REAL ESTATE

A vision for the River District is coming together

By Andrew Dunn | *January 13, 2017*
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Now that it has the city's approval, the River District is ready to take shape.

Two of Charlotte's prominent developers — Crescent Communities and Lincoln Harris — are teaming up to build a massive new mixed-use area along the Catawba River in western Mecklenburg County. The project was announced last spring, and finally got approval from the City Council in November.

Plans call for 2,000 houses, 2,500 apartments, 500,000 square feet of retail space, 1,000 hotel rooms and 8 million square feet of office space across its 1,300 acres.

It has the potential to be the next Ballantyne, but it's going to take 20 to 30 years.

[Agenda story: All new details on plans for the "new Ballantyne" on the Catawba River]

Image by Cooper Robertson

A New York design firm has been contracted with to come up with a master plan.

Cooper Robertson is a architecture and urban design firm well-versed in master-planned communities.

Their lead on the River District project is partner John Kirk, who lent his ideas toward developing Celebration, Florida (outside Disney), as well as Battery Park City in New York.

Cooper Robertson held several planning meetings and design charrettes, including this one at Atherton Market.

Photo by Cooper Robertson

They wouldn't share many details yet, but here's a rough sketch of how it will be broken into neighborhoods.

Get ready for a new "West End" and "Old Town." Each of these areas is likely to be developed as themed areas with their own design aesthetic.

Image by Cooper Robertson

This corresponds with the plan submitted to the city. Houses are mostly on the north and south along the river, with the commercial district in the south-center. Offices make up the inland part.

Want more of a taste of what it could look like? Look to Atlanta.

Cooper Robertson describes its plan for the River District as similar to Serenbe, a major development on rural land just outside of Atlanta. It started in 2004 and now is home to about 400 people, though it's only 15 percent built out.

It's been developed in four "hamlets": agriculture, health and wellness, education and the arts. Homes cost between $400,000 and $700,000.

Serenbe has houses, townhomes, condos, three restaurants, eight shops, a company headquarters, a gym, a day spa and a Montessori school. This is similar to what's envisioned for the River District.

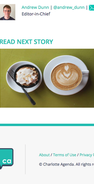

Photo by John Kernaghan on Flickr (Creative Commons)

The Serenbe Farms farmers market. Photo via Serenbe.com

Cafe at Serenbe. Photo via Serenbe.com

Shopping at Serenbe. Photo via Serenbe.com

Open houses in the art district. Photo via Serenbe.com

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