

# SmartCentres seeks land

## Company is behind Blairmore big-box shopping development

BY CASSANDRA KYLE, THE STARPHOENIX NOVEMBER 27, 2009



SmartCentres wants to purchase land east of Betts Avenue

**Photograph by:** Greg Pender, The StarPhoenix, The StarPhoenix

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The company behind the Blairmore big-box shopping development has asked city council to re-start purchase negotiations for 7.59 acres of land in the area.

SmartCentres, which has also developed the Stonegate Shopping Centre, has sent a letter to city council asking the city to enter into negotiations with the company to complete the purchase of the land.

City manager Murray Totland said SmartCentres had previously entered into a contract with the city for the commercial land, but the deal fell through mid-year.

"Any arrangement we had with SmartCentres lapsed and we have no understanding or agreement with them at this time," Totland said. "So what Mr. (Mike) Gilman (SmartCentres' senior land development officer) is actually requesting here is to re-start or re-initiate or reinstate, I guess, that previous agreement."

The land in question, located east of Betts Avenue on the city's west side, is in a holding position, the city manager said, explaining no new offers are being accepted for the land at this time.

"That's really the decision the land bank and then city council need to deal with -- do they choose just

to take it out in the regular process to public tender or do they have an interest in resurrecting the arrangement that had been previously entered into with SmartCentres?" he said.

Totland said the company's request will be received by city council at Monday's meeting and will be referred to the land bank committee, which will likely make a decision about the request early in the new year.

Gilman didn't return calls to The StarPhoenix Thursday; however, SmartCentres' letter to council says the company couldn't move ahead with the previous contract because of uncertainty around the timing of its second anchor store's construction.

"We are now in a position to proceed with the development of the 7.59 acres of B3 (commercially zoned) land, and we are writing to request that the city enter into negotiations with us to complete the purchase of these lands," the company said in its letter.

Earlier this year, city council granted SmartCentres an extension on its deposit for the big-box development, pushing back the date to June 30 from earlier this spring for a \$150,000 payment.

The main anchor at SmartCentres' Blairmore development is a 185,000-square-foot Walmart Supercentre, which is under construction and is set to open in early 2010. The store will replace the Walmart at Confederation Mall. The second anchor store, totalling 152,000 square feet according to site plans filed with the city, remains unnamed but is rumoured to be a building supply outlet.

Plans for the 31-acre site also include six smaller buildings and more than 1,700 parking spaces.

Nearby developments in the Blairmore suburban centre include a 104-room Best Western Hotel located west of Tommy Douglas Collegiate, as well as park space and multi-unit housing.