

## **Cherokee South makeover to include cosmetic upgrades, new tenant mix**

BY: Suzanna Stagemeyer

In the two and a half years since Tri-Land Properties bought Cherokee South Plaza, 95th Street and Antioch Road, the strip mall's occupied space dropped from more than 90 percent to about 40 percent.

Now, representatives of the Illinois company said, the 118,000-square-foot strip mall is prime for redevelopment.

"It has to get worse before it gets better," Hugh Robinson, Tri-Land executive vice president, told the Overland Park City Council last week. "The tenant mix when we bought it did not have long-term viability."

Robinson presented \$21.1 million plans that include gutting, construction and partial demolition.

On a piece of the parking lot near the intersection, Walgreen's has agreed to build a 14,800-square-foot location that would serve as the anchor store, Robinson said.

The 11.6-acre site would receive a makeover; plans include replacing many storefronts and installing awnings, adding perimeter landscaping and raised planting areas in the parking lot, screening trash areas and mechanical equipment, and using 40-plus flag poles to fly seasonal flags.

"Our goal is to significantly improve the parking area aesthetically," Robinson said.

By recasting the environment of Cherokee South, built in 1962, the strip mall will attract high-quality tenants that include golf and jewelry stores, hair salons, coffee shops and specialty food stores, Robinson said.

He listed Starbuck's coffee shop and Paul Mitchell hair salon as possible tenants.

Robinson said he believes the project will succeed because of the area's "solid middle class market," the mall's visibility and convenient access, and a location where two major streets intersect. He also expects the Interstate 435 ramp onto Antioch Road, which will be fully completed in 2008, to increase traffic to the area, he said.

"Despite the center's current condition, it has a good location on a main intersection," Robinson said.

According to Tri-Land, Cherokee South's 21 current tenants employ 98 people and generate about \$5.7 million in annual sales. After redevelopment, Tri-Land estimated the project would employ 246 people and generate about \$22.9 million in annual sales.

However, the project needs financial incentives from the city to materialize as planned, Robinson said. He asked the City Council for \$4.5 million in 20-year tax increment financing so Tri-Land could achieve an 11 percent return rate on Cherokee South. TIFs allow portions of future property or other taxes generated by the development to help pay for eligible costs.

Without the financing, Robinson said, Tri-Land would pursue a plan with less capital investment and lower-rent tenants.

Council members directed staff to investigate possible financing mechanisms for Cherokee South.

Tri-Land specializes in redeveloping distressed open-air shopping centers and owns 17 shopping centers nationwide, including five in the Kansas City area.