

February 10, 2017 – [Florida Today](#) article by Rick Neale

WEST MELBOURNE — If this suburban-sprawl city is ever going to get a "downtown," a developer will have to build one. And West Melbourne City Hall officials are zeroing in on the vacant Minton Road parcels flanking Heritage Oaks Boulevard as potential target sites....

The city has been talking about this for many years. In fact, in the 2010 comprehensive plan that we did, we heard from citizens that the city of West Melbourne doesn't have a town center, doesn't have sort of an identification-focal area," Christy Fischer, planning and economic development director, said during a workshop on Thursday.

Fischer led a pair of "town center" workshops at the West Melbourne Veterans Memorial Complex that were attended by a variety of Brevard County officials. Thanks to a Florida Department of Economic Opportunity grant, the East Central Florida Regional Planning Council is helping the city craft a zoning plan that will encourage developers to create a downtown-type attraction.

Attendees viewed photos and diagrams of Baldwin Park Village Center, Winter Garden Village, Plainsboro Village Center in New Jersey and Peachtree Corners near Atlanta.

West Melbourne's population has increased to 20,679 residents across roughly 10 square miles of blob-like boundaries — and more than 1,000 new homes are planned in the coming years.

"Local flavor: This again gets back to that notion where our citizens said there's nothing to identify West Melbourne," Fischer said. "Melbourne has 'The Harbor City,' and there's other things to identify it. What does West Melbourne have? So we're going to have to make some of that, whether it's with landscaping, whether it's with signage on Minton Road. We'll have to do some of that so people will visually get an impression."

However, transportation officials project that Minton Road traffic will increase from about 30,000 daily vehicles today to more than 50,000 daily vehicles, requiring widening from four to six lanes as soon as 2026.

"The one thing for me that makes a downtown place is not having to get out of my car on the main road, to be able to get out on adjacent corridors or parallel corridors, preferably," said Erin Sterk, Brevard County planner/grants administrator. "If you think about downtown Melbourne, that's the best part about it: You don't have to park on the main road."

"If I think about on-street parking along Minton, it sounds terrible," Sterk said. "They're going so fast, I don't want to get out of my car. I don't want to get back in my car after I've been at a restaurant and I'm in a dress."

In the meantime, developer Art Evans and his team plan to build 49 single-family homes on 20 acres at the southeast corner of Minton Road and Heritage Oaks Boulevard, adjacent to the Brookshire at Heritage Oaks subdivision. The West Melbourne City Council approved a preliminary plat for the project Tuesday.

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Other Minton Road development updates:

- The former Palm Gardens Golf Course may be developed with 77 single-family homes and 21 townhomes facing Minton Road.
- A 44-lot gated subdivision is under construction on 18 acres across the street from Meadowlane Primary Elementary.
- A new 6,000-square-foot office building opened south of Henry Avenue.
- The city's moratorium on new gas stations from Helen Street to the Interstate 95 overpass extends through May.

Fischer said West Melbourne's potential Minton Road town center may measure 14 to 20 acres, and the city may advertise in national magazines seeking suitable developers. A sizable off-site stormwater retention pond could be required.