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Last St. Louis area drive-in theater up for sale, may be redeveloped

By ALAN J. ORTBALS

The last remaining drive-in movie theater in metropolitan St. Louis has gone on the sale block. The Skyview Drive-In in Belleville, owned and operated by Bloomer Amusement Co., has been listed for sale with Swansea-based BARBERMurphy Group.

The entire property encompasses 17.5 acres and includes the drive-in theater, which is still operating, and the former Quad Cinema, an indoor theater that is closed and vacant. The owner is open to selling all or part of the acreage, according to Steve Bloomer, company president.

At one time there were more than 150 drive-in theaters operating in the state of Illinois, including 14 in Southwestern Illinois. Today, there are just 10 remaining in operation in the state and the Skyview is the sole survivor in the St. Louis area. Two things led to the demise of drive-ins, according to Bloomer.

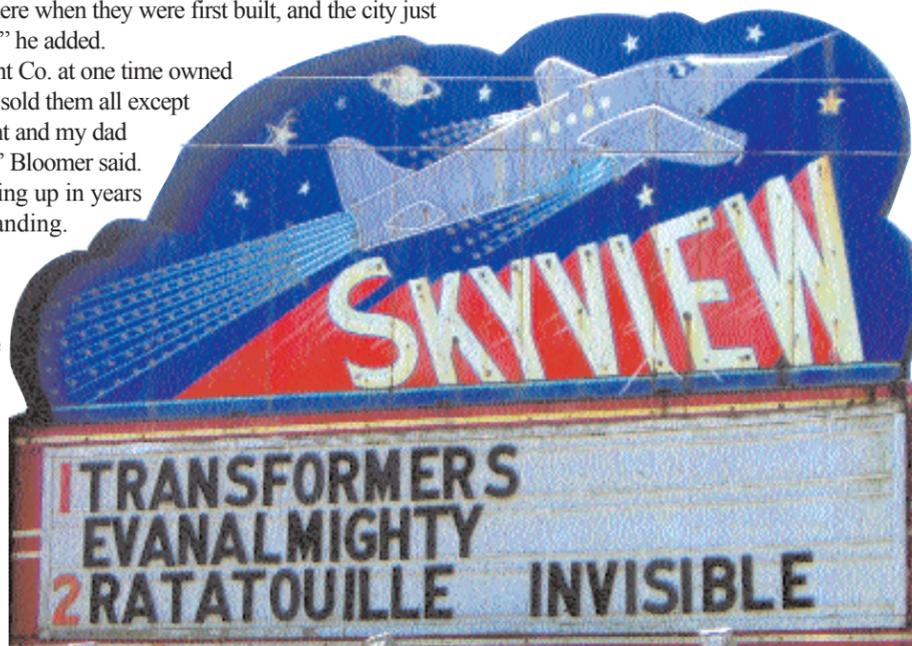
"In the mid to late 1980s was the advent of the home videotapes," Bloomer said. "Most drive-ins were not first-run theaters. The movies would open at the indoor houses and then, after they were done with them, the movies would go to the drive-ins. But with videotapes, a lot of people just decided to wait until it came out on video and watch it at home. It affected the entire movie industry, but I think it hit drive-ins even harder. That's probably a secondary cause. The prime cause was that the land itself was becoming more valuable as development property than it was as a drive-in theater. Most drive-ins were built out

in the middle of nowhere when they were first built, and the city just grew up around them," he added.

Bloomer Amusement Co. at one time owned 17 movie theaters but sold them all except the Skyview. "My aunt and my dad were the two owners," Bloomer said. "They were both getting up in years and we weren't expanding. And if you're not expanding in this business, you're falling behind. If we weren't going to expand, we thought, 'Well, let's just sell off what we can and get out of the business entirely.'"

With no interest in the Skyview, BAC continued to operate it and it experienced some tough times,

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Buyers are being sought to redevelop the Skyview Drive-in theater in Belleville. The theater opened in Belleville in 1949 and is one of only 10 remaining in the state.

Photo by Alan J. Ortvals

Caseyville's wooded lots, estate-sized homes ready for buyers

By KERRY L. SMITH

A \$1 million-plus custom home is rising from the earth at the site of the most massive residential development project Southwestern Illinois has seen in years.

The community is Forest Lakes in Caseyville, the developer is Bakersfield, Calif.-based Sport Choice LLC. The builder of the nearly 5,000-square-foot home is Padgett Building & Remodeling Co. Inc. of Belleville and the architect is EWR Associates Inc. of Fairview Heights.

