

■ RETAIL AND RESIDENTIAL

Downtown is going to the lofts

BY KATHI SCHROEDER | NMW STAFF

Imagine living or working in loft space where the address is 100 Gold (Avenue SW, that is). Does the image of an upscale residential or office environment, on an upper floor of a multistory building in the heart of Downtown, come to mind? If so, you're in the ballpark because that's what the developer, the **Historic District Improvement Company**, (HDIC) hopes tenant owners will envision about its proposed **Gold Avenue Lofts**.

The six story retail/office/residential complex on the south side of Gold Avenue between First and Second streets will form an exterior, or liner building, completely masking the north side of the city's newest parking garage. HDIC plans to pre-sell 15 of the units prior to the start of construction and two have already been purchased. Once construction starts, HDIC officials expect the loft project to be ready for occupancy by no later than 2003.

The city's five-story parking garage was set back on its north wall about 45 feet from Gold Avenue. The Lofts will be about 37- to 40-feet deep, off of common hallways on each floor. "It'll [the north face] look a bit like three old warehouse buildings," says Chris Leinberger, HDIC's managing partner, of the building's exterior design by Albuquerque's **Flatow Moore Shafer McCabe** (FMSM) architecture firm.

Says FMSM's Project Manager, Gerry Lannom, "We're bringing back the look of the warehouse type buildings that bordered the railroads and which held cotton and other goods that were transported by rail. The buildings are very consistent in appearance, with large windows and everything is designed to be similar in scale."

Lannom, who spent 15 years in Houston, Tex., says the warehouse style buildings in renovated downtown areas like Houston were slow to take off at first, but "now they're going like wildfires." Denver and New Orleans, among others, also renovated former warehouse buildings near railroad lines and have



FMSM Design Group

The lofts project, a combination of retail, residential and office space, will be complete in 2003.

entirely rejuvenated their downtowns with such mixed use, live/work developments.

Continues Lannom, "It really is one of the first loft type projects [in Downtown] - any purchaser can do with it what they like, but the goal is to have that open feel, with little partitioning, where one's imagination can work. It's a real change in thought for Albuquerque. We've purposely tried, even in the units we're trying proto-typically, for a feel that might be unusual and we're hoping it will be very popular."

Each unit is initially being sold as a basic shell, with prices starting at \$160,000 and rising to \$250,000 the higher one goes in the building and depending upon square footage and certain amenities. Purchasers can hire in their own architects or designers to complete the interior build-outs or work with **Dutcher Construction**, a design/build firm that has created several interior packages for HDIC that range in price from

\$30,000 to \$60,000 for high end interiors that include Viking stoves and other upscale extras.

The loft project faces the new **Century Theatre** complex and its mixed-use loft-style office/street-level retail façade, designed by **Dekker Perich Sabatini Architects**. Each set of buildings will run the length of the block on Gold, with colorful brick, concrete, glass and stucco exteriors.

According to leasing agent Barbara Lebeck, **The Lebeck Company LLC**, the units at street level will be occupied by retailers, while the second through sixth levels will house 41 loft-style offices and/or residences. HDIC's listing agents for the retail spaces are Alan Vincioni, **Berger Briggs Real Estate & Insurance**; Mike Goodwin, **Maestas & Ward Commercial Real Estate Services**; and Karen Cook, **Property Solutions Inc.**, Jo Cook, with **Keller Williams** also represents HDIC as a listing agent for the residential/office units.

Residential and office units range

from 1,100 to 1,500-square-feet with 11-foot ceilings, but Lebeck says there's built-in flexibility for buyers who desire larger spaces. Some units will have large, private terraces and in fact, the first two units sold included terrace space.

Some units have an option for a bay window or a small balcony. A secure entry with elevator access, solid wood core entry doors at each unit, dual-parted, thermally-insulated (and operable) industrial style windows, stainable concrete floors, radiant floor heating, forced air heat and refrigerated air conditioning are among the elements that will be installed with the basic shells. All units will have access through a centralized communications hub to state of the art data, phone and cable lines.

Townhouse units have 22-foot ceilings in a living/study area, combining two separate floors of live/work space.

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