encouraging. I haven't even begun marketing yet," said Crifasi, president of Crifasi Real Estate. "I think that says a lot about the site."

So far, names of potential tenants are not available because Crifasi said he has not signed any leases yet.

The 9.6-acre parcel lies about a half-mile north of Old 41 Road on U.S. 41 North. It sits on an untouched stretch of land that extends along U.S. 41 North, from Old 41 Road to the Collier

County line. It took Crifasi about 18 months to negotiate the \$4.2 million purchase from landowner Tamiami Square LLC.

To coincide with the new development, Crifasi has started a firm called Tamiami Square of Naples LLC, which has no personnel ties with the similarly named selling company, which could not be reached to comment.

During the 1½ years of deal-making, Crifasi worked his plan through the Collier County planning process and is now

prepared to break ground. He will begin clearing land next week and the shopping center is expected to open in December.

The finished product will hold about 18 spaces of various sizes. The largest area is 25,000 square feet, which has been eyed by retailers and a college. There are out-lots close to U.S. 41 that also will contain separate buildings.

The L-shaped Mediterranean-style structure will be stuccoed, tiled and accented with palm

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trees and other tropical plantings.

"It will be lushly landscaped and have fountains and pavers," Crifasi said. "It will be of a much higher quality than other strip centers."

Besides its attractive look, the mall has a prime location going for it.

When businesses call the Economic Development Council of Collier County looking for potential sites, North Naples tops the list.

"That part of the county is filling up most quickly. It's the area that's most in demand because of the population growth there," said Tammie Nemecek, executive director of the council. "(Crifasi's development) is right on target and it should take off."

Crifasi, with his background in real estate and development, knew North Naples would be a hot spot.

"There will be other developments in the area. We want to be the first one out of the ground and ready for occupancy," Crifasi said. "The reason we put it there is there's not much commercial up there. A lot of retailers want to appeal to both Naples and Bonita Springs."