

What is Codo? It's apartments, commercial space

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When the banner unfurled on the side of the former York Auto Parts building on York City's North George Street, it presented a vision of Codo -- a \$9.5 million project that will combine redevelopment and new construction to create loft apartments and new commercial space.

That the banner faced the front entrance of the city's new Sovereign Bank Stadium is no coincidence.

Bill Swartz III, a member of the Codo development group, said the project would not have happened as quickly if the stadium had not been built. The ballpark demonstrates the energy in the area, he said.

"The stadium was really the main driver behind this project because what this stadium did was announce that York is entering a new era," Swartz said. "And Codo confirms that."

The York Revolution has just finished its first season at the stadium, but developers said that between Codo and the \$37 million Northwest Triangle project across the street, baseball is already influencing their decisions to invest in the city.

Meeting demand: Swartz, who is owner of Sherman Property Management Inc., said his company has been turning away young people looking for high-end rentals because there are not enough units to meet demand.

Codo comes to meet that demand, he said. The project development group will put millions into renovating the former York Auto Parts building at 241 N. George St. into loft apartments and commercial space, and then building an addition and a glass lobby tower to connect both parts.

The development group brought hundreds of people out to a project unveiling Thursday, attracting attention with an ad campaign that asked, "What is Codo?" and an opening event that offered free T-shirts and baseball tickets to people who had signed up online.

Some of them were potential future tenants, including 25-year-old city resident Erin Barkdoll. She said Codo's loft apartments could keep people in the city after college, and the big windows in the plans had her intrigued.

"I'd like to see it, that's for sure," Barkdoll said.

Influence in Triangle: The companies developing the Northwest Triangle project also said the stadium played a role in their decision to get involved.

When Northwest Triangle development proposals were due last year, the stadium was still in the planning phase. But that was enough to encourage Maryland-based Enterprise Homes Inc. to invest in the project along with the Kinsley companies.

"The stadium is something that was of great interest to us," said Chickie Grayson, Enterprise Homes president. "That was helping revitalize the downtown area."

The Kinsley-Enterprise plan, still mostly in the planning phases, calls for renovated and new commercial space as well as 85 to 125 new townhouses in a nine-acre area. The project will require \$37 million in private funding plus promised state grants.

Other factors that sold Enterprise on the plan were the proximity of the Susquehanna Commerce Center, the plans to extend the Heritage Rail Trail County Park and the opportunity the Northwest Triangle project presented to help transform the community, Grayson said.

Kinsley spokeswoman Barbara Sardella wrote in an e-mail that the stadium was "a factor, but not the only factor" that got Kinsley interested in developing the project, which will also benefit from the city's new arts district, new shops and

restaurants and the "solid foundation" of the downtown core.

More development?: Property owners and city officials alike hope to see other nearby tracts redeveloped. A real estate agent has put the long-abandoned former York County Prison on a few acres on Chestnut Street on sale for \$3.9 million, and city economic development director Matt Jackson said he expects more development in the next two years.

"The best projects have sustained, gradual development around them, and that's what we're looking for regarding the baseball stadium," Jackson said.

Still, he had predicted the city would get about five new ethnic eateries opening up along North George Street this year, though the stretch has gotten only two so far: Italian dining at Colosseo Ristorante Italiano in the 100 block and the African-inspired Healthy Deli Café around the corner in the first block of West Philadelphia Street.

The stretch of storefront still includes empty facades. Jackson said his earlier forecast was an imperfect assessment of the often-volatile restaurant market.

"It's hard to read the tea leaves on these projects, but so much can happen: a change in lease, a change in ownership, a change in Realtor ... or often a lack of funding if you're a small owner," Jackson said.

He said he still expects to see more restaurants eventually fill the storefronts near the stadium.

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ABOUT CODO:

Buildings: two, the former York Auto Parts building at 241 N. George St. and an adjoining addition facing North Street

Residential units for rent: 36

Commercial space: 10,000 square feet plus a street-level café

Investors: Louis Appell, George Hodges, John Zimmerman, Bill Zimmerman, Joe Wagman, Bill Swartz III

Companies involved in development: Wagman Construction Inc., Sherman Property Management

Construction to begin: December 2007

Construction to end: September 2008

More information: www.codoyork.com

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