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Stinson Park Unveiled for Summer Events

It is not the first call post for this site. But the opening ceremony last week for Stinson Park – part of the redevelopment of historic Askarben – sent out a new message for visitors to come to the green space at 67th and Center Streets.

New businesses are moving into Aksarben Village, the emerging redevelopment that included commercial and retail space, along with a surge of economic activity in central Omaha. “The community needs to see what’s here,” said Jay Noddle, president of Noddle Companies. “I think people are going to be surprised.” Interiors are being completed most recently for Chicago Title, Paradise Bakery, plus three more agreements were close, Noddle said.

The large Chicago Title lease, via Grubb & Ellis|Pacific Realty, means new jobs in Omaha, Noddle said.

The dedication last week of Stinson Park, across from Wohlner’s Market, is important because it will give people a reason to visit the park, and in the late summer, events are planned that should have a wide appeal, he said.

Aksarben Future Trust board members and others gathered for an official opening of the park, named for the board’s chairman Ken Stinson, under the 100-foot tower. The tower design looks like the original tower at the Askarben racetrack, which closed in the 1990’s after more than 50 years of horse races. “People really like this part of the city,” Noddle said. “People are pleasantly surprised at how much is here already here and how it’s woven into the community.”

He pointed to there being more than one developer working together, particularly in challenging times, to stay the course and complete projects.

The portion Noddle Companies developed is 86% leased and just over half occupied, he said.

A Marriott Courtyard that opened this spring in Aksarben Village, 1625 S. 67th Street, is said to be growing occupancy, but it will take some time for people to know about it because of the hotel choices in Omaha, Noddle said.

This summer the whole village will have wireless Internet access.

Part of the construction is to be the new home for the University of Nebraska at Omaha’s College of Business Administration. The connection to the university includes the development of athletic facilities.

Magnum Development Corp. has planned the entertainment complex to the north of the park, which will have theaters, and the first phase of construction starting in the summer.

Magnum also developed Aksarben Place, which is on the south side of Center Street and has “filled up nicely,” Noddle said.

Alchemy and Broadmoor have developed the residences now receiving their first tenants.

The new Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Nebraska headquarters is presently four stories of steel that will grow to 10 with occupancy in the fall of 2010, Noddle said.

DLR Group, a design firm, is beginning construction of its new headquarters in the fall at 64th and Frances Streets.

The elements of the Village from retail, public space, hotel and even Wohlner's itself – a historical Omaha grocery store that relocated to Aksarben Village in the fall, is important to the whole.

"Each of these elements are an anchor." Noddle said.