The estate home's appearance is testament to the fact that three years after its beginning, phase one design of the 500-acre, \$400 million development is nearly finished and construction of the main roadways, utilities, amenities and other infrastructure is well under way.

In an era when home starts and home sales nationally are less than robust, is there regional concern about what market conditions mean to an upscale project like Forest Lakes? The price points on the

homes scheduled for construction in this development range from the mid \$200,000s to \$1.5 million.

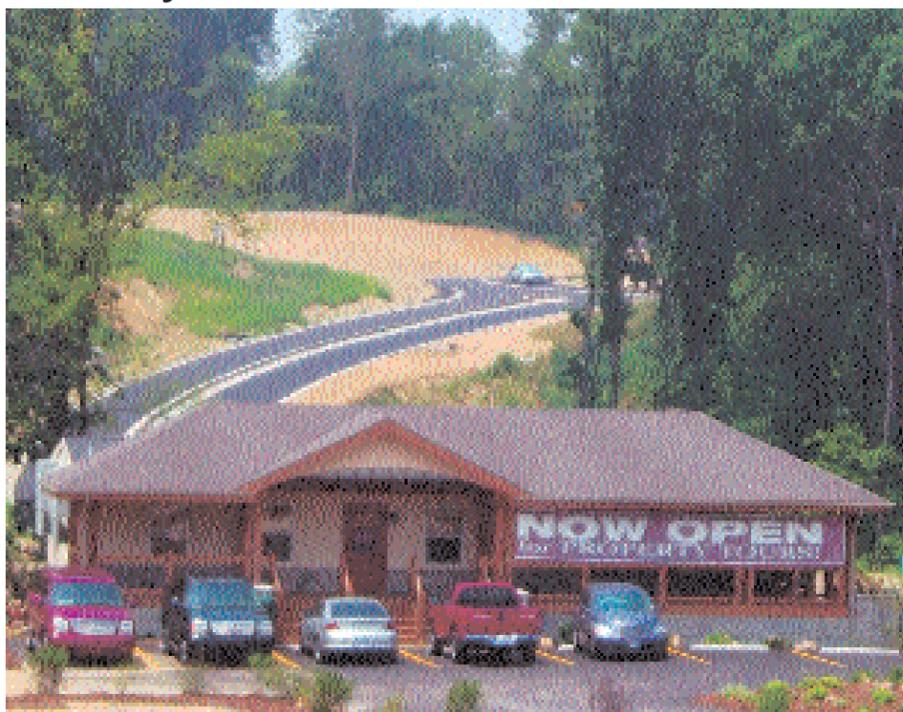
Jerry Rombach, executive officer of the Home Builders Association of Greater Southwest Illinois, is among those who are not worried about the Caseyville-based development.

"I know there's a lot of concern in this regional market about inventory when it comes to spec building," said Rombach, "but we just don't see an over building in these higher price ranges. This developer has been very selective in its choice of builders. And in terms of the market for these homes, there's a market of folks who have been waiting and waiting for it (Forest Lakes) for years and are now ready to jump on it."

Missouri-based American Heritage Homes owns a large number of lots on which it is selling homes from its various design plans.

Padgett Building & Remodeling and

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Three years in the making, Caseyville's Forest Lakes development is now entering the homebuilding phase. Three companies are building homes ranging from \$240,000 to \$1.5 million.

Photo by Alan J. Ortvals

Project is client's but plans, concepts belong to architect, despite misperception

By KERRY L. SMITH

Architects and attorneys agree that although the finished product belongs to their client, the designs and concepts that were created therein are the copyrighted possession of the architect and/or the architectural firm.

Michael Lefferson, president of Alton-based architecture firm Lefferson & Associates Inc., says there is a misperception among some in commercial development. They believe that when a professional firm is engaged to design a facility, the fee paid for that project also includes the right to the plans - and the right to duplicate those plans in the form

of future projects in other locations.

"We have had clients request that I relinquish all the rights to my drawings so they could build the same building in multiple locations with no further fee payment," said Lefferson. "Even using a very specific color scheme or specific usage of materials on an interior can be at issue, if it can be considered a reasonable facsimile to what you created. Our contracts state that the drawings and specifications are the property of the architectural firm, and compensation is due for the continued use/reuse of the documents," he added.

