

Renaissance Road

New "commerce district" makes headway on Beltline



Novation Campus



Photos courtesy of The Alexander Company.

Novation Campus building interior

By Sarah Schilling

Show of hands. How many of you spend the beginning and end of your workday on the central corridor of the Beltline? Recent traffic studies reveal there should be 120,000 hands in the air.

Show of hands. How many of you, during your commute, have glanced up from your BlackBerry or Palm, and taken a look at the construction underway? I don't need traffic safety statistics to tell me you don't have your hand up, because you're a conscientious driver who doesn't use a cell phone, laptop or PDA while driving. Right?

So you've got both hands on the wheel, your eyes up and concentrated on your surroundings, a major part of which are redevelopment

and infill projects along the Beltline. Yes, the Beltline is steadily improving and you get the privilege of watching the progress from the comfort of your automobile.

Convenience

Imagine exiting at Todd Drive, Rimrock Road or South Towne Drive and arriving at your new office in record time. Maybe you're just imagining one of those exits is the end of your morning commute (since some



Rob Zache
Central Place
Real Estate

of the developments aren't yet finished), but, yes!, it'll take minutes off your drive time. At Todd Drive, **Rob Zache, Central Place Real Estate**, exclusive leasing company for **Arbor Gate**, estimates the location and ease of entry to the project will save almost a day per year in travel time.

Accessibility is just one of the selling points for these new developments along the Beltline. **Debi Offerdahl**, owner of **Ultimate Spa Salon**, will be relocating her business to what she calls the "center of the city" — the central Beltline corridor where her class-A office building will be built a few doors down from Veridian Homes at the South Towne Drive exit.



Debbie Offerdahl
Ultimate Spa Salon

"I'm on the committee for the Monona Drive expansion," says Offerdahl, "and I've been aware for the last 10 years that Monona Drive will be taking up more of my parking lot by 2010. I've owned the new property for about two years, and I think the Beltline will be key for servicing our clients mid-city."

"If a business needs to have an accessible location for employees and clients, this is it," says **Dan Peterson**, director of public relations, **The Alexander Company**. "It takes five minutes to get downtown, and 15 minutes to the far west and east sides."



Dan Peterson
The Alexander Company

The Alexander Company capitalized on a Beltline location with its **Novation Campus**, a 70-acre redevelopment at the Rimrock Road exit. The Alexander Company recognized the exit's handiness when they worked on the Department of Revenue building years ago:

"We did a traffic study," says Peterson, "and found that their employees were coming from all over Dane County, and that particular state building was a great location when it came to convenience for people driving in from the edges of Madison and the county."

See and be seen

Traffic studies have also shown that this central corridor has the highest traffic count (read: captive signage readers) in the state, excluding downtown Milwaukee.

"You can't beat the Beltline on visibility," says Offerdahl. That's one great plug for com-

mercial brokers targeting businesses that thrive on visual impact.

Zache, **John Collins** and **Jesse Schluter**, brokers with Central Place Real Estate, are leasing office, retail and restaurant space in Arbor Gate, the six-story, mixed-use complex under construction on Todd Drive.



John Collins
Central Place Real Estate

"We're looking for businesses that want to use their office space to make money and command respect," says Collins. "For some businesses, location doesn't matter, but others need the prestige of a high-end office building that will be 'an arrow in their marketing quiver.'"



Jesse Schluter
Central Place Real Estate

Indeed several businesses are moving and have moved just down the Beltline to take advantage of the impressive new developments. **WIPFLi CPAs & Consultants** will move to the fourth and fifth floors of the east tower at Arbor Gate in fall 2008. **Wisconsin Heart** will occupy almost two floors in the west building at Arbor Gate in fall 2008 as well.

And **Zimbrick, Inc.** relocated its BMW, Mercedes, Audi and Porsche brands to two adjacent lots on Novation Campus.

In addition to being seen from the Beltline, the upper floors of some of the new buildings will offer panoramic views — "breathtaking" views, says Collins. Zache, who is responsi-

ble for leasing the sixth-floor restaurant space in the west tower at Arbor Gate, envisions the 14,000-square-foot rooftop penthouse as the perfect fit for a one-of-a-kind "sky restaurant and banquet facility" with outstanding views of the city and campus. Collins is excited about the two exterior patios on the top floor of each tower, which he jokes will create an after-work ambience à la ABC's "Boston Legal." (Who wouldn't enjoy puffing on a cigar with William Shatner after an eight-hour day in court?)

What won't you be looking at? Sprawling parking lots. Offerdahl plans to have two levels of parking for her new four-story building. Arbor Gate's attached 600-car parking deck will keep employees, visitors and clients warm and dry. Novation decided to hide their climate-controlled parking underground, but has ample "at-the-door" parking as well.

"This is a campus, not a business park," says Peterson. "We're developing a main thoroughfare called Novation Parkway, so you can get from one building to another without getting out of your car."

Madison loves "local"

A direct perk of the Beltline projects: community development.

"What we want to do is bring services to this neighborhood and Dane County," says Peterson, "while also building a commerce district. There will be jobs here that weren't five years ago. We've got one million square feet we're developing. For every 1,000 square feet, about five new jobs will be created — so we're expecting anywhere from 3,000 to



Arbor Gate rendering

Photo courtesy of Central Place Real Estate



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5,000 jobs here in the next five to eight years.”

Schluter adds that Arbor Gate has received “positive reactions” from the surrounding neighborhoods.

“**Mortenson Investment Group** and the Baxter family [which owns **Kayser Automotive** and **Westwind Associates**] worked closely with the neighborhood to develop a target list of retail tenants for the brokers to pursue, so the types of services and restaurants we bring in are what the neighbors want,” says Schluter.

“These families have come together with an ongoing commitment to the city of Madison,” adds Collins. “This is not a Chicago-owned property or a merchant-built project that can be sold tomorrow. You’ll always know you’re doing business with local people.” ■

Down the road

Anyone with a keen eye who travels through the Stoughton Road area of the Beltline may have noticed that the old cars that once filled a somewhat-obscure lot just west of the interchange is now empty. The junkers and the lemons are gone, all gone.

That’s because the **Livesey Company**, the original developers of nearby Pier 37 and South Towne Mall, are under contract to purchase 8.3 acres of land in that area for a future development named for the family that currently owns it: **Whitehorse Commons**.

To the undiscerning eye, the site does not look like much, but Livesey envisions a mixed-use development, including office and retail space, a 80- to 120-room hotel and a restaurant.

“It’s an obscure site surrounded by a ton of activity,” says **Alex Weis**, executive vice president, Livesey Co. “It’s a great site for us.”

He adds “it’s a logical extension of Pier 37,” which houses, among other things, a UW Credit Union branch, Staples, Copp’s Food Center, Starbucks and more. Pier 37 has “been highly successful by every measure,” with a low vacancy rate, high sales volumes and great visibility and traffic.

Livesey is currently in the process of getting the site rezoned and is working on a TIF agreement with the city of Monona. All buildings on the site will be razed, and the company hopes to start construction in June 2009.

—Amanda N. Wegner

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