

## Events

### Developer's Panel

January 16, 2014

West Side Association put a new twist on the annual meeting this year by inviting local private developers to participate in a panel discussion of their current and future projects. The topic piqued the interest of the business community, which was evidenced by over 120 people attending the event. The panel included:

Andy Dumke	Alliance Development
Brian Wagner	DealerFire/Black Teak Properties
Grant Schwab	Schwab Properties/First Weber Group
Keith Holschbach	The Outlet Shoppes at Oshkosh
Peter Jungbacher	Alexander and Bishop

The panel discussion was moderated by Sean Fitzgerald, the Publisher of New North B2B magazine. Each panelist was asked to address specific projects or properties with which they are associated.

**Andy Dumke**—Alliance Development recently purchased the former **Kmart/Sears** building on N. Koeller St., but as yet the company has not developed a concrete plan for the property. The existing building will likely be razed and the site cleared for outlet businesses with big box retailers anchoring the space. Andy did note that the Sears lease had just expired in August 2013.

Alliance is also involved with the **Rivers II** project, an 80-unit, 4 story residential building located on the north bank of the Fox River near Jackson Street and slated to break ground in Spring. The industrial feel of the architecture is likely to appeal to young professionals who want to live in the downtown area.

**Brian Wagner**—Black Teak Properties has several parties interested in leasing the former Soiree space in the 400 block of Main Street. The company is being selective to ensure the new tenant is a good fit for the downtown area, but they hope to have someone in that space by summer. They anticipate a February or March opening for the former Joey's Bar, which will be known as Bar 430. With recent approval to expand the business by converting the second floor from its current residential space, remodeling will be continuing with the upper floor opening in September.

DealerFire, which is currently located at 146 Algoma Boulevard, has been experiencing tremendous growth and expansion. With upwards of 70 employees in their current location, the owners (who are also part of Black Teak Properties) recently purchased a three-story building at 531 N. Main Street that formerly housed Kitz Printing. Interior demolition has already begun that will enable the software company to expand to 150 employees, and occupy the second and third floors. The company hopes to develop retail on the first floor.

**Grant Schwab**—An investment group named Morgan District LLC purchased the former Morgan/Jeld-Wen property and armed with a \$150,000 clean up grant, has

demolished nearly all of the factory buildings that were located on that site (Sixth Avenue on both sides on Oregon Street, bordering the Fox River). In 2014, we will see the construction of a 24,000 square foot office building on the South East corner near the Dockside Tavern. Additionally, Morgan District LLC plans to deed a portion of the riverfront property to the city for the continuation of the Riverwalk.

The Schwab Properties Group successfully closed the deal on the CVS Pharmacy that recently opened at the corner of 9<sup>th</sup> Avenue and N. Koeller Street after many challenges and set-backs. Grant feels the realization of this project sends a message to other retailers who may be considering Oshkosh that we CAN get deals done. There is a new regime of city, developers, and landowners who are not willing to give up.

**Keith Holschbach**—The Outlet Shoppes at Oshkosh have a challenging and unique dilemma in terms of marketing the store brands that have locations at the mall. Because many of the brands are sold in retail outlets within a close proximity of the Outlet Shoppes, they are restricted from advertising those brands. Consequently, many area shoppers are not aware that the outlet features Skechers, Aeropostale, Gap, CJ Banks and more.

Although he was not able to identify the brand, Keith did indicate that Horizon Group recently purchased a national restaurant chain, and the vacant restaurant on the Outlot will be home to that new restaurant as early as May 15. He did caution that the Oshkosh community's support is paramount to the success of the new eatery.

**Peter Jungbacher**—While he could not say who he is in negotiations with, Peter did indicate that the north wing of the Menard's Plaza Strip Mall will be remodeled this year for a new tenant. Additionally, there is a party interested in an Outlot location there. On the residential front, plans are being laid for a 51-unit second phase of the Morgan Crossing apartments on Pearl Avenue. The driving force behind residential development in this area is the growing student population, which is anticipated to increase from 14,000 to 18,000 in the coming years.

### **Economic Development Organizations**

Representatives from the City Development Department, the Oshkosh Chamber of Commerce and Chamco were on hand to share how their respective organizations assist and support the private developers to ensure their projects move forward. They also provided brief updates on projects around Oshkosh.

**Rob Kleman, VP of Economic Development, Oshkosh Chamber**—The former Walmart site at the corner of 20<sup>th</sup> Avenue and S. Koeller has been purchased by the Masters Group from Hartford, WI and demolition of the strip mall has begun. At this point, no plans have been submitted to the city for new construction, however, the Masters Group owns and operates both the Fox and Hounds and Mineshaft Restaurants, as well as provides concessions for the annual Country USA Festival. The prevailing opinion is that we can assume plans will be submitted for a large-scale restaurant and possibly some retail space in the near future.

**Allen Davis, Development Director, City of Oshkosh**—Allen addressed two high-profile properties that folks have been asking about for some time: the Buckstaff property on South Main Street and the Pioneer property on Pioneer Drive. Unfortunately, the city does not own either of these properties, so the amount of influence they have on facilitating action is very limited.

The Buckstaff property is a unique dilemma because there had been a dispute with the bank as to who owned the property—the bank or the former owner who filed bankruptcy. To make matters worse, the bank (Citizens Bank) was recently sold and is now First Merit Bank. The city of Oshkosh is working with an attorney and filed a suit claiming the building is a public nuisance, and anticipate a hearing will be held on the matter in spring. Regarding the Pioneer Inn property, the city is pursuing a Market Analysis to determine possible uses for the property if and when the owner is ready to sell.

**Elizabeth Hartman, CEO Chamco**—The former Pluswood building is now unoccupied and listed for sale. Chamco expects that property to see development of that property, possibly in the form of a convenience store, as well as expansion of the northeast industrial park with more heavy industrial businesses.

The formation of a new Aviation Business Park can be an entire presentation in itself, so suffice it to say that project is moving forward but it will be a long-term development, probably 15 to 20 years. A consultant is being hired to assist in the planning of the project and determining they types of businesses that will be the best fit for the property.

The overall consensus is that there is a new prevailing attitude at city hall with more fair and equitable treatment to the development community. The professional approach that now exists has been a significant improvement and will enable Oshkosh to continue to build on the momentum we have seen in the recent past.

(compiled by Connie Drexler)