

Sawyer success propels Coxe Avenue rebirth

By John Boyle
STAFF WRITER

ASHEVILLE — Standing in a posh, \$250,000-plus condominium with gleaming wood floors and expensive art on the walls, architect Steve Gaddis raised a glass for a toast.

"Welcome to Coxe Avenue, guys," he said. "It's a little different than it used to be, isn't it?"

With one major condominium development completed and a second project about to start, the answer is obvious: Coxe Avenue is becoming a downtown hotspot.

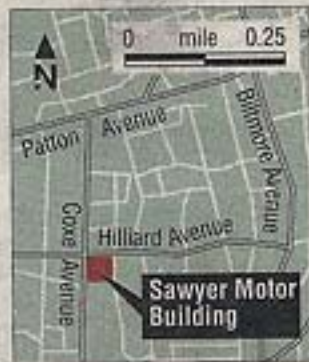
Wednesday evening, about a hundred people attended an open house to celebrate the redevelopment of the Sawyer Motor Building into upscale condos and office space, and the groundbreaking for the Sawyer Annex building next door.

Scott Shuford, director of Asheville's Planning and Development Department, says developments such as the Sawyer Building and the annex represent another step in downtown's evolution.

Downtown Asheville has undergone a remarkable resurgence during the past 15 years, evolving from a near ghost town with 80 percent of its buildings vacant into what many consider a jewel. Developers say \$200 million has gone into the revitalization.

Developer Harry Pilos said the \$2.9-million, 18,000-square-foot annex should be complete by March 2004 and will house at least nine "office condominiums" with a starting price of \$180 a square foot.

Some might consider that price a bit steep, considering the neighborhood still has an industrial look about it and a homeless shelter a block away. But Pilos said two annex units are already sold.



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"I bought this property four years ago," Pilos said of the Sawyer Building, which was built in 1926 by Eugene C. Sawyer, Asheville's first car dealer.



Harry Pilos

"We got an offer on the last condo today."

And the 20 condos in the building aren't cheap: one-bedroom units go for about \$240,000, two-bedrooms for \$350,000 to \$400,000.

Located at 100 Coxe Ave., the Sawyer Building has office space on the first floor, which as of Monday will be occupied by the 40 employees of Gould Killian Certified Public Accountants. The company is moving from space on Merrimon Avenue in north Asheville.

"It met our needs," said Gould Killian President Ed Towson. "We wanted something on one floor, with the square footage and parking that we needed — and something close to downtown."

David Kanis and his company, Ashford Mortgage, will also move into the Sawyer building.



David Kanis

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