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ALERT **TOP STORY**

Hundreds of homes are going up on Tucson's busy south side

Gabriela Rico

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Devin Sheehan, an electrician with Pace Electrical, works near the new Pepper Viner development The Pearl at The Bridges on Feb. 27. The Pearl will have more than 126 homes for sale.

Grace Trejo, Arizona Daily Star

Gabriela Rico

Once described as an area of town with “severe limitations” for success, a development on Tucson’s south side is now the site of thriving retail, businesses, entertainment venues, and now homes.

The Bridges, bounded by Park Avenue, Kino Boulevard, 36th Street and Interstate 10, will add nearly 550 residential units to the mix of stores, entertainment and office buildings that have gone up in recent years.

The transformation of the parcel, that once was Tucson's downtown airport, recently saw an apartment complex completed and now single-family homes for rent and homes for sale are under development.

Local homebuilder, Pepper Viner, has broken ground on The **Pearl at the Bridges**, a 12-acre community with 126 homes to be built for sale.

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The one- and two-story homes will range in size from 1,100 to 2,400 square feet.

"The property has really come of age," said Bill Viner, president and CEO of **Pepper Viner**. "I'm not sure there's another place in town where you have all those amenities at your doorstep and are still close to the university, Banner South and the airport."

This is his first project with local developer **Bourn Cos.**, who has recruited business and retail to the project.

"I do love that live-work-play environment they have created," Viner said.

He said The Pearl's gated community's amenities will be the location, where residents will be able to walk to a movie theater, arcade, gym, grocery store, medical care, and, in some cases, work.



One- and two-story homes at The Pearl will range in size from 1,100 to 2,400 square feet.

Grace Trejo, Arizona Daily Star

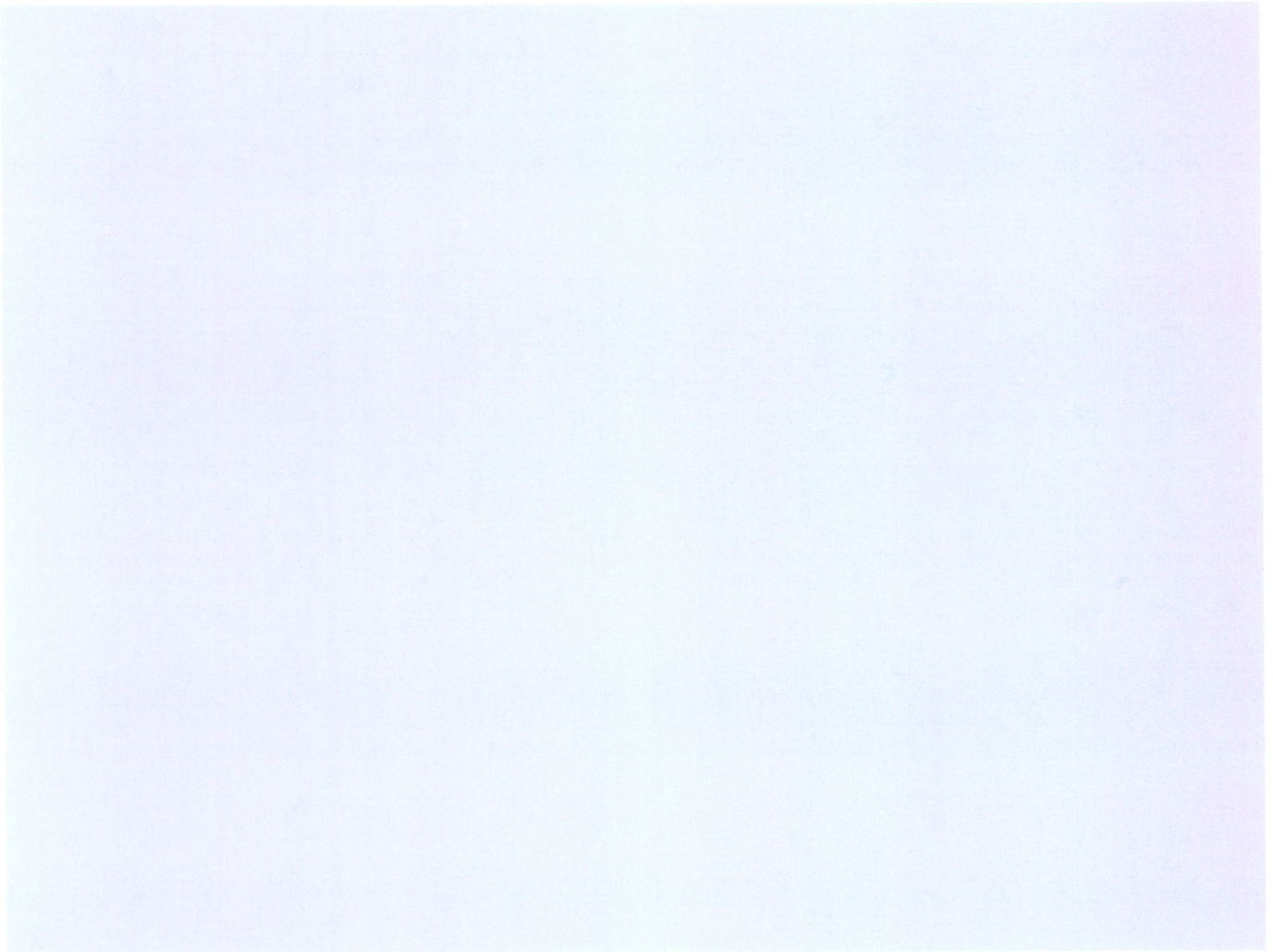
Since the first retailer, Costco, opened at The Bridges in 2011, the development has added a Walmart and various restaurants and entertainment retailers, a movie theater and three hotels.

