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Wednesday, February 9, 2005

Linden Commons by Neyer dazzles College Hill forum

Abandoned corners to be revived

By Gregory Korte
Enquirer staff writer

Developer Al. Neyer Inc. will turn the abandoned corners of Hamilton Avenue and West North Bend Road into a mix of retail shops, offices, condominiums and townhouses, College Hill development leaders announced Tuesday.

The College Hill Community Urban Redevelopment Corp. unveiled a conceptual development plan for what it's calling "Linden Park Commons" at its annual meeting Tuesday night.

The selection of a developer was a key step toward turning around a business district that's been one of the city's most pressing neighborhood development problems. Three of the four corners of College Hill's most-traveled intersection have been vacant since Kroger Co., CVS Pharmacy and the Shuller's Wigwam restaurant left two years ago.

Six City Council members attended the meeting to demonstrate support. City Manager Valerie Lemmie will introduce an ordinance today appropriating \$800,000 for the project, city development officer Tom Jackson said.

And Tuesday, City Council's Neighborhoods and Public Services Committee voted to adopt land-use regulations for the area to encourage more pedestrian-friendly development.

In Cincinnati, Neyer is best known for building the Kroger parking garage - and its 27 condo units - now under construction at Vine Street and Central Parkway, and for redeveloping the old Ford Factory in Walnut Hills.

Its Michigan Terrace project of high-priced condominiums on Hyde Park Square has drawn controversy, with one resident describing the six-story building as "looking like the Queen Mary coming down the street."

"We don't always get this kind of reception when we come to communities and talk about developing them," President David Neyer joked. He said the College Hill project would be more similar to Columbia Tusculum's town square project proposed for the intersection of Columbia Parkway and Delta Avenue.

"You should be excited that Neyer is excited about this project," architect Mike Battoclette, of Champlin-Haupt Architects, told a crowd of about 200



Developer David Neyer talks about the proposed "Linden Park Commons" project to College Hill residents Tuesday night. The Enquirer/Steven M. Herppich [Zoom](#)

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College Hill community leaders.

Acquisition of the property is still a big hurdle, but "there's no reason we can't get started with real construction a year from now," said Neyer vice president Ken Schon.

Though the development team is now made up of "a bunch of middle-aged white guys," Schon promised a more diverse group of architects, contractors and subcontractors by the time the project gets started.

Carol Lyon, president of the redevelopment corporation, said College Hill was making progress at a "dizzying speed." A "streetscape" project of new sidewalks and lights is under construction, and the residents and business leaders attending the dinner were optimistic.

"Everything CHCURC (the redevelopment corporation) has done this year has blown us away," said College Hill Forum President Elizabeth Sherwood. "A few years ago, you couldn't even figure out what all the words meant in the acronym. And now, they've elevated themselves to an unbelievable level."

The College Hill meeting was also an early stop in the 2005 mayoral campaign, with state Sen. Mark L. Mallory, D-West End, and Councilman David Pepper each giving remarks.

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