

## Sheridan Station Designed as Transit Village for Broward County, Florida

It began in 2003 with a request for proposals from the Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) to redevelop its Tri-Rail park-and-ride lot in Hollywood as a transit-oriented development (TOD). Miami's Pinnacle Housing Group, a workforce housing developer, got the nod with a plan for 450 affordable apartments and a charter school.

"But when we showed the plan to the city, they said something developers rarely hear from a municipality," recalls Pinnacle partner Michael Wohl. "They said 'No, we want a larger project.'"

T. Neil Fritz, Hollywood's downtown and corridor redevelopment director, explained that the city's 2001 master plan envisioned a comprehensive transit village around the Tri-Rail station and suggested that Pinnacle buy two adjacent mobile-home parks in order to obtain the additional space needed for such a project. Pinnacle agreed, then formed a joint venture with RAM Development Company of Fort Lauderdale, a national developer of commercial and multifamily properties.

The result will be Broward County's first authentic TOD, due to break ground early next year. At buildout, the \$500 million, 40-acre (16-ha) Sheridan Station will provide 1,050 residential units, 300,000 square feet (27,900 sq m) of retail and restaurant space, 299,000 square feet (27,800 sq m) of office space, a 150-room hotel, a 793-space parking garage to serve the Tri-Rail station, and a six-acre (2.4-ha) live oak hammock that developers will donate to the city for use as a public park. The project is expected to generate the equivalent of 2,150 full-time jobs with at least an \$80 million annual

payroll, plus millions of dollars in new annual city and county tax revenues.

Developing the project has not always been smooth sailing, however. Completing the approval process took more than four years, and a few steps remain. "Though the TOD concept had broad support, some neighbors balked at its scope, fearing increased traffic, school congestion, and overbearing building profiles," says Hugo Pacanins, RAM development manager.

The team responded with reduced building heights, statistics showing no negative impact on area schools, four detailed traffic engineering studies, commitments for major road improvements, and preservation of hundreds of mature live oaks and a historic house built of coral rock on the six-acre (2.4-ha) park parcel originally slated for townhouses.

"We eliminated 550 residential units, accommodating neighborhood concerns and allowing for more office/retail space, which has stronger market demand and will have greater impact on the city's tax base," says Pacanins.

Twenty percent of all residential development at Sheridan Station will be workforce housing, distributed through each phase and exceeding the county's 15 percent requirement, says Wohl, south Florida chair for ULI's Terwilliger Center for Workforce Housing. Phase I workforce housing in the project will be rental units.

Sheridan Station's design team includes Cooper Carry Inc., Atlanta, master land planning; Wakefield Beasley & Associates, Atlanta/Jacksonville, retail; Roger Fry & Associates Architects, Coconut Grove, Florida, residential; Stiles Corporation, Fort Lauderdale, office; and Witkin Hults Design Group, Hollywood, Florida, landscape architecture.

Witkin Hults has been assigned the task of visually integrating the diverse components to give the project a unified appearance. Hardscapes of concrete pavers in different sizes, patterns, and shades of color



Sheridan Station (below) will provide 1,050 residential units; a 150-room hotel; retail, restaurant, and office space; and a parking garage adjacent to an existing rail station on a site (above) that includes a six-acre (2.4-ha) live oak hammock.



will give each building/entryway a distinctive profile while establishing a signature look for Sheridan Station's overall exterior environment, says Juan Pacheco, senior project manager for Witkin Hults. Major water features defining the central plaza will include a 24-by-10-foot (7.3-by-3-m) mirrored water wall and a 15-by-15-foot (4.6-by-4.6-m) stainless steel landmark feature of interlocking S shapes sitting on an 800-square-foot (74-sq-m) round water basin, he says. Native royal palms and street furniture will provide shaded rest areas. Walkways and bikeways will link all the project elements to the Tri-Rail station.

In keeping with the project's pro-environment character—it is one of six Florida projects chosen by the U.S. Green Building Council for its Leader-

ship in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) for Neighborhood Development pilot program—Witkin Hults worked closely with civil engineers Carter & Burgess of Fort Lauderdale to design a road through the live oak hammock that will preserve every single tree.

Michael Hammon, RAM's chief development officer, hopes future TOD developers in Florida will have an easier time gaining entitlements.

"Given that TODs are in the public interest, regulatory agencies shouldn't put the full burden for achieving land use changes on the developer and make them meet the same standards as for traditional development," he says. "Elsewhere in the country, agencies are treating TOD developers more as partners. Florida isn't quite there yet."

Adds Debbie Orshefsky, Sheridan Station's land use attorney, "Everyone, including FDOT, has known for years the Sheridan Street/I-95 interchange is dysfunctional. The developers will now construct almost \$5 million in traffic improvements to address longstanding problems that would likely continue to exist if this project hadn't come along."

Despite the challenges of the past four years, Wohl says the team is thrilled with the final plan. "I think it will be a TOD model; it's definitely the highest and best use of the land," he says. "And with rising gas prices, it obviously couldn't be happening at a better time."

**JAN MYLES SCHWARTZ** is president of Janel Schwartz Associates, a marketing and business development firm in Boca Raton, Florida.