

Lake City intersection gets a fresh start

By Bernard Bridges

It's often a good sign when businesses are lining up to lease retail space.

That's the case with a new development at Lake City Way and NE 125th—a development that promises to help transform a critical intersection.

Bob Wilcoxin, the owner of the Lake City retail project, said he's pleasantly surprised by the early interest.

"A lot of people want to negotiate," said Wilcoxin. "They are big, well-run businesses."

The development will include a 17,000-square-foot Bartell Drugs as the anchor tenant, and "a strip mall full of small shops," said Wilcoxin.

The strip mall, he said, will be "really high class" in regards to the tenants he chooses and in the design by Magellan Architects of Redmond. "That spot demanded something spectacular," he said.

Wilcoxin said demolition began in late February, and the \$6.5 million development will be substantially completed by the end of this summer. The Bartell's and other stores should open in the fall, he said.

Because Wilcoxin has not signed contracts with prospective tenants, he said he could not reveal their names, but promised, "They will really complement each other."

Pedro Castro, whose firm designed the building, said it was crafted to be responsive to local architecture.

The Bartell's will incorporate brick, and the development as a whole will have a "human scale" that



Courtesy of Magellan Architects

will not overwhelm visitors, Castro said.

The structure will have 13,000 square feet of retail space—which will be "double-fronted," Castro said, meaning entrances will be on both sides.

Wilcoxin said he exceeded the minimum amount of parking required by code, and will provide about 105 parking stalls.

The development has been five years in the making, according to Wilcoxin.

"We had a lot of negotiations with Bartell's," he said. Because it will replace a strip mall—which is owned by Wilcoxin, but by his own admission was "ugly and old"—Wilcoxin said he had to allow existing leases to close.

The process also included hazardous materials abatement, and the permitting time was about a year, he said.

Since it will replace an aging row of businesses, the new development is a welcomed break from what was

previously there. "The neighbors are very excited," he said.

He said the community, through a series of meetings and other forums, pitched in ideas about what type of construction materials and even colors should be used. "We went through a huge process," he said.

The property has been in Wilcoxin's wife's family for about 40 years. But the development pre-dated that, and was about 65 years old, he said.

Wilcoxin said it has been a family "dream" to redevelop the property. "We decided we would build something special there, no matter what the cost. We are keeping it in the family forever," he said.

The development, which covers about two acres, will also be pedestrian friendly and feature an open plaza at the Lake City Way and 125th Street corner. "We've done a lot to make it spectacular," Wilcoxin said. "I'm hoping what goes in there benefits the area."