

15-story tower with apartments, retail, parking proposed for Franklinton

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A pair of Columbus developers is proposing a 15-story tower on West Broad Street in Franklinton, continuing the transformation of the neighborhood.

The \$50 million tower, on the southwest corner of West Broad and South Gift streets, would include 206 apartments in the top 11 stories, above parking, commercial and retail levels. A rooftop lounge with a view of Downtown would sit on top of the T-shaped building.

About 75% of the apartments would be priced to be affordable for families making 80% to 100% of the area median income, which in Franklin County is \$58,700 for a one-person household and \$83,800 for a family of four.

The plan expands and modifies a November proposal for the site, which called for 80 apartments in a 13-story tower.

"When we got initial feedback, it was clear parking was important," said Brian Higgins, owner of Arch City Development, which is pursuing the project with OZ Development Group.

"We worked to tie up the rest of the block, which really allows us to do something significant."

The tower would occupy the block bordered by West Broad, South Gift, South Skidmore and Shepherd streets. It would incorporate three historic buildings, from 577 to 585 W. Broad St., built in 1900 and 1905.

"We need to get in there with an engineer to make sure we can use them, and we plan to pursue historic tax credits, but I think those buildings contribute to the architectural heritage of the neighborhood," Higgins said.

Other buildings on the block would be demolished, including the Inn Towne Motel, a budget motel built in 1953 at 595 W. Broad St.

The building is dubbed the Mondrian because the original design included bold color blocks in the style of the Dutch painter Piet Mondrian. The name remains, at least for now, but the colors might not, Higgins said.

In addition to enlarging the building and adding parking, the design has changed in another way: The tower no longer sits directly on the sidewalk. Instead, the West Broad Street front of the building will be two or three stories, including the older structures.

"Originally, they came in with a big glass thing that went straight up from the sidewalk," said Judy Box, vice chair of the East Franklinton Review Board, which heard a presentation on the tower in the fall.

"I advocated for no more than five stories on the curb, then step it back," she said. "I'll give them credit, that's what they did. This won't make West Broad look like a canyon."

The project sits in one of central Ohio's 52 Opportunity Zones, which allow investors to defer or perhaps eliminate capital-gains taxes. OZ Development Group specializes in the investments.

"We are pleased to partner with Arch City Development on The Mondrian," said Graham Allison, CEO of OZ Development Group. "As a transformational project, it will create the western gateway to the Scioto Peninsula and build upon all the great things happening in our city."

The Mondrian is the latest of several large projects in Franklinton, including the Scioto Peninsula, Gravity and River & Rich developments in East Franklinton and, in West Franklinton, the new CoverMyMeds headquarters and redevelopment of the former Mount Carmel West site.

"I'm bullish on Franklinton," said Higgins, who has worked on other developments in the neighborhood.

Arch City and OZ plan to present the tower proposal to the East Franklinton Review Board Wednesday.

Higgins said if the approval process goes well, developers hope to break ground in 2022.

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