



Residential growth a positive sign

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Will Petersburg's warehouse district be transformed into a trendy residential district?

We sure hope so.

If it happens, it will give Old Towne Petersburg's revitalization effort a major kick in the business, so to speak.

Robin Miller & Associates sparked the imagination by purchasing the old, abandoned Seward Luggage Co. headquarters. Miller's company is transforming the sprawling complex into market rate apartments and condominiums. Phase I is complete, and what a project it is. Located on High Street among a smorgasbord of the city's most attractive renovated historic homes featuring a wide variety of architectural styles, the appropriately named High Street Lofts promise to bring ambitious professionals with a pioneering spirit to Petersburg. It's a multi-phase project that is just now in its infancy. It's a fantastic development, truly a watershed event in the ongoing effort to revitalize Old Towne. The prospect of residents - lots of them - to fill businesses in Old Towne and support the budding arts community is a promising development.

What's more promising is that others would see the, well, promise of such a venture and jump to get in on the ground floor.

John David McCormack owns a warehouse on Bank Street. It was heavily damaged in an October fire. Formerly home to several businesses, McCormack wants to follow the blueprint of High Street Lofts and convert his building into high-end apartments and condominiums. Like High Street Lofts, McCormack's venture offers potential buyers an opportunity to live in a historic structure without having to worry about upkeep and yard work. In other words, it's perfect for a busy, ambitious professional who covets stylish living in a historical, but non-traditional setting. And it's in a dynamite location should Petersburg's dreams of waterfront development become a reality. McCormack's property overlooks the Appomattox.

What the city needs now is additional businesses to fill in around Old Towne offering the types of goods and services that would appeal to existing and future homeowners. One idea that has been discussed lately is the need for a grocery store with high-end stuff like gourmet goods, health food and variety galore.

Of course, High Street Lofts and McCormack's warehouse on Bank Street aren't the first warehouses to be converted to apartments. The former Dunlop Tobacco Warehouse on Old Street was converted years ago into the Carriage House Apartments for the Elderly. Here's hoping the staying power of the Carriage House is a good omen for High Street Lofts and McCormack's budding venture.

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