



## HighPoint Flats: Muskegon officials can't wait until downtown apartments are available

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MUSKEGON, MI – Excuse city officials, community leaders and downtown boosters for being a bit anxious for Jon Rooks to get going on building out the former Comerica Bank tower with an initial 48 apartments.

The HighPoint Flats – an initial \$10.5 million condominium redevelopment of the eight-story bank building at 285 W. Western – was given a unanimous endorsement by the Muskegon City Commission on Tuesday. The project has been changed from the 2008 plans for condominiums to market-rate apartments.

With expected approval of a state financial loan and grant package from the Michigan Economic Development Corp. in September, a development agreement with the city calls for construction to begin in the next three months. The HighPoint Flats apartments would take 18 months to construct, developer Jon Rooks has said.



Parkland Development Co.

The HighPoint Flats apartments is expected to be 48 units in the old bank tower with a potential second phase with 24 new units on property east of 285 W. Western.

“The sooner we can get those apartments available the better,” said Cindy Larsen, president of the Muskegon Lakeshore Chamber of Commerce. “There is a huge market for young professionals looking for upscale residential, but they are not ready to buy a house yet. They are looking for urban apartments like these.”

Downtown promoters have been frustrated with a lack of development since the beginning of the Great Recession in 2008, but the central business district redevelopment plans seem to be regaining momentum. Besides the apartment complex, the city has approved plans for the **Shoreline Market, Unruly Brewing Co.** and the Hennessy’s Irish Pub’s **redevelopment of the former Muskegon Athletic Club’s sports bar.**

Rooks' Parkland Development Co. had struggled to find proper financing for condominium buyers with a tight credit market and a depressed residential housing market. Parkland scrapped those plans to pursue the apartments, Rooks told city commissioners.

**The city is assisting HighPoint Flats with a "brownfield" redevelopment incentive**, allowing future increases in property taxes on the property to be used to help pay off Parkland's state loans up to \$750,000.

"We feel lucky to be in the midst of a big revival in downtown Muskegon," