

CanalSide

Vista Visions

By Kristen George

Once a warehouse district filled with textile mills and railroad terminals, the Vista played a central role in the growth and development of the city of Columbia.

Today, the Vista is again the center of activity as a prime commercial, residential, shopping and dining hub, with more than 45 restaurants and bars, 60 artists' galleries and specialty shops and an eclectic mix of businesses and services.

The area's proximity to the Congaree River, the downtown business district and the University of South Carolina's Innovista development make it a destination for residents as well as visitors.

CanalSide is one of several mixed-use developments on the drawing board. Among the others are the Renaissance Plaza Apartments on Lady Street and City Club townhomes on Gervais Street.

Developers see CanalSide, a 23-acre development, as a self-sustaining neighborhood complete with shops, restaurants and galleries.

"The focus is to not only attract residents to CanalSide, but promote the lifestyle of living in downtown Columbia," said Fred Delk, executive director for the Columbia Development Corp., a 20-year-old city office focused on promoting development within the Vista.

"We hope to attract people of a creative nature, those who are likely to enjoy the urban lifestyle; to eat out, to use credit cards, to purchase paintings from local artists to hang on the walls in their new condos. We're building and creating sustainability not only in the Vista, but in all of downtown."

Upon completion, CanalSide will be the largest residential development in downtown Columbia, with 750 total residences including multi-family owned and leased residences and single-family



RENDERING/COURTESY BEACH CO.

CanalSide is a 23-acre development being built by The Beach Co.

home sites.

Phase I, which has an anticipated completion of winter 2008, will include about 40 townhomes, 100 condominiums and 160 apartments. The neighborhood will include about 35,000-square-feet of retail and commercial space designed to attract boutiques, gourmet markets, art galleries, cafés and restaurants.

The Beach Co., a Charleston-based developer/builder, purchased the 23-acre tract from the city of Columbia in April 2006 and began accepting home site reservations in August. The project is expected to take seven to 10 years to complete, according to Daniel Doyle, vice president of development for The Beach Co.

"The scale of this project is very large and very complex," he said. "We are creating a neighborhood that will appeal to people getting their first apartment as well as those buying their last home. The development will be geared toward pedestrians, with shops and restaurants within walking distance and offices, parks and museums just a few blocks away."

CanalSide will complement the Innovista project by providing living space for University of South Carolina faculty and students, Delk said.

"This is a great exchange of energy," Delk said. "CanalSide will provide a lifestyle opportunity for some of the

research professors, who will be hard workers and creative individuals. They're going to want to live close (to the university), not in a typical suburban home."

CanalSide is designed to attract professionals and students, and to bring suburban residents back into the central city, Doyle said.

"This will be great for Columbia, but it will benefit the entire state," he said. "Through these projects, we hope to attract and retain intellectual, human capital. Instead of (USC) grads going to Charlotte or Atlanta, why not stay in Columbia?"

Delk added that all units currently for sale are eligible for the city of Columbia's housing loan program, which is a program developed to attract residents to the downtown area.

"The perception is that this is a high-end development, but that isn't true," Delk said. "When this is finished, we will have a very affordable, mixed community."

CanalSide condominiums start at \$170,000.

Delk said he expects that residential growth in the area will continue to expand over the next 10 years, with an office corridor developing along Huger St.

For more information on CanalSide or other Congaree Vista projects, visit www.columbiadevelopment.org