

Developer banks on La Cantera draw for new restaurant park

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by [Tricia Lynn Silva](#)

Dallas-based Hermansen Land Development Inc. has some "tasteful" plans in store for San Antonio.

The firm is eyeing 11.28 acres of land at the northwest corner of Interstate 10 and Loop 1604 for a new restaurant park called the La Cantera Restaurant Park.

Current plans call for developing four restaurant pad sites, says Kirk Hermansen, principal for Hermansen Land Development, adding that a fifth site could be added.

Ultimately, La Cantera Restaurant park could contain about 36,000 square feet of restaurant space, he says.

Two restaurants are already showing strong interest in the site. Hermansen Land Development currently has two sites under contract with Orlando, Fla.-based restaurant operator Darden Restaurants Inc., which plans to bring a [Red Lobster](#) and an Olive Garden to the site. Both restaurants, Hermansen adds, will be about 8,500 square feet.

As for the other two sites planned for the restaurant park, Hermansen says that his company is in talks with several national tenants.

"The demand has increased since we've gotten the word out," says Hermansen, referring to the property brochure that his firm has been sending out.

It helps that the park has several things going for it - namely some 1,600 acres of prime real estate.

The restaurant park is located at the front entrance to the master-planned community La Cantera. Besides high-end custom homes, La Cantera also includes The Westin La Cantera Resort, the La Cantera Golf Club and Six Flags Fiesta Texas.

Hermansen's restaurant park is also adjacent to the planned The Shops at La Cantera mall, which is scheduled to break ground next week. The mall is being developed by Columbia, Md.-based The Rouse Co. and USAA Real Estate Co.

The residential growth that continues along the I-10/1604 corridor has done much to enhance the intersection's identity as a corridor of regional importance, says Nick Altomare, principal with United Commercial Realty (UCR) of San Antonio.

"The demographics are already there," he says, "and it's only going to get better."

Besides national restaurants, Hermansen says his company is also interested in talking with local restaurant operators about the park - bring some San Antonio flavor to the development, he adds.

While Hermansen is targeting 11.28 acres for the restaurant park, the company plans to develop only about 8 acres - with the rest of the land being landscaped and serving as a buffer around the site.

As for the cost of the project, Hermansen says it is "more than we would like."

"We are doing some significant site work and some road improvements - and the landscaping; it's costly," he says. "But we believe that care will bring some good dividends. We try to preserve as much green space as we can."

Hermansen says that his company will take the project before the city's planning commission later this month. The firm hopes to break ground on the project in March 2003 - which means that some of the restaurants could be open by the third quarter of next year.

Something new

La Cantera Restaurant Park is the first project for Hermansen in San Antonio. The company has handled its share of projects in Dallas and Atlanta, where it has served as a broker and developer for several national restaurant concepts.

The company has done a number of build-to-suit projects for retailers like Walgreen's, Staples and Costco. Hermansen also specializes in small, multi-tenant retail projects.

"What we don't do is big-box-type developments," Hermansen says.

La Cantera is, however, Hermansen's "first restaurant park, per se," he adds.

The company is already looking at more sites in Texas for new projects - and that includes looking at San Antonio, Hermansen adds.

"We might be on to something (with the La Cantera restaurant park)," Hermansen says.

At this point, all Darden officials will say about any plans for San Antonio is that they have not signed a contract for a specific site for a new Red Lobster or a new Olive Garden here.

Hermansen, however, does confirm that Darden has two sites under contract at La Cantera.

He adds that with the new restaurants, Darden also plans to bring some new design concepts to San Antonio for Red Lobster and Olive Garden.

Red Lobster plans to bring its "Coastal Home" design to the site. Olive Garden, meanwhile, plans to pattern its restaurant at the park after its "Tuscan Farmhouse" design.