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Taking Ferndale in a new direction

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By Jennie Miller
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FERNDALE — Ground has been broken on the future of residential living in Ferndale.

With many high-profile residential projects in the development stages throughout the city, such as the Woodward Avenue Lofts on Lewiston, and the massive plans for Troy Street, action can finally be seen on two Hilton sites.

The Terra Land Group of Novi has its hands full with Ferndale properties — three on Hilton and one on Livernois. All will be transformed into what they call live/work townhouses.

Two of those properties are underway, with underground work completed and footings being installed as of press time.

"We'll be framing through the winter," said Geoff Greenheisen of Terra Land Group. "We'll start selling them after the first of the year, and they'll be occupy-able in the fall of 2006."

Terra Land Group made a name for itself after developing a similar project in Walled Lake several years ago.

"The product we are building is essentially a two-story town home that allows for flexibility in its use," Greenheisen said. "Someone could buy one of these, use the first floor as a small office, and live above it.

"People are really starting to look at this as a real viable living alternative. The buyers are very entrepreneurial, and we thought this was a perfect fit for a city like Ferndale. We've been looking for sites here for a couple of years. There is a great energy and excitement here."

The city is in the process of updating its Master Plan, and according to city officials, these mixed-use development projects are exactly the kind of thing that fits into the vision for Ferndale.

A recent proposal to change the city's zoning ordinance is in part an effort to make it easier for developers to carry out their plans, to make the city more viable.

"This is exactly the kind of thing we're trying to promote throughout the city," said City Councilman and Plan Commissioner ~~Scott~~ Galloway. "When we create denser downtowns, more people are living, shopping and doing business in a city. We are trying to create these vibrant corridors like Hilton and Livernois, and I think we can do it."

The two Hilton projects that are underway will have 14 units each, which will include seven lofts and seven live/work units, Greenheisen said. Prices are yet to be set.

The site on Hilton at Academy will be 12 units, half of which will also be lofts. The Livernois plans have yet to be laid out, but Greenheisen promises something different for that area of the city.

"That one will probably be a little bit edgier, more artistically designed," he said.

Working with the City of Ferndale has been a treat to Greenheisen and his partners at Terra Land Group.

"The Ferndale City Council and Plan Commission saw this as a cool idea and one they wanted in their community," Greenheisen said. "They did everything they could to get us through the process to get us to where we could break ground."

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