

Omaha's districts expand with commercial, office and retail space

by Gabby Christensen

Omaha's districts continue to show signs of revitalization and growth, according to local firms.

Recently, Leo A Daly partnered with Shamrock Development to transform the 5.4 acre Capitol District from blighted parcels into a vibrant, walkable destination.

Martin Janousek, senior design architect at Leo A Daly, said the district's mixed-use character combines residential, commercial and entertainment functions and offers vistas unique to the Capitol District location.

According to Janousek, its orientation to downtown and major thoroughfares informed architectural siting decisions for the Capitol District's 333-room hotel, 218-unit luxury apartment complex and 19,000 square feet of retail space.

"Most of our design decisions stem from the goal of creating memorable experiences for visitors," Janousek said. "We imagined people shopping, dining and interacting against a scenic backdrop. For example, placement of the Marriott Hotel near the district's eastern boundary provides an anchor for social activity with panoramas visible nowhere else in Omaha. That's one reason the lobby features a 270-degree, sweeping glass façade. The district continues to shape the growth of NoDo."

In the Blackstone District, Jay Lund, principal at Greenslate Development, said the company has a project underway to

bring the Blackstone Hotel back to life.

The historic, boutique hotel will include multiple restaurant and bar outlets, as well



Janousek



Lund

as a rooftop ballroom and large pool.

Lund said it is expected to be completed in the spring of 2020.

Across the street from the hotel, Lund said another large project, the Blackstone Corner, will be finished this fall.

The building features 12,000 feet of street level retail space.

East of Interstate 480 on Farnam between 24th and 26th streets, Lund said another project is developing called Farnam Hill, a 24-loft style apartment building.

This building is leased to a 10,000-square-foot office tenant, Populus, which will be opening this spring/summer.

Another project near the University of Nebraska Medical Center campus that Greenslate Development is currently working on is a 140-unit apartment building

designed with affordable price point and walkability to campus in mind.

"We continue to see and follow trends in revitalization and density of the urban core," Lund said. "It's been a recurring theme in Omaha for the last five to 10 years. We need to continue to attract and retain talent for major employers, who want these urban environments where they can live,

work and be entertained all within a reasonable zone that might not include using a car at all."

Arun Agarwal, CEO of White Lotus Group, said the West Maple corridor, specifically 168th Street to 192nd Street has seen and will continue to see rapid development due to the completed widening of 168th Street from West Dodge Road to West Maple Road.

In November of 2015, Agarwal said the city of Omaha announced the 180th Street bridge connecting Dodge to Maple, which is a significant catalyst to development at the intersection of 180th Street and West Maple Road.

"180th and Maple is the most densely zoned corner in the city and we are excited to be able to bring it to life with our 'Maple

180' project," Agarwal said. "This 35-acre project will create a prime retail center in the fastest growing section of Omaha, and will neighbor the newest high school in Elkhorn."

According to Agarwal, another exciting project is the New North Makerhood Project — the Millwork Commons.

"Future Forward, the investor group founded by the Kiewit Foundation, and Paul and Annette Smith with Black Dog Development have really begun to bring life back into Omaha's north Downtown area and it's outstanding," Agarwal said. "Plus, with Flywheel as their anchor tenant, bringing over 400 employees alone to the New North Makerhood, success is inevitable. We've been honored to work closely with Future Forward on another exciting project in the area that we will announce later this year, but will focus in on creating a gateway to the city of Omaha while honoring and building upon the legacy of the past neighborhood residents — skilled craftsmen."

BLACKSTONE
— DISTRICT —