

Revitalization efforts bring life to historic areas, outer edges of storied neighborhoods

by Michelle Leach

Formerly, when one mentioned a notable destination for all things housing, shopping, working, and entertainment, the “usual suspects” (the Old Market) came to mind; today, a multitude of new and emerging destinations have changed the narrative.

“We are a smaller development shop, but we had big dreams and aspirations to be able to buy this piece of land on the outskirts of Aksarben Village,”



Spellman

said Ryan Spellman of J Development Co. “We saw the potential for future job growth.”

Two and a half years later, Centerline Apartments at 7007 Oak St. is 98% leased; the firm anticipated the Creighton University Medical Center relocation from downtown to the Bergan Mercy campus. In turn, health care workers represent a large percentage of residents.

“The next wave of growth for Aksarben is related to UNO and the growth of its campus and enrollment,” he said; specifically, growth



Holly Barrett, executive director, Omaha Downtown Improvement District.

south of Center Street with projects such as the new baseball and softball complex.

“The former CoCo Key/Ramada Inn has

tremendous potential for redevelopment,” he said. “It’s right off of Interstate 80 on 72nd St. and is a great opportunity to start from scratch.”

Spellman referenced the development of an “Aksarben Village South” or “Phase No. 2.”

“I am a huge advocate for density; having retail with housing above and getting as much



Kline

bang for your buck with the land you’re working with,” Spellman said.

Instead of concentrating on one area, multiple districts and pockets that pop up throughout the region advance the importance of transportation, easing travel to different areas.

“I have never been a fan of ‘westward expansion,’” he said. “Soon enough, we’ll find ourselves in Grand Island. The city planning department has been fantastic in the encouragement of density and urban infill-types of developments.”

Executive Director Holly Barrett’s Omaha Downtown Improvement District spans 75 blocks, and includes the convention center, Old Market, Central Business District, and Riverfront and Capitol districts.

“We have so many fabulous emerging neighborhoods on the edge of our district,” she said. “We’ve got Little Italy and Little Bohemia on our south end, the neighborhood between Midtown and downtown on the west end, all of the potential of North Downtown and the Makerhood.”

The Capitol District has brought new life to the convention center corner, she said, while the

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Riverfront and Conagra campus projects are spurring things into high gear in the Old Market.

"Up in the Central Business District, where things move a little bit slower sometimes, we have tremendous potential at the World Herald and Civic Center auditorium sites and, while it's frustrating to see it like fallow, we are thrilled the city is taking it so seriously and working on finding exactly the right tenant," Barrett

said, adding they hope that includes a big-box grocery store.

She said ODDID looks forward to working with philanthropy organizations to help grow its foundation, allowing for projects such as public art installations, and seating, sidewalk and lighting improvements. It is also the lead stakeholders in the Old Market-wide alley revitalization project, assisting properties in dumpster consolidation and safety, beautification, and potential economic development projects

at their back doors.

Vice President of Development Jay Kline emphasized White Lotus Group's HUB 1401 and NoDo projects at 11th and Nicholas streets; the former is described as a "mission-driven nonprofit center designed around collaboration and innovation," while the latter builds upon the "legacy of past neighborhood residents, skilled craftsmen, while being a gateway to Omaha."

He referred to HUB's unique co-lab environment; through collaboration and shared services, philanthropic efforts are maximized by avoiding overlap and redundant expenses. Filled with public art from all types of makers, the NoDo project area highlights modern architecture amid historic charm.

"We believe that our concept — combining local retailers and amenities, multi-family apartments and office users — will help kickstart the New North Makerhood's ability to thrive for many years to come," he said.

Kline mentioned the following as positively impacting NoDo: Future Forward's revitalization efforts on the New North Makerhood; refined plans led by Paul G Smith Associates on the Millwork District; the expansion of the Builder's District south of Cumming Street (notably, the Kiewit headquarters relocation); the Downtown Riverfront Trust's efforts to revitalize Lewis and Clark Landing; and continued support from the city.

Such districts fit significantly into Omaha's overall landscape; for instance, he noted how less than 15 years ago, Maple Street in Benson was "sleepy," with a small handful of places breathing life into the area.

"What has happened since then is nothing short of incredible," he said of organic reinvestment. "The up-and-coming neighborhoods in NoDo... they have quietly been a place for art and other creatives for many years, but the growth in the area due to proximity to TD Ameritrade Park

and the CHI Health Center, along with the redevelopment plans for the Riverfront, are shining a bright light on the potential of this area."

