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\$1 billion Asante project aims to house 40,000

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The Arizona Republic

May. 20, 2006 12:00 AM

A new 3,600-acre master-planned community, including a 1 million-square-foot shopping center, soon will spring from fallow desert land in the far Northwest Valley.

With a price tag of more than \$1 billion, Asante will be built along Grand Avenue in Surprise, just west of the future Loop 303 freeway. It eventually will be home to new schools, fire stations, parks and 14,000 homes with a variety of housing types.

"You will see everything from a townhome condo to a 1-acre estate," said Alan Jones, regional vice president for Lennar Corp., which is developing the project's residential component. "It allows a mixture of people with different lifestyles to live within the same community."

When completed, more than 40,000 residents will live at Asante, only one of various new master-planned communities being planned or built in Surprise.

Construction of the first phase of Marley Park, the 956-acre community near Waddell and Reems roads, is under way. And Prasada, a 3,400-acre project straddling the Loop 303 corridor, is going through annexation and rezoning hearings this month.

Lennar is teaming up with Barclay Group, a Scottsdale-based shopping center developer, to bring a shopping center to Asante. Barclay plans to build Surprise Spectrum, a 124-acre retail center that will rival Phoenix's Desert Ridge Marketplace in size.

The \$100 million center, at 163rd and Grand avenues, will include a national department store, grocery store, sit-down and quick-service restaurants, and other retailers. The first stores will begin to open in 2008.

"It will offer people in the area shopping opportunities they don't have now," said Councilman Cliff Elkins, whose district includes Asante. "Looking at the bottom line, I like the implications of the sales tax revenues we will be getting."

Elkins added that the development will bring critical infrastructure to the area, including three fire stations, five schools in two different districts, new roads and public spaces. Developers will invest more than \$100 million on public improvements, including the widening of 163rd Avenue to six lanes from two between Grand and Happy Valley Road and a BNSF Railway crossing to eight lanes from two.

The first phase of the project, which will begin in early 2007, calls for a \$15 million regional wastewater treatment plant and about 2,500 homes. They will range from 1,100 to 4,000 square feet, and will cost between \$200,000 and \$800,000.

Location played a significant role in determining where to build Asante, Jones said. A quarter mile from the Loop 303 corridor, Asante will be easy to reach once the Arizona Department of Transportation widens seven miles of the loop in 2011.