

\$20 million Eisenhower project gets preliminary approval by city

By MERLISA LAWRENCE CORBETT

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Alexandria developer Donald Simpson hopes to join the growing number of businesses sprouting up around the massive \$500 million Patent and Trademark Office on Eisenhower Avenue. Simpson Development plans to build a six-story, 98,000-square-foot mixed-use complex which would include retail and office space on the company's existing 3 ½ acre site of its Eisenhower I and II office buildings. "The Patent and Trademark Office has been a successful venture for the city ... You're talking 2.5 million square feet of office space and 8,000 employees.



"That's the focal point of the whole Eisenhower East development," said Donald Simpson Sr., president of Simpson Development. "Along with that it (PTO) is bringing 1,500 residential condominiums planned or already under construction. You're going to need retail, restaurants and service businesses to support the residential and office populations."

This week the city approved preliminary plans for Simpson's \$20 million redevelopment. On Tuesday, Simpson takes his plans before City Council for final approval. "We don't anticipate any problems," he said. If approved, construction on the project is scheduled to begin in Spring 2006. Simpson, who serves on the board of the Alexandria Eisenhower Partnership, is essentially redeveloping land it developed back in the 1980s when it completed two office buildings off Eisenhower Avenue.

"We are one of the first to redevelop our property," said Simpson. "We are going to redevelop our property in stages." Although no retailers have committed to Simpson's project, the developer wants to capitalize on the emerging residential presence along the Eisenhower corridor. Across the street from the site in which Simpson plans to build, construction has begun on Carlyle Place, a two-tower luxury condominium high-rise.

Development around the PTO is part of the city's Eisenhower East Small Area Plan to maximize use of existing mass transit, reduce reliance on cars and encourage pedestrian traffic. It's part of a national trend by local governments to move away from sprawl and crawl and towards "urban villages." Simpson said he has no particular retail in mind, but believes food services and personal services such as dry cleaners and hair salons would best meet the needs of the residential dwellers and office workers in that area.