

Developers, officials break ground on Sydney Hall

Subhead:

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Blurb:

The controversial apartment building will be complete by August 2010.

A ceremonial groundbreaking in the empty lot behind the Dinkydome Wednesday marked the beginning of construction on Sydney Hall, a residential and retail complex that has been in the works for two years.

The first shovel to dig into the earth was miniature and pink, and wielded by the hall's namesake, Sydney Doran, 8. Sydney is the daughter of Kelly Doran, who owns the Bloomington-based developer Doran Cos., which is carrying out the \$36 million project.

The six-story building will be located on 1501 University Ave. SE, and will include 125 units of housing on the top five levels, and street level commercial space. It will be ready for incoming students in August 2010. The project will also include the renovation of the attached Dinkydome, which was in a "steady state of deterioration," Doran said.

Doran shoveled dirt at the groundbreaking alongside University and city officials, including Minneapolis Mayor R.T. Rybak, who called the project "ground zero," and a fulcrum between Dinkytown and the University of Minnesota. The addition of Sydney Hall will help recognize the "true potential of Dinkytown," Rybak said.

The project went through the city of Minneapolis three times for three different approvals before the final design was reached, Doran said.

Doran Cos. worked to understand the student population so they could cater to it and "embellish the area," Ward 3 Councilmember Diane Hofstede said.

The apartment complex will include studios and one and two bedroom apartments, which will go for about \$800-900 a month, Doran said. Each apartment unit has a University-related name, like Northrop, Coffman, Mariucci and Folwell. University pride was evident at the groundbreaking, where the audience sang along as members of the University marching band played the Minnesota Rouser. The marching band received a \$100,000 donation from Doran Cos. at the event.

University junior and marching band member Jackson McNeil, said he would live in Sydney Hall, and that it was a "great location."

Doran said the new 6-story plan will fit in better with the area than the previous 14-story plan that was criticized by organizations like the Chi Psi Fraternity, which was concerned with the building's height.

To make the project economically viable the new design increased retail space, decreased underground parking space from three levels to two and cut down construction costs, Doran said.

He said the building will increase commercial business in an area that is "underserved from a retail perspective," but the building will not impact other businesses in the area.

The independently owned Student Bookstore below the Dinkydome will remain in operation. The change in ownership and addition of Sydney Hall will not affect business, Store Manager Steve Edwards said.

Many of the small businesses previously located in the Dinkydome will not return, Doran said. Confirmed tenants of

the new Sydney Hall commercial space include Wells Fargo and Erbert & Gerbert's Subs & Clubs. The project will generate 500 construction jobs, Mike Hawthorne, business manager of the Building and Construction Trades Council, said.

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