



Salem project will bring condos, studios downtown

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A mixed-use condominium project in downtown Salem is being hailed as an example of effective collaboration.

The \$20 million, five-story project at 295 Church Street, scheduled to open on Dec. 18, consists of two floors of separately-owned commercial spaces topped by three floors with 27 condominium units.

What makes the project unusual is the partnerships that sparked it in the first place, said Rick Scott, director of the city of Salem's urban development department.

Scott said the project is a joint effort that includes the city, the Mid-Willamette Valley Cable Regulatory Authority, Willamette University and developer Cascadia Development.

The city's information technology center, located in a building that was once a gas station and a tire warehouse, needed a new space.

So did Capital Community Television, the public access station that was running out of room within the city's public library.

Meanwhile, Willamette University had long been interested in establishing a presence close to the downtown core, Scott said.

So the groups worked together on the development: CCTV will now occupy new studio space on the ground floor of the Church Street project, and the city's IT department will own the second floor.

Willamette University bought the city's old IT center for about \$4.8 million and is considering plans for a \$50 million performing arts center there, Scott said.

Cascadia Development, meanwhile, is marketing an additional 1,800 square feet of ground floor commercial space as well as the 27 condo units.

The collaboration has drawn accolades.

On Oct. 6, the Oregon Economic Development Association gave the development its "Award of Excellence for Collaborative Partnerships."

The building's designers made a point to make the difference between the lower floors and the upper condo units visually apparent.

"This building has a top, a bottom and a belt line," said Greg Mitchell, a senior project manager with the design firm for the project, Portland-based LRS Architects Inc.

"We thought, 'let's be brutally honest with this building' and created a reveal, or a cleaved building at the belt line. You read the base of the building as an urban office ... and the top of the building reads just very straight forward as residential."

The project also marks the start of a condominium surge in downtown Salem.

The Church Street project is the first of three condo developments to come to market.

Scott said an eight-story, 22-condo development called The Rivers Condominiums along Front Street near Riverfront Park is under construction. Another project, The Meridian, will bring 89 luxury condo units to the riverfront.

The Church Street project has received reservations from two potential condo tenants, and a third is now negotiating a purchase contract, said Elesa Doll, a project representative and broker with Coldwell Banker Commercial Mountain West Real Estate.

Doll said she expected about 40 to 50 people to show for an open house of the project in late October. Instead, it attracted 200 people.

"A lot were serious buyers looking for a condominium lifestyle downtown," she said.

But there is a leaning curve to selling a product new to a market. Doll said her team came to Portland for a lesson from the Rose City's experienced condo brokers.

"We toured a lot of the Portland condominium projects to find out the benefits of living in a condo," she said. "I think it will be good for the city once we get people living downtown more."