

New homes coming to West Dayton may just be beginning

Developer proposes project at former Gem City Ice Cream Co. site.



Charles Simms Development proposes building 26 new townhouses at 1005 W. Third St., which until recently was home to the now-demolished Gem City Ice Cream Co. building.

JIM NOELKER / STAFF



Robi Simms, vice president of Charles Simms Development, shows members of the Landmarks Commission examples of brick the company could use to build new townhomes in the Wright Dunbar neighborhood.

CORNELIUS FROLIK / STAFF



Renderings of proposed Wolf Creek homes project in West Dayton.

CONTRIBUTED



Charlie Simms is the president of Charles Simms Development, which is working on a plan for 26 new townhomes at the former Gem City Ice Cream Co. site.

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DAYTON DAILY NEWS IN-DEPTH

New affordable rental homes and market-rate townhomes are planned for the Wolf Creek and Wright Dunbar neighborhoods, and developers and city staff say they hope to help bring even more new housing to West Dayton.

“This is a really exciting time for the West Third Street corridor and inner west Dayton,” said Tony Kroeger, Dayton’s division manager of planning and land use.

Wright Dunbar and Wolf Creek have hundreds of existing homes, but they also have a significant amount of vacant land that developers and city staff say has redevelopment potential.

Wolf Creek has a riverfront location, views of downtown and is close to the urban center, the West Third Street business corridor and the Wright Dunbar district, Kroeger said.

Wright Dunbar, located west of downtown across the Great Miami River, has a healthy housing market and a growing and increasingly active historic business district.

Late last month, Charles Simms Development appeared before Dayton’s Landmarks Commission for a concept review of a proposed housing project in Wright Dunbar.

Simms Development, a company that many people credit with helping kickstart a wave of new downtown housing a decade ago, is working on a plan for 26 new townhomes at the former Gem City Ice Cream Co. site.

The three-story townhomes at 1005 W. Third St. could cost in the \$200,000s.

“We are excited to build in Wright Dunbar – we want to come in with something people can afford,” Simms said.

Simms has completed six projects in downtown Dayton in roughly the last decade, creating more than 115 townhomes.

Simms started with smaller, less expensive townhomes and went on to build larger and more upscale units, with significantly higher prices.

“We have to establish that market first,” Simms said.

“Hopefully the same thing that happened downtown will happen in the Wright Dunbar area.”

Simms Development wants to build more townhomes in Wright Dunbar than just this project because the neighborhood can support it, said Robi Simms, vice president of Charles Simms Development.

“There are many empty lots and opportunities to serve the Wright Dunbar neighborhood better with new construction (of) market-rate homes,” he said.

The proposed townhomes could contribute to the “richness” and “diversity” of the street-level experience in Wright Dunbar in a way that is consistent with the district’s evolution, says a letter to the landmarks commission from West Social Tap & Table, the new food hall down the street, and developer Dillin LLC.

Wolf Creek homes

On Oct. 5, the Dayton City Commission approved selling 10 residential vacant lots in Wolf Creek to County Corp.

The sale supports County Corp.’s \$10 million project to construct 28 detached single-family homes.

The Wolf Creek homes project is intended to stabilize and repopulate a neighborhood that already has some strong assets and attributes, said Kroeger, Dayton’s manager of planning and land use.

The new homes, which will be operated as affordable rental units for 30 years, are north of West Third Street, between North Broadway Street and James H. McGee Boulevard, say developers County Corp. and Oberer.

Twenty-six homes will have two stories and 1,662-square feet of space, while a couple will be smaller, ranch-style units (1,375 square feet), said Bob McCann, chief operating officer with Oberer.

There will be six different elevations and appearances, though all the houses will have four bedrooms, two baths, garages, front porches and energy-efficient features, he said.

The homes will be affordable to families at 50% to 60% of the area median gross income, with monthly rents expected to be between \$650 to \$750.

The project is less than 60 days away from breaking ground, and McCann said the new housing builds on the momentum of the nearby Wright Dunbar neighborhood.

He said the project will help stabilize the larger community.

“Investment breeds investment,” he said.

The new homes will be mainly financed by tax credits, including Low-Income Housing Tax Credits, but Dayton plans to award \$300,000 to the project out of its federal COVID-19 relief funds.

The city also is considering spending coronavirus relief funds to improve housing east of Broadway Street, in the Wright Dunbar area, which could include new construction, Kroeger said.

Dayton City Commissioner Shenise Turner-Sloss said is glad the Wolf Creek neighborhood is being targeted for new housing, and County Corp. has been a good partner.

But she said some Low-Income Housing Tax Credit (LIHTC) projects in the past did not end well, and the properties today are boarded up and blighted.

Turner-Sloss, like some other community members have noted, say LIHTC properties are “saturated” in west and northwest Dayton.

“If we are saying we want people to invest in these areas, then we have to be intentional, we have to make sure we are going in, addressing the social ills and that we are not just creating another shell game, which we have in the past with LIHTC,” she said.

Dayton City Commissioner Darryl Fairchild said he is pleased that new homes will be built along Broadway Street, across from Edison Elementary, partly because he envisions families walking across the street to school.

“We’re invested in this neighborhood and we’re excited to see it come back,” he said.

Dayton Mayor Jeffrey Mims Jr. said this project is exactly what citizens have wanted to see happen in the city and that area.

“This is great for our city, great for West Dayton and great for that neighborhood,” City Commissioner Chris Shaw said.

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