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Watch out, here we come ...

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2005 filled with development, plans for growth in Ferndale and Berkley

By Jennie Miller
 C & G Staff Writer

FERNDALE/BERKLEY — Move over, Birmingham. Step aside, Royal Oak.

These booming metropolises are so yesterday.

The future belongs to cities like Ferndale and Berkley, who've spent 2005 focusing on downtown development and community-wide improvement in times where money is more than tight.

Development is all the rage in Ferndale, with too many irons in the fire to count.

- The long-awaited Troy Street proposal is a \$40 million project with three condominium towers atop a ground floor of parking and commercial space planned by Larson Realty Group.

- The Woodward Avenue Lofts is a project planned by Lewiston Realty Inc. to erect a retail and loft complex after demolishing the former Ashmore Truck and Trailer Rental on Woodward at Lewiston.

- Thirty-one new homes are under construction in Ferndale's northeast side after the demolition of the former Hazel Park Clark School building.

- The Terra Land Group of Novi has its hands full with Ferndale properties — three on Hilton and one on Livernois — where it will construct unique live/work townhouses.

"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."

New businesses have joined vacated buildings in Berkley and Ferndale's downtowns, turning them into destination spots and creating more attractive storefronts.

In 2005, Ferndale welcomed Gracie's Underground, Via Nove, Buffalo Wild Wings, Twisted Shamrock, Contempo Home, Vixen Intimates, American Pop, Savvy Soles, Naka, Flip, El Gato Salon, State of the Art Framing Gallery, Karma Tea & Tonics, and Body Lyrics Harmonizing Elements.

"I think that downtowns are always evolving, but ours is evolving at a faster pace than others at this time," said Cristina Sheppard Decius, director of the Ferndale Downtown Development Authority. "As new businesses come in, we're finding that a lot of them are raising the bar in terms of quality."

In Berkley, these places include 24 Seconds Bar & Grill, Famous Flavors, Urban Avenue, Super Suppers, Edible Arrangements, 3M Investments, Sweet Essentials, Victorian Tea Room and Ameritax.

"Berkley is an up and coming area — the downtown has a lot of potential," said Bob Bronstein, who immediately set his sights on Berkley to open 24 Seconds.

In addition, longtime businesses are looking to better their locations. Alex's of Berkley moved right next door, renovating the building and expanding its capacity for patrons. The same can be said for Dairy Queen, LeVasser, Dyer & Associates, Curves, Have You Any Wool and GT Sales — all which have new buildings in Berkley.

Woodward Avenue Brewers bought the property across the street in Ferndale in order to erect The Emory, a bar/restaurant the owners hope will be known for its quality hamburgers.

Rosie O'Grady's obtained permission from the Ferndale City Council to add on a second story, and Affirmations and Garden Fresh Gourmet are also expanding their facilities.

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