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Rooms, retail almost ready

Final touches on the Metropolitan

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Posted: Tuesday, Oct. 07, 2008

Slideshow



Trader Joe's grocery store at the Metropolitan, a condo/shopping development just off of uptown Charlotte. The store is set to open Oct. 10.

More Information

- [The Metropolitan](#)
- [Trader Joe's ready to open near uptown](#)
- [Metropolitan Overview](#)

The project includes about 455,000 square feet of shops and restaurants, a 153,000-square-foot office tower and 101 condos.

Condo details

MetLofts: Five levels of residences above Trader Joe's, Modern Salon & Spa and specialty retail. Sixty studios, two-level mezzanine lofts and rooftop residences, from 540 to 1,800 square feet.

Price: \$198,000 to \$650,000.

Features: Balconies, 10- to 21-foot ceilings, stainless steel appliances, bamboo flooring, ceramic tile in baths, private decks with rooftop units.

MetTerraces: Three levels of residences above west elm furniture, Vivace restaurant and specialty shops with 41 terrace homes and penthouses, from 880 to 3,000-plus square feet.

Prices: \$350,000s to \$1.5 million.

Features: Terraces as large as 2,100 square feet, 10-foot ceilings, floor-to-ceiling windows, Viking gas grills, heated bathroom floors, designer tile in baths.

Bonus: Condo owners get membership in MetClub, a private resort-style club with indoor and outdoor amenities on the third-floor terrace level of MetTerraces. Outdoors: a pool, sundeck, covered summer kitchen, dining area and lounging areas. Indoors: lounge, bar entertainment area and appliances plus plasma-screen TV and surround sound.

Sales center: Kings Drive and Metropolitan Avenue.

Information: www.metmidtown.com.

Metropolitan, conceived more than eight years ago, is on its way to becoming a Next Big Thing for uptown dwellers and residents of neighborhoods that ring Interstate 277.

The urban marketplace – that's how the developers describe it – is preparing for a flurry of shops, services and restaurants as workers put the final touches on construction. The first 35 residents have moved into condos in the project's 60-unit MetLofts building, and 18 will begin closing on condos in 41-unit MetTerraces in about three weeks. The \$225 million project – watched by thousands of Interstate 277 motorists – is on acreage formerly occupied by Midtown Square shopping mall near uptown. Specialty grocer Trader Joe's opens there Friday, joining anchors Target, Best Buy, Staples, Marshalls and Home Depot Design Center.

Close on its heels are west elm, a Williams-Sonoma concept similar to Swedish furniture giant IKEA, scheduled to open Oct. 15, and Modern Salon & Spa, which expects to open in the second week of November. Vivace, an Italian restaurant plans an April debut.

The project is a joint venture of Birmingham-based Colonial Property Trust and Charlotte's Pappas Properties and Collett & Associates. The housing crisis and tighter lending policies make such projects challenging today, but the developers say traffic in their sales center is up 20 percent over the past 60 days, more than half the units have closed in their first condo building, the second condo building will be finished on schedule and commercial leasing is

going well.

During a tour, Peter Pappas pointed out two Metropolitan selling points in addition to its retail: unobstructed views of the skyline and the incorporation of the Little Sugar Creek Greenway into the project.

Metropolitan was identified in the first Next Big Thing column on Feb. 16, 2005, as a key to uptown's residential growth and ability to attract additional shops and services.

Charlotte Center City Partners President Michael Smith views it as one piece of what's needed to serve residents, daytime workers and visitors in the center city, which he says extends beyond uptown to adjacent neighborhoods.

He said a 2007 study called for three types of center city retail:

So-called soft goods stores like those that cater now to office workers.

Neighborhood stores such as hardware and grocery.

Big-box and larger specialty stores like those at Metropolitan.

Although the mixed-use development is just outside uptown's I-277 loop, "it all kind of feeds together," Smith said. "Its offerings are a great convenience for center city residents."

The study said uptown isn't ready to attract destination retailers such as suburban department stores and should concentrate for now on serving office workers, visitors and business travelers.

That leaves Metropolitan as the closest big retail.

Smith said the Kings Drive-at-Charlottetown-Avenue site is convenient to uptown and "has great connectivity from neighborhoods to the south and east via the greenway."

It also would appear to be a natural location for the Gold Rush shuttle to stop. That would link daytime workers to Metropolitan's stores and restaurants.

Smith said Center City Partners has discussed the possibility with Metropolitan's developers, but there are no plans to extend the free service.

Charlotte Area Transit System spokeswoman Jean Leier said CATS isn't considering the idea but would be willing to discuss it with Metropolitan.

For now, uptown shoppers will have to walk, bike, drive or hop on a regular CATS bus.

Leier said CATS has added bus stops to the Metropolitan area, which is on its Midtown and Kings Drive routes.

Metropolitan has some of the flavor of a mixed-use village – Birkdale Village in Huntersville comes to mind – with residences atop shops and restaurants along a main street called

Metropolitan Avenue.

But Metropolitan's density is much greater.

It has about 60 percent more retail and restaurant space – roughly 455,000 square feet – plus a 153,000-square-foot office building on acreage about one-third the size of Birkdale.

Pappas said the retail portion is about 70 percent leased, and the 10-story office building is about 90 percent leased.

Signed office tenants include NewDominion Bank, accounting firm Cherry Bekaert & Holland, Carolinas HealthCare System and AON Insurance.

The developers say their goal is to create “sophisticated urban living” by blending the ambience of the greenway with uptown and surrounding neighborhoods.

Steps will lead up from the greenway to Metropolitan. And restaurants will offer abundant outdoor dining along the greenway and retail plaza.

Residents in condos facing uptown and people lounging on elevated terraces have cool skyline views over I-277.

The developers say there's more to come as shops and restaurants fill the remaining space in Metropolitan through the second quarter of 2009.

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Semicolon wrote on 10/08/2008 08:18:24 AM:

I also agree that the roads are a catastrophe there. A hiker is going to die or