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Uptown's big goal: Rebirth

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AVONDALE - Construction is expected to begin this week on the first phase of Uptown Consortium's \$100 million mixed-use development along Burnet Avenue.

The project, which will span three city blocks in this Cincinnati neighborhood, is expected to transform Burnet Avenue between Forest and Erkenbrecher avenues, said Tony Brown, president and CEO of the nonprofit development corporation.

"We've said that we want to make Uptown Cincinnati an important brand for the region, and we're working hard to create a distinction for the neighborhoods so that when you think Uptown, you think about our dominance in education and health care, our eclectic neighborhoods and our business districts," Brown said.

ADVERTISEMENT This week, work is expected to begin on a multilevel parking garage between Erkenbrecher and Northern avenues. As part of the project, Northern will be extended from Burnet - where it currently dead-ends - to Harvey Avenue.

The garage is part of the first phase of development, which also includes a 100,000-square-foot office building along Burnet for Cincinnati Children's Hospital Medical Center and a 45,000-square-foot office building for the Cincinnati Herald weekly newspaper.

Work on the office buildings is slated to be complete by the end of the year and will allow the consortium to begin construction on a condominium development along Harvey between Erkenbrecher and Northern.

The consortium has hired Model Group, an Over-the-Rhine-based development firm, as the design firm for the residential component, Brown said.

All told, the consortium has committed about \$25 million in federal New Market Tax Credits, which is being used to pay for land acquisition and infrastructure improvements, and will pay to help subsidize some of the cost of construction for town homes, Brown said. The remaining cost for the construction of the office space is being financed by Children's Hospital and the Cincinnati Herald.

Meanwhile, the consortium has gained footing further east on Burnet with the recent purchase of properties between Forest and Rockdale avenues.

The site is targeted for a second phase of redevelopment that would include a mix of retail, office



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An artist's rendering of development scheduled to be developed.

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and residential uses, Brown said.

"Getting control of this corner was a big deal for us, because if you look at police records, you would see that it was a hot spot for shootings and murders," Brown said. "We not only have to change the physical landscape here, we have to change folks' perception of the area. We can't do that with just any small plan. It has to be big and bold."

The consortium is working with the Avondale Community Council to develop plans for the second phase of the project, which also will include developing a building to house the Avondale Community Pride Center - a neighborhood resource and work-force training center.

Additionally, a market study of the site is under way by the University of Cincinnati to determine the best end users for it, said Patricia Milton, president of the community council.

"We're working diligently to make sure there is a fit between the neighborhood and the institutions," she said. "We are pleased with the progress so far and we look forward to getting some buildings up so that people can see that this is really a reality."



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