

# Idaho Statesman

October 16, 2005  
Section: Local  
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## Project may revitalize downtown Nampa

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NAMPA -- A planned 61,000-square-foot building in downtown Nampa would be the first new major construction in downtown in more than 30 years and allow the owners of its condominium-style suites to live, work and shop in the city's center, according to city officials.

The estimated \$8 million project, dubbed Heritage Plaza, could spur downtown revitalization efforts and other projects, officials and others said. And it would realize city leaders' longstanding dream of bringing high-end residential development downtown.

Heritage Plaza, proposed for the mostly vacant property at 3rd Street and 13th Avenue South, would have residential suites with private balconies on the third floor, business suites with balconies on the second floor, and specialty shops and private parking on the ground floor. Tenants would purchase from 1,000 to 20,000 square feet per floor (for about \$175 to \$185 per square foot) that would be finished according to their wishes, developers said.

The construction, planned to start mid-2006, would be the biggest new building in central Nampa since the Landmark Tower was built in the 1970s, and it's about 20,000 square feet bigger than Nampa's most famous three-story building, the Dewey Palace hotel, a storied structure that sat on 1st Street downtown until it was demolished in 1963.

Developers Jeff Needs and Pat Inglis expect the building to open in spring 2007 with a brick and stone facade and arches that will fit in with the style of downtown Nampa's historic buildings.

"This is almost like a trial balloon," said Jasper LiCalzi, assistant professor of political science at Albertson College of Idaho. "If it takes off, everybody will want to do it. The key thing is to get people living downtown. "

Other experts agree.

"Once a project of significance validates an area, it's a lot easier for other people to make a decision to build or invest," said George Liff, real estate broker at Colliers International in Boise. "If the project in Nampa is the right project and it's well done, then it should have a substantial impact on Nampa."

City building and planning and zoning officials said the building fits in the city's downtown zoning, so no conditional-use permit is necessary, but variances and platting issues may arise depending on how the building sits on three lots that were platted as part of the original townsite in the late 1800s.

City officials haven't seen developers' plans but estimate the approval process could take up to 90 days. Developers have not yet begun the permitting process. In recent decades, most new construction of office buildings and commercial space in Nampa has been on the outskirts of town.

Needs, who was raised in Nampa and moved away for a while, wondered every time he came back to visit his parents why nothing was being done downtown. He started working on the project before he returned to live in Nampa last year.

"It's important that we have a town center -- a place with soul," he said.

Strong city leadership and funding for details such as landscaping are also key to revitalizing the downtown, Needs said.

The city is in the process of hiring an economic development director who would oversee efforts downtown, but officials don't yet have plans for where to put or how to fund buildings for vital city services, such as the library.

Mayor Tom Dale said he's working with a committee on plans and funding but wouldn't divulge the names of business people and others involved. Needs said about 28 percent of the Heritage Plaza has been reserved. He declined to give tenant names because contracts can't be signed until the city approves the plans for the project.

Downtown Nampa

Land has been changing hands downtown for the past year, partly because of city efforts.

Laurel MacKinnon, a Washington, D.C., developer who grew up in Nampa, has purchased buildings and lots along 13th Avenue South with plans to renovate and build.

William and Anita Corbett of Boise purchased the Village Square buildings at 13th Avenue and 2nd Street in August 2004 and the line of stores across the street in June. Corbett plans to remodel a main entrance to Village Square and turn the central portion into a French cafe by the end of the year.

Lisa and Kevin Myers of Nampa have plans to open a Flying M Coffeehouse downtown by the end November.

Contact reporter Sandra Forester at 377-6464 or sforesteridahostatesman.com.

Cutline: This artist's rendering shows the proposed Heritage Plaza development, right, with existing businesses .