Dennis Young, president and chief

executive officer of Fairview Heights-based Wm. B. Ittner Inc., says there's nothing wrong with appreciating great architecture and wanting to incorporate great design based on something you've seen somewhere else. But there's a difference between being inspired and copying.

"Usually what someone ought to do is look and appreciate the value of that original idea and then see how to appropriately apply that to their particular situation, and then it's not a direct copy," Young said. "If we were in a situation where we came on board where someone already had a prototype from another

architect and asked us to redesign it, we wouldn't do it. We would tell them to go back to the original architect, or to ask for a letter from the original designer, if for some reason that firm was no longer willing or able to do the work. Once we use another's design, we're responsible for it. It's important not to blindly reuse another's plans," he said.

Popular cable television networks such as HGTV reinforce the general misconceptions that design concepts and completed design work is "free" for the using, Lefferson says.

"I really think HGTV has promoted

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DRIVE-IN (cont. from page 1)

according to Bloomer.

“The problem at the drive-in in the mid-80s,” he said, “is that it became a teen-age hang-out. On a Friday or Saturday night we’d have groups of 200 to 300 kids just standing around visiting, milling around, getting drunk. We had to hire off-duty police to patrol the place to try to keep the

crowd under control. We finally put enough pressure on the kids that they felt uncomfortable. They left and they quit coming, which was our whole intent - to get rid of them. The problem was they had been there long enough that they drove away the family business. Parents weren’t going to bring their kids out to the drive-in where you’ve got all of these

drunken teen-agers hanging out. It’s just been gradually coming back over the past 15 to 20 years.”

Bloomer said that since then, Skyview has been catering to families by selecting movies that parents would want to bring their kids to see, maintaining a playground and offering free admission for two kids under the age of 12 when accompanied by an adult. The strategy has worked, according to Bloomer, and today the theater is profitable.

According to Wayne Barber, principal of the BARBERMurphy Group, there are a variety of options regarding the property. One, the entire 17.5 acres could be redeveloped. In this case, Barber said, probably the best use would be a mixed-use project with multi-family in the rear and one or more commercial developments along the North Belt West frontage. He said that he was speaking with developers about both an apartment development and

a senior citizens’ housing development.

Another option, according to Barber, is that the drive-in theater could remain but that the frontage could be sold to one or more commercial users. Barber even has plans that show that the theater operation expanded to three screens while selling the frontage.

“We’re very flexible as to what we can do,” Barber said. “If you had a restaurant or video store or whatever you needed - one or two acres - we can do that. Or if you needed a space for a big box store, we could do that, too. It’s a half block from Frank Scott Parkway. It’s one block from West Main Street. It’s right in between those two high traffic carriers. North Belt West has an average daily traffic count of just over 20,000 cars a day. There’s a Schnucks supermarket and a Walgreens right next door. It’s a great location.”

IBJ Business News

Holland Construction completes Miners ballpark

Construction is complete on the Rent One Park in Marion. The \$20 million ballpark, built by Holland Construction Services Inc. of Swansea, was completed in time for the home opener of the Southern Illinois Miners.

K&S awarded Army Reserve training center contract

The United States Army Corps of Engineers has awarded a \$14.4 million contract to K&S Associates Inc. to build a new Army Reserve Training Center in Granite City to accommodate 600 reservists.

DRIVE-IN THEATERS OF SOUTHWESTERN ILLINOIS

(source:www.drive-ins.com)

THEATER	ADDRESS	CITY	YEAR OPENED	YEAR CLOSED
Alt-Wood Drive-In	Old St. Louis Rd.	Alton	1949	NA
Avon Drive-In	12707 Drivein Rd.	Breese	1953	1996
Bel-Air Drive-In	Chain of Rocks Rd.	Mitchell	1950s	1987
Futura	Water St.	Cahokia	NA	NA
Cahokia	State Rte. 15	Alorton	NA	1980
Capri	State Rte. 15	Wood River	NA	NA
Falcon	7400 Collinsville Rd.	Collinsville	1955	1970s
French Village	8601 St. Clair Ave.	East St. Louis	NA	early 90s
Green Valley	Alton-Jerseyville Rd.	Alton	1942	NA
Mac's	State Rte. 37	Salem	2003	Open
Air Park	U.S. Rte. 40	Highland	NA	NA
Shop City	Summit Ave.	East St. Louis	NA	NA
Skyview	5700 North Belt West	Belleville	1949	Open
Starlite	3500 College Ave.	Alton	1950	1984

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