

Woodhaven Country Club project takes shape amid NIMBY protests, lawsuit

Crescendo secured zoning for \$167M redevelopment of Fort Worth property



Council member Michael Crain and Will Northern with 913 Country Club Lane (City Fort Worth, Crescendo Development, Google Maps, Getty)

By TRD Staff

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Key Points

- Redevelopment efforts for the Woodhaven Country Club in Fort Worth are proceeding despite an ongoing legal battle.
 - Crescendo Development purchased the 163-acre property for \$8.5 million and has secured zoning for a mixed-use redevelopment project.
 - A lawsuit has been filed by Will Northern's former business partner, Fort Worth City Council member Michael Crain, claiming he was cut out of the Woodhaven deal.
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The redevelopment of Fort Worth's Woodhaven Country Club is galloping along, amid protests of NIMBY neighbors and the cloud of a legal battle involving the site.

The shuttered 163-acre property went into foreclosure and was purchased last year for \$8.5 million by Crescendo Development, led by investor Will Northern. The firm has since won zoning for a sweeping mixed-use redevelopment at 913 Country Club Lane in East Fort Worth that could bring a community center, housing, office space, an urban farm and a revamped golf course, the Dallas Business Journal reported. Supporters — including the Fort Worth Chamber of Commerce and local neighborhood groups — say the plan could revitalize an area long dominated by aging apartments and single-family homes.

Opponents argue the project doesn't fit the community's demographics and fear it could displace longtime residents. At a Sept. 17 City Plan Commission meeting, Crescendo pitched the project as a \$167.7 million private investment that would

create nearly 1,000 jobs and generate \$15.6 million in new tax revenue over the next decade. Commissioners delayed a vote until Oct. 1 to give residents more time to digest the application and review property impact studies.

The development push also comes with drama, as Northern's former business partner — Fort Worth City Council member Michael Crain — sued him in June, claiming he was cut out of the Woodhaven deal. Crain's attorneys called it a "personal betrayal," while Northern's legal team blasted the suit as a political play.

The suit also names a substitute trustee tied to the acquisition and seeks more than \$1 million in damages, along with temporary and permanent injunctions to halt further action on the land. Crain abstained from the February rezoning vote.

The case has since been moved to the newly-created Texas Business Court, where Judge Jerry Bullard will preside. Crain's lawyers are trying to kick it back to state district court, arguing the deal doesn't meet the \$5 million threshold for the new court's jurisdiction. Lawmakers in Texas recently lowered the minimum claim in business courts from \$10 million. A hearing is set for Oct. 6 at Texas A&M's Fort Worth campus.

In the meantime, Crescendo has started marketing slices of the property online. A 62-acre tract at 5500 Randol Mill Road is listed on LoopNet for \$4 million, or about \$65,000 an acre, while a Crexi posting shows the land has been up for grabs for nearly six months.

Crescendo continues to pitch the Woodhaven project as a once-in-a-generation chance to reimagine a struggling corner of East Fort Worth, provided the courtroom wrangling doesn't derail the momentum.

— Eric Weilbacher