

Business

Inside

Real estate: West Loop land will go for road project. D8

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REAL ESTATE

Expansion of U.S. 290 to eat into retail sites

Several large tracts along the northern portion of the West Loop are being acquired for a roadway project that's been in the works for years.

Most notable is about 12 acres of the Macy's parking lot at Northwest Mall. That and other properties around it have, or soon will, be purchased by the Texas Department



NANCY SARNOFF

of Transportation for the planned expansion of U.S. 290. "The acquisition of this much West Loop frontage is extremely rare," said property consultant Mark Sikes of Deal Sikes & Associates.

Sikes, whose company specializes in property valuations for eminent domain initiatives, is working for many of the owners being affected.

About 73 acres of frontage along West Loop North are being acquired for the project, which will expand the West Loop where it intersects U.S. 290.

The long-range transportation project is happening in stages.

For now, the properties being purchased are east of North Post Oak between West 18th Street and Old Katy Road, Sikes said.

Two other large parcels that have been affected include the old Antique Center of Texas building and the former Malibu Grand Prix, which make up a combined 18 acres.

Betting on downtown

Few developers build residential projects downtown, a part of the city known more for its office population than its residents.

Marvy Finger is planning to do it for the second time in recent years.

The Houston-based builder has a project in the works across from Minute Maid Park.

For now, he's not revealing details as he finishes ironing out plans.

He's clearly bullish on the eastern part



Scott McDonald / Hedrich Blessing

Planning Design Research's bright white space has yellow accents. And the space is also green all over.

of downtown.

In 2009 he completed One Park Place, a 37-story luxury rental building overlooking Discovery Green.

But downtown isn't his only focus.

His development firm, the Finger Cos., is constructing more than 400 apartments near the Whole Foods at West Dallas and Waugh. It has other projects planned for the corner of Dunlavy and West Alabama in Montrose and in west Houston at Wilcrest and the Katy Freeway.

Where We Work

Where do you work? A cool home office? A converted warehouse?

The Chronicle's Prime Property blog is launching a feature today called Where We Work. It's where we'll showcase some of the most distinctive offices in the Houston area.

If there's something special about your workplace or one you've seen, let us know, and we'll try to feature it. Send an email with details and photos if you have them to nancy.sarnoff@chron.com.

Perhaps it's fitting we

chose an architecture firm that designs cutting-edge office space around the world as our first subject.

Located on the 39th floor of 2 Houston Center, the downtown office of Planning Design Research was recently recognized with a design award from the local chapter of the American Institute of Architects. The bright white space with yellow accents also happens to be quite green — as in environmentally friendly.

Interior window blinds are controlled by solar panels on the building's roof. Water-conserving bathroom fixtures have helped reduce water usage by 35 percent. And workstations can be adjusted for work-surface height. The space has earned LEED Platinum certification for Commercial Interior Design and Construction from the U.S. Green Building Council.

Find more pictures of PDR's office at blog.chron.com/primeproperty.

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 Sarnoff's real estate blog is at blog.chron.com/primeproperty.