

# HOUSTON CHRONICLE

## Lower Heights District, Regent Square developers disclose plans for their urban sites



Nancy Sarnoff | on May 17, 2019

Developers revealed new details Thursday for two mixed-use real estate projects long planned for oversized sites in the urban core.

The developments, each on sites of more than 20 acres, have been years in the making as the owners waited out economic downturns, sought tenants and revised their designs.

Construction recently started at Lower Heights District, a 24-acre site a mile west of downtown, just south of Interstate 10 between Sawyer and Studemont, a burgeoning neighborhood of upscale restaurants, art studios and shops.

While the first phase of the project — a 370-unit apartment complex and 78,000 square feet of retail and restaurant space — is under construction, plans are in the works for a cinema and dining concept,

office buildings and more apartments and shops, according to Gulf Coast Commercial Group, the Houston developer that bought the site in 2015 for \$40 million.

Also on Thursday, the Boston-based firm behind Regent Square, a mixed-use development planned on the former site of the Allen House Apartments, said it would start construction this fall on a 600-unit apartment complex and 50,000 square feet of retail space on a portion of the site at West Dallas and Dunlavy streets.

Several years ago, Alamo Drafthouse Cinema, an entertainment concept that combines a movie theater and dining, said it was planning a location in Regent Square, but a spokesperson for GID Development Group said those plans were off.

Boston architecture firm CBT is designing the new buildings. Apartment floor plans will range from studios with separate sleeping alcoves to large two-bedroom units. The shops will ring a central plaza designed by Houston-based OJB Landscape Architecture.

JLL has been tapped to oversee retail leasing for the entire mixed-use district along West Dallas Street between College Memorial Park Cemetery and Waugh Drive, across Allen Parkway from Buffalo Bayou Park.

GID announced plans to develop Regent Square in 2007. At that time, the property housed the Allen House Apartments, which GID had owned for decades. Most of the apartments were demolished, but the project stalled until GID built a 21-story apartment tower at 3233 W. Dallas. That building, called the Sovereign, was completed in 2015.

“Our goal for Regent Square is the creation of an exemplary, urban mixed-use district in the heart of Houston. Phase 2, the core of the masterplan, is poised to establish the project as a dynamic, walkable place as it weaves high quality restaurants, retail and residential into the fabric of the surrounding neighborhoods,” James Linsley, GID’s president, said in a statement.

Lower Heights District, designed by Gensler, is also designed to be open and walkable, with small plazas and green spaces. Diners will spill onto outdoor restaurant patios and the project, near the hike and bike trail, will cater to trail users as well as nearby residents, the developer said.

Gulf Coast said there are plans to develop a 120,000-square-foot office building constructed with cross-laminated timber wood panels made from several layers of lumber glued and stacked that is said to be an environmentally friendly construction material.

Trammell Crow Residential is developing the apartment complex under construction at Lower Heights District. Completion is expected mid-2020. Total Wine and Ulta Beauty have finalized leases for the retail space underway, but the developer would not reveal names of the other tenants it is talking to.

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