

West Palm approves Immocorp's mixed-use project in Northwood

Three-building development by Gilbert Benhamou's firm is first on tap in district long-slated for revitalization



For years, West Palm Beach leaders have pushed for redevelopment of the Northwood district, but it's been to no avail — until now.

On Tuesday, the city's planning board greenlit the first project: A plan by Gilbert Benhamou's Immocorp Capital for 382 apartments, 63,200 square feet of commercial uses and roughly 13,000 square feet of public space on 4.7 acres at the west end of the Northwood Mixed-Use District.

The move is a step forward for Northwood, as well as for the Currie Mixed-Use District to the east that also was upzoned years ago to attract development.

Immocorp plans its three-building Northwood Square project on the Anchor Site, so-called for its pivotal role in tying together the Northwood and Currie mixed-use districts. The development site, which is meant to bookend both districts, spans from 23rd Street north to 25th Street, and from the FEC Railway east to Broadway Avenue, including a lot on the west side of Broadway.

The main building will have six stories atop a three-story podium and will consist of 321 apartments, 54,800 square feet of commercial space and garages for the entire development, according to a city planning staff report on the project. It will be connected through a pedestrian overpass to a smaller, four-story building that will consist of 39 apartments and 5,200 square feet of commercial space.

The last building will be four stories but taper down to three in the portion of the lot that's within a historic district, according to the planning staff report. It will consist of 22 apartments and 3,200 square feet of commercial space.

"The Anchor Site was identified back in 1999. ... [It] is really needed to hold everything together," said Joshua Long, a planner representing Immocorp who previously worked as a West Palm Beach planner.

Despite zoning changes made years ago, the mixed-use districts "have not had the success," but with recent tweaks to development regulations, this will change, Long told the city's planning board.

At Immocorp's project, the ground-floor commercial uses will rise 25 feet and will be glass-enclosed to make the development more walkable. Also, sections of Northwood Road and 24th Street will be turned into public open spaces with pedestrian paseos, allowing for more walkability, he said. Pinewood Avenue will be shifted east and away from the FEC tracks for safety.

West Palm's push to jump-start projects in Northwood dates back to 2015 when the city started to rewrite development regulations. The district stretches from 23rd Street to lots that are just north of 25th Street, although in areas it goes up to 26th Street, and also from the FEC tracks east to South Dixie Highway.

In 2019, Immocorp won a city solicitation to redevelop the Anchor Site, which is owned by the Community Redevelopment Agency.

Construction of Northwood Square is expected to start either in December or January, Benhamou said. Completion is expected in the third quarter of 2024.

Immocorp, which is based in Aventura, also is betting on other South Florida areas. In partnership with Kushner Companies, it plans a mixed-use project south of Stephen Ross' Hard Rock Stadium in Miami Gardens.

Although Immocorp's project is the first to win approval in Northwood, it's not the first proposed for the district.

This summer, Jeff Burns and Nick Rojo's Affiliated Development proposed a 200-unit apartment project with retail at 2502 Spruce Avenue. The city is reviewing the application.

The Currie district — stretching from South Dixie Highway to Currie Park, although it goes up to the Intracoastal Waterway in some areas, and between Pine and 27th streets — has attracted development in recent years.

New York-based Savanna plans a pair of 28-story Olara towers with 315 condo units and 170 apartments in the south end of Currie.

Also, Jeff Greene, who owns vast swaths of land in the Currie district, wants to build two 30-story condos with 182 units in the area, although he has not yet submitted an application to the city.