

Midtown: Mutual project is the biggest

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executive vice president of ECI Investment Advisors. Mutual retained Chicago-based ECI as the project developer.

The other two retail anchors will be a three-to-five-screen movie theater in the southwest building and a centrally located L-shaped fitness center.

CB Richard Ellis/Mega will be looking for restaurants, cleaners, shops, professional offices and services that will occupy the first floor in the seven-building complex.

"Our preference is for more locally grown businesses" than national chains, Bawolek said.

The 300 condos will begin to go on sale a year to a year and a half before the three condo buildings forming a western crescent overlooking Turner Park are completed in the summer of 2009. The 300 apartments won't be offered for lease until probably January 2009.

Up to 50 of the apartments, depending on demand, will come completely furnished. Visiting professors and doctors at the University of Nebraska Medical Center and Creighton University would likely be attracted to the short-term apartment rentals, as would some corporate consultants.

The final details are still being negotiated between the city and Bawolek for redesigning Turner Park, the lightly used green space at the big S curve as Dodge Street swings into Douglas Street for east-bound commuters to downtown. Turner Park becomes the centerpiece of Midtown Crossing.

City planners and area residents are monitoring the project to make sure there is safe pedestrian access across Dodge, Farnam and Harney Streets.

One of the area's greatest assets is its diversity of ages, incomes, education, housing types and backgrounds, said Black and City Planning Director Steve Jensen.

"That mix is what makes it interesting," Jensen said. Subdivisions traditionally have been viewed as individual projects with little attention to how they link and interact with their surroundings, Jensen said.

"The city is just now learning how to do those projects in a way that creates great urban places," Jensen said.

Many of the 4,500 parking stalls will be used during the week by Mutual employees. As they leave work, downtown workers are expected to stop for dinner, a movie or to visit friends in the condos and apartments.

All condos and apartments come with one underground parking stall, with others available at a price.

This is all part of a national trend, Jensen said. "People are rediscovering what makes cities great."

In Midtown Crossing, Omahans are part of that rediscovery.

"Midtown Crossing will enhance Omaha regionally and nationally," Bawolek said.

The status of some other neighborhood development plans:

South Omaha: The effort to turn South 24th Street into a festive experience is about half complete.

Another couple of years and \$4 million will be needed to complete the South 24th Street renovation and adjoining plaza.

Meanwhile, the last commercial lot has been sold in the former stockyards area. When the corrals and fences came down, many Omahans doubted that businesses could be attracted to an area where cattle, hogs and sheep came for decades on their way to slaughter.

North Omaha: Nearly 200 jobs have sprouted along North 24th Street on the 15-acre North Omaha Business Park where Logan Fontenelle public housing apartments once stood.

Only one commercial lot is left to be filled, and city officials expect the entire business park will soon be sold out.

North Downtown: The transformation is well under way in this long decaying area between the Qwest Center Omaha and the Creighton University campus.

Four hotels are rising along Cuming Street between 12th Street and 15th Street leading to the inPlay restaurant and entertainment center and the TipTop lofts.

The search for an anchor attraction, such as a new baseball park or museum, remains stalled.

Midtown gets makeover fever

Change spurs change, creating \$865 million in projects

By DEBORAH SHANAHAN
WORLD-HERALD STAFF WRITER

Whether it was sparked by public-private talks about revitalization, inspiration by what was happening next door or a response to internal growing pains, a swath of east-central Omaha is in the midst of a makeover.

New developments involving some long-standing institutional properties are planned and under way. Together, they will bring more than \$865 million in mostly private investment to the midtown area.

The investment is significant, said Ta-

wanna Black, executive director of Destination Midtown, the effort that brought together big and small businesses, Creighton University, the University of Nebraska Medical Center and neighborhood associations to talk about revitalizing the area from 24th Street to Saddle Creek Road, Cuming to Center Streets.

And she attributes the investments largely to the collaborative planning that has gone before.

"Every developer who has come to us is doing their project because they know other development is going to happen around them," Black said. "They know they won't be the lone investor."

Aksarben Village



Proposed view along Center Street in the Aksarben Village development.

URBAN DESIGN ASSOCIATES

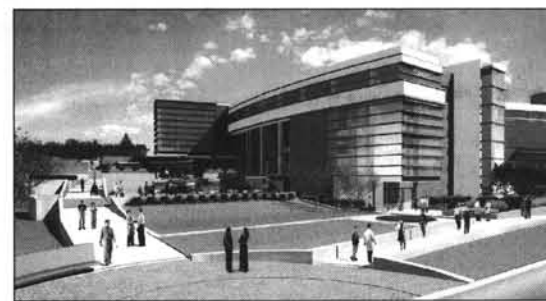
Where: From the Little Papio Creek on the west to 63rd Street on the east, from Pine Street and Woolworth Avenue on the north to Center Street on the south.

What: A \$166 million new neighborhood with the feel of a college town on 170 acres surrounding land that formerly was home to the Ak-Sar-Ben racetrack. The plan calls for 660,000 square feet of office and research space; 280,000 square feet of retail, services and entertainment; 605 residential units; and 138 hotel rooms.

When: Five developers are involved to speed development. By summer 2008, a fitness center should open and the first residents should move in. A few months later, a Courtyard by Marriott hotel and a 12-screen theater should open.

Why: Ken Stinson, chairman of the Ak-Sar-Ben Future Trust, which took control of the land surrounding the closed racetrack in 1996, as the trust agreed to the detailed development plan in September: "We wanted the best and highest use. . . . We were trying to do things that we couldn't find in a cookbook."

