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Lumberyards mixed-use project set to rise along South Broadway

By Margaret Jackson
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Developer Jon Cook, right, recently moved his office to Broadway and Yale Avenue, near his proposed project, The Lumberyards. With him are his daughter, Dominique, and son, Steven. (John Prieto, The Denver Post)

Real estate investor Jon Cook has spent the past 40 years assembling property along South Broadway, and now he is getting ready to start an ambitious redevelopment plan.

Cook, 60, is planning a mixed-use project that would include housing, office, retail and restaurant space. The project, known as The Lumberyards, would be located on several blocks west of South Broadway and West Jewell Avenue.

Among the parcels included in the project is 6 acres formerly owned by The Shattuck Chemical Co., which salvaged uranium from defective fuel rods. It closed in 1982, leaving the site contaminated with radioactivity. The site was cleaned up under the federal Superfund program in 2006.

"We will start in 2011, as long as the economy allows," Cook said. "We don't feel we can be more prepared than we are now for when the economy turns."

The first eight-story building is being planned and designed, Cook said. It will include an upscale restaurant at street level and residences above. Cook said he plans to build one building at a time and allow it to stabilize before starting the next phase.

Denver City Councilman Chris Nevitt compared Cook to Mayor John Hickenlooper and developer Dana Crawford, two people who pioneered development in Denver's Lower Downtown district.

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"I think Jon Cook is in an enviable position to have enough property to not only be the first guy in but to be able to really catalyze the future down there," Nevitt said. "South Denver so much needs this. There's so much potential. South Broadway is the gateway to the city."

Cook's properties fall in the district covered by the Evans Station Area Plan, aimed at creating a vibrant, urban neighborhood. The plan calls for redeveloping underutilized industrial areas into mixed-use transit-oriented urban centers such as the one Cook is planning.

Another of the plan's goals is to connect the area's existing light-rail station to Broadway, which will be transformed into a "Main Street" with the city's \$34.4 million Better Broadway initiative.

"Broadway is the No. 1 new boulevard in the Denver metroplex," Cook said. "There are going to be a lot of exciting new changes for many years."

In addition to the new buildings he is planning, Cook has made numerous improvements to the properties he has collected along South Broadway from Interstate 25 to West Floyd Avenue in Englewood. He also built an office building at the southeast corner of Broadway and Yale Avenue, where he recently moved. Colore Pizzeria Moderna also opened in the building.

HomeStars home furnishings recently moved

into an old automotive facility that Cook renovated at 2059 S. Broadway.

"It's a good environment," said business owner Mark Davis. "I like the action on Broadway."

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