

Work to begin on six-block Grove Village near year's end

BY PATRICIA HOYOS

Phase one of a project aimed at revamping West Coconut Grove along Grand Avenue is scheduled to break ground toward the end of the year.

The six-block Grove Village project is to bring a mix of residences, retail and offices to the historic neighborhood, replacing low-rent housing and commercial space.

"From day one we've always had the vision of work, live, play," said Peter Gardner, president of Pointe Group Advisors, which is responsible for the massive mixed-use development.

Phase one, which consist of two blocks, is expected to be completed by 2014, said Margaret Nee, vice president of development for the Pointe Group.

The Bimini block will include a full-service grocery store, 60,441 square feet of retail, 52 residential rental units, eight townhomes and over 400 parking spaces. Ms. Nee declined to disclose which grocery store will anchor the building.

The Paradise Island block will be the site of 223 residential rental units, 20,572 square feet of retail and over 380 parking spaces.

Ms. Nee said construction on the different phases will begin as leases are signed. She said she hopes that no more than three phases will be necessary and hopes the whole project is completed in five years.

Mr. Gardner, who grew up and lives in Coconut Grove, said he wants to reignite the neighborhood so that it becomes what it should be.

Since the Grove Village project was first announced, it has been met with conflicting sentiments. Some were eager for the revitalization and the prosperity it might bring to the area while others feared for the fate of the residents of the area.

While some people still have a few reservations over the project, the Miami City Commission approved the Pointe Group's major use special permit (MUSP) Dec. 17, giving the project the final go-ahead agreeing that it was the best project that has been suggested to stimulate the dying neighborhood.



Margaret Nee and Peter Gardner with a model and a rendering of the six-block Grove Village project.

Ms. Nee said the Pointe Group has been working with the residents to help them relocate. About half of the current residents, she said, chose to stay in the Grove while the other half decided to move closer to their workplace or out of Florida altogether.

“We tried to encourage as many people to stay in the Grove,” she said.

Working with the community to create a development that will fit the contemporary bohemian feel of the area while improving the neighborhood has been a priority for the Pointe Group, which has had more than 100 community meetings since 2007.

“We have tweaked and changed the development to reflect what the residents wanted,” Mr. Gardner said.

Another important aspect of the development, Ms. Nee said, was making it accessible by planning for plenty of parking and making sure public transportation reaches the area.

The Grove circulator already passes through the area, and the University of Miami’s shuttle also serves the Grove. Once the development is completed, she said, the Coral Gables trolley will carry passengers to the neighborhood.

Grove Village will also be four blocks away from CocoWalk, Peacock Park and the water, Mr. Gardner said, creating a great flow for Coconut Grove residents and visitors.