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Column: Doug Smith - Development

### **LIFE ALONG LIGHT RAIL PRIVATELY OWNED LAND THOUGHT TO BE BIGGEST MIXED-USE PROJECT ALONG LINE IN THE WORKS: A ONE-STOP DESTINATION WITH HOMES, OFFICES, RETAIL, RESTAURANTS, FITNESS CENTER AND PARK *DOUG SMITH, Staff Writer***

Next stop: funky dwellings, hip offices, outdoor sculptures, a spa, a fitness center, a park and a climbing wall.

That's Poindexter Village, a 17-acre mixed-use project a developer envisions on the South Corridor light-rail line.

Tim Crawford of Citiline Resortline Cos. describes it as a Phillips Place for a younger, hipper crowd seeking an eclectic lifestyle as well as an edgy, contemporary abode.

North Charlotte's NoDa with its galleries, entertainment venues and artsy hangouts is one such example, he said.

Unlike NoDa, which is teeming with renewed residential development, Poindexter Village - near South Boulevard and Remount Road - could take a while to become The Next Big Thing in South End.

Construction isn't expected to start before mid-2007, and the first buildings likely wouldn't be completed before late 2008.

But the nearby New Bern station would be operating if the Charlotte Area Transit System starts service as planned in late 2007 on the 9.6-mile rail line from uptown to near Pineville.

The city is encouraging high-density housing around the 15 stations, and developers have responded by announcing plans to invest nearly \$1 billion in transit-oriented projects.

Citiline said the estimated \$300 million Poindexter Village eventually could reach 1,000 residences, bringing the total units announced along the rail line in South End to more than 2,000. Planned buildings in the village, expected to be developed over about five years, include three- to eight-story midrises with residences atop about 150,000 square feet of retail, office and restaurant space.

The residential density would generate potential riders for CATS, and the rail line would make

Poindexter Village a destination with easy mass transit access to uptown and South End, Crawford said.

The Poindexter Village tract is believed to be the biggest privately owned land assemblage announced on the South Corridor transit line.

Tracy Finch, the city's transit station area development coordinator, believes larger transit-oriented villages could be coming.

The city is in the process of selecting a private developer for what she said appears to be a slightly larger tract of city-owned land at the Scaleybark station.

Finch said that according to the rumor mill other large assemblages might be in the works along the rail line, something that could be a good thing for the city and CATS.

"When you assemble the land you can really create a vision," she said. "Otherwise, you have to try to weave together single properties."

At Poindexter Village, Citiline is trying to create "an urban experience" around a larger lifestyle theme of wellness.

To appeal to 20-somethings and 30-somethings, Crawford said, the developer plans to emphasize fitness through a nonprofit facility while creating interesting experiences and surprises.

For example, residents would be able to attend concerts in a private park with an outdoor band shell, sample foods from aspiring chefs at culinary kiosks, enjoy a sculpture garden or test their skills on a climbing wall.

Crawford said he has talked to a couple of climbing wall companies about using eight silos that remain on the site from Rea Contracting's former asphalt plant.

Citiline has experience in condo and mixed-use development, but this would be the largest project it has attempted in terms of construction time.

Crawford said the principals plan to meet the challenge by bringing in expert help. They're interviewing national master planning firms with experience in transit-oriented development.

Construction of the first phase - probably 200 to 250 residential units - likely would begin near the Remount-South Boulevard intersection and take about 1 1/2 years to finish, Crawford said.

He said it's too early to determine the price or square footage of the proposed units.

Citiline has taken the initial step toward development by purchasing 1 acre and contracting to buy 16 more.

The acreage includes the asphalt plant property on Youngblood Street near Remount, The Clock

Bar-B-Que restaurant site on South Boulevard and the Bonded Logistics warehouse tract in the 2800 block of South Boulevard next to Pepsi-Cola Bottling Co.

In addition, Crawford said, Citiline will have the first opportunity to buy the 6-acre Pepsi complex if the bottler decides someday to move from what is anticipated to be a congested transit corridor. The Poindexter Village tract could grow to 23 acres with a Pepsi plant acquisition.

Crawford said Citiline is pushing to complete acquisition financing within about a month and close between now and spring on eight more parcels under contract.

The developers are working with the city to extend Poindexter Drive across South Boulevard into the planned village.

Also, Crawford said, the city is expected to help by rezoning a few parcels that aren't zoned for transit oriented development.

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View along the light rail line looking toward uptown Charlotte

View looking down Poindexter Drive Poindexter Village

Size: Up to 1,000 residential units in 3-story to 8-story buildings atop 150,000 square feet of retail on 17 acres.

Location: On the South Corridor light rail near Remount Road and South Boulevard and across from The Home Economist Market, an organic foods grocery.

Components: Nonprofit fitness facility, urban-oriented spa, medical facilities, alternative medicine businesses, culinary kiosks, climbing wall using eight remaining asphalt plant silos, private park, locally owned retail shops.

Theme: Wellness lifestyle combined with an eclectic urban experience, including contemporary architecture, green building techniques, a modern art gallery, sculpture garden, hip offices.

Timetable: First phase construction could start in mid-2007 and be completed by late 2008. The tallest building planned in the village would be about eight stories with shops and restaurants on the ground level. The village would be about 3 miles from uptown. The South Corridor light-rail line runs from uptown to near Pineville. Service is to begin in late 2007.

Poindexter Drive would be extended across South Boulevard to create this entrance to the planned village.

Caption:

1. RENDERINGS COURTESY OF RISDEN MCELROY DUANE COCHRAN - DCOCHRAN@CHARLOTTEOBSERVER.COM. Rea Contracting's former asphalt plant on Youngblood Street is being cleared for redevelopment. The silos will be become part of the mixed-use project planned for the site. PHOTO, GRAPHIC:2

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