



## DEVELOPERS INTRODUCE INDEPENDENCE STATION

*Building will mix retail and residential in downtown area*

INDEPENDENCE -- City leaders refer to Independence Station as the most significant downtown development in decades. On Tuesday, they decided to share their secrets with community representatives from throughout the state. The downtown development plan, which will mix retail, office and upscale residential units in a three-story building, was shown off Tuesday as an example of what other cities might do if the right developer meets the right project in the right city.

Salem developer Steven Ribeiro said the building's location and the city's enthusiasm made the project attractive. He had sought the property at Second and Monmouth streets for a few years before he learned that the city bought it from the owner with hopes to turn it into a mixed-use development. He said he has been working on a development in Idaho for years and is much further ahead in Independence than in Idaho. The car-battery store that stood on the lot was cleared last spring.

Ribeiro, who is a former resident of Independence, expects the \$10 million, 56,000-square-foot building to be completed early next year. "This is a long-term deal," Ribeiro said of the project. "We're not going to flip it and run. We want locally owned small-town businesses here."

Ribeiro, 43, said he has an interest in energy-efficient buildings and the use of bio-diesel fuel, which he has made and used to power several of his cars in the past. The building's design includes elements that will capture and reuse rainwater runoff. Groundwater will help heat the building and biodiesel engines will run the building's electrical system.

Ribeiro said his goal is to make the building as energy-efficient as possible, although traditional power will be used as a backup. Styrofoam forms for the concrete walls will remain in place to improve heating efficiency. In addition, all three stories will be Internet-ready.

Designed by Portland architect Mark Seder, Independence Station is viewed as a model for other communities to promote development with limited public funding. In addition to use of about \$100,000 in urban renewal funds to purchase the site, the city of Independence will fund some exterior improvements with the money it received from selling the property to Ribeiro, said city manager Greg Ellis. Ribeiro said work on the project slowed in recent months because of adjustments to the plans. Citing a stronger market for condominiums than for office space, some of the second-floor office space now will become residential units.

On Tuesday, while representatives from towns throughout the state looked on, work crews continued to raise some of the pre-cast concrete pieces that will support the structure. Since creating an urban renewal district in 2001 that includes the city's industrial and downtown areas, the city has focused on revitalizing the historic downtown. Although it is a small town of slightly more than 7,000 residents, Independence has added a library and an amphitheater in recent years.

Independence mayor John McArdle said Independence Station will add energy to the town, which has seen more than 25 percent growth in population in the past four years. "It's all about vision," McArdle said. "And the city's can-do spirit."