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New project, downtown goals, perfect fit for future

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By Susan Gordanier

To effect major changes, someone must dare to take the first step.

When Metro prepared its 2040 Growth Concept plan, it named several regional town centers, including downtown Hillsboro. Ever since, the city's planners have watched for strategic projects that might jump-start the movement, making downtown a place where people would choose to both live and work - a core concept of the regional vision.

The renovation of the Venetian Theater is one such project, notes John Southgate, Hillsboro's Economic Development manager. This explains why the city partnered to make the project economically feasible. "Right now, other than the (farmers) markets, there's not much presence downtown," he said. "We want 18-hour activities, at least 7 a.m. to 9 or 10 p.m."

Another strategic piece needed to create a vibrant downtown is mixed-use development, with street-level commercial establishments and housing above. The combination brings shopping, business or entertainment opportunities into proximity to a permanent customer base.

"Having people further away is inherently inefficient," Southgate said.

Downtown's first fully mixed-use project is slated to break ground within the next few weeks.

Washington Street Station will occupy the lots currently addressed at 435 and 445 East Washington Street. The project, as conceived, will have as many as 10 professional office spaces on its ground floor and 10 two-story residential condominiums above. The U-shaped building will surround a gated courtyard.

R.C. Hernandez, of Nuera Realty, is a member of the team working on the project. "Mixed use is new to the downtown core," he said. "Lots of developers are looking to see how this will succeed."

To help ensure this success and attract the type of urbane residents targeted as 2040 center-dwellers, Washington Street Station will feature select amenities. Developer Jason Rucker, acting for Ty/Clark Investment Properties, listed some of the condominiums' special features: fire protection sprinklers in all units, tankless water heaters, a security system and locked gate into the common courtyard, hardwood floors, tiled showers, granite countertops and gas fireplaces.

In addition, the condos will have 10-foot ceilings on their main floor and 9-foot on the upper story where each will have two bedrooms. Corner units will also have access to private roof-top patios.

Layout of the ground-floor commercial spaces is flexible. Rucker says they are "designed to go horizontally," meaning placement of interior walls will be determined by buyers' needs. Individual business units measure about 600 square feet, but buyers may opt for more than one. Walls, bathrooms, lighting and other tenant improvements will be added later, as requested.

More information will be available soon on the project Web site washingtonstreetstation.com, and the development team plans to hold an open house soon at the Civic Center.

In the meantime, contact R.C. Hernandez at 503-449-5979 or e-mail rc@nuerarealty.com.