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From the ashes of the Mosley Motel will rise a \$55 million development in St. Petersburg



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Rendering of four-story retail and self-storage facility planned for the site of the former Mosley Motel. Altis Cardinal plans to add a \$55 million phase to its now \$75 million plan to redevelop the edge of Historic Kenwood. [Courtesy of Altis Cardinal]

By Waveney Ann Moore, Times Staff Writer

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ST. PETERSBURG — A Coral Gables developer has unveiled the \$55 million phase of its multimillion-dollar plans for the edge of Historic Kenwood.

Altis Cardinal, which bought and upgraded the Skyline Fifth apartments in the neighborhood several years ago, says it will build a four-story retail and self-storage facility on the site of the old Mosley Motel, convert a six-story office building into loft apartments and add dozens more units on a former commercial site.

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Frank Guerra, a principal of the company, said that together with Skyline Fifth, the new plans will bring a total of \$75 million in development to the 12 acres Altis has acquired between 34th and 31st Streets N and Fifth and Third Avenues N.

"We wanted to aggregate as much property as we could in that area, because we thought it had a lot of unrealized potential," Guerra said, calling Kenwood a "very successful historic district."

A groundbreaking last week for the first phase of the new development was attended by Mayor Rick Kriseman and City Council member Amy Foster, who represents the area.

"The secret about how great Historic Kenwood is, is out," Foster said in a text to the Tampa Bay Times.

Altis' most recent acquisition in the neighborhood was the now demolished Mosley at 401 34th St. N, which was in foreclosure when company took it over in 2016. At the time, the neglected property housed hundreds of poor men, women and children in squalid conditions.

The four-story building that will go up on the motel site will include 7,500 square feet of retail space on the ground floor and three levels of self-storage above. It is scheduled to be finished by March 2018.

Work will proceed simultaneously on 78 one- and two-bedroom lofts, with 11-foot ceilings, at 3151 Third Ave. N. The building was once used for state government offices. This phase of the project will also include two new, three-story buildings with 24 apartments each, said Guerra. The lofts and apartments are expected to be finished by May 2018.

A second phase will see apartments rising on former commercial property at the corner of 33rd Street N and Third Avenue N. The construction of two four-story buildings, with a total of 122 apartments, will begin in 2018, Guerra said.

The complete project will boast "a walkable, campus-style feel," with open green spaces and "a lot of lush foliage," he said.

"We are using seven acres to put up 248 units," he said. "It's very low density. There is nothing near downtown that is a campus-style feel. We're going to jazz it up with resort-style amenities."

Its "resort-style amenity package" will include dog parks, a pet washing station, pool, gym and community room and is expected to attract mostly young people who want to live near where they play and work.

Guerra founded Altis with business partner AJ Suarez in 2009. But Altis isn't the only developer

with plans for Kenwood. Green Mills of Fort Lauderdale, which specializes in affordable housing, is holding a grand opening ceremony on Friday for its new, five-story Burlington Place apartments at 3155 Burlington Ave. N.

Green Mills co-owner Mitchell Rosenstein said the 53 one- and two-bedroom units were "100 percent pre-leased" even before the building got its certificate of occupancy.

The company is planning another affordable housing project across the street, featuring 86 one- and two-bedroom apartments. The new Burlington Post building is scheduled to be finished in the summer of 2018.

Historic Kenwood, known for its picturesque bungalows and brick streets, has an active neighborhood association. Before Walmart opened its new neighborhood store in 2011, Kenwood residents worked with the retail giant to get a façade that evoked the craftsman style of their bungalows.

Rosenstein said that because Green Mills considers itself to be in the business of "community development," respecting the feedback of local stakeholders was critical.

"It took some time to build credibility with our neighbors in the Historic Kenwood neighborhood, but it was worth it and we are certainly grateful to have the neighborhood support," he said. "They had concerns about density, traffic, about proximity to adjacent businesses."

Historic Kenwood Neighborhood Association president Brenda Gordon said she is pleased with the millions of dollars in development plans for the area. She said it's a welcome change from the "great no man's land" of parking lots and long-vacant commercial and office buildings that once plagued the edge of the neighborhood. Kenwood residents had also complained that the Mosley harbored crime and loiterers.

The residents brought by the new apartments built by Altis and Green Mills will mean more business for Kenwood's adjacent Grand Central District, Gordon said.

"More roof tops, more foot traffic," Guerra said, "that's what makes a neighborhood a neighborhood."

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