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KOTI development breaks ground

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A crew from Team Elmer's works on the future site of KOTI, a 76-unit Scandinavian-themed resort resort in Acme Township | the Williamsburg Event Center on M-72. Plans for a future phase could include retail, commercial and residential combined in mixed-use buildings.

Record-Eagle photos/Jan-Michael Stump



ACME — Heavy equipment rolled through the future site of KOTI to lay the groundwork for the first part of a new resort planned in Acme.

Dan Kelly, a longtime restaurateur who owns the land off M-72 east of U.S. 31, said he's planning to test the market by building about 30 "tiny houses" and renting them out short-term. They'll sit on land that includes the former Stained Glass Cabinet Company. Kelly's catering business is there as well, in a different building.

That lot stretches back to Acme Creek. Both Kelly and Bob Brick, a real estate broker working with Kelly on marketing the project and its future phases, touted the ribbon of water as a major asset in the 18-acre parcel.

So too is its proximity to nearby beaches, made even closer by shuttle, Brick said. And Grand Traverse Resort's golf courses are across M-72. And a pathway would link visitors to a planned Traverse Area Recreation and Transportation Trails spur.

"There will be multiple moving parts, a restaurant, a resort store, there could be bike rentals there," Brick said. "It could be a complete resort where you kind of go as a family and just enjoy the benefits of the surrounding area."

Up front will be a new restaurant in the remodeled Stained Glass Cabinet Company building, Kelly said. He has a liquor license for what he'll call KOTI Pub and said he has a fairly good idea of the menu, but wasn't ready to go public with it yet.

"We've been in the restaurant business for 45 years, we haven't decided exactly what it's going to be, but it's going to be a full-service restaurant," he said.

It's one of a few businesses envisioned for the first phase of the Scandinavian-themed resort, Kelly said — "koti" is Finnish for "home," he added.

He scrapped initial plans some time ago to sell the houses within as condominiums, opting instead to remain the owner and manage them as short-term rentals, he said. Simplicity is among the reasons he made that choice, he said.

Future phases call for more — township trustees in 2018 approved up to 126 houses, 45,000 square feet of commercial space and 20,000 square feet of office space in the planned development, documents show.

A future phase will include another entrance off M-72, lined by buildings modeled after a downtown block, Kelly said. It's set to be a mixture of residential, commercial and retail, and could include more restaurants although exact plans are still a ways off.

"Who knows what we're going to do with the commercial for sure, there's lots of possibilities there," Kelly said.

Kelly is also watching what the Grand Traverse Band of Ottawa and Chippewa Indians develops on land between his development and Meijer and wants to coordinate with the tribe, including on a planned connection from his development to a road linking to Meijer.

The Bureau of Indian Affairs in March 2020 approved the tribe's 2016 application to place the 160 acres in trust — that means it's held for the tribe by the federal government — as off-reservation, non-gaming land, documents show.

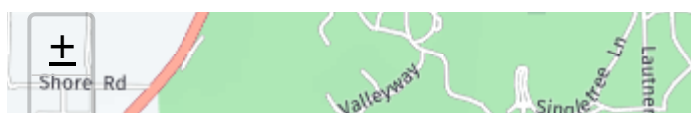
Water for the development already will come from the tribe's system nearby, Kelly said, while sewer will go through Acme Township's system.

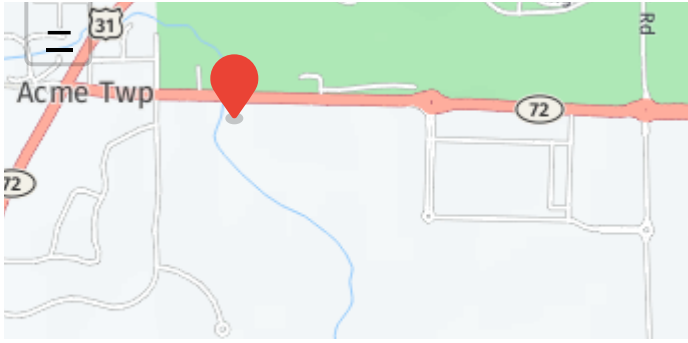
The COVID-19 pandemic shut down what would've been a 2020 start to construction, Kelly said.

Plans for Kelly's development initially drew concerns over the proximity to Acme Creek, which already suffered from other nearby development. Two rainstorms sent clay-laden runoff into its waters in September 2014, ultimately leading to state regulators fining Village at Grand Traverse LLC.

Shawn Winter, the township's planning director at the time township officials were reviewing plans for the development, previously told the Record-Eagle he believed the creek should be well-protected by the plans.

Kelly echoed this, noting he's complying with water quality monitoring requirements and others township officials approved. One of those includes a stormwater retention area in what otherwise would be an ideal spot for building.





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