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Demolition starts on Friedrich Lofts project as community expresses noise, environmental concerns

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Image: San Antonio Business Journal

Gabe Hernandez | SABJ

The Friedrich Lofts on Tuesday, April 11, 2023, in San Antonio. The developer said that demolition officially began on April 17, 2023.

Crews began demolition work on the Friedrich industrial complex this week at 1617 East Commerce St. It's the first sign of significant progress for Dallas-based developer Provident Realty Advisors' \$93

million, 358-unit Friedrich Lofts project, which had been proposed in 2020.

The project — which is being developed in partnership with the San Antonio Housing Trust — has been in the works in some form or another since 1999, when Dallas developer John Miller purchased the site. As previously reported, while Miller sold off most of the complex, he still retains a historic building at the site that he plans to redevelop, according to Provident Director of Multifamily Development Basil Koutsogeorgas.

In a presentation to community members at the Ella Austin Community Center in Dignowity Hill this week, Koutsogeorgas said that the demolition is expected to last four to six months.

According to the team hired to perform the environmental abatement on the complex, the task is "about 98%" completed since starting in January.

Answering a question from a community member about soil samples, Koutsogeorgas said that the firm has approval from the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality (TCEQ) to move further with the demolition process and submit soil samples for approval after a portion of that work is completed.

"We're in cooperation with TCEQ, who has given us approval to demolish the vertical part of the structure so that we can continue to dig the borings, do lab testing and send those back to TCEQ," he said, adding that environmental consultants will complete that work once vertical demolition ends.

Another community member, concerned about the demolition, asked how the development team planned to mitigate the sound generated in the process. Koutsogeorgas said the work being done is excavation-based.

"It's not going to be an exciting explosion demolition," he said. "It's going to be a slow excavator, just slowly peeling apart this building. This biggest noise will probably be — once we actually start taking out the slabs — the jackhammer for days. Unfortunately, it's a necessary part of the process of any redevelopment."

He added that the team is in close coordination with the adjacent Carver IDEA Public School over any noise issues. There will also be

minimal road closures throughout the project's timeline, which is expected to take about a year.

Of the complex's planned 358 units, a number of them will be offered below the area median income (AMI). Twenty-four units will be offered at 60% AMI, and 165 units will be offered at 80% AMI. The project is being funded by multiple sources, including a \$54.8 million loan from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, \$10.9 million in equity from American South Real Estate Fund and \$1.7 million from the Inner City Tax Increment Reinvestment Zone.

Dallas-based Architecture Demarest is designing the project.



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Reporter - *San Antonio Business Journal*

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