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Fifth Ward development could include helipad

Rivianna, a proposed Fifth Ward condo and hotel development planned by developer Bob Schultz, could include a unique amenity in Milwaukee: helicopter air taxi service to Chicago. Rivianna would have a 100-room hotel and 192 condominiums at 236 S. Water St., along the south side of the Milwaukee River. The building would have three 11-story towers built on top of a four-story base building.

The hotel would be in the middle tower, and the helipad would be on top of that tower. The building would include a lounge for people waiting to take the helicopter. Schultz said he is in discussions with Midwest Helicopter Inc. to provide the air taxi service. Midwest Helicopter would pay a fee to use the Rivianna helipad. "We are definitely moving in that direction," Schultz said. "Our discussions are past serious."



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Another proposed development, a 42-story mixed-use building planned by JBK Properties Inc. just southeast of the U.S. Bank Center at 777 E. Wisconsin Ave., had included a helipad in the plans, but was later removed. That project is still in the planning stage and is seeking an anchor office tenant. Schultz said he is not sure if the air taxi service would be made available to the general public. However, corporations could purchase a share of a helicopter which would be kept at Midwest Helicopter's Kenosha facility. The corporate owners then could share usage of the helicopter and use Rivianna's helipad.

"That is by far the most economical way of owning any type of aircraft," Schultz said. Business people could use the air taxi service as a way to quickly travel to and from Chicago, while avoiding Chicago area traffic. Schultz said he previously worked for a real estate developer in Eau Claire, where he used a helicopter frequently to travel to and from development sites. "There are people that think this helipad is a hair-brained scheme," Schultz said. "(But) I found the helicopter to be a very useful tool."

Schultz partnered with St. Paul, Minn.-based CommonBond Communities Inc. to redevelop the former Teweles Seed Co. building at 222 S. Third St. He also is a partner in the River Renaissance development under construction at the corner of North Water and East Erie streets in Milwaukee's Historic Third Ward. Details of the Rivianna project are still being developed, and the project still must be approved by city officials. The hotel would probably be operated by Rick Eckert, the owner of Olympia Resort & Conference Center in Oconomowoc. The condos would have a wide price range of \$150,000 to \$3 million.

The building will also have its own yacht club, in which residents will be able to share yachts. Schultz is not seeking a city subsidy for the project, but still says he is committed to providing community benefits with the development. The construction workers who build Rivianna will be union members, and 25 percent of the construction workers will be women or minorities, he said. The building will be an environmentally-friendly "green building," and Schultz is hoping to obtain a silver LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) certification. Schultz is also seeking minority- and women-owned businesses to provide services for the project.

"I am committed to socially responsible real estate development," Schultz said. Schultz said he expects to obtain city approval for the project in May. He plans to break ground next spring and complete the project in 2010. More information about Rivianna is available at: www.rivianna.com.