

Morris Square project meets housing's high demand



RENDERING COURTESY I'On

Morris Square, a forthcoming residential development on the Charleston peninsula, is expected to be completed by 2007.

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What was once a pair of vacant lots straddling the Radcliffeborough and Elliotborough neighborhoods in downtown Charleston will become Morris Square, a \$25 million upscale development.

Sixty-four residential units are planned, including townhouses, con-

dominiums and single-family homes, plus a sprinkling of possible restaurant and retail space of approximately 2,000 square feet. Construction is scheduled to begin in six months and last about two years.

Bounded by Morris, Marion, Smith and Jasper streets, and extending north of Morris toward Cannon Street, the 2.7-acre Morris Square will help satisfy the current demand for urban Charleston living and increase foot traffic to upper King

Street, says the I'On Group, Morris Square's creator and marketer.

In a May 5 lottery, 62 prospective homebuyers competed for the development's first 12 units, part of the project's 34-unit first phase, according to I'On Group spokesman Drew Grossklaus. Lottery participants submitted a \$5,000 deposit along with their application.

"We did zero advertising; it was all word-of-mouth," Grossklaus says. Whether future lotteries will be used to sell Morris Square's remaining units has yet to be decided.

Morris Square's condominiums are two- and three-bedroom units ranging from \$449,000 to \$675,000. Townhouses have three bedrooms and are priced from \$432,000 for about 1,430 square feet to \$675,000 for nearly 2,240 square feet. Single-family homes have as many as four bedrooms and cost ranges from \$465,000 to \$715,000. Charleston-based Chastain Construction Inc. is the general contractor.

The architectural style will be traditional Lowcountry with stucco siding, shutters and porches, says LeGrand Elebash, president of the I'On Group. Buildings will be no higher than four stories. Some units will include garages, and some townhouses will have rooftop terraces.

An imported Italian stone fountain will be the center of a corner, open-air piazza that may front a restaurant or café. Two

tree-shaded parks, along with the piazza, will serve as public space.

In terms of architecture and the importance of public spaces, Morris Square will bear some design similarities to the I'On Village residential subdivision in Mount Pleasant but will have a more urban feel, says Elebash.

"Morris Square is the kind of urbanism we wanted to do at I'On," Elebash says. Morris Square's smaller area and higher population density lends itself to a more dynamic and lively urban design.

A major marketing point for Morris Square is its location, Elebash says. The development is a 15-minute walk from the College of Charleston, the Medical University of South Carolina, Ashley Hall School, Marion Square and the boutiques and restaurants along upper King Street. Stores like Waterworks, a high-end bathroom fixtures and accessories retailer, and Maine Cottage, an upscale home furnishings emporium, both located on upper King Street, are contributing to what Elebash calls a "dynamic trend" that will make Morris Square that much more appealing.

Morris Square represents peninsular Charleston's latest example of "in-fill" development, an antidote to urban sprawl. ■

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