

‘NO CHEAP AND CHEERFUL ALLOWED’

UM Properties has high hopes, standards for housing development near university

MARTIN CASH

MORE than 10 years after acquiring about 120 acres of land that used to be the Southwood Golf Course, the University of Manitoba is about to launch the commercial marketing of what could eventually become a \$6-billion development.

Pending final approval of the development plan from the University of Manitoba’s board of directors at the end of this month — which university president Michael Benarroch said he is confident of achieving — sewer and water lines will start going in for the first phase of the development starting in the second quarter of this year.

Dubbed Southwood Circle, the \$1.5-billion first phase alone will feature about 3,000 residential units and about three million square feet of development including retail, services and extensive parks and outdoor amenities with access to the Red River.

Among other things, the National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation will build its new headquarters there.

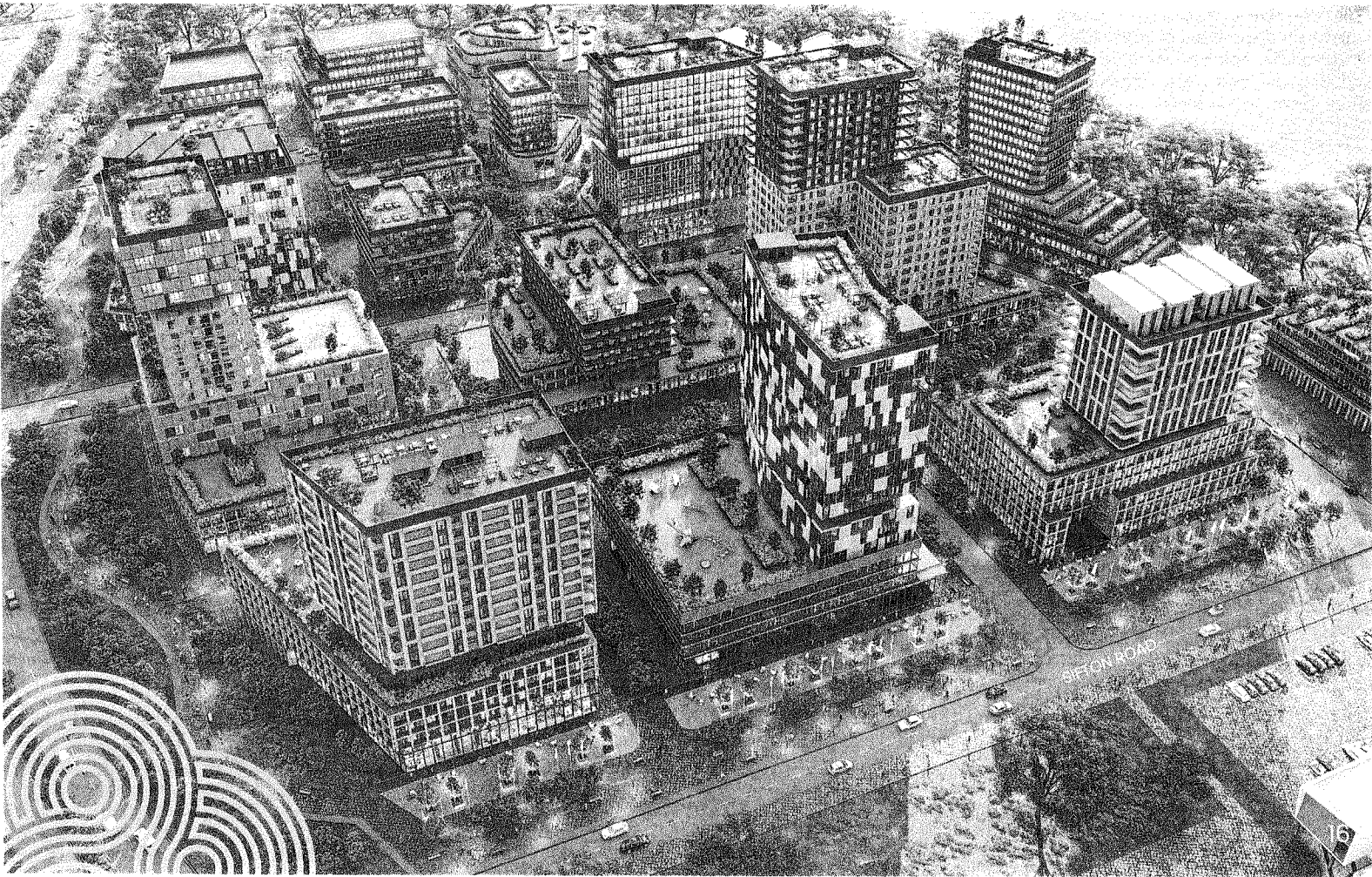
Developers will have to follow strict environmental design guidelines — all buildings and land development will have to satisfy, at a minimum, LEED gold standards.