Millwork Commons was top of mind for Restoration Exchange Omaha President Adam Andrews; Flywheel's slated move to the Ashton Building this summer is the first of many planned projects for the neighborhood, which is named after former warehouse users (such as the Adams and Kelly Millwork Co.) that made windows, doors and other building components.

"The existing historic district is the same size and age as our Old Market, which is a favorite locale of everyone's," Andrews said. "So, it has the same potential to provide a glimpse into Omaha's past while being a part of its present and future."

With the envisioned commercial, retail, residential and other districtwide amenities, Andrews said Millwork Commons is set to make a great first impression on travelers flying into Eppley Airfield.

Andrews also mentioned the Blackstone Hotel's renovation into the Cottonwood Hotel as the "crown jewel" in the Blackstone District's noteworthy revitalization.

"It will be one of only a few historic hotels operating in the city and bring back to life a faded part of Omaha's past while contributing greatly to the life and vitality of the neighborhood," he said.

"Livability" endures.

"The post-war boom of the suburbs had such a detrimental effect on urban life and historic neighborhoods that, in some cases, their revitalization has only come about in the last 10 or 15 years," he said.

"Historic neighborhoods were traditionally denser, more diverse, offered a variety of living styles, amenities and services. On top of all those things, they have character and interest with a variety of architectural styles, residents and building types. All these factors combine to make places that people gravitate towards and want to live, work and play in."

SUPER CROSSWORD

ACROSS
1 Reddish-brown pigment
7 Nitpick
9 Know-it-all
13 Fleet leader
20 Instead (of)
21 Win over
22 Bishop's district
23 User's storage component
25 Gives approval
26 Rock's Brian
27 "My true love has eyes" ("Oh Susanna" lyric)
28 Without, to Jean-Luc
30 Shrubby expanses
31 Disorder
33 NBA'er — Gasol
34 Occasion to say "King"
36 Pasta laus food
38 Baseball card stat
40 — light (go by)
41 Zip
42 Ship-deck diversion
43 Sauce giant
46 Euro source

51 Hotsy — Crown
54 Diner's gear
59 "Thirt" With the Dragon
61 "Tattoo" heroine
64 Diner's gear
65 Prefix with dose or ten
66 Less lenient
68 "Entertaining of" Salinger
69 "Trio" might, "Joe"
70 Participant in the sport
71 Ultimate
72 "Oh Susanna" transport
73 Draw — on (take careful aim at)
74 — Brothers
75 "It's Your Thing" (deceptions)
76 Han's group
77 Han's home, briefly
78 Naive
79 It enables a motorist to stop
80 Boy bird
81 Naive
82 Brazilian soccer star
83 Tending to wear away
84 "Hm, let —"

THE THIN, THE FLAT, AND THE ROUND

83 Former NBA star Ming
84 Spio who served with Nixon
85 False tale
87 K-P hookup
91 45's place
94 "Mickey" singer Basil
96 Gives help
100 In the style of
101 "Try —"
102 It includes the sacrament
106 Helio of the sport
107 Social reform
108 Film rating
112 Paris' mother
113 Author J.K.
114 He defeated
115 Murderer
116 Put — (deceptions)
117 Like space debris
119 Commonality
120 Of seven answers in this puzzle
122 Turn loose
123 Gathering, as bees
124 Lie
125 Fair — (blond)
126 Dictation-taking group

127 Mad Hatter's party pieces
DOWN
1 Words to an attack dog
2 — ear and out the other
3 "SL — Fire"
4 Small swig
5 Nine, in Nice
6 Aviation aid
7 Agitates
8 Whiffen: Prefix
9 Women's patriotic op.
10 Menorah
11 Subgroup
11 Bursting
12 G's ditch
13 "The Piano" pianist
14 Kitchen cloth
15 Murderer
16 Fling
17 With 65-
18 Down, video store charge
19 Allegic affliction
20 Decrease
24 Special span
25 Hersey's candy bar
26 Tanning lotion stat
27 Spy org.
28 Cleanup org.
29 Quote a lot

39 Tarzan's son
42 French
43 Bad plum
44 Battle site of '44
45 Clair's area
46 Newly rich people
47 Ordinal suffix
48 GPS options: Abbr.
49 Wound from a mull
50 65-
51 Whiffen: Prefix
52 Down, charge to log on
53 Bel — cheese
54 Simple top
55 Wilches
56 In a carefree manner
57 Animated
58 Film featuring Seinfeld's voice
59 JFK landing: Abbr.
60 Fumble
61 Around June or July
62 Saut — Marie
63 Your, once
65 See 17-
66 Down
67 Grating
68 Elegant tree
69 Smallish batteries
70 Biophile's love: Abbr.
71 Takes vids
72 That — "iel"

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20 21 22