

Renaissance District defines opportunity, green living

For Cox News Service

At the heart of the City of Middletown's economic development resurgence is its Renaissance District. Loosely defined as 1,000 acres around the Interstate 75 and State route 122 interchange, the area has been the focus of significant investment – both from private and public sector projects.



Chris Dobrozsi

Most recently, the December 2007 opening of the much-anticipated Atrium Medical Center has caused regional headlines and ribbon-cutting fanfare – the new \$195 million hospital on a 190-acre health care campus is a catalyst for growth and creator of jobs in the education, life sciences and biosciences sectors. The elements of the campus, either planned or under way – and the cumulative effect they will have on quality of life in the district – cannot be overstated. World-class specialty treatment centers, such as Dayton Children's Specialty Care Center, combined with state-of-the-art health education programs will round out other medical services in an environment designed to promote wellness.

Health care is just part of the story of Renaissance District. Also under way is the first building at Al. Neyer, Inc.'s corporate campus. East Pointe Building 200, a 50,000-square-foot Class A, multi-tenant office building, is the first phase of a total of 228,000 square feet planned on 10 acres in Renaissance District – a total investment of about \$35 million. The



developer has inked its first lease deal with the help of City of Middletown incentives, including a 10-year, 75-percent enterprise zone tax abatement. The tenant, Paychex North America, will occupy about half of the building and provide a \$5.4 million annual payroll to the city when it moves in with more than 100 employees.

With East Pointe, Al. Neyer will develop, design and build the project with the goal of gaining Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) certification. LEED, a U.S. Green Building Council program, is the worldwide recognized industry standard of sustainable building. East Pointe Building 200 will be the City of Middletown's first LEED-certified building.

"It's a great opportunity and honor to work on the City's first LEED building," according to Chris Dobrozsi,

director of real estate development for Al. Neyer. "Not only is it the right thing to do for the earth, but its becoming part of nearly every corporate mission statement to work in green environments. It's healthier for employees in the long-term."

Al. Neyer is currently completing a green tenant build-out for architecture firm Steed Hammond Paul, for which it intends to achieve LEED for Commercial Interiors certification. The space will be Steed Hammond Paul's headquarters, located in Al. Neyer's Linden Pointe on the Lateral corporate office campus in Norwood, Ohio.

Planning a clear priority

"Renaissance District will look and feel like a comprehensive, balanced lifestyle center because it is being

carefully planned that way," Dobrozsi says. The City of Middletown chose Al. Neyer over eight contenders in 2005 to prepare a development master plan for the District. A major impetus was the upcoming reconstruction of the highway interchange by the Ohio Department of Transportation, along with the new hospital.

Al. Neyer, along with key consultants Property Advisors and Woolpert, followed a two-level planning process that balanced market analysis and site analysis. The plan created describes a regional business and living center that is economically and environmentally sustainable; balancing office, medical office, service and general retail, hospitality, residential and land development and community open space. To date, all of those precepts have been followed.



"Renaissance District is an identifiable place to work, live, learn, work out and shop, all within walking distance to a world-class health care center," Dobrozsi says.

"The principles of the design of great urban places are being brought to bear here, even though it's not in a traditionally urban setting."