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Two condo towers going up

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The Hilldale Shopping Center is growing up fast. Literally.

With work on the first phase of redevelopment pretty much spoken for, attention is turning quickly to the second phase of work that will include the construction of two condominium towers that will replace the former Humana Health Care Building, Hilldale Theatre and Peking Palace Chinese Restaurant.

The nine-story Centric MetroLofts and 11-story Heights -- \$26 million and \$28 million, respectively -- will go up along University Avenue and are being developed by Palatine, Ill.-based Joseph Freed and Associates, which also handled the first phase of the Hilldale redevelopment project.

Domenic Lanni, Freed's vice president of development, said demolition and site work will likely begin next month, and preliminary construction work could begin in September or October. He said he expects the Heights to be completed in the first quarter of 2009 and Centric MetroLofts to follow three or four months thereafter.

Lanni said that despite sagging numbers in the condominium market as of late, the company is resting assured that the two new complexes will fill up.

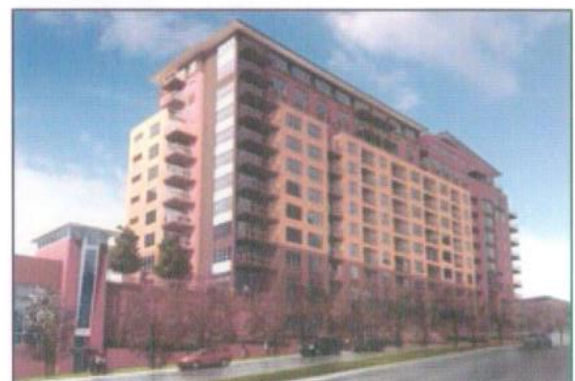
"It's definitely something we're mindful of," he said. "It's not just a Madison or Wisconsin thing -- the condominium market has definitely slowed down throughout the country. Freed works with a

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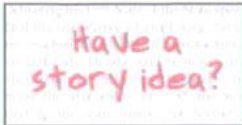
The \$26 million Centric MetroLofts will offer 90 units on the site of the former Hilldale Theatre, with units ranging from 700 to 1,300 square feet.

Rendering courtesy of Joseph Freed and Associates



The \$28 million Heights tower will have 112 units, ranging in size from 720 square feet to 1,526 square feet.

Rendering courtesy of Joseph Freed and Associates

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long-term perspective, though, and we're confident with the Madison market in the long run.

"We do believe that if we have the right product at the right price, we'll be able to sell."

Positive reaction

And part of what's helping fuel that belief, he said, is the reaction the first phase of redevelopment has received.

"It's unbelievable when people come onto the property -- I think they're really kind of blown away," Lanni said. "Everyone's getting very excited about how the area is starting to shape up and -- not to brag, of course -- but that means a lot to us, because I know a year ago people were wondering what we were doing and if it would really turn out alright."

City officials are excited about it too. Alderman Mark Clear said the Hilldale area could soon be just as vital a scene as the city's downtown area.

"I'm very supportive of the project and excited about it," he said. "With all that's going on down there, we could have just as big a concentration of tall buildings in that area as we do downtown. It's becoming a very exciting area, and I think that's great for Madison."

Freed will host a public open house this weekend for Madison residents to experience a few grand openings of new additions to the shopping center and get information about what the second phase will have to offer.

The condominium complexes were designed by Milwaukee-based Epstein Uhen Architects.

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