

Security First looks to build HQ at Ormond Crossings

By [Clayton Park](#)

After 15 years of waiting, Ormond Crossings finally appears set to become a reality.

Security First Insurance has tentatively agreed to build a \$25 million, 100,000-square-foot office complex that would become the first tenant at the long-planned 6,000-acre mixed-use development along U.S. 1, near Destination Daytona.

But before it signs the dotted line on purchasing the site, the company, which specializes in insuring Florida homeowners, is seeking \$285,000 in economic incentives from the city to defray some of the project's infrastructure costs.

Those costs include extending a road and installing water, sewer, electrical and natural gas lines.

The Ormond Beach City Commission is scheduled to vote on whether to approve the incentives at its meeting Tuesday evening.

Joe Mannarino, the city's economic development director, said the city staff is recommending approval of the performance-based "growth assistance" incentives, which would be contingent on the company's creation of at least 285 jobs over five years that pay an average of \$61,000 a year.

The Volusia County Council in February approved a \$198,000 local match of those incentives, Mannarino said.

Security First, established in 2005 by former State Senator Locke Burt and business partner Harry Bleiwise, already has its headquarters in Ormond Beach, in a 5-story, 25,000-square-foot office building at 140 S. Atlantic Ave. that Burt and his family own.

Burt is the company's chairman and president. Bleiwise is a silent partner who is not involved in Security First's operations, said Melissa Burt DeVriese, Security First's chief administrative officer and general counsel.

DeVriese, Burt's daughter, said the company has outgrown its headquarters building and has had to lease additional space in Holly Hill.

Security First has grown to become one of the largest writers of homeowners insurance in the state with more than 350,000 customers.

The company employs more than 240 workers, and has added 40 since the start of the year including four who started on Monday, she said. It also has staff in the Tampa area as well as in Sunrise.

The future headquarters would allow the company to consolidate its operations under one roof, DeVriese said. The company expects to employ nearly 700 workers by 2030, according to documents filed with the city.

The company hopes to break ground on the project this fall, with a target move-in date tentatively set for Jan. 1, 2019, she said.

The future headquarters would include room for additional buildings, should the company need to further expand, as well as surface parking for 400 vehicles.

The campus would include dining facilities for workers as well as a fitness center and a lake-like water feature, DeVriese said.

The company considered potential consolidation sites in Daytona Beach, Holly Hill, DeBary, Palm Coast, Lake Mary and Atlanta, Georgia, said DeVriese, who led the site search.

Ormond Beach was her company's first choice, DeVriese said.

"This is our home and where we'd prefer to be," she said.

Efforts to develop Ormond Crossings date back to 2002 under the would-be project's original developer, Tomoka Holdings LLC, a subsidiary of Duluth, Minnesota-based Allete Inc., which envisioned building nearly 3,000 homes and 4.5 million square feet of commercial space — four times the size of Volusia Mall.

Those efforts were stymied in large part by the onset of the Great Recession in late 2007.

Mannarino has described Ormond Crossings as "the future of Ormond Beach."

"We don't have the land elsewhere to attract new companies or for existing ones to expand," he told The News-Journal in December 2016.

Allete in Sept. 22 sold the Ormond Crossings development site to the Ford family of DeLand, which does business under the name Ford Properties.

The Security First project, which would be built just east of I-95 behind the row of existing businesses along U.S. 1 that includes a McDonald's restaurant and some gas stations, would be the first tenant of the Ormond Crossings Commerce Park, according to plans filed with the city.

DeVriese said the future headquarters would be visible to motorists on I-95 but not from U.S. 1.

"It's the first project for the Ormond Crossings development which is very exciting," Mannarino said. "To have a project of this quality and magnitude hopefully will kick off the commerce park."