

# Theater planned for far north side

## Cinemark will build at I-25, InterQuest

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THE GAZETTE

A 14-screen Cinemark movie theater complex is coming to Colorado Springs' far north side, giving moviegoers in fast-growing neighborhoods more options and threatening to dim the lights of older theaters at the Chapel Hills Mall.

Cinemark's third Springs megaplex is the first anchor announced for a retail center planned by Springs real estate giant Nor'wood Development Group.

Nor'wood's center — originally envisioned for 76 acres, but which has grown to 110 acres — will be built east of Interstate 25 and Inter-Quest Parkway. It will be one of the city's largest retail developments, with big-box stores, restaurants and 1.1 million square feet of space — slightly less than the Chapel Hills and Citadel malls.

Cinemark hopes to open its Springs complex in fall 2005, said Fred Veitch, Nor'wood's vice president of commercial development.

The theater complex is expected to draw from north-side Springs neighborhoods such as Briargate, Rockrimmon and Northgate, as well as from Monument, Woodmoor and Palmer Lake north of town, unincorporated Black Forest and Gleneagle of the Springs and even as far as Castle Rock, Veitch said.

"Cinemark's a known entity in our region," Veitch said. "They're very successful operators, with a great track record."

Terrell Falk, Cinemark's vice president for marketing and communication, said the chain looks for fast-growing areas and likes smaller cities.

"Our moviegoers tend to be younger and tend to be families," Falk said. "You want a certain kind of demographic — new families coming in."

The suburban Dallas-based theater chain dominates the Springs. Its 20-screen Tinseltown complex opened in 1998 on the south side and near the Colorado Springs World Arena. Two years later, Cinemark 16 and a separate IMAX theater opened in Nor'wood's sprawling First & Main Town Center, along Powers Boulevard on the east side.

The latest, 14-screen complex will be similar to Cinemark 16, with an art deco look accented by reds, gold and blacks. It will feature stadium seating, high-backed chairs that rock, cupholders, extra leg room, digital sound, concessions and Internet ticketing, among other amenities.

The complex likely poses a threat to Chapel Hills 15 at the Chapel Hills Mall, say some retail experts. Most of those 15 theaters, operated by Carmike Cinemas of Columbus, Ga., opened in 1982 when the mall was built. They're smaller and lack stadium seating.

"It's going to be a big blow to them (the Chapel Hills theaters)," Jay Carlson, a retail specialist with Front Range Commercial in Colorado Springs. "They're just poorly maintained and managed. When a new concept comes in, with the stadium seating and all

the bells and whistles and (14) screens, nobody is going to go there (Chapel Hills) anymore.”

Carmike officials in Georgia couldn't be reached. A Chapel Hills 15 manager declined comment.

Brian Behm, a member of the Colorado Springs Film Society who lives in Northgate on the far north side, said a theater in his neighborhood will be a major draw. Now, Behm said, he usually bypasses the Chapel Hills 15 and drives to the Cinemark complex on Powers Boulevard.

“It's a long drive,” Behm said. “I'd appreciate being able to drive five minutes. It would certainly make me interested in going to the movies a little more frequently.”

Huge theater complexes — namely Cinemark 16 and Tinseltown — have driven many movie houses out of business in recent years. The Cinema 70, Academy Station 6, Citadel Crossing and Tiffany Square Cinemas closed as moviegoers opted for the latest amenity-filled theaters.

Several other far north megaplexes have been discussed or proposed in recent years, but Cinemark is the first to stake its claim in the area.

Kimball Bayles, owner of Kimball's Twin Peak Theater in downtown Colorado Springs, said Cinemark is making a smart decision.

“It's the right move, these guys are no dummies,” Bayles said. “That's a fast-growing area.”

Bayles said he had considered taking over the now-defunct Tiffany Square Cinemas west of I-25 and Woodmen Road but backed off because of rumors about a multiplex going on the city's north side.

He thinks Cinemark's latest megaplex will stick with mainstream movies, leaving the arthouse and independent audience to Kimball's Twin Peak.

“I've been trying to stay under their radar and play the films that they don't want to play,” Bayles said.