University of Nebraska Medical Center



Michael F. Sorrell Center for Health Science Education, on UNMC campus.

HDR ARCHITECTURE INC.

Where: Throughout the campus running roughly from Dodge to Leavenworth Streets, 38th Avenue to west of Saddle Creek Road.

What: A \$250 million, 10-year plan for a mostly vertical expansion that includes the Michael F. Sorrell Center for Health Science Education, which is now under construction and expected to be completed by fall 2008. It will serve as home to the UNMC College of Medicine. The plan also includes four more research towers — in addition to the Durham Research Center and the soon-to-be-constructed second tower — a new hospital tower, new clinics, a geriatric center, a College of Public Health, six new parking garages and a hotel.

When: The next phase of the plan could begin as early as summer 2008, if a federally funded study agrees with the medical center's plan to relocate Saddle Creek Road to the west. Construction on a third tower, which would focus on cancer research, could begin by early 2009, medical center officials said when presenting the plan in September.

Why: UNMC Chancellor Dr. Harold Maurer, during a December release of an economic-impact study: "This is a growing, world-class medical center, and we're locked in here."

Midtown Crossing at Turner Park



Midtown Crossing at Turner Park, east of Mutual of Omaha's headquarters at 33rd and Dodge Streets.

MUTUAL OF OMAHA

Where: Fifteen acres east of Mutual of Omaha's headquarters at 33rd and Dodge Streets, bounded by 31st and 33rd Streets from Dodge Street to south of Farnam Street. Three buildings forming a crescent would overlook an expanded Turner Park.

What: A \$250 million, seven-building complex of housing and retail development by Mutual intended to serve corporate workers, graduate and professional students, empty-nesters and college faculty members.

When: Initial retail, office and residential units and a hotel scheduled for a summer 2008 opening.

Why: Mutual Chairman and Chief Executive Dan Neary, when announcing details of the plan in October: "We have been part of this neighborhood for 60 years, and we intend on staying."

Creighton University



Creighton's planned \$55 million Living Learning Center, northeast of 21st and California Streets.

OPUS ARCHITECTS & ENGINEERS

Where: Generally from 32nd to 17th Streets, between Cuming and Cass Streets.

What: An expanded, more unified, student-centered and greener campus. Creighton's plan to expand its campus from 90 to 135 acres would include a new medical campus to the west and new athletic fields to the east along with a new academic and residential neighborhood. So far, more than \$200 million in projects has been completed or announced.

When: In 2003, Creighton University unveiled a long-term master plan that included the just-completed Hixson-Lied Science building and Morrison Stadium. Since then the university has built two apartment-style residence complexes for students, added two parking garages, reconfigured Cuming and Burt Streets traffic, relocated a freeway on-ramp and renovated a significant portion of the central campus mall.

In June 2006, Creighton officials announced plans for a new 214,000-square-foot, four-story Living Learning Center northeast of 21st and California Streets that will combine student services, admissions, the bookstore, a coffee shop and a sports cafe, along with other activities and services. The project includes a ballroom and meeting space available to external groups. Ground was broken for the project in October.

Why: The Rev. John Schlegel, president of Creighton, during the 2003 unveiling of the master plan: "Creighton's motivation to embark on this historic and dramatic expansion was triggered by the dynamic development in downtown Omaha. . . . The goal is to create a unified campus."

Other areas are the focus of some just-beginning efforts:

North Omaha



Salem Village at Miami Heights, at Lake Street and 34th Avenue.

HOLLAND BASHAM ARCHITECTS

Where: The area between Cuming and Fort Streets, from 16th to 52nd Streets. Key corridors include 24th Street going south from the area, 16th Street, 30th Street going north, and Ames Avenue and Sorensen Parkway going west.

What: The Greater Omaha Chamber of Commerce, working with a steering committee of north Omaha community and business leaders, launched the North Omaha Development Project in October. The goal, officials said, was to lay out a project-oriented economic development strategy for north Omaha.

When: A newly hired consultant was scheduled to conduct a study that would be completed by this summer. Chamber funds and those from about 30 donors — a total of \$750,500 — are to pay for the study and three years of enacting its recommendations. The chamber also will hire a project director, to be housed at the chamber's downtown office.

Why: Dick Davis, chief executive of Davis Cos. and co-chairman of the steering committee, during the October announcement of the study: "There is an untapped resource of African-American financial and intellectual capital in Omaha. I believe that there is goodwill from all folks to tap into that capital."

Benson Ames



Planned Metro Area Transit center at 72nd and Blondo Streets.

LEO A. DALY

Where: The area bounded by Fontenelle Boulevard and 72nd Street on the east and west, and Sorensen Parkway and Western Avenue on the north and south.

What: Omaha By Design and the City of Omaha partnered with neighborhood associations, business owners, community groups and the University of Nebraska at Omaha to develop a model of revitalization that could be replicated.

The Benson Ames Alliance Plan calls for revitalizing older commercial corridors, including historic downtown Benson, housing and transportation.

When: The Omaha City Council adopted the plan and made it part of the city's master plan in November. A new Metro Area Transit Center at 72nd and Blondo Streets has been approved. The next step is to attract private investment, said Councilman Jim Suttle, who represents the area.

Why: City Planning Director Steve Jensen, an alliance co-chairman, as the plan was presented for public comment in May: "The current development pattern is stretched out so much that it doesn't have the cohesiveness and energy to be more than a few struggling businesses. This plan would build patrons around commercial centers and the area, and create viable nodes where businesses (complement) each other."