

**FIVESOUTH**

## Bismarck Futures takes next step on downtown project

14 HOURS AGO • BY [JESSICA HOLDMAN](#)

A proposed downtown development would give Fifth Street a new look.

Bismarck Futures and Cardon Development Group have been working with city employees to develop a potential street plan surrounding its downtown Fifth Street mixed-use development.

Bismarck Futures Chairman Bruce Whittey said, if the proposal, dubbed FiveSouth, meets city officials' expectations developed by the Downtown Sub-Area Study, the group hopes to come back in late April or early May with an official plan and a price tag.

The group also will host a series of public open houses to get community input and answer questions.

The new development will be edged by two lanes of traffic on Fifth Street and Sweet Avenue. A two-laned Bowen Avenue would run between housing complexes and a south Fourth Street would be created to run south from Sweet Avenue to Kirkwood Mall.

Under the group's proposal, there also will be a bike lane on the west side of Fifth Street, 300 spaces of on-street parking around the development and sidewalks wide enough for restaurant dining, as well as the ability to close the street for large community events.

Conceptual drawings of the buildings include a potential seven-story hotel, four-story apartments with retail on the ground floor and a five-story parking ramp.

Cardon said housing will amount to 300 units in the development's first phase. According to a market study, the city could support more but the group chose to start smaller, he said.

"To be an activator, you have to be successful," he said, and the group doesn't want to overbuild.

Whittey and developer Don Cardon of Cardon Development Group said the past several months have been about making sure the project would work. They have gone over traffic flow for large Bismarck Event Center events, electrical and sewer connections and capacity and airspace above the proposed hotel needed for planes coming in and out of the Bismarck Airport.

Cardon said it is technical aspects that can often kill a deal and the group wanted certainty.

### **In with the new**

Whitney said the area is underutilized.

Bismarck Futures aims to replace buildings south of Sweet Avenue, such as the former Knutson's Photography, Sidelines Bar and the city-owned strip mall containing Quiznos, Big Apple Bagels and more.

"You can change things, and greater things will happen," said Whitney, adding that the current business owners are hoping to retire, move or be part of FiveSouth.

Several attempts have been made to rejuvenate south Fifth Street, said Whitney, adding that Bismarck Futures is hoping its proposal will be the answer.

"We're not Dickinson. We're not Minot. Bismarck needs to get to the next level," Whitney said.

### **Success in Phoenix**

When Don Cardon drew up the concept of CityScape mixed-use development on a legal pad three years before it was built, the main three blocks of downtown Phoenix were "a hole in the doughnut."

Cardon said city officials wondered for years why no one would develop the area around the large city's main street. Since then, two of the three blocks have been successfully developed.

Eric Johnson, program manager for Phoenix, said the city contributed \$57 million to the \$600 million development in the form of streets, utilities and other public infrastructure. Despite being in the middle of the recession, office space filled to about 90 percent occupancy within a year. Retail took a little longer, but base retailers, such as CVS and Urban Outfitters, came within a couple years.

"It took time, but, overall, it's doing well," Johnson said, and the city is making back its investment in the form of tax revenue and rent paid on the city-owned portion of the development.

Johnson said the project definitely met the city's economic development goals of bringing housing and retail back to its core.

In the case of CityScape, Cardon partnered with a larger developer, Red Development, to make the project happen. Now, he hopes to use his company to do the same in Bismarck.