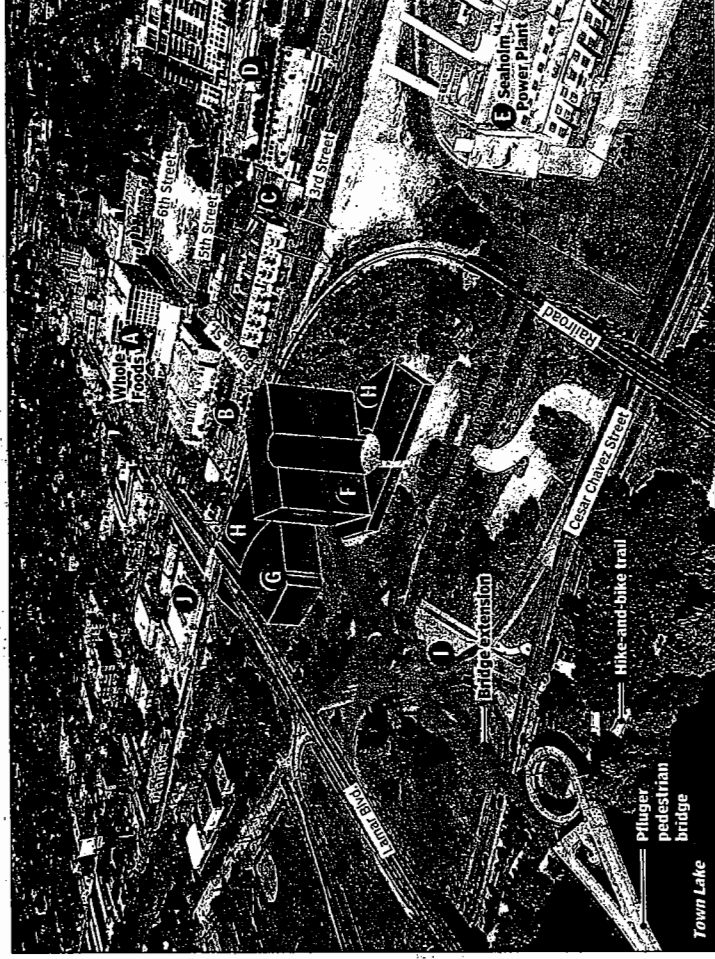


NEW NEIGHBORHOOD TAKING SHAPE IN A DOWNTOWN NOOK



Redone roads would lead to Park Plaza

By Shonda Novak

AMERICAN-STATESMAN STAFF

More than 4 acres overlooking Town Lake near downtown's western edge could become home to hundreds of new apartments, condominiums, shops and offices within two years.

Gables Residential Trust plans to start work late next year on a project that it's calling Gables Park Plaza.

Opponents have thwarted previous plans to develop the land, at the northeast corner of West Cesar Chavez Street and North Lamar Boulevard.

But now the city is pushing to revitalize the western end of downtown, and Gables' plans coincide with the goal of creating a new neighborhood.

Pfluger Bridge extension

The city will unveil the design for the Pfluger Bridge extension Saturday. Displays will be shown from 8 a.m. to 2 p.m. at the north end of the bridge.

Gables will team up with CLB Partners Ltd. to build a 15-story condominium tower and a 10-story apartment building, each with shops on the ground floor, and two parking garages, with some spaces open to the public.

The project would mesh with the city's efforts to improve traffic flow with new streets and extending the Pfluger pedestrian bridge with an

See **PROJECT, A10**

Ralph Barrera and Robert Catzada
AMERICAN-STATESMAN

Western downtown's changing landscape

- A:** Whole Foods Market
- B:** Proposed 36-story Spring condominium tower
- C:** Gables West Avenue apartments
- D:** Site of proposed 27-story Zom Development apartment tower
- E:** Seaholm: future mixed-use project
- F:** Gables' proposed 15-story condominium tower; 100 units, shops on the ground floor
- G:** Gables' proposed 10-story apartment tower; 314 units, shops, offices
- H:** Parking garages
- I:** City parkland, with future extension of Pfluger pedestrian bridge, rerouting of Sandra Muralda Way, new streets connecting Cesar Chavez Street and Lamar Boulevard
- J:** Future apartments on former Goodwill site

Sources: Lanamation LLC; RhodeHurt; ROMA Design Group; HDR Engineering Inc.

PROJECT: Plans may depend on a height exemption

Continued from A1

overpass across West Cesar Chavez, said Austin Librach, assistant director of the Economic Growth and Redevelopment Services office.

The Gables plan includes a two-lane drive through the project, connecting to Third Street, with a landscaped median and flanked by separate paths for bicycle and foot traffic.

The city is planning other road changes in the area that would include rerouting Sandra Muralda Way and a new entrance into the adjacent Seaholm Power Plant, which is slated to be converted into a venue for entertainment, restaurants and other uses.

Eventually, the city plans a transit hub that would include commuter rail in the area.

The Gables project would open in mid-2008, said Brett

Denton, regional vice president of Gables Residential, which is based in Boca Raton, Fla., and owns nine apartment complexes in the Austin area.

Gables' plans are contingent on winning a zoning change for the condo tower, which would be just under 200 feet tall in an area where the city caps building height at 120 feet.

The Zoning and Platting Commission will hear the request Nov. 17.

The city's Downtown Commission voted unanimously to support the project after seeing a presentation Wednesday night by Steve Drenner, an attorney for Gables Residential.

Stan Haas, an architect and member of the commission, said it "is clearly in keeping" with Mayor Will Wynn's goals to have 25,000 people living downtown in the next 10 years, a fivefold increase from today.

"It's an excellent plan," Haas

said. "The scale and massing of the project seem very reasonable within the context of Town Lake and the urban setting."

Several development plans have been proposed in recent years for the land, which Gables is buying from Lumbermen's Investment Corp., a subsidiary of Temple-Inland Inc.

But previous projects ran into opposition from neighborhood groups that didn't want high-rises that close to the lake and environmental activists who favored turning the land into a park.

The site is bordered on the south by city-owned parkland. Gables originally planned to include a new home for the Austin Children's Museum. However, those plans fell through when the city struck a deal that will give the museum space elsewhere downtown.

Gables would have some high-profile neighbors. On West Third Street just north of the Gables land, other developers are proposing a 36-story condominium tower. On West Fifth Street, ZOM Development Inc. plans to break ground soon on a 27-story apartment tower.

Drenner, the Gables lawyer, said he expects some opposition to the extra height.

The city has yet to rule on a zoning change for the proposed 36-story Spring condominium tower, which also is an area with a 120-foot height limit. The Zoning and Platting Commission has recommended limiting the proposed 400-foot tower to between 275 and 350 feet.

Mary Arnold, a longtime environmental advocate, said Drenner has yet to win her over.

"I don't like the increased height," Arnold said. "I feel like the scale of the buildings ... needs to be lower."