

### **Dinner, movie, Pilates**

#### **The entertainment complex in Aksarben Village, including a gym, is rounding into shape.**

The entertainment complex in Aksarben Village is taking shape, with the first tenant scheduled to open in late fall.

Challenging economic conditions caused the developers to change building designs and even delay the project by about six months, but the skeleton of a new building now rises from property formerly home to a horse-racing complex.

Construction began in January on the 83,000-square-foot building, which will feature a movie theater, an athletic club and restaurants.

The Aspen Athletic Club, a franchise that started in Des Moines, will be the first business to open in the building, in November.

“We’ll continuously have openings over the next several weeks after that,” said John Hughes, president of Magnum Development Corp., the developer of the entertainment complex.

Hughes said the developers will announce specific opening dates for the 10-screen Main Street Theatres Inc. and other retail spaces this summer. The weather’s impact on the construction timeline makes it too difficult to project more definite dates, he said.

The all-digital theaters will have a total of 1,700 seats. One auditorium’s curved walls mimic a rotunda that is a prominent exterior feature of the building’s architecture.

With the theater and athletic club, the building is nearly 90 percent leased, and Magnum is negotiating with potential tenants for the four remaining retail spaces, Hughes said. Magnum expects that the building will be fully leased when it opens, he said.

Hughes declined to name the four restaurants in lease negotiations. He said one is a fast casual restaurant and one is a specialty ice-cream vendor.

The 22,000-square-foot health club will be the first full Nebraska location for Aspen Athletic Club. In December, the company opened a temporary satellite facility at the nearby Aksarben Place shopping center, at 63rd and Center Streets, to recruit members.

The club’s second floor will include space for personal training, group exercise classes, a yoga studio, spinning room, cardio workouts, weight training and circuit training. It will overlook the entertainment complex’s plaza and Stinson Park.

The ground floor will contain the lobby, locker rooms and kids’ area.

Free public parking for the complex, called “Zone 5” for now, will be in three locations: a large surface lot to the west; on-street parking surrounding the entire block; and a parking garage directly north of the building.

Developers reworked some of their original plans as banks tightened lending on new construction projects. The theater and athletic club committed to the project early, but one preliminary design called for them to be in

separate buildings, surrounded by other mixed-use tenants.

Last year, the developers decided to put the theater and athletic club in the same building, partly because the uses were compatible — gym use is heavy in the morning, theater use is heavy at night — and partly in response to the economy, Hughes said.

“Banks and private investors are demanding more today, and it made sense to develop a single building that is almost entirely leased versus two buildings with a larger proportion of vacant space,” he said. “It also allows us more flexibility to react to the market demands in the future.

“By combining them into one building, it made it easier to move forward with construction,” he said.

The master plan and the vision remain the same, he said, but the developers are now creating the complex from the middle out, continually adding attractions, versus building it all at once.

“Obviously, there’s been a slowdown in the economy, but the city block that makes up this entertainment zone will just continue to be developed,” Hughes said.

Under the master plan, the complex can accommodate as many as four more buildings, all intended to complement one another and create a retail shopping, restaurant, entertainment and nighttime attraction, he said.

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