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Last updated: April 10, 2007 07:35am

**JV Plans \$250M Addition to \$900M Cooper Life**

By [Connie Gore](#) [Email this story](#) | [Printer-friendly](#) | [Reprints](#)



Cooper Life Rendering

(To read more on the multifamily market, [click here.](#))

McKINNEY, TX-The joint venture developers of the \$900-million Cooper Life at Craig Ranch, a health-centered concept community, have bought an additional 140 acres to add another \$250 million of mixed-use space to their plan.

Anchored by Cooper Aerobics Center, the 191-acre development is just two weeks from the construction start of its first residential units.

Wellstone Communities LLC, based in Cumming, GA and Dr. Kenneth H. Cooper, the country's aerobics guru from Dallas, have amassed development land inside the 2,500-acre Craig Ranch for a health-oriented prototype that's drawn inquiries from the United Arab Emirates, South Korea, Thailand and Italy as well as stateside bids for similar communities, according to Rusty Criminger, Wellstone's chief marketing officer. "What we want to do is get the majority of this one proven out and under our belt and then I think the opportunities will play out," he says.

Criminger says the JV has 55 commercial acres in Craig Ranch on the market that it bought before working out a deal for a 100-acre infill site to round out the residential, retail and office designs in its New Urbanism-style hybrid project. "It was a bit of a Rubik's Cube to put together," Criminger says. Since word got out about the commercial dirt, he says he's been approached by "a number of serious buyers."

Meanwhile, Criminger tells GlobeSt.com that he's holding a letter of intent from a multifamily developer for a 400-unit apartment complex on one pad site, is deep into talks with two hotel developers for another pad site and negotiating with one of the nation's health-oriented grocery chains for yet another. The original 51-acre tract has about 12 acres of uncommitted dirt.

Cooper Life, still being fine-tuned, will have roughly 250,000 sf of retail, at least 155,000 sf of office and medical office space, 225 townhouses or brownstones, a 124-unit condo tower and about 700 single-family homes. Infrastructure work is wrapping up; ground will break in two weeks on 18 townhouses. But coming soon will be 60 row houses and four single-family detached dwellings. If the plan stays on track, presales for the mid-rise condo tower will be under way by midyear 2008. The aerobics center and spa, which opened last year, is 75,000 sf with an abutting 55,000-sf medical office building, the first of at least three.

Wellstone's plan is to develop the residential, except for the one site that's under contract, and sell pads of all sizes to retail developers. Wellstone also is working on a 35-acre tract in Craig Ranch, where it's soloing on a 202-unit condo development. The first

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16 condos have been sold and work's about to begin on another 16.

The Cooper Life-branded construction will line Alma Road and Collin-McKinney Parkway with street-level retail and upper floors of office or residential space. The interior land is being mapped out with amenities to innovatively integrate it with the single-family component.

Cooper Life's development within a development has more than the norm to support the JV's hybrid drive. Its land is across the street from the Cooper Institute for Sports Medicine Research and a world-class sports complex anchored by Michael Johnson's Performance Training Center--an eight-lane, 400-meter outdoor track with 4,000-seat stadium along with an indoor tracks, basketball gym, strength-training facility and physical therapy. And just a stone's throw away is a PGA Tournament Players Club golf course. The aura shows in Cooper Life's list of prospective residents--95% in the "40-something" or older crowd with a hardy mix of fitness-oriented lifestyles.

As Cooper Life takes shape, Criminger says designers are toying with innovative ideas like putting a swimming deck overtop retail space to lend to its drawing power. "If we're going to appeal families, we have to integrate amenities with a soft edge as a transition into residential from commercial," he says. "It's a challenge. Anybody can do it the block way. The challenge is can we marry community amenities with retail."

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