

Business

HaysFreePress.com

Hays Free Press

September 24, 2014 • Page 1D

New development in Old Town

BY MOSES LEOS III

moses@haysfreepress.com

For the past few months, Kyle resident Richard Romo has noticed a pair of signs heralding development near his home along Main Street.

While he harbors mild concern for what's coming — a 10,000 square foot commercial/residential complex — Romo believes it will ultimately be an asset to the city.

"I'm just glad they are developing here in [Old Town], instead of going outside of town," Romo said. "I think the money should be here in the area first."

Comanche Holdings LLC, the proprietor of the mixed-use development, closed on the property at 225 Main Street in January. They plan to bring a two-story multi-use commercial and residential structure to the Central Business District (CBD).

The structure will feature six, one-bedroom 800-square-foot luxury apartments on the top floor.

On the bottom will be 5,000 square feet of commercial space. Sterling Howry, president at Comanche Holdings LLC, said it is enough for six office units. He said several prospective businesses already expressed interest.

According to Howry, Comanche attempted to develop a similar project in Austin for the past two years. However, he said the process was a "nightmare."

Howry said the process was smoother in Kyle, despite a "hiccup" when former Kyle Planning Director Sophia Nelson abruptly resigned in April.

Since then, he said the city helped ease the process of starting up the development. On Aug. 19, the Kyle City Council approved a parking waiver to Comanche Holdings for the development.

The Kyle Planning and



PHOTO BY MOSES LEOS III

Development signs on the vacant property at 225 Main Street in Kyle announce a proposed mixed-use development in the town's Central Business District. Shown below is what the development would look like.

Zoning Commission (P & Z) approved a conditional use permit on Aug. 26 to move forward with construction.

"Kyle is welcoming to new development and we are excited to be there," Howry said.

The development takes place within the CBD-2 zoning district, which allows for a mix of uses, including office, restricted commercial, restricted multi-family residential and residential uses. Each multi-family unit is required to have a minimum of 500 square feet of living area.

In addition, the building façade is required to be constructed or maintained in the same architectural style as the buildings within the district.

According to Kyle Planning Director Manuel de la Rosa, buildings in CBD-

2 are required to have a brick element.

De la Rosa said Howry's development met the city's requirements. That included the addition of a parking exemption. The development was required to have 30 spaces. While the company only accounted for 28 in its site plan, Comanche asked and was granted a variance to use two existing spaces.

They were also granted a variance to improve the city's right of way. Howry said the development would plant new trees and use landscape similar to what is seen at city hall.

It will also add 17 unrestricted parking spaces in the ROW, two of them handicap.

According to de la Rosa, the additional ROW improvement will account for more downtown parking spaces.

While it's an asset to Romo, the longtime Kyle resident harbored some concern. Romo, who rents his home, isn't sure if the property he lives on will be sold in the future.

He also wasn't sure how the neighborhood would react to the development.

Jesse Morales, who lives on Miller Street, said the community needs the development, and that the complex will work.

"I think it helps a lot and it brings jobs, also," Morales said. "Apartments, townhouses and condos are going to happen. You just have to accept it and move on."

Gary Alvarez didn't agree.

While Alvarez understood the need for the development, he was concerned it could take away from Old Town Kyle's identity.

The luxury aspect of



COURTESY RENDERING

the apartments was also problematic. Alvarez said the higher cost apartments could drive away families. In addition, he was concerned with what businesses could go into the development.

"Unless you have a good, decent job to pay (for) that, you can't live there. A modern family can't live there," Alvarez

said. For de la Rosa, it's a chance for the city to bolster the commercial presence in Old Town and on Center Street.

"[The development] means we will have residents that live in our downtown community," de la Rosa said. "It will help our (downtown) businesses."

Running out of inspection stickers

STAFF REPORT

news@haysfreepress.com

If your vehicle inspection sticker is about to expire, you may want to call ahead if planning to head out to a station that performs the service, especially in Buda.

All vehicles in the state of Texas must pass a safety inspection to be street legal. The Texas Department of Public Safety (DPS), the state agency in charge of inspections, contracts the service out to private firms.

At Kwik Kar on Main Street in Buda in the late morning hours of Sept. 18, the attendant offered a friendly greeting, then dispensed the news that the business was out of inspection stickers.

A *Hays Free Press* employee said she twice tried to get her car inspected at the same location, with similar results: they ran out of stickers.

A poster on this newspaper's Facebook page wrote, Justin Ivicic, wrote, "Last two times I've went to Kwik Kar in Buda they've told me they were out of stickers."

The attendant said it

would be about two days until their stack of stickers would be replenished.

How does Kwik Kar run out of stickers in the middle of the month?

"We can only order 30 stickers at a time," he said. "DPS only allows us to order so many."

Additionally, he said the technician in charge of inspections was off-site temporarily.

Meanwhile, the attendant wasn't aware of any other locations in town that could perform the inspection.

A short drive down Main Street to the Haveline just east of Interstate 35 proved that inspection stickers were available. However, the technician who could perform the service was also unavailable but would be back within the hour.

What is the process of ordering stickers from the DPS? One of the employees said they order them in batches of 50.

"We rarely run out," he said.

All three attendants at that location snickered slightly when they heard about the first location running out of stickers. The employee who an-



COURTESY PHOTO

DPS approved vehicle inspection stations that run out of stickers may face suspension or even charges filed against it.

swered the first question said, "We get a lot of business from there."

At the 4-Way Auto Shop in Kyle, John, one of the owners, said his inspection technician, his father

John Senior, was out of the building performing an inspection. He explained how he orders stickers in batches of 50.

"If I'm down to 30, I'm already ordering more,"

he said. "We do about 250 inspections a year and we hardly ever run out."

DPS spokesperson Tom Vinger provided details on the state inspection process in an email.

That information said, in part, "All applicants for an inspection station license must submit an application to DPS. Stations purchase inspection certificates in advance from the department and issue them to passing vehicles. A public inspection station in Buda (Hays County) pays the department \$7.50 for each certificate. When that certificate is issued to a vehicle that passes inspection, the station may charge the customer no more than \$14.50. (Please note this may differ slightly for emissions counties.)"

Included in the detailed information was a section on the sticker ordering process.

"Stations place their certificate orders with DPS via an automated system, which is available 24/7," the email said. "An order received at DPS by 3 p.m. will generally be shipped out the same day. (Stations

should take into account weekends and holidays.) Certificates are generally available by a book of 50 and can cost as much as \$837.50 depending on the inspection certificate type. DPS does not sell individual certificates. In Buda, a book of 50 inspection certificates costs \$375."

The email also cautioned that stations may incur penalties for running out of stickers.

"Stations must maintain a certificate inventory and manage that inventory, as they would any other commodity they sell," the email said. "Failure to have certificates on hand is an offense that could result in an administrative penalty, including possible suspension of the station's license and their authority to inspect, and in some cases, may result in charges filed in local JP courts."

The email said DPS investigates complaints about stations that run out of inspection stickers.

"A station that has a history of failure to maintain a supply of certificates will be suspended," it read.