

Creating Places: Office condos to sit on site set for Park 30

*By William Williams, wwilliams@nashvillecitypaper.com
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If you love quality urban infill development, it's a fun time to live in Nashville.

Currently, the city's downtown, SoBro, Gulch, Midtown and Vanderbilt University campus, collectively, have in various stages of construction eight buildings of between 10 and 21 stories.

(I tried, yet failed, to recall the last time Nashville had such significant simultaneous construction of tall structures. Readers are encouraged to email me if they have helpful information.)

In addition, there are no fewer than 25 multi-spaced urban infill buildings of two to seven floors (both commercial and residential) in the aforementioned five areas plus in Belle Meade, East Nashville, Germantown, Green Hills, Hillsboro Village, North Capitol Mall, Waverly-Belmont and West End Park.

In short, Nashville is undergoing a building boom that many second-tier U.S. cities would salivate to experience.

But like the casualties in the wake of the Don Imus fiasco, not every announced project materializes.

One example is Park 30, a seven-story retail/residential building John Hays' Graymont Group had planned to develop near Centennial Park.

Hays says a saturated local condominium market forced him to rethink his plan for the site, located on 30th Avenue North near Poston Avenue. He will now develop a three-story, 34,000-square-foot building with space to be sold as retail/commercial space.

"We were about three-fourths through with plans when numerous condo developments or plans for them hit the market," Hays says.

Hays says the exterior of the now-planned building, for which he currently has no name, will offer a "historic replica" feel, with a nod to 1920s architecture. Local architect Preston Quirk is handling the design, with Middle Tennessee Bank & Trust to provide financing.

The scrapping of Park 30 is, frankly, a disappointment. For its design, Hays had enlisted Nashville's Gilbert McLaughlin Architects PLC, a progressive company known for contemporary work. Had it been built, the sleek Park 30 would have contributed nicely to the "mini-skyline" in the general area.

Hays says work should begin on the substitute project within six months and require a roughly one-year timetable.

Public art for WEP

Speaking of The Graymont Group, Hays says the company in the next 30 days will install a roughly 7-foot-tall abstract sculpture in front of its Graymont Park condo buildings at 3186 Parthenon Ave. in West End Park.

Nashville-based artist David Rahm designed the outdoor sculpture.

And on an embarrassing note...

The April 9 *Creating Places* — which focused on Atlanta-based developer Barry Real Estate Companies and its proposed tower to be anchored by Bass, Berry & Sims — was a mess that could rival that of the Don Imus fiasco.

In fact, many posters on the Nashville forum of urbanplanet.org ripped me for the missteps. Understandably so. Oddly, with all the attention, I almost felt like a local celebrity.

First, I misspelled the last name of local architect — and true *City Paper* supporter — Gary Everton. My apologies, Gary.

Second, I failed to include in the list of those high-profile and nationally known architecture companies that have designed Nashville high-rises the venerable Skidmore, Owings and Merrill LLP. The Chicago-based SOM — which is designing New York City's Freedom Tower, by the way — was the architect for the handsome William R. Snodgrass Tennessee Tower.

Lastly, I unwittingly suggested that non-Nashvillians should not be allowed a voice regarding the design and function of the proposed Barry tower. I acknowledge that to take such a stance would be unfair, if not ridiculous.

What I meant to write, very simply, is that there are some out-of-town urbanplanet.org Nashville forum posters who sometimes criticize the design and function of proposed buildings while failing to acknowledge two points: 1. The architects of these projects are, to an extent, limited in what they can design by the developers' budgets and desires; and 2. These buildings, imperfect though they may be, often generate a sense of community excitement and bring numerous ancillary positives to the city.

Yes, we should demand that developers and architects deliver the best buildings possible. But we must be realistic. And we must respectfully ask the out-of-towners to understand that those of us who live here and are working diligently to make Nashville a more cosmopolitan and enjoyable place sometimes find their approach tiresome and unproductive.

William Williams writes about Nashville's manmade environment. Contact him at wwilliams@nashvillecitypaper.com

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