

Castle Rock downtown gets facelift

By Janet Forgive

Developer using own funds to make 'fantasy' a reality

Revitalizing a downtown with cute shops and restaurants isn't a new idea.

But for developer Brad Brown, it's a deeply personal one.

Brown's Castle Centerstone Real Estate and Development LLC isn't selling bonds, partnering financially with the city or asking for tax rebates to pay for any of the redevelopment of downtown Castle Rock.

Instead it's investing its own money and taking out loans to build what Brown calls his "fantasy" downtown.

So far, the company has invested about \$15 million.

The fantasy centers on building unique "best-of-the-best" shops in a pedestrian-friendly setting to lure the area's fast-growing population to the Douglas County seat.

Castle Rock and the surrounding area have seen their population boom in recent years, with Douglas County's population growing almost 200 percent from 1990 to 2000.

The area also has seen median household income grow by almost 10 percent to \$88,752 from 2000 to 2003, according to the Castle Rock Economic Development Council.

"We're seeing that critical mass," Brown said. "And we're trying to get people who live around here to make the choice to come here."

Brown was a well-known broker for Frederick Ross in downtown

Denver until about 10 years ago, when his passion for raising polo ponies led him to relocate to a Sedalia ranch.

Six years ago he opened the Castle Cafe, a bar and restaurant that was the first of his downtown projects. Other redevelopment followed, about three blocks' worth that brought new shops and eateries and a three-story office building.

Jason and Leah Gray opened Crowfoot Valley Coffee on Perry Street in 1999. The husband-and-wife team from Alaska had definite ideas about what they wanted their shop to be, Jason Gray said.

"We felt Castle Rock was getting more of a cohesive feel; it's a downtown that has a plan," he said. "Then we met Brad Brown and our ideas and his ideas were really in line with each other."

The ideas included surrounding the coffee shop with a bookstore and pastry shop, both of which have since materialized.

Crowfoot Valley, which sells higher-priced coffees from around the world, has since opened two other locations, a Highlands Ranch franchise and a store in Parker that subsequently closed.

Meanwhile, it just completed a small expansion of its 1,190-square-foot Castle Rock shop, moving its coffee bean roasting operations across the street and adding almost 20 seats.

Brown's vision was one of the factors that drew Stefanie Palko to downtown four years ago.

Palko, owner of Copperfalls Aveda Spa, has since seen double-digit business growth each year, with sales rising 26 percent last year



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Commercial developer Brad Brown stands at the corner of Fourth and Perry streets in downtown Castle Rock. Brown's Castle Centerstone Real Estate and Development LLC is using its own funds to redevelop the downtown, including the building in the background. So far, the company has invested about \$15 million. The redevelopment centers on building unique "best-of-the-best" shops in a pedestrian-friendly setting to attract the area's fast-growing population.

and on track to increase 36 percent this year. Since opening, it has added nine employees to its original 20, Palko said.

Phase II of Brown's vision is growing up around Palko's day spa, which brings in about 1,200 people each month for massages, facials and aromatherapy treatments.

Wilcox Square, a \$5 million project that will boast 33,000 square feet of offices, shops and restaurants, will break ground in July and is slated to open next spring.

No tenants have been announced, he said, but Brown envisions one restaurant, possibly upscale, surrounded by six or eight smaller shops and about 20,000 square feet of offices.

He seems to have no doubt that's what will happen.

"It's almost like, if you can think it, some form of it will show up," Brown said.

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