

A Conversation with David Farbman

New Center Council (NCC): You are working on several residential projects throughout downtown, with focus on the Central Business District and the East Riverfront. Why do you think that New Center would be a favorable location in which to expand?

David Farbman (DF): First, New Center's proximity to both Wayne State and the Medical Center, its closeness to downtown, and its abundant parking make it appealing. Second, although GM has moved from New Center, their commitment to seeing that the right things happen in terms of the transition to residential and future commercial retail is an important consideration. The third factor would be the New Center Council and its commitment to seeing the right types of deals happen. The Council can help make the process easier, through its understanding of how to make a deal economically viable and, at the same time, architecturally compatible to the surrounding areas.



47 Burroughs – future rental lofts in New Amsterdam (Burroughs & Cass)

NCC: As you complete the renovation and sale of the Gramont Manor Condos at the northern edge of New Center, your next project will be lofts for rent in two historic buildings in New Amsterdam. Who is your target market for the new rentals?

DF: I believe the absorption of these units will come from the following: 25% will be State

employees currently residing near New Center; 25% will be Wayne State related, such as students, faculty and administrators; 20% will come from the medical communities of DMC and Henry Ford; and the balance will come from current Detroiters or suburbanites looking to live in an actual loft district, not an isolated loft building.

NCC: Speaking of Wayne State, what opportunities do you see for New Amsterdam as it relates to the development of Wayne State's proposed Tech Park (SmartZone)?

DF: Overall, I think it will be imperative to work side by side with Wayne State. I think working flexibly with each other in relation to parking, public space maintenance, and design issues will be key to the success of each project.

NCC: You've mentioned the desire to mix the "high-tech" future with the existing historic condition. Do you see that as an angle for attracting the digital age market into this neighborhood?

DF: All lofts that are an "A-type" product can be done in a fashion that offers the latest and greatest in digital entertainment, Internet options and high speed access. The irony about most of these older buildings is that they accommodate such high-tech luxuries easily due to the open floor plans, high ceilings and strong structural load capability. They don't build them like they used to.

NCC: We are optimistic about retail in New Center, but firmly believe that a new influx of residents is necessary to take us to the next level. What do you see as potential retail within the Wayne State/New Center corridor after New Amsterdam is in place?

DF: I see a smaller organic-type grocer. I see nightclubs with dining and small cafes with outdoor eating areas. The development community needs to be willing to do something more than fast food stores with no architectural appeal, and I think with some give and take, a fabulous retail product can be developed that does a viable business but also wins awards for its architecture.



Gramont Manor Condominiums



Future rental lofts in New Amsterdam at 6200 Second Avenue (Amsterdam and Second.) Construction begins in Spring of 2001.

