

Crestview Station moves forward

Developers of mixed-use community in North Austin name Meritage and Newmark as home builders.

By M.B. Taboada
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Plans are picking up speed to turn a former North Austin industrial site into the \$200 million Crestview Station, which will be one of Austin's biggest transit-oriented developments.

Meritage Homes and Newmark Homes will build the 450 single-family houses at Crestview Station, where housing, offices and stores will be built on 73 acres once occupied by a Huntsman Corp. research facility.

Developers Stratus Properties Inc. and Trammell Crow Co. are expected to submit a site plan application to the city within the week.

"It will be a catalyst for redevelopment of the area," Stratus CEO Beau Armstrong said Monday.

The project, which is bordered on one side by the future Capital Metro commuter rail line, is designed as a community where people will be able to live, work and shop without having to drive.

A commuter rail station is planned for Lamar and Airport boulevards.

"Crestview Station is probably one of the most exciting projects coming together in Austin right now," said Eric DeJernett, senior vice president and a Crestview project coordinator for Trammell Crow. "People in this area really will be able to live in an environment where they don't have to have a car or at least not have to rely on a car all the time."

The homes will be on narrow lots, 25 to 30 feet wide, and prices will start in the \$250,000s, Armstrong said.

High Street Residential, a Trammell Crow subsidiary, will build the multifamily component.

The mix will include live-work units and loft-style apartments.

The project will have about 150,000 square feet of retail and office space.

Developers recently completed a \$3 million soil environmental cleanup of the site, bordered by North Lamar Boulevard, Morrow Street and the rail line, and are awaiting a closure letter from the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality.

The first phase, which might break ground this summer, will include 300 apartments and 60,000 square feet of retail.

The retail will include restaurants, stores and probably a small grocery market.

The housing is expected to be completed by fall 2008, coinciding with the opening of the rail line.

Other multifamily units will follow market demand and probably will not be built until the first phase is complete.

Crestview "really represents the best practices nationally in urban redevelopment next to a rail station," said City Council Member Brewster McCracken, who is also a Capital Metro board member. "It's important to promote development next to the rail stop. More people will ride the rail if it's done that way."

Developers also will renovate the North Austin Optimist ball fields at the northwest corner of the site, DeJernett said.

Area residents are excited about the transformation of an industrial site into a development that fits into the neighborhood's character.

"It's going to look like a part of town that is in town versus industrial edge of town," said Katrina Daniel, president of the Highland Neighborhood Association, which represents a neighborhood across Lamar from Crestview. "We're excited about all the prospects. . . . Right now, we don't have much to walk to eat or shop. This will afford us those kinds of opportunities."

Courtesy of JB Goodwin