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MIXED-USE SNAPSHOT: COLUMBUS

NRI'S TRANSFORMATIONAL MIXED-USE PROJECTS IN COLUMBUS SERVE AS GROWTH CATALYST

By Oliver Higgs

The Ohio Association of Realtors recently reported that home sales for 2013 in Central Ohio ended the year up more than 17 percent over 2012. Commercial construction increased at an even higher pace, surging 26 percent above the \$1.3 billion in 2012 to more than \$1.65 billion in 2013.

More importantly, the region has surpassed its pre-recession employment peak—two years ahead of when the rest of the country is expected to do the same. The fundamentals and demand are in place to fuel strong commercial development in Columbus and Central Ohio.

Ambitious Plans

Columbus-based Nationwide Realty Investors (NRI), the real estate development affiliate of Nationwide Mutual Insurance Co., owns and manages more than \$1.4 billion in real estate investments across the United States. Two of its largest projects are located in NRI's own backyard and continue to evolve, expand and drive additional development in the region.

NRI's \$500 million Grandview Yard development, which is pre-certified LEED Silver for Neighborhood by the U.S. Green Building Council, is located just minutes outside of downtown Columbus and Ohio State University. The 100-acre master-planned,



The Arena District in Columbus features more than 1.5 million square feet of commercial space including the six-story, 134,000-square-foot 191 Nationwide Boulevard building. The ground floor offers 21,000 square feet of the Arena District's most visible retail and restaurant space.

mixed-use development sits on the former Big Bear warehouse site in Grandview Heights.

The project, which already includes a 92,000-square-foot Class A office building, a 42,000-square-foot LA Fitness, a 126-room Hyatt Place hotel and 154 luxury apartment units, will be expanded in Phase II.

"We are very excited about this

next phase of Grandview Yard," says NRI President and CEO Brian Ellis. "Demand is high for vibrant, mixed-use urban environments in Columbus, and this project is resonating with users of all types, from residential and retail to office and restaurants."

Included in this next development phase are 120 additional apartment units with 30,000

square feet of first floor space. At the southeast end of the site, construction is underway on a 75,000-square-foot, three-story office building that will be supported by a new 505-space parking deck.

Ernst & Young has already leased 15,000 square feet in the new building. Alongside the new office building will be an

18,000-square-foot Hofbrauhaus restaurant and German bier hall expected to open this fall.

The north end of the project will be anchored by a 92,000-square-foot store, a Get Go Gas Station, Panera Bread and Wright Patterson Credit Union. In addition, OhioHealth plans to open an urgent care center in a new 10,000-square-foot multi-tenant building across the street from the new Giant Eagle.

When completed, Grandview Yard will include between 1.5 and 2 million square feet of commercial space, including retail, restaurants, office and more than 600 multifamily units.

Arena District Evolves

The Arena District is an \$800 million mixed-use development located in downtown Columbus. The project features more than 1.5 million square feet of commercial real estate, including 1.2 million square feet of Class A office space, three hotels and more than 700 apartment and condominium units.

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Also integrated into the project's 75-acre footprint are 18 bars and restaurants; the 20,000 seat Nationwide Arena, which is home to the NHL's Columbus Blue Jackets; the 10,000 seat Huntington Park, home of the Columbus Clippers minor league baseball team; and an indoor/outdoor concert venue.

In 2013, NRI delivered the \$37 million, 200,000-square-foot midrise 10 West Nationwide Boulevard building to single-use tenant Nationwide Financial as well as the 120-unit expansion of its Flats on Vine residential project, Flats II.

Currently under development is the \$50 million, 286,000-square-foot Columbia Gas building and supporting parking structure. Columbia Gas is leasing 280,000 square feet, leaving 6,000 square feet for street-level retail. The project will be completed this fall.

Success Breeds Success

"We are very proud of the impact that Grandview Yard and the Arena District have had on Columbus and Central Ohio," says Ellis. "These are complex master-planned projects that reflect our focus on long-term value over short-term returns. This market-

driven, opportunistic approach has allowed us to deliver highly coordinated mixed-use commercial environments that drive sustainable growth and investment."

It's clear that NRI's large, complex projects have spurred significant third-party interest and investment in the surrounding areas. From housing and office to retail and entertainment, other developers have leveraged the success of NRI.

"We know that our projects are catalysts and magnets for other developers," says Ellis. "That has proven to be a very good thing for Columbus. We are patient and market-driven, and that will continue to be our focus as we expand and evolve our footprints for both these projects and our other developments across the country."

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