

BUSINESS

Rediscovering Columbus

An old KC neighborhood hopes for a jump-start in redevelopment

By KEVIN COLLISON
The Kansas City Star

The quiet revival of Columbus Park, one of the city's oldest neighborhoods, is expected to get louder today with the kickoff of a \$1.2 million residential development.

The groundbreaking for East Market Row, an eight-unit town house and condominium project at Fifth and Holmes streets, could be the precursor to a much larger redevelopment plan for the neighborhood

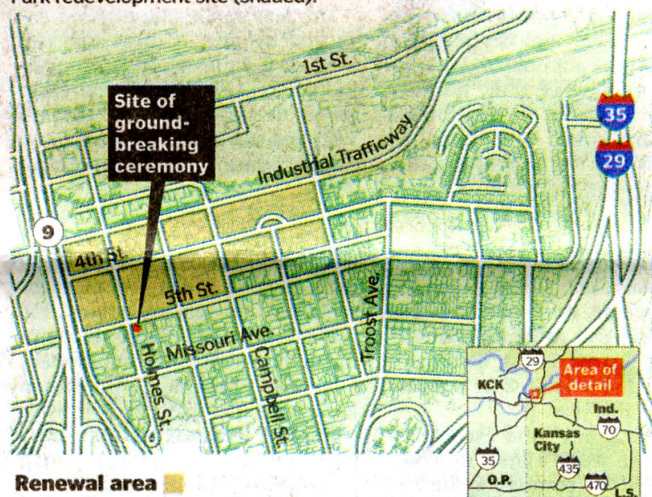
being pursued by the Land Clearance for Redevelopment Authority, a city agency.

The authority has received proposals from three groups interested in redeveloping a 22-acre site between Third and Fifth streets, from Gillis to Cherry streets, an area that encompasses about 20 percent of the neighborhood. The goal is to create a mixed-use development, predominantly owner-occupied housing, that complements the density and style of the rest of Columbus Park.

The redevelopment authority is scheduled to choose a developer later this month after receiving recommendations from the Kansas City Housing Author-

Columbus Park redevelopment

Ground is to be broken today for the East Market Row housing project, on the southeast corner of Fifth and Holmes streets, next to the Columbus Park redevelopment site (shaded).



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ity, the Guinotte Manor tenant association and an advisory committee established by Mayor Kay Barnes.

Mike Sturgeon, past president of the Columbus Park Community Council, said the neighborhood had been on a roll since the \$46 million redevelopment of the Gui-

lotte Manor public housing development. In recent years, young professionals and artists have been joining the Italian-Americans and other ethnic groups that make up one of the city's most ethnically diverse areas.

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Illustration courtesy of Kite Singleton

The East Market Row town house and condominium project (left) is expected to look like this.



COLUMBUS: Old neighborhood gets new housing

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"Between redeveloping Guinotte Manor and the general resurgence of cities nationwide, Columbus Park has been in a position to ride that wave," Sturgeon said. "There's so much interest in downtown right now. ... The last five years we've seen a significant amount of private investment in our neighborhood."

The neighborhood is among the city's poorest — median household income for its census tract was \$11,875 in 2001 — and among the most diverse, according to the marketing service Claritas. About a third of its residents were white, another third Asian-American, mostly Vietnamese, and the rest African-American and Hispanic.

"The neighborhood is very eclectic," said Lynn Craghead, chairwoman of the mayor's advisory committee and a senior vice president at US Bank. "There's a wide variety of different ethnic groups along with art galleries and other activities. It's hard to define as one particular subgroup, but it's very tight-knit."

Columbus Park residents like to claim that their roots go back to the founding of Kansas City. Its oldest standing residence dates to 1857, ac-

ording to the association, and the neighborhood was a major turn-of-the-century destination for Italian immigrants along with Russian Jews, Poles and Germans.

The redevelopment of Guinotte Manor, though, spelled the start of a new life for the neighborhood. The 1950s-era public housing development had deteriorated by the early 1990s and was blamed for many social ills. Finally, in 1997 the Kansas City Housing Authority received federal funding to demolish the 412-unit project and replace it with 219 units designed to blend with the neighborhood.

As part of that project, about nine acres were freed for new construction. The redevelopment site being pursued by the redevelopment authority includes the land formerly used for Guinotte Manor and an additional 13 acres now occupied by one-story light industrial buildings. It borders a much larger, 55-acre riverfront development site to the north controlled by the Port Authority of Kansas City.

The 22-acre Columbus Park redevelopment site is eligible for a variety of federal, state and local tax incentives, including Chapter 99, a program that offers a 100 percent tax

abatement on improvements for 10 years. The redevelopment authority began its search for someone to rebuild the area in January and received responses from three groups:

■ McCormack Baron Salazar, a St. Louis-based firm responsible for the redevelopment of Quality Hill in the 1980s, and Greenleaf Construction of Kansas City.

■ Gale Communities, which is part of the team selected to redevelop the adjoining riverfront area, and MC Lioness Realty and Landmark Mortgage, two entities associated with DST Realty.

■ Zimmer Cos., Urban Coeur Development, architect Kite Singleton and Taliaferro & Browne, a civil engineering company.

Patrick Sterrett, director of the redevelopment authority, said his agency was impressed with the groups that responded to its search for a developer.

The group including Urban Coeur and Singleton is part of Columbus Park Venture LLC, the developer of the East Market Row project. The developers hope their commitment to the neighborhood won't go unnoticed by the redevelopment authority when it decides which group will receive the opportunity to pur-

sue the larger redevelopment plan.

"What we're looking at doing is true urbanism, re-weaving the existing neighborhood fabric into a new development that understands the historic context of the neighborhood," said Vincent Gauthier of Urban Coeur. He is a partner with John Hoffman and Larry Maxfield on the East Market Row project.

Sturgeon, who has been a neighborhood resident for six years, estimated that 50 units of housing had been built in the area over the past five years. That new construction also has been accompanied by renovations of existing buildings.

Singleton, who has designed two other houses in Columbus Park, said there was a new sense of optimism in the area following the redevelopment of Guinotte Manor. He said five of the eight residences in the East Market Row development already had been purchased. The prices of the homes range from \$145,000 to \$240,000.

"Those things tell you it's a good investment and things are starting to happen," he said.

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