

Eateries to add to Promenade at Casa Grande scenery

By HAROLD KITCHING
Staff Writer

Two more restaurants at The Promenade at Casa Grande, now rising at Interstate 10 and Florence Boulevard, were approved Thursday night by the Casa Grande Planning and Zoning Commission.

The major site plans were for an In-N-Out Burger and an Olive Garden Italian restaurant.

Keith Gilbert, representing the hamburger chain, said the restaurant will be about 3,350 square feet and is projected to be open by June.

Olive Garden, expected to be open by next fall, is listed as being 7,441 square feet. By comparison, the nearby Mimis now under construction and expected to open in about 30 days, was listed as 6,674 square feet, with an outdoor dining area bringing the total footage to 7,449.

Olive Garden will not have a patio area, either for waiting or dining, representative Jack DeGagne said.

The shopping center at Florence Boulevard and Interstate 10 is being developed by The Pederson Group, Westcor and WDP Partners.

Vice President Gary Pederson told the commission, "We've had a big month. Last month was the opening of all our four department stores and we're really looking forward to our grand opening on Nov. 16 when the Harkins Theatre is going to open. We're real excited about what's been going on."

Pederson said the opening ceremony will be Nov. 16 at 9:30 a.m. in front of the theater complex at the north end of the center. Opening events will continue through that weekend at the stores opened so far, which include Dillard's, Target, J.C. Penney, Kohl's and Staples.

Pederson said his company brought the first In-N-Out Burger — which he called "one of the premier hamburger places" — to Arizona when it built a mall in north Scottsdale.

"There was such a buzz that people came from all over the Valley," he said. "They have quite a cult following, no

doubt about it."

Answering a question of why a popular restaurant such as Olive Garden would have only 80 parking spots, Pederson said that the number is higher than required by city code and that neighboring operations will have reciprocal parking.

"This pad is part of what we call Restaurant Row," he said. "There's a number of pads, I think there's eight or nine total buildings in this area. The number of parking spaces is well above what is required by code, and it's reciprocal parking among all the pads. They're separate plated parcels and so there is plenty of parking."

"These national chains such as Olive Garden wouldn't come here unless there was enough parking for their customers."

Overall, Pederson said, "We're very proud of our product and I want to compliment (Planning and Development Director) Rick Miller and his team. I've said several times to the commission and the City Council that it was an incredibly aggressive schedule to get this project opened by this fall, and we were able to make it happen with a lot of help from Rick and his team. They've just done a great job."

Commission approval of both projects was unanimous.

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In other action Thursday night, the commission:

■ Over the objections of Commissioners Jeril Benedict, Tina Cramp and Chairman Timothy Lee, approved allowing a 1998 manufactured home in Desert Sky Ranch.

■ Approved a major site plan for the second phase of The Commons at Palm Creek, at the northeast corner of Henness Road and Florence Boulevard. The phase calls for a 60,000-square-foot building and one of 23,000 square feet along with two individual pads of 8,000 square feet each

and others of 7,250 and 13,969 square feet.

Kellie Hill, a developer representative, also told the commission that there is no truth to rumors that LA Fitness, earlier announced for the first phase of the project, was being delayed for two years. Work should start shortly, she said.

■ Delayed until the December meeting a request to change zoning to planned area development at the southwest corner of Henness Road and McMurray Boulevard and tabled a request for an adult day care home for developmentally disabled adults at the northeast corner of Drylake Street and Ash Avenue.

A request for a preliminary plat for Casa Grande Lakes Office Condominiums was withdrawn at the request of the developer.

