



6/23/2005

## **THINGS LOOK UP IN NORTH HYDE PARK**

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**NORTH HYDE PARK** - Developers are racing around North Hyde Park like mice navigating an experimental labyrinth.

Forty years ago, it was an area of low- to medium-income homeowners with few professionals and many people moving away. Now it's on the brink of reversing that trend. Today they are coming back," said Bob Allen, president of the North Hyde Park Neighborhood Association, who has lived in the area since 1967. "I'm excited about it. The proposed buildings are attractive. It would be a plus for our community. "The plans that developers are discussing call for changes in the area just north of South Tampa and a stone's throw north of Kennedy Boulevard.

Developers said property in South Tampa is hard to find and the prices are extremely high, driving investors to the north side of Kennedy Boulevard. Mize & Sefair Properties Inc. is planning a 17-unit town house development at North A Street and Albany Avenue. Each 1,600- to 1,750-square-foot unit will have three bedrooms, 3 1/2 bathrooms and a two-car garage. The prices are in the low-\$300,000s. Dan Sefair, chief executive officer of Mize & Sefair, and company President Jay Mize said the location is perfect and the zoning regulations embrace dense development. Town houses are popular because they offer an urban lifestyle without the hassle that comes with single-family homes, Sefair and Mize said. Change is coming to the area, Sefair said. He envisions a mix of town homes, rehabilitated homes and new single-family homes, along with professional buildings on Howard and Armenia avenues. "It's a new area that hasn't been tapped into," Sefair said.

LIST Group Developers has several ideas, including 10 two-story town homes at 2410 W. Gray St. that will sell for \$225,000 or more, said Steve Micheleni, governmental relations consultant for LIST. The same developer is proposing professional office space at 1907 Cass St. and at 401, 403 and 407 N. Howard Ave. There are several reasons for the development trend in North Hyde Park, Micheleni said: Some people are leaving the suburbs and moving into the city to avoid the long commutes. Young professionals who may have grown up in South Tampa or rented apartments there might not be able to afford a single-family home in South Tampa, but they want to stay in familiar surroundings.

The established community has existing infrastructure, including water, sewer and drainage systems. There are nearby schools, jobs and hospitals. Price and availability helped attract Jere Tolton and a group of investors to the area. They proposed to build a medical office building at Howard Avenue and Gray Street. The one-story, 7,740-square-foot building will have a historical look with a brick facade. "It's hard to find available property south of Kennedy," said Tolton, an investment partner with the project. "The megadevelopers have scooped

everything up."

Anthony Garcia, principal planner with the Hillsborough County City-County Planning Commission, said residents should know they have a voice in managing the area's growth.

The neighborhood organization and people who live there need to ask for what they want and express their concerns. They have to be active and vigilant, he said. "It's power of the people who will determine their growth," Garcia said. "New development is good, but it's good development you want. They are going to make a determining factor. They have to live with it every day."

Ken Husuliak, who lives in the area and owns rental property there, too, supports the planned development. The area is improving, but it still struggles with crime, such as drug dealers and prostitutes, he said. With development, sophisticated residents will come to the area, which will push out crime and bring in needed businesses. "I'm like everybody else, I want everything nicer," Husuliak said.

Allen, the neighborhood association president, said the biggest concern is parking. Some of the area's streets are narrow. If cars park on the streets, it will slow traffic, he said. The growth also will put added stress on the roads, drainage and lighting systems, he said. Allen suggested developers in the area contribute money to a fund for improving infrastructure. "I'm excited, and most people in my group are excited," Allen said. "It's hard to find available property south of Kennedy. The megadevelopers have scooped everything up." JERE TOLTON Investment partner, on the group's choice of the North Hyde Park area for a medical office building