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ANN ARBOR NEWS

Broadway Village at Lowertown launched

Granholm joins groundbreaking at Lowertown site

Friday, January 11, 2008

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The Ann Arbor News

As Kevin McGraw prepared to read from a statement to kick off a groundbreaking ceremony for the Broadway Village at Lowertown, he put on his reading glasses.

"When we started this project, I didn't need reading glasses," the director of development for Strathmore Development Co. joked to a room of developers, financiers, government officials and politicians.

Gov. Jennifer Granholm also appeared during Thursday's 30-minute ceremony, which ended when she and other key representatives stuck shovels into a pile of dirt under a heated tent at the corner of Broadway and Maiden Lane.

Work on Broadway Village at Lowertown started in 2001. It has endured some residential resistance, protracted financial negotiations and a development process in a city with a reputation for bureaucratic delays.

McGraw told the crowd that change isn't easy and "we had our opponents."

"The only one who likes change is a wet baby," he said.

McGraw said the seven-building, 775,000-square-foot mixed use development with a 700-spot city-owned parking structure will have a ribbon-cutting ceremony by late summer 2010.

Granholm said Broadway Village at Lowertown is the type of project that should be done in the state. She pointed out it took advantage of tax incentives for cleanup of contaminated soil, had cooperation at many levels including the city and University of Michigan and could create almost 600 jobs.

"It is the perfect project," Granholm said, joking that her daughter, who is a U-M freshman, may someday live there.

Jim Epolito, president and CEO of the Michigan Economic Development Corp., said the project is "a great step forward for the state of Michigan."

After the speeches, Granholm, Epolito, Ann Arbor Mayor Pro-Tem Marcia Higgins and Clark Construction Co. Vice President Kenneth Lawless participated in the groundbreaking ceremony.

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