

The Columbus Dispatch

Business

Major development planned for Trueman Boulevard in Hilliard

By Jim Weiker

The Columbus Dispatch

Posted Aug 21, 2020 at 7:19 AM

Updated Aug 21, 2020 at 9:27 AM

A major mixed-used development planned in Hilliard serves as a homecoming of sorts for its developer, Equity, which isn't well known in central Ohio despite being based here for more than three decades.

A major development planned for Hilliard is serving as a homecoming of sorts for its developer, Equity.

Even though Equity has been around for more than 30 years and is a nationally recognized health care developer, it is not widely known in central Ohio.

The company, owned by the Wathen family, hopes the 22-acre, \$150 million project, called TruePointe, will change that.

"This is very important to our company," Equity founder and CEO Steve Wathen said. "I'd call it an intentional push into increasing our exposure and position in the central Ohio marketplace.

"I've spent a lot of the company's time and resources and skills over the last 20 years growing in other cities and states such as Florida and Texas. But we're a Columbus family, a Hilliard family, and realized we should have a bigger role in our home market."

TruePointe is planned for the east side of Interstate 270 immediately south of Equity's corporate headquarters at 4653 Trueman Blvd.

It will extend Equity's campus and include approximately 205,000 square feet of offices, 20,000 square feet of retail and restaurant space and 334 apartments in multiple buildings.

The initial layout of the development features two office buildings, eight apartment buildings, and one retail and restaurant building with apartments above. The plan also calls for 1,627 parking spaces 750 of them in a garage and the rest surface spaces.

Wathen and his son Austin noted that the plan could change, but said offices remain the biggest priority. (Another son, Patrick, is also with the firm.)

"The city of Hilliard is going to want to see the office component before the residential," Austin Wathen said. "Hilliard's strategic plan has an emphasis on freeway-visible office, so we're excited to work with them on this."

Even though the coronavirus pandemic has damaged the office and retail market, the Wathens are confident that there will be demand, especially since they don't plan to break ground on TruePointe until the end of 2021.

“We view COVID as a short-term phenomenon,” Steve Wathen said. “Will office usage change? Absolutely. But companies have to function, companies have to continue to grow, and the projections for central Ohio growth, Columbus growth, are spectacular.”

Austin Wathen said initial conversations with potential tenants have been encouraging.

“The pandemic adds an element we couldn’t have prepared for, but we’ve had preliminary conversations with office and retail tenants that give us the confidence to launch the project now,” he said.

While TruePointe might be Equity’s most visible central Ohio development, it is far from the first. Among the company’s other Columbus-area projects is OhioHealth’s Westerville campus.

From its seven offices in Ohio, Florida and Texas, Equity developed over \$90 million in projects last year, and manages about \$400 million in assets. The company employs 70 people in its Hilliard headquarters.

In addition to development services, the company offers commercial construction, leasing, management and sales. This year, Equity was recognized by the Conway Center for Family Business for its succession plan.

Steve Wathen said TruePointe won’t be the Equity’s last stop in its hometown area.

“We’re working on several other sites in central Ohio, he said.”

jweiker@dispatch.com

[@JimWeiker](#)