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Panel looks at drivers behind Nebraska's current commercial real estate projects

by David Kubicek

"The Drivers and the Vision for the Changing Demographics of our Nebraska Commercial Real Estate Markets" will convene from 9:15 to 10 a.m. at the Summit. Colliers International VP Jeffrey Wyatt and the Robert Peters Co. President Robert Peters will moderate the panel.

Panelists will include Mickey Anderson, president of Baxter Auto Group; Ben Kiser, director of corporate communications for Nelnet; Jay Noddle, president of Noddle Cos.; Ken Cook of Mutual of Omaha/Midtown 2050 Corp.; Todd Heistand of NuStyle Development; and Othello Meadows of 75 North.

The program most likely will begin with a brief introduction and move forward with a conversation that Wyatt and Peters will shepherd along.

"The discussion will focus on the progress of Omaha and Lincoln, the challenges we are facing and how we plan to confront them, how we are able to attract local growth with such low unemployment and how we can cultivate growth here in our communities," Wyatt said. "It will include development in the CBD, medical development, changing demographics and the return to urban lifestyles, and a view from the top on the economic and non-economic issues facing the business community and its impact on commercial real estate."

Panelists will shed light on how they identify and evaluate the specific markets they work in, which



Jay Noddle, president of Noddle Companies.

include housing, retail, office and community centers.

They will answer questions like:

— What opportunities are driving you to work on a project?

— What are the markets and drivers telling you to build?

— Are there non-brick and mortar components?

— How do you know if you were right?

— How are your projects adaptable and sustainable for future uses?

— What's next? What else is on the horizon?

Wyatt, who has participated on five previous panels, said slide-shows have not been popular in past panel discussions, so attendees shouldn't expect any in this one.

"The best outcome is when the discussion is unrehearsed and the panelists start to jam as a group," he said. "The style will be roundtable discussion and, hopefully, a little debate."



Wyatt

Jay Noddle, president of Noddle Cos., said his contribution to the panel most likely will be to discuss mixed-use projects and what makes them both attractive and viable. The firm is working on several projects in Omaha, including HDR's world headquarters in Aksarben Village and an auto mall with room for seven auto dealerships, all of which have been spoken for.

An important part of the discussion will be incentives such as workforce development incentives and tax increment incentives. Although these incentives go mostly to employers, they're all part of the package, Noddle said.

He said he expects to hear panelists' views on the state of local projects, what developers need in their toolboxes to facilitate these projects, and what the overall state of the marketplace is as a consequence of what the developers are working on. Questions the panel will answer include:

— What do you need in your toolkit to advance your projects?

— What are you pursuing to get projects off the ground?

— What are your biggest concerns?

Concerns are usually market-driven, like construction costs and the political environment.

"It's always fun and rewarding to be involved in the CRE event," Noddle said. "It's always very well attended. From a professional standpoint if there's something we can offer that will advance our industry in some way, shape or form, I'm always pleased to be a part of that."

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