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Hollywood's star rises with redevelopment

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By Brad Berton
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Long-expected in the long-ignored Hollywood District, redevelopment has arrived.

Much of the early activity focuses along Northeast Halsey Street east of the Hollywood Transit Center, with new medical offices for Providence Health System and a fitness center.

Eventually Sandy Boulevard -- Hollywood's spine -- will see development with residences above ground-level shops and offices. And though there's no deal in place yet, a Whole Foods Market might anchor that project.

"Hollywood's going to happen," promises Debbie Bischoff, the city's senior planner for Northeast.

It's been said before, of course. Redevelopment on Halsey seemed inevitable when Home Depot proposed a store topped with apartments at the Davis Business Center. But in 2001, citing economic factors, the company dropped out amid neighborhood protests about traffic.

Now Providence Health System plans to lease the site. They will replace existing structures, currently filled with small businesses and professional offices, with facilities for its medical center, which is just across Interstate 84. Work, however, might not start until the Home Depot lease expires in two years. Providence has already built offices and facilities just to the east of the office complex, stretching to the 47th Avenue bridge.

And that's just one project.

Construction crews already are working on the Copeland Lumber site, which will be called Hollywood Station. The first phase includes a 24 Hour Fitness Center, relocating from down the street, with third-floor offices and some street-level retail space. And developers are looking for tenants for as much as 100,000 square feet of office space in a possible five-story building, says Lisa Stroud of Dorn-Platz Co. of Glendale, Calif., the project developer.

The hope is that employees and clients -- as well as future residents -- will ride mass transit. Officials are considering improving the transit center, which could free space for development, she says.

Development of top-tier offices can't come quickly enough for real estate agent Paul Clark of Township Properties. Businesses flock to close-in locations, he says, but Hollywood's older buildings don't work for many that otherwise might locate there. Its early 20th-century low-rise concrete and masonry structures are filled with smaller retailers, restaurants and services, such as banks and medical offices. While 100,000 square feet of office space is a lot to swallow, Clark expects the project to attract businesses lured by the transit hub. "I'd think they'll be able to fill it up."

Meanwhile, Gerding/Edlen is starting to plan a residential/retail development along the north side of Sandy between 43rd and 44th. Preliminary designs call for 40 to 45 apartments, along with ground-floor retail space and structured parking, says managing principal Kelly Saito of Gerding/Edlen.

Whole Foods Market might be part of the development. The company's Web site lists a 40,200-square-foot Sandy Boulevard store, with no address, among stores "in development" but Whole Foods declined to comment.

Though the activity appears to be just what city and regional planners have in mind, some have concerns.

Bud Breithaupt, a Davis neighbor and opponent of the Home Depot, worries about traffic along Halsey and adjacent streets, 39th Avenue in particular, and that Providence or others may swallow the remaining residential blocks. He's also sorry to see the Davis complex, which dates from early post-World War II, go. But Bischoff knows Hollywood is one of the 30 town centers targeted for denser mixed-use, pedestrian-oriented development.

"The goal is to have more people living and working in Hollywood," Bischoff says.

And there's going to be.

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