



# THE PLAIN DEALER

## Cedar Center development plan approved

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South Euclid- In place of a tired mishmash of stores, Coral Co. envisions a gleaming row of retail and residential, a city park and community center to finish the makeover of Cedar Center.

A hub of the East Side inner suburbs, Cedar Center is where South Euclid meets University Heights on the west side of the intersection of Cedar and Warrensville Center roads. It's where Starbucks built its first Cleveland shop and Coral brought Cleveland's first Whole Foods grocery store.

On the southeast side of the intersection stands the new University Square, a vertical mall with a mammoth Macy's, Target, JoAnn and other stores clustered around a central parking garage.

South Euclid wants to unite the district by razing 12 acres of half-century-old plazas at the intersection's northwest corner and building four two-, three- and four-story structures.

On Monday, City Council approved a development agreement with Coral.

"It has that potential, that atmosphere," Mayor Georgine Welo said. "It holds it all. It's an absolute gem."

Redevelopment has been in the works since 2000 but passed from developer to developer before the city chose Coral, which built Whole Foods and redeveloped the plaza on Cedar Center's south side. The company had submitted a plan at the beginning of the process, Welo said.

Coral President Peter Rubin, whose office overlooks the project, drew up a scheme with a parking garage, a sculpture spanning Cedar Road and a one-acre park with outdoor furniture, kiosks and possibly a stage. Wireless Internet is also a possibility, as are farmers' markets and poetry slams in an upstairs civic space.

The old plaza will probably come down in fall 2008, with the new development built in 2009, said Keith Benjamin, the city's director of community services. Coral must remediate part of the site because of a dry-cleaning store once located on the site. "We always felt we wanted to finish the job," Rubin said. "I couldn't really stand someone else doing it."

For years, South Euclid fought to buy the property - a hodgepodge of brick and wood, and beige, white and brown shapes - from its 12 owners.

In August, a judge cleared the way for the city to purchase the plaza for \$16.4 million.

Still, Jay Steingroot of Jacob's Judaic Book and Gift Center isn't happy about moving.

"It's a big expense and a lot of work," he said. "To me, what would make the most sense is to refurbish" the plaza.

The city hopes new development will lure the so-called creative class. Residents in the 75 condominiums, built atop stores, could walk to the library and throughout the Cedar Center district.

The plan, Rubin said, is "creating comfort level for people to walk across the street, like a real city."

Already, folks gather at bus stops, and moms push strollers at crosswalks. But on her lunch break, Tierra

Mitchell of Euclid drove the few blocks from National City Bank to Chipotle.

"It could probably use an update," Mitchell said. "Especially with the new Macy's and everything, the rest of the place should look good, too."

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