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Peninsula developer kicks off new wave of housing in downtown San Bruno

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Sares Regis Group of Northern California kicked off a new wave of housing coming to downtown San Bruno. The developer started construction late last year on an 83-unit apartment project with 7,000 square feet of retail at 406 San Mateo Ave.

The Plaza Apartments is the first major project under a plan the city adopted in 2013 to revitalize its downtown that is now spurring other proposals that could bring several hundred more homes.

San Mateo-based G.W. Williams Co. is putting together a proposal to transform Mills Park Center, a 135,000 square-foot office and retail complex at the corner of El Camino Real and San Bruno Avenue, into a new community with up to 400 new homes and 30,000 square feet of retail. That project, which is in the conceptual phase, is close to transit and some of the city's major employers, such as Walmart.com.

The owners of two parcels at 111 San Bruno Ave. submitted an application to build 60 units of housing and 8,500 square feet of retail.



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“San Bruno had a stated goal: We want our downtown to be more vibrant and we want to set the table for development activity,” said [Drew Hudacek](#), chief investment officer for Sares Regis. “They are seeing the fruits of that labor.”

Sares Regis demolished a vacant movie theater to make room for its project that was designed by [KTGY Architects](#) and built by Johnstone Moyer Inc.

The Plaza Apartments “is a great example of the sort of mixed-use development that we anticipate,” said [David Woltering](#), director of community development for the City of San Bruno.

The city’s vision, known as the Transit Corridors Plan, established development guidelines for 155 acres in downtown near main transit arteries including San Mateo Avenue, San Bruno Avenue and El Camino Real and close to the city’s BART and Caltrain stations.

The plan calls for up to 1,610 new residential units, 900,000 square feet of office space and 149,000 square feet of retail space in the city’s downtown core that is primarily made up of low-rise buildings and surface parking lots. Voters in the city of 43,000 residents passed a ballot measure in fall of 2014 that increased building heights to up to 90 feet in some downtown areas.

Like various Peninsula cities, San Bruno wants more vitality by bringing more housing downtown close to transit stations and encouraging pedestrian traffic.

[Sares Regis is building another 260 apartments in downtown South San Francisco and 73 condos in Belmont.](#) All three projects are slated for completion next year.

The idea behind those developments is that, “the city is the amenity,” said Ken Busch, senior vice president for residential development for Sares Regis. “The goal is to create that urban-suburban lifestyle people are looking for in a downtown center.”

Cities like South San Francisco and San Bruno spent years setting guidelines and completing environmental review for new development, Hudacek said, which makes it easier and faster for developers to win project approach approval.

“San Bruno has a lot of employment, it’s transit rich with BART and Caltrain, and has good freeway access,” Busch said. “We believe a lot of our residents will be

taking Caltrain to go to work on the Peninsula.”

Blanca Torres

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San Francisco Business Times