Gregory Rogers, CEO of UM Properties, the U of M-owned development company said, “I think it will be the most sustainable development in the country.”

In addition to sustainable construction design, trees will be preserved, storm water management will use sustainable strategies and Indigenous design professionals will inject Indigenous cultural elements throughout.

The entirety of the development — stretching from Pembina Highway to the Red River from north of IG Field — is expected to take decades to complete and will be worked on in distinct phases starting with two parcels immediately north of the stadium from University Crescent to the river.

Benarroch said, “This has a real opportunity to transform the space around the university and transform



A rendering of Southwood Circle, Phase 1A and 1B concept. The \$1.5-billion first phase will include about 3,000 residential units.

the learning experience in parts of our institution.”

In addition to design policies, Rogers said developers will be expected to build to the full extent of the density of the land.

And those design standards are expected to be strictly adhered to.

“No cheap and cheerful allowed,” Rogers said.

“We want to see buildings go up here that are commensurate with what you would see in similar triple-A sites in cities across the country.”

With the announcement earlier this week of the potential for massive new multi-family developments around Polo Park and the ongoing development plans of Naawi-Oodena, formerly the Kapyong Barracks that includes more than 1,100 residential units, Southwood Circle will have some competition.

Generally speaking about 3,000 multi-family residential units are brought on to the Winnipeg market every year.

“Developers are all looking for a piece of that pie,” Rogers said. “The pie is going to grow over time especially after Winnipeg breaks through the one-million mark in population and

people will choose to live in different parts of Winnipeg for different reasons.”

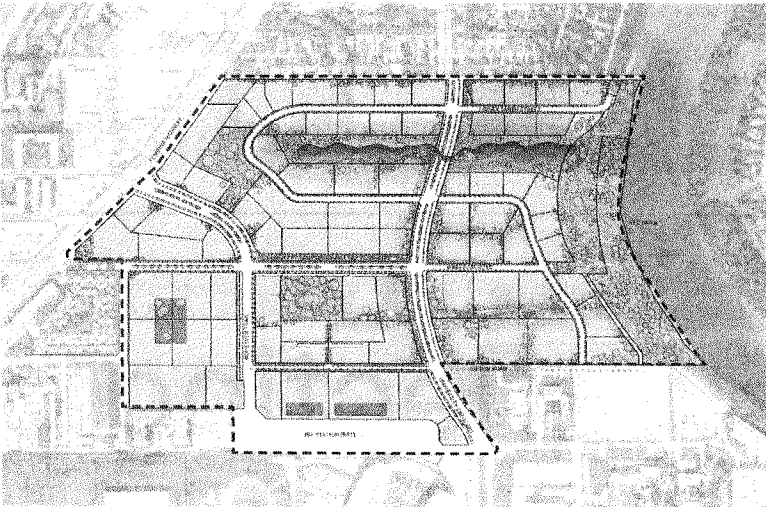
Rogers and Benarroch said they are confident there will be demand from developers. All the properties on the site will be built and developed by third-party developers. Benarroch said there are no plans to have university buildings on the site.

“I would say we are very well positioned,” Roger said. “I’m not going to take it all and I don’t want it all. We’ll get our fair share and what is fair for me will be commensurate with what the market feels is the relative attraction of my community to the other alternatives in the city.”

WITH close to 40,000 people already present at the U of M campus on any given day and more than 500,000 square feet of public amenities there including the stadium, the idea of the development is that it will be a walkable community for anyone having anything to do with the university.

“There is nothing like this project in the city in terms of its walkability,” said Rogers. “Currently there is really no place for the 40,000 people who are on the campus to live so that they don’t have to drive to work or school. Here we are creating a walkable community, with a bus-rapid transit system running right through it and all the big box amenities within a kilometre.”

The project has achieved all of the regulatory clearance from City Hall



The development stretches from Pembina Highway to the Red River from north of IG Field.

except for a minor alteration where UM Properties and the city will swap a couple of small parcels of land. That has to be recognized with a final zoning bylaw.

UM Properties has a 99-year lease on the land — which the university owns — and will lease land to developers for 99 years. They will pay UM Properties the full amount of the lease up front which will be roughly equal to what the value of the land would be if it was freehold.

Rogers figures the value of the lands will continue to rise after it is serviced and part of a larger development

community.

UM Properties has borrowed funds to do the servicing work and will pay back the loans from revenue received from developers.

All of the excess is profit that will go back to the university.

“We do see this paying returns to the university in the future,” Benarroch said. “We also have other goals we want to accomplish with this piece of land... It is going to enrich everything we do on the campus.”

martin.cash@freepress.mb.ca