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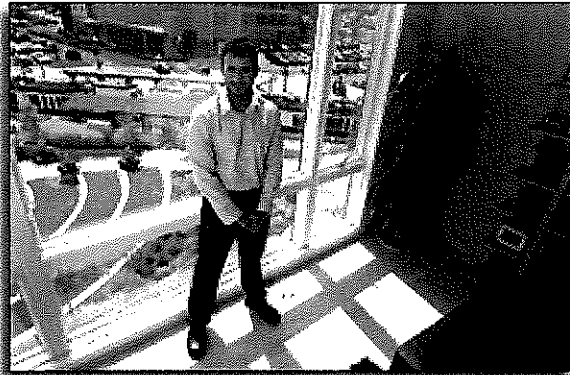
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Jeff Sanford, a DirecTV salesman, thought about buying a place in the Pearl but instead bought a condo in the Round, where he savors loft life and easy access to amenities. With the adjacent MAX stop, he says he hardly ever needs to drive.

Rounding the corner

Residents find urban dreams fulfilled in brave new Beaverton complex

By JODI HELMER Issue date: Fri, Aug 27, 2004

The Tribune

Jeff Sanford's condo is literally two flights of steps away from takeout pad Thai at Typhoon restaurant, his 24-hour gym and the MAX train — features he thought he would find only in downtown Portland.

After house hunting across the metro area, the former Lake Oswego resident discovered the Round, a sleek mixed-use development in the heart of Beaverton. "It was perfect," he says. "It was everything I was looking for."

Eight months after moving in, Sanford says, "I have really simplified my life; I am within walking distance of 24 Hour Fitness and great restaurants, and I live right on the MAX line, so I almost never drive my car; almost everything I want is right here."

By offering 24-7 services in a suburban location, the Round is helping to turn Beaverton from a community with a reputation for strip malls, cookie-cutter neighborhoods and fast-food restaurants into a destination for shopping, dining and theaters. Down the street is the recently renovated Cedar Hills Crossing — the former Beaverton Mall — a Costco and the Nike Inc. world campus. Compared with Portland, Beaverton's housing prices and taxes are lower.

"People really want to see this kind of downtown community in the suburbs," says Cherie Henry, the project manager at the Round. "It is becoming a very active urban community."

The three buildings now offer a combination of commercial, residential and retail space. Five more mixed-use buildings also are



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Current weather planned, to house additional restaurants, shops and businesses. "The city is ripe for growth and the opportunity to become more urban," Henry says.

The Round wasn't an overnight success. Its original developers couldn't get financing, and the property was vacant for several years, until Dorn-Platz Properties purchased it in April 2001.

Some 93 percent of the 108,000 square feet of commercial space now is occupied; tenants include Coldwell Banker Barbara Sue Seal Properties, 24 Hour Fitness, Liberty Mutual and Open Source Development Labs.

Michael Tocchini, co-owner of The Round's Mingo restaurant, an offshoot of the popular Caffe Mingo in Northwest Portland, says he debated for months about whether to venture into the suburbs. "We figured Portland is growing out, and there might be a place for us here."

Now, he says, "gradually, each month, business is getting better and better."

Mingo serves approximately 150 dinners on Friday and Saturday nights, and between 80 and 100 per night during the week. "We thought we'd get a lot of business from the residents, either grabbing takeout or using us as their personal dining room," Tocchini says. "We are making some die-hard regulars."

Pearl can be too pricey

Residential interest also took time to build.

"There was a slight stigma about the project because it had failed before," says Peter Andrews, associate broker for Coldwell Banker Barbara Sue Seal Properties at the Round.

But bamboo floors, stainless steel appliances and loft living just steps from the MAX line have attracted people. Prices range from \$169,000 for a studio loft to \$325,000 for a two-bedroom penthouse. "We have a lot of spinoffs from the Pearl District who were discouraged by the prices," he says.

Sanford says he considered buying in the Pearl District, but the prices drove him away. At the Round, he says, "I got much better bang for my buck, especially for the square footage and the amenities."

To date 45 percent of the 65 high-end contemporary condominium units are sold. The numbers are increasing as more businesses — including Mingo, Typhoon and Mio Sushi, which recently announced its plans to open there — serve as an attraction to condo buyers, Andrews says.

However, Beaverton officials recently chastised the developers of the Round for not keeping up on their construction schedule and outstanding construction liens. They want Dorn-Platz to complete all eight buildings by the end of next year.

John Morrow, vice president of Dorn-Platz, says the firm continues to work with the city "to resolve the dispute regarding (our) construction pace and concerns regarding a lingering construction lien."

Morrow says the agreement with the city "allows us until April 2007 to begin building all structures in its plan."

More growth to come

Besides the Round, events like the Beaverton farmers market and Nike SummerFest, plus new construction projects, are helping to change others' perception of Beaverton as a sleepy bedroom community.



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“Beaverton isn’t a suburban joke anymore,” Andrews says.

“This whole area is going through a growth spurt,” says Chris Sloan, manager of Cedar Hills Crossing, a shopping center on Cedar Hills Boulevard.

Cedar Hills Crossing, just a few miles from the Round, is in the midst of a multimillion-dollar renovation. Anchor tenants such as Old Navy and Best Buy have helped attract retailers to the remodeled shopping mall, which will have 750,000 square feet of retail space when it’s completed this fall.

Shops at the mall include T-Mobile, Famous Footwear, Cold Stone Creamery, Beach Shack and Century Theater, which expects 1 million moviegoers per year to fill theater seats when it opens next summer.

As both the city and the Round continue to grow, Mingo’s Tocchini is hoping his business will expand as well. “The developers really want to make the Round a significant contributor to Beaverton’s commerce.”

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