

# Developers of proposed Anderson 2020 address questions

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(Photo: File photo)

The deal of a lifetime or a deal too good to be true – these are just two of many questions Anderson Township entities continue to consider.

Since early this year, members of the Anderson Township Board of Trustees, Forest Hills School District and the Anderson Park District have discussed a collaborative effort involving the Beech Acres Parenting Center property along Beechmont Avenue that would provide a new high school, renovated recreation center, and revenue-generating development all at no cost to taxpayers. Over the last few months, many questions have been asked but, for some, not all answered.

In a letter, in meetings, and in a statement before the Anderson Trustees, Tom Fernandez of SFA Architects and Rob Smyjunas of Vandercar continue to explain why their so called “Anderson 2020” plan is the real deal.

Fernandez and Smyjunas are two of the key players in a business partnership that brings together bankers, lawyers, builders and others for the proposed Anderson 2020 plan.

“We understand for a long time the park board has been dreaming and planning for the purchase of the Beech Acres Parenting Center. It’s a great property,” Fernandez said.

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August 19, 2015

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After putting together the deal that's bringing a new high school to West Clermont School District with no additional tax dollars, Fernandez said he wanted to bring that same idea to Anderson Township.

"I was the guy who brought this to the attention of Josh (Gerth) and the school district many months ago," Smyjunas said. This opportunity has actually not changed. It can still go forward. It's just a matter of timing, cooperation and working together, he added.

The most recent concept plans for Anderson 2020 involve the construction of a new Anderson High School on the Beech Acres Parenting Center property, some land designated for the construction of a new RecPlex on the same property, and a \$100-million-plus multi-use development on Beechmont Avenue and Forest Road where the existing Anderson High School is located. The concept plan calls for TIF funds generated by the new multi-use development, combined with \$25 million the school district has designated for the renovation of the current Anderson High School, to fund construction of the new high school.

In September 2014 the park district entered discussions with Beech Acres Parenting Center to buy nearly 40 acres of land on Beechmont Avenue. The property is adjacent to the existing Beech Acres Park and includes the RecPlex. Soon discussions expanded to include the township trustees, the school board and business partners.

With many unanswered questions surrounding the concept plan, the park board moved forward with its initial plans. In June the park board voted to place a 0.7-mill, 15-year levy on the November ballot. If approved, the issue would raise just more than \$12.8 million providing funds to buy the land, renovate the RecPlex and extend the walking trails.

Earlier in August, the Park Board issued a joint statement highlighting eight reasons for its decision to proceed with its plans. The No. 1 concern was a perceived funding gap.



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Last week Fernandez and Smyjunas directly addressed the eight points including the question of funding.

There have been a lot of conversations, and the letter is an effort to make certain all of the facts are known, Fernandez said. There is no funding gap. The proposed project would provide a new high school, include the property purchase and an additional \$2 million for renovation of the existing RecPlex, he said.

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