Employers located there include Geico, The University of Arizona **Refinery** building, which houses tenants such as Raytheon, and JTED. **Arizona Public Media** just broke ground on a new headquarters and broadcast center.

Last fall, **Brass Pro Shop** announced plans for a 100,000-square-foot store at The Bridges.

The Pearl homes will be available in six floor plans, all with two-car garages and private outdoor areas.

“There will be choices for single adults and families,” Viner said. “We’ve all come up with a something that will appeal to the public.”



The Pearl will be a gated community with a movie theater, arcade, gym, grocery store and more in walking distance.

Courtesy of Bourn Cos.

He said home prices will be determined by market conditions when the homes are ready for sale.

Initial work is underway, and models are expected to be completed this spring.

Viner said the development’s name, The Pearl, was because of its unique location on 36th Street and Martin Luther King Jr. Way.

“We thought it was a gem,” he said, “a one-of-a-kind opportunity.”

Beyond typical infill

The first residential project, an apartment complex called **Cabana Bridges**, developed by Scottsdale-based Greenlight Communities and Tucson-based Holualoa Cos., opened last year.

The 288-unit complex leased quickly and only a handful of units remain available.

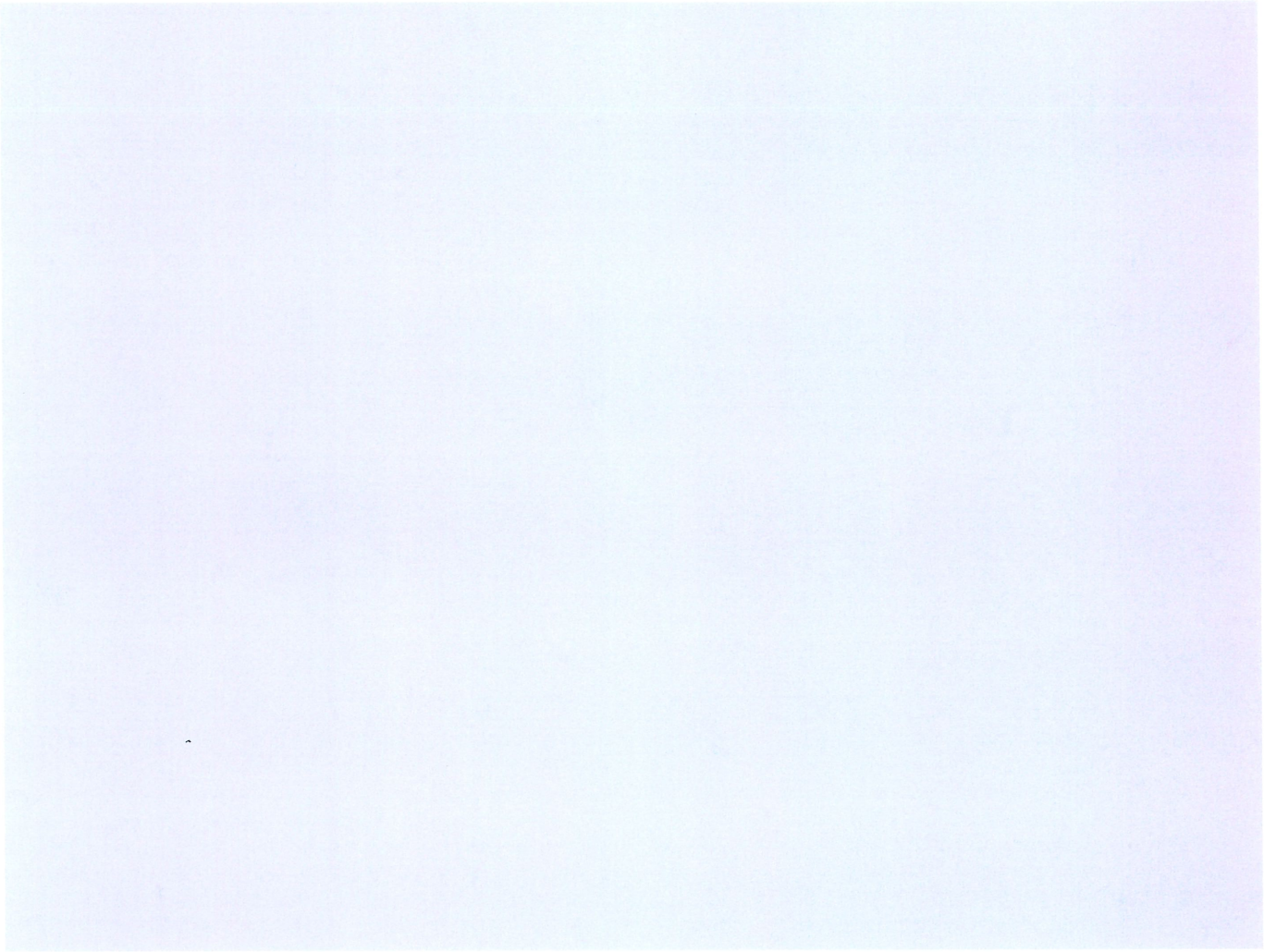
It is located on the corner of Park Avenue and 36th Street, immediately west of The Pearl.

To the south of Cabana, Bourn is building 128 detached homes that will be for rent.

The development, **Brioso**, opened for lease March 1 with two-and three-bedroom models with rents from \$1,950 to \$2,350 a month.

Known as built-for-rent, communities of single-family homes that are only for renters have been growing in popularity as people look for the space and privacy of a home as home buying prices remain high.

At buildout, there will be nearly 550 residential units with The Bridges.



The Pearl homes will be available in six floor plans, all with two-car garages and private outdoor areas.
Courtesy of Bourn Cos.

“Our vision for The Pearl and Brioso extends beyond typical residential infill,” said Don Bourn, CEO of Bourn Cos. “We’re creating a community centered around modern amenities, connectivity and design.”

An economic development study prepared for the city of Tucson in 2003 painted a bleak picture for that vacant parcel that had become overrun with weeds and criminal activity.

“While the market will support a small amount (of) retail development in the South Park neighborhoods, existing demographics place severe limitations on the likelihood of any successful national chain recruitment,” the South Park Hope Study said. “Locally-owned chains and the cultivation of area entrepreneurship efforts are the recommended courses of action in the immediate term.”

The pad was the largest undeveloped site in the Tucson core at the time.

“Despite a traditionally harsh perception amongst the remainder of the community and several very serious social stresses,” the Hope study concluded, “the South Park neighborhood exhibits factors that — if properly developed — show great potential for significant, positive economic changes in the area.”

Many neighbors rallied around redevelopment plans and attended city meetings when zoning changes were requested.

Today there are two new office buildings that comprise 320,000 square feet and 52 retail businesses open, totaling 540,000 square feet with 10 businesses in the development stage that will add 240,000 square feet of retail.

Some national chains report this is their top-grossing location in the state.



See what's in store for the new Bass Pro Shops store coming to The Bridges on Tucson's south side.

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