

Developers aspire to create new public spaces in MidTown Oklahoma City

The Downtown Design Review Committee is set to hear an application that, if approved, would create a unique urban courtyard that would tie together three buildings being renovated as part of the MidTown Renaissance development.

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The Downtown Design Review Committee is set to hear an application that, if approved, would create a unique urban courtyard that would tie together three buildings being renovated as part of the MidTown Renaissance development.

The courtyard is in a former alley platted as “Park Place” and will be promoted by that name, said Chris Fleming, who is developing the NW 10 and Robinson Avenue block along with partners Bob Howard and Mickey Clagg.

Fleming credited architect Brian Fitzsimmons and urban studies consultant Blair Humphreys with creating the concept, which will tie together the already completed Hadden Hall apartments with retail and offices in the Packard Building and apartments and retail in the old Guardian Garage.

Fleming noted the Packard Building renovations are wrapping up and more than 60 percent of the building has already been leased to Blue Knight Energy Partners. He said renovations on the Guardian Garage also are under way and said he hopes to have work started on the courtyard as soon as plans are approved.

“Our goal is for the Guardian to have a restaurant that will spill into the plaza area,” Fleming said. “We’ve gone through vacation procedures to get the alley close to where we can close it. The unique thing about the Guardian building is it also has windows on the former alley. It made it a natural fit for something like this ... it energizes a space people typically avoid.”

Fleming said Humphreys was helpful in identifying ways to create spaces that would encourage walkability throughout the area. Fitzsimmons, meanwhile, has won praise for his previous work at the 23rd Street Courts, where a series of bungalow homes were renovated into a trendy set of shops, offices and restaurants.

Humphreys said the Park Place project is a step in the right direction for downtown development and urged the design committee and city planners to consider how to encourage other developers to look at how buildings and attached spaces can create a more “active public realm” that results in a more comfortable experience for pedestrians.

Fitzsimmons said he hopes the Park Place plaza will be used by the entire neighborhood and not just those in the adjoining buildings. He said he realized with design for the 23rd Street Courts just how far redevelopment can go beyond building renovations.

“That's been an exciting place for dealing with the urban fabric,” Fitzsimmons said. “It's not just about the buildings — it's about the spaces between and the whole experience.”



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