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Homewood center gets new look

Neighbor of SoHo being modernized, new name: Independence Corner

BY LINDA PARHAM / STAFF

Muirfield Village owners are changing the Homewood shopping center's name and starting storefront renovations later this month.

The 11,000-square-foot shopping center, which is owned by FRW Properties Ltd., is located at the corner of Independence Drive (U.S. Hwy. 31) and 28th Avenue South. The center is two blocks from the site where the new SoHo Square and SoHo Flats Condominiums are going up.

FRW Properties Ltd. last year selected

'This center has great potential because it is located at a very prominent, highly visible corner.'

Mark Hollis
Hollis Real Estate

Hollis Real Estate to develop and manage the property that was built in 1991. The owners asked Hollis for a renovation plan to attract new tenants.

"I think we're getting a center that deserves an update, and the design reflects a fresh look," says Mark Hollis of Hollis Real Estate.

"The name change just better identifies the center," Hollis says. "I think 'Independence Corner' is just a natural for that center."

In a bow to the new name and the street on which the shopping center is located, Hollis Real Estate also is erecting a 40-foot flag pole and plans to fly an



SPECIAL TO BBJ

This artist's rendering depicts the new look for Muirfield Village shopping center. The center is getting a new name and face-lift.

American flag at the center.

The name change goes into effect when renovation starts next month. The project should be finished by the end of April, according to Hollis.

The refurbishment includes new roofing, new awnings, exterior painting, distinctive lighting, new architectural treatments and updated landscaping. All this is designed to give the shopping center a facade that mirrors its newer neighbors. Hollis declined to disclose cost of the renovation.

Hendon + Huckestein Architects drew up the renovation design.

Farewell to the '80s look

"The building has a very post-modern '80s look, and we are changing that with a new color scheme of earth tones, such as tans, browns and blacks," says the

architectural firm's Eric Hendon. Plans call for installing exterior lights that will reflect the style of neighboring SoHo, he says.

"This center has great potential because it is located at a very prominent, highly visible corner," said Hollis. "It is the first intersection you come to in Homewood when you travel over Red Mountain Expressway from downtown Birmingham, and it is within walking distance to the future Homewood Municipal Complex and the new SoHo Square."

Hollis says he admires the SoHo developer's design.

"I looked at their plans, and I do feel that the tenants and the people who live within the SoHo development would

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walk to other area centers, including Independence Corner, because the SoHo development is really the catalyst that links a lot of the adjoining properties together.”

The center’s current tenants include T-Mobile, H&R Block, Smoothie King and Lovely Nails.

Two spaces totaling more than 6,000 square feet are available for lease. One space measures 4,682 square feet; the other spans 1,326 square feet.

Hollis will be targeting prospective tenants ranging from retail to financial services to medical users. He says the location is ideal for a business owner

looking for space in the Homewood/Mountain Brook area.

Spurred by SoHo

Homewood city officials have said they expect the \$55 million SoHo mixed-use development to spur more construction downtown and influence redevelopment of property in the area.

“In over three years with the Homewood Chamber, I have never witnessed property owners repairing and refurbishing their buildings like I have over the past several months,” Lori Leonard, Homewood Chamber of Commerce director, said in a press release.

“In the past, many visitors to

Homewood think that ‘Downtown Homewood’ is simply one street and they don’t take the time to explore the other streets that also offer one of a kind shops and services of all types. This mindset is rapidly changing and business owners are taking notice.”

“We hope that our plans for Independence Corner will add to the vibrant environment and rejuvenation being created in the heart of Homewood,” says Rich Chism, Hollis’ partner.

Hollis Real Estate, a commercial real estate firm, is located at 2633 Valleydale Road, Suite 150, in Birmingham.

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