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CONSTRUCTION UPDATE

Carneros park now part of renewed industrial activity

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BY JEFF QUACKENBUSH
STAFF REPORTER

SONOMA – Seven years after Korbel Winery owner Gary Heck purchased 53 acres of industrial land south of Sonoma for Carneros Business Park and two years after work started on infrastructure and ponds there, Schell Investments is selling some of the last large industrial lots in the North Bay.

Four of the 17 lots off Eighth Street East are already in contract for sale to previously interested buyers, amounting to at least 80,000 square feet of prospective new businesses in the park, according to developer Bill Saks of St. Helena-based William A. Saks & Company. The park is approved for up to 750,000 square feet of mostly light-industrial space in 18 buildings and can accommodate companies that need up to 300,000 square feet of contiguous space.

The largest prospective buyer is an unnamed industrial condominium developer who is angling to buy two lots to house a 40,000-square-foot building. That project would house 20 2,000-square-foot units. Two others are seeking 20,000 square feet each.

Several years of challenges

The Carneros business park, where prices range from \$11 to \$14 a square foot, was approved in spring 2001 but ran into challenges with regulators.

“For a couple of years, activity at the park screeched to a halt,” Mr. Saks said. “Now that we’re selling to the public, it’s like painting a painting and finally getting it hung somewhere.”

Retail overtakes industrial sites

Competition from retail developers is pushing industrial land prices in Marin and Sonoma counties as high as \$30 a square foot. One example of industrial land giving way to retail is Best Buy’s proposed 35,000-square-foot store in San Rafael to replace industrial buildings that housed Labcon before it moved to Petaluma.

Some of the first new industrial space in Marin is Keenan/Lovewell Venture’s redevelopment of the former Fairchild Semiconductor plant in north San Rafael into light-industrial condos that sold briskly last year.

Industrial properties also are giving way to housing and retail

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development in Petaluma. Basin Street Properties is spending more than \$100 million on transforming downtown waterfront commercial buildings into upscale mixed-use developments.

A similar future is being discussed for Napa Pipe Company's 151 acres along the Napa River to the south of that city.

Lifting limits spurs buying

The lifting of a development limit in the south Napa business parks late last year sparked a buying frenzy in the first half of this year for land. A dramatically dwindling supply of industrial land is prompting the County of Napa to take inventory of it as the General Plan is updated.

In Santa Rosa and north, several industrial projects are under construction or recently completed:

• Vince Rizzo is building 193,200 square feet in three buildings called Industry West Commerce Center in Santa Rosa.

• A 20,400-square-foot industrial flex building is nearing completion at 7667 Bell Road in Windsor Business Park.

• Bill DenBeste of DenBeste Transportation has completed a 24,000-square-foot warehouse near Sonoma County Airport.

• Construction is set to start on the last two buildings at Shiloh Business Park, a 63,000-square-foot industrial incubator at 295 Shiloh Road in Windsor.

• Widening of Conde Lane and Shiloh Road in Windsor is opening up dozens of acres owned by Airport Business Center and other developers for projects.

For more information, call William A. Saks & Company at 707-968-9696.

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