



# TRADITION

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## **LUXURY DEVELOPMENT A GO COMMUNITY FOLLOWS TRADITION OF SEASIDE, FLA.**

DAVID TORTORANO/THE SUN HERALD

**VILLAGE:** Tradition construction in Harrison County will begin in four months

The Biloxi native behind a long-promised planned community says he's no longer waiting for an outside developer and will use his own money to begin construction on Tradition.

Construction of the village center will begin in February, and model homes will be built next summer.

A presentation giving the timetable will be made Monday at 9:30 a.m. to the Harrison County Board of Supervisors, which has had a keen interest in the development.

"Over \$1.7 billion will be invested over the life of the build-out, estimated at 20 years," said New Orleans-based developer Joe Canizaro, owner of Tradition Properties Inc. He said Tradition will generate more than \$111 million in tax dollars for Harrison County and \$227 million for the state, and lead to creation of 7,500 jobs.

"This is a very special project for me. This is my chance to make a lasting mark on this community," said Canizaro, who has invested \$15 million in the project to date, including money spent on developing the central water and sewer plant and environmental studies. The commitment to Tradition is the latest chapter in a story that goes back five years, when plans for the 4,600-acre, self-contained community in central Harrison County were announced.

Modeled after other successful planned communities such as Seaside, Fla., and Woodlands, Texas, Tradition will have up to 30,000 residents, 15,000 homes, schools, businesses, churches, shopping centers and golf courses, and its own water and sewer system.



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The project was delayed by a lengthy permitting process --- the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers environmental permit required input from multiple agencies --- and the failed bid to get a nationally recognized retirement community developer to take a chance on breaking into a new market.

Canizaro said the overall plan is the same but the strategy is different. Rather than first landing an expert in building and promoting retirement communities --- just one aspect of Tradition --- he's going to go after the local market.

"I'm going to do it, and I'm going to spend my own money. . . . Instead of waiting for that developer, we're moving forward."

Moving forward will involve building the town center along with 12 model houses "so people can come and sense and see exactly what we have."

Tradition will eventually include a lake, five miles of hiking and biking trails and a bed and breakfast. A 200-acre site along Highway 67 is designated for major retailers.

Brynn Joachim, in charge of sales and marketing for Tradition Community Development Corp., said the "Traditional Neighborhood Design" concept that will be utilized is characterized by public gathering places, narrow streets and trees. "TNDs are famous for having what they call the Popsicle test --- that your child should be able to get on a bike or walk and go get a Popsicle within five to 10 minutes and you not worry about your child's safety."

Tradition represented South Mississippi's bid for a piece of a market dominated by Florida and Arizona: the active retiree market.

"What we did initially and thought we needed to do was to find a developer, a national developer, who would develop the retirement community," said Canizaro.

"We actually finally convinced a national developer who came to town for about a year and a half, negotiated, and right at the last minute they pulled out," he said. "We stood back and thought about it and said, what we've been doing is relying and waiting on someone else to make this project happen," said Canizaro.

Now Canizaro will move forward on a different part of the project aimed at the local market --- developing 300 acres in the northwest sector.



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Moving forward might put to rest questions that had been raised about the state spending money on the expansion of Highway 67 and Tradition Parkway, the main road through the community.

The state had already been planning the \$20 million improvements to Highway 67, and the \$9 million Tradition Parkway was seen as an aid to hurricane evacuations.

"We went to the state and got the money for the county, but to get it done, we had to agree that we were going to spend \$50 million by the year 2010 or I had to pay it back," Canizaro said. "I personally guaranteed the money."

Canizaro said that by moving ahead, it will show the naysayers that Mississippi has what it takes. He has been involved in more than 10 million square feet of development elsewhere, including Canal Place in New Orleans.

"Our problem has been, first, we're Mississippians," he said. "You've got to fight your way up every ladder when you talk about economic development and all these big firms just say no.

"And yet we've got more in some respects than other communities that are building these types of projects . . . We think the big development community will be surprised by the results."

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