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Despite delays, developer says Leander X-Park is still a go

Austin Business Journal - by [Kate Harrington](#) ABJ Staff

Almost one year after a groundbreaking was planned, the 209 acres slated for the proposed Leander Sports and Entertainment Destination Center, including the site for the extreme sports park Texas X-Park, still sits untouched.

But the center's developer, **Leander Capital Investors LLC**, hasn't been idle during that time. A new site development plan designed to increase the proposed park's revenue in the wake of market woes has been approved by the city and includes plans for a 2,500-seat amphitheater.

Gary Blackwell, general partner with California-based Sixth Street Capital Investors, owners of Leander Capital Investors, says the combination of a longer than anticipated permitting process, delays on expansion and extension work on Bagdad Road and San Gabriel Parkway and the hit to national financial markets have been responsible for the delay. Although Blackwell is reluctant to aggrandize the proposed park's plans, he says he expects the permitting process to be complete in six to eight weeks, and a groundbreaking to happen by the end of 2008. Construction on the first phase will likely take about eight months, he says.

The addition of the amphitheater into the park's first phase should also help boost revenue, he says.

"One of the reasons we had to put the amphitheater in [was to] increase revenue," Blackwell says. "The revenue stream in the original plan wasn't enough to substantiate the park."

The Texas X-Park's first phase was originally planned to hold tracks and courses for everything from motocross and BMX biking to paintball on its 110-acre site. Those developments are still planned to take shape in addition to the amphitheater, Blackwell says, and the project's later phases are still planned to include larger developments, such as a hotel. He says Leander Capital Investors has spent about \$2 million on development costs, and has increased the development's total cost, once projected to be \$66 million at build-out, but declines to give an estimated number for the project's new estimated cost.

"These kind of sports venues have been planned around the country. Many of them never happened, but they get hyped up. I want to talk with a shovel in my hand," Blackwell says. "We own the land outright, and everything's ready. This is not something we're just doing for fun."

The commercial and retail portion of the center, Park Village, has also been subject to the delays in road construction. Bob Novit, with **Quick & Company Commercial Realty Inc.**, is Park Village's broker, and says that development can't move forward until the intersection of Bagdad Road and San Gabriel Parkway is completed. The initial commercial and retail development is still planned to span about 170,000 to 200,000 square feet and include two hotels, a bank, restaurants and retail on 23 acres. Novit says Quick & Company hasn't been marketing the retail very actively, but will likely start a marketing effort anew in the third quarter of 2008.

PARC Management LLC will operate the park and **Wormhoudt Inc.** is designing it.

Kirk Clennan, economic development director for the city of Leander, says a recently announced Cedar Park entertainment center hasn't impacted Texas X-Park's plans.

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