

New Developments

Appleton's RiverHeath project is set to bring excitement about the future of the Fox River.



RiverHeath

In recent years, Northeast Wisconsin has developed big-city answers to the big-city hopes that its residents have had for it. Trendy independent boutiques, a wide array of performing arts and culture, and nightlife that is comparable to that in Wisconsin's larger cities. But those of us who hoped for a downtown condo overlooking the water felt like our options were limited to the Green Bay Riverfront developments. And for some of us, we aren't ready to leave the Appleton neighborhoods that we have grown to know and love.

Now, we don't have to.

Appleton's dreams of riverfront developments are being answered by RiverHeath - a 15-acre development project located just east of the College Avenue bridge. The site, one of Appleton's oldest neighborhoods, is getting an overhaul to bring residents a community that will mix condominiums, retail shops and restaurants.

In other words, it's bringing back the neighborhoods that once made a community just that - a community.

"A lot of old neighborhoods are walking neighborhoods - dense, with lots of little shops storefronts, and amenities," explains Mark Gaell, a former Fox Cities resident and principal in Tanesay Development of Denver, which is spearheading the project. "We would like to roll that back a bit and rediscover how nice it is to walk to a corner grocery or a local watering hole.

According to Gaell, the site for the proposed community was an easy choice.

"There's over 1000 square feet on the Fox River," he explains. "It's big enough to keep us busy for 15 years!"

The start of the project has attracted a great deal of attention from businesses and residents alike, all of whom are anxious to see such prime land redeveloped into something that everyone can enjoy.

"Right now, the land doesn't generate a dollar in taxes for the city," Gaell tells us. "It's fenced off, so the public cannot access the riverfront." The plan to open up the land and help grow the area into a place that residents will be able to enjoy has earned a great deal of interest and support from locals. In fact, the public has been invited to participate in the development by attending meetings and offering their input into the project and its progress. Everyone from kayakers anxious to launch from and past city planners who have design ideas have contacted Tanesay to discuss the project. Even the website, www.riverheath.com has collected a number of comments and suggestions since it was launched in early 2007.

"We've tried to incorporate all these voices into the current plan," says Gaell. "When you include the community in this way, they have more of a stake in the outcome.



It's hard to imagine the community wouldn't be excited about the plans that lie ahead for RiverHeath. Sales for the residential portion of the project have already been swift, and Gaell says that they have accepted a number of deposits from people who want to live and work on the river.

The retail space is also attracting a great deal of attention, with many independently-owned businesses having already committed to being a part of the project. One of the most highly-anticipated for sushi fans is Koko Sushi Bar and Lounge, who currently have a location in Bellevue. Other businesses include Table Restaurant and Atlas Coffee Mill and Cafe.

"Almost all of the businesses that have signed up already are independent, family-owned businesses," says Gaell. "Independents embrace community, and that's important when you're trying to create a community from scratch."

Don't think that restaurants are the only ones getting in on the action though. Ken Cobb Photography will be opening up shop, and a market that provides goods from local bakers and locally-grown produce is also expected.

There are other rumored additions that will certainly enhance the Appleton nightlife, though Gaell is remaining coy about the details. He is, however, anxious to share details about the walking trails, waterfront access, and skating rink that are planned for the community as well.

"The community access to the riverfront remains wide open," Gaell said in a previous interview. Part of that access includes a place to launch kayaks or rent one on site, and a riverfront trail will connect the pond with other trails and allow residents to enjoy the additional trees being planted to create a visual extension of nearby Telulah Park.

Though RiverHeath isn't the first condominium community in the Appleton area, Gaell thinks this project is different because of the waterfront location. According to Gaell, it's an amenity that shouldn't be overlooked.

"The projects in Green Bay were very helpful in showing us that the market would respond to well-designed, well-located waterfront development," he explains.

But location isn't the only thing that sets RiverHeath apart from the others. RiverHeath is incorporating green design elements such as geo-thermal exchange systems for heating and cooling and what Gaell refers to as "innovative stormwater management." RiverHeath is also a part of the U.S. Green Building Council's pilot program that rewards projects that not only incorporate green elements into their design, but that support energy efficiency with prime location.

"You can build the most energy-efficient building in the world," explains Gaell, "but if it's twenty miles from where people live, the gains in energy efficiency from the building will be outweighed by the resources used going back and forth."

As RiverHeath development continues, residents will see the progress not only on the Appleton riverfront, but in the Appleton community as well.

"RiverHeath has an energy already," he suggests of the project, adding that "the Fox Valley doesn't have too many projects with well-designed waterfront downtown condos."

"We're hopeful that people who are looking for this kind of lifestyle will find RiverHeath.

Looks like we found the answer to those riverfront dreams after all.

For more information, go to www.RiverHeath.com.

