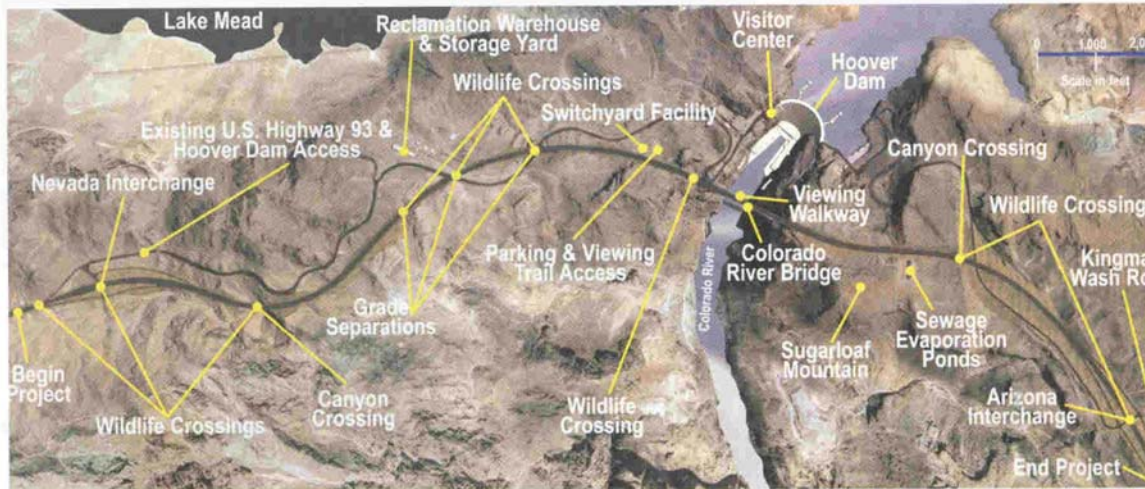


DESERT DEVELOPMENT: "The Ranch at White Hills," a sprawling community to be built in Mohave County, Ariz., was designed with green space in mind.



LAND RUSH

WITH THE HOOVER DAM BYPASS PROJECT ASSURED, DEVELOPER LEONARD MARDIAN LEADS THE CHARGE FOR A LAS VEGAS COMMUTER TOWN IN NORTHWEST ARIZONA.

BY: LISA MARQUIS JACKSON

As a Developer for more than 40 years, Leonard Mardian has been on a personal quest that any production builder in the country can relate to: "I've spent my whole life looking for a large piece of land," he says of his dream. And although the term "large" may be relative, his latest Arizona acquisition of desert ranch land is substantial enough to qualify as a coup by anyone's standards.

With outright ownership of more than 37,000 acres scattered across Mohave County, Ariz., and leasing rights for contiguous areas across the states Northwestern Region, Mardian is sitting pretty. "I've got rights on the land from the Colorado River, across to Lake Mead, over to an Indian Reservation in the east and south to Dolan Springs- about 700,000 acres in all," he says. "The entire Las Vegas Valley is about half that size."

In an area plagued by challenges, even the savviest developers could find little potential in the land. Although the White Hills area was a mere 45 miles south of the booming Metropolis of Las Vegas, the need to traverse the Hoover Dam created an isolating effect and slow commute. The availability of water- a master control factor in desert developing- was unproven. And, in a state where only a small percentage of land is privately owned, bundling property in Mohave County involved additional complexities. Riddled with a checkerboard pattern of ownership, each square mile of privately owned land was intermingled among government-owned parcels of the same size.

But for Mardian, instinct has always been as important as due diligence. In December, he received an approved area master plan for a self sufficient and green community, including 35,000 homes on nearly 25,000 acres.

Dubbed "The Ranch at White Hills," the general master plan- located 27 miles south of the Hoover Dam off of Highway US 93- includes three areas. The nucleus of the project, called White Hills Central, covers 5,800 acres and is pegged for 23,000 units plus a majority of the commercial, schools, parks, and businesses in the area. To the north, The Ranch at Temple Bar

covers 1,700 acres and will eventually include 5,500 homes with an equestrian facility. To the east, The Ranch At Red Lake will boast another 6,300 homes on 9,700 acres.

INSTINCTS IN ACTION

Throughout his career, it seems Mardian's timing has been perfect. Cutting his teeth at the age of 19 in California's blossoming real estate market, his first projects involved hotels and other commercial opportunities. As a registered CPA, Mardian applied his financial savvy and business management skills to mostly commercial projects until 1989, when he sensed that the state's increasing development restrictions would just continue to escalate. "It was just becoming too difficult," he recalls.

Lisa Marquis Jackson, Big Builder Magazine Mid-April 2005
Contributed to this report