

Flood project to transform shopping center into green space

By John W. Gonzalez

N.W. Siders get preliminary look at design of flood-control park.

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Bexar County unveiled preliminary designs for a \$12.8 million flood-control project on the Northwest Side on Wednesday night that call for a parklike concept, a feature that pleased many area residents.

The goal is to avert flooding on Fredericksburg Road and near [Jefferson High School](#) and Woodlawn Lake. To accomplish it, a former shopping center will be turned into a deep, 20-acre pond that could hold 78 million gallons of floodwater.

Dry most of the time, the 26-acre site would bring outdoor recreational options, including sports fields and walking trails, to the otherwise drab 3600 block of Fredericksburg.

“We want this to be a community place,” Precinct 2 Commissioner [Paul Elizondo](#) told about 20 area residents Wednesday night at a meeting at Jefferson High School. “Now we need your input.”

Former Mayor [Ed Garza](#) praised the plan and credited Elizondo

with making it possible.

“This has been talked about for decades,” Garza said. He predicted that it would be a popular recreation site and would “add value to this community.”

Residents raised questions about landscaping, safety during storms, impact on surrounding residences and other issues. Some suggested it could serve as a skate park and dog park and provide an alternative to heavily used Woodlawn Lake Park.

The installation is designed to handle runoff from areas near Loop 410 and Interstate 10. In major floods, water tends to overwhelm Fredericksburg and Babcock roads, Kampmann Boulevard and Woodlawn Avenue en route to Woodlawn Lake, where a drowning was recorded during the July 2002 storms.

By reducing catastrophic runoff, about 75 homes in the Monticello and Woodlawn neighborhoods no longer would be in the flood plain.

Construction begins next March at Northwest Plaza shopping center, which opened in 1961. Demolition has started, but it's been slowed by condemnation proceedings.

Before the site was boarded up early this year, it housed 45 businesses and 200 flea-market vendors. The county spent \$3 million to ease their relocations.

The basin project is known as Laddie Place III. Two smaller detention ponds nearby proved inadequate. The pond will be 12-18 feet deep, ringed by a walking path and with a cluster of mature oaks in the middle. New trees would be planted on higher ground near Fredericksburg Road. Parking spaces would be provided. A

VIA stop is planned, and other amenities are being considered.

The project is part of a 10-year, \$500 million county flood-control program. When the pond is completed in March 2013, San Antonio will manage Laddie Place III.