



King Me

Playing Checkers in Downtown Phoenix

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“I use this expression today,” says Michael Hallmark, one of the six principals in the development of Jackson Street Entertainment District. “This is a city developed like checkers: [if] there’s an empty box or an empty square, put something there. If it doesn’t have something, that must not be good. But they didn’t think about the stuff in between.” Downtown Phoenix may not be as developed as other cities like New York or Chicago, but we’re still young. As everyone

knows, with immaturity come mistakes and those mistakes have created little urban centers all around the metropolitan area instead of one urban core. Now Phoenix has six men who are thinking ahead.

Michael Hallmark, David Wallach, Dale Jenson, Bradley Yonover, Jim Lourgos and Patrick Keeley are working on the Jackson Street Entertainment District project, a major development that’s supposed to fill in the boxes,

so to speak, in Downtown Phoenix. Years in the making, Jackson Street Entertainment District will be the urban focal point that Phoenicians have been craving for so long.

A pedestrian-friendly neighborhood, Jackson Street Entertainment District will wrap around US Airways Center down Jackson Street, with the hopes that more development will take place in the years to come. "We're trying to provide an area in the city where creative class, urban people want to exist. Not just live, but work and play," says Wallach. "It's a mixture of entertainment venues, music venues, retail, office and residential."

The Summit, a 23-story residential high-rise, is the first building in the new district, with a few more projects breaking ground in early 2008. "We see the immediate need to bring obtainable housing down here," Wallach says. "One of the first projects that we do will have an obtainable housing component because very many intellectual, smart young people don't always have money to live in high-rises."

The Jackson Street Entertainment District isn't the only major new development, there's also a revitalized Phoenix Convention Center, a brand new Phoenix Biomedical Campus and the transplanted University of Arizona College of Medicine, among many other developments. An expanded Arizona State University Downtown Campus will also play an important part in the District.

"I teach a 600-level design class at ASU," says Hallmark. "I asked several students what they thought [of Jackson Street Entertainment District] and one particularly bright student said, 'You need people like us or the district will be boring.'" Hallmark laughs as he tells this because he knows this particularly bright student is absolutely right. "You need people who make cities work, run, students who want to hang out ...

and you need them living here," he says.

For the students of ASU Downtown, their campus will feel more like an East Coast college in the near future. Between classes, students will be able to get on the light-rail and go to Jackson Street for a quick coffee and go shopping for books, and at the end of the day, students can go to the district to have a beer with their friends and just walk home to the many dorms that will soon be built. With an expanded ASU Downtown Campus, the flow of college students to the Jackson Street Entertainment District will be similar to that of ASU Main and Mill Avenue.

The flourishing nightlife will rival Scottsdale (a rumored House of Blues will make sure of that, if it happens) and the vast amount of entertainment available will rival Tempe, but living in Jackson Street Entertainment District will surely mirror larger American cities like Chicago.

A permanent public market means residents won't have to worry about getting the lopsided shopping cart at Fry's since they'll just pick up only as many groceries as they can carry when they're walking home from work. The noise of a baseball game in the background won't be from their TV, but from the actual game itself. With bars and clubs on Jackson Street, friends won't have to sacrifice a night of fun to be the D.D., and with all the walking patrons are going to do, no one will need a treadmill to get buns of steel. Phoenix will finally have what other cities have had for so long.

"People [in Phoenix] have a tendency to look elsewhere and say, 'Why can't we have that?'" says Wallach. "They're forgetting, of course, that those places weren't always like that. But they evolve into that."

As far as the evolving development for Downtown Phoenix goes, it'll take some time

and patience to move all the pieces to the other side of the board, but Wallach and the rest of the principals are making sure Jackson Street is the start of the process. "And if [the city] is well planned," he says, "then let the rest of the development go its way [and] you wind up with something that's pretty cool. And that's what Jackson Street's about."



YOU KNOW YOU'RE AN URBANITE IF ...

You can't fall asleep without constant honking and yelling in the background.

You stop into your favorite coffee house everyday and it's not Starbucks.

You can eat out and not worry about the calories because you're going to walk them off.

You never have to leave your neighborhood.