Welch Hardware site adds more housing

By JOURNAL STAFF

Declining demand for office space and increasing demand for housing in the Central District has led developers to make changes in the mixed-use complex planned for the former Welch Hardware site at 2201 S. Jackson.

Originally, the complex was to have office, retail and 102 apartments in three buildings above a two-level parking base. Joan Weiser, project manager for Lorig Associates, said Hewitt Architects has redesigned the building at the corner of at 23rd Avenue and South Jackson, converting it from a five-story office building to a five-story, 158-unit residential building located above street-level retail.

David Spiker of Hewitt said the building will continue to have a more imposing presence than the other two structures and "anchor" the corner, but the bulk of the building has been reduced. It will have a concrete frame on the first level but wood frame above that for a more residential look, Spiker said. There will be terraces at the second level for tenants.

Each of the apartment buildings will include ground floor commercial space and landscaped courtyards.

Weiser said the changes are "market driven and the result of seeing gentrification of the neighborhood around us." She said the west side of 23rd Avenue, on which the site is located, has become more residential than it was just a few years ago.

Rents for the studio, one-, two-bedroom and townhouse units will be 80 percent of median, Weiser said.

The previous plan was estimated to cost $15 million, but Weiser said the redesigned project will be repriced by the contractor, W.G. Clark, and she expects some cost savings in light of the depressed construction market.

Letters of intent have been received from a financial institution and professional offices. Weiser said a day care center will be located in the complex, as well as headquarters for the project's co-developer, the Central Area Development Association.
Construction is set to start next summer and take 14 months to complete.

The development team also includes Coughlin Porter Lundeen as the structural engineer. Design/build contractors are Unity Electric, electrical; Encompass, mechanical; Roestel's, plumbing; and Advanced Fire Protection, fire protection.