

Downtown spreads out

Housing developers tackle their projects on small lots of land

By **Steve Lackmeyer**
Business Writer

The days of large, undeveloped tracts of downtown land cleared by Urban Renewal awaiting a developer are over.

But that's not inhibiting some housing developers from seeking out opportunities in less likely spots — even if it means pursuing projects on smaller lots.

Tom Seabrooke, who to date has been a suburban home developer, admits he admires the work that has been completed so far — projects like The Centennial, Block 42 and the Brownstones at Maywood Park.

"I saw them and I thought, I'd like to get in on some of this," Seabrooke said.

A shifting downtown market

Finding the right spot for downtown housing, however, is more difficult than it was even a few years ago. Seabrooke discovered most swaths of land in the Deep Deuce and Flat Iron districts — where most downtown housing is being built — are already controlled by developers or are up for sale at extravagant prices.

MidTown, with its scattered 25 by 25 foot lots, has a history of attracting smaller infill developments. Along NW 7, west of Shartel Avenue, architect Randy Floyd renovated a series of territorial homes and was then followed by other architects who bought nearby lots and built new houses.

And so it is that Seabrooke is entering the downtown housing market with 21 units, instead of 80, at the corner of NW 7 and Dewey Avenue. He is also planning to build another set of condominiums on a center lot across the street. While the lots are surrounded by older homes, Seabrooke thinks sales, with prices ranging between \$220,000 and \$320,000, will go well thanks to proximity to St. Anthony Hospital.

"There is really nothing over that way," Seabrooke said. "This is close enough to downtown, and I can also cater to the people at the hospital. I've had people approach me about these and if I had contracts ready, they'd be signing now."

Brett Hamm, president of Downtown Oklahoma City Inc., said the emergence of such a development is an indicator that the downtown market is shifting.

"This may be an area where the city has a bit of a learning



Tom Seabrooke is hoping to start construction later this year on a 21-unit, three-story condominium complex at NW 7 and Dewey.



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BY STEVE LACKMEYER, THE OKLAHOMAN

Tom Seabrooke, left, and John Ward stand on vacant land at NW 7 and Dewey where Seabrooke plans to build 21 condominiums.



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