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# Lone Tree keeps growing

## 25 years after it began, RidgeGate's transformation now expands east past I-25

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Anyone driving south on I-25 25 years ago would have seen Lincoln Avenue in Lone Tree as the southern edge of Denver's I-25 corridor, where development along the freeway gave way to scrub brush and sharply rising bluffs at the south end of the Denver basin.

A 7,500-square-foot amenities center with a restaurant, fitness building, and pool are expected to open this month.

Meanwhile, King Soopers is underway for a broader Marketplace supermarket on track to open next year that Holwell said will anchor smaller-scale

sions with the city about the expanded RidgeGate site, before moving ahead with Burnham Yard in Denver for a new stadium site.



The landscape west of the freeway has been almost entirely filled in with medical, commercial and mixed residential development that has lured some 7,500 residents and 10,000 jobs.

But what's happening now east of the freeway will make for even more of a transformation.

'Organic' growth in an empty expanse

In thousands of acres extending east along RidgeGate Parkway, the center of Lone Tree is set to jump across I-25, taking along the center of its growth and even much of its metropolitan infrastructure into what is now mostly an empty expanse.

"We're going to allow it to happen organically, to grow the community in the way communities have historically grown, with a town center that will allow people to live intertwined with work and civic opportunities," said Daryll Jones, senior vice president for Coventry Development Corp., developer of the 6-square-mile RidgeGate master plan.

All of that began when the city voted to annex that ground in 2000, already acquired decades before by Coventry. Included was a 440-acre site designed for a new city center, and a new terminus for RTD's

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Light Rail lines down the I-25 corridor, now showing two new stations east of the freeway.

Coventry, which is marking a quarter century of RidgeGate's development, is taking a victory lap on how the west side of the plan turned out at a moment when all of its developable sites are either done or sold to builders.

Jones, who spoke to The Denver Gazette, said the buildout west of the freeway will be exceeded, as Lone Tree reaches into the 3,500-acre expanse to the east.

That area, already home to 200 new residents, sprawls from Lincoln Avenue south past RidgeGate Parkway to the edge of the bluffs and reaches east of the freeway another 2 miles.

Earlier after annexation, the developers created a birds-eye rendering showing how that might look, envisioning an actual downtown for Lone Tree, with a core city center area having some taller buildings, much like the Denver Tech Center has now.

Jones said that the outcome will likely be lower density than that.

"It was originally zoned for a higher office component that the market won't support," he added. "It will be less dense."

But it will still be transformative in size, creating as many as 25,000 jobs and attracting another 10,000 homes, according to Lone Tree Director of Economic Development Jeff Holwell.

He said that Lone Tree already offers around 20,000 jobs west of the freeway, including at Charles Schwab, HCA HealthONE Sky Ridge Medical Center, Lockheed Martin Space Engineering and other hubs.

That's more jobs than Lone Tree's current number of residents at around 15,000.

As all of that takes place, Lone Tree and Coventry are likely to draw ongoing attention from residents and other trail users about preservation of the bluffs as open space.

The prominent trail park on the west side of RidgeGate is one of the few points where hikers and bikers find interesting topography east of the foothills.

#### Bluffs Regional Trail

That area includes Willow Creek Trail, just west of the city's attractive recreation center on Crossington Way, where hikers can climb 300 feet to the highest point of the town, marked by a mini-Stonehenge monument that locals call "Lonehenge."

It stands close to 1,000 feet above Denver's famous mile-high elevation, and has a compass rose that points out landmarks of the 360-degree view — the peaks along the Front Range, plus downtown Denver and Denver International Airport.

This is also the place to view how single-family neighborhoods have filled in the slopes and gulches approaching the bluffs.

Further on, RidgeGate's 500-seat Lone Tree Arts Center is part of \$100 million worth of infrastructure built by the city and by Coventry as homes arrived.

Last fall, residents began pushing back at a builder's plan to create another 343 single-family homes on the crest of the bluffs, close to the trails. They expressed specific worry about extending Cabela Drive, near the Cabela's store and a new Living Spaces furniture store, to serve those homes.

Holwell said that the proposal is an application at this point, and hearings on the project haven't been set.

But Jones said that although the tops of the bluffs include areas of private land that could be developed, the view of the bluffs as a backdrop to the city will stay the same regardless.

“Some residents think we’re not preserving the bluffs. But, as you look to the bluffs from Lincoln, you’ll see what you see today,” Jones said.

With that and other areas of RidgeGate essentially set in place, they pale in comparison to the expansion of the east side, where the city center is headed.

The city of Lone Tree calls that “an authentic downtown environment,” where “robust transit, pedestrian-friendly streets and a network of bikeways” will tie residents to open spaces, parks, and community gathering areas. The city says the new area will “build on the existing quality and character” of the areas west of the freeway.

Lone Tree has started construction on a transplanted public works center for a 10-acre site on the east, and on a new justice center and police department headquarters there. The city has not announced any plans to move its city hall from its original location near Park Meadows shopping mall.

The new sites have transit access, including the two light rail line stations. Nearby, Highlands Ranch developer Shea Homes already has a 700-acre community underway east of the freeway, south of RidgeGate Parkway.

Lyric at RidgeGate is set for an eventual 1,900 homes, with just over 100 completed to date. The community has also attracted Greenwood Village-based Infinity Properties and Lokal Homes, and LoDo-based Thrive Home Builders to show models there.

A 7,500-square-foot amenities center with a restaurant, fitness building, and pool are expected to open this month.

### New King Soopers

Coventry notes that the east area has 340 units of luxury apartments that are close to RidgeGate Light Rail Station. Two senior living communities and a village designed for residents with intellectual and developmental disabilities are also under development.

Meanwhile, King Soopers is underway for a broader Marketplace supermarket on track to open next year that Holwell said will anchor smaller-scale shopping attractions rather than big-box stores.

An 80-acre regional park that Holwell said will be a significant attraction is also planned.

All of that could happen over the next 25 years — or faster still, said Jones.

Jones and Holwell both noted that the Denver Broncos had what they referred to as serious discussions with the city about the expanded RidgeGate site, before moving ahead with Burnham Yard in Denver for a new stadium site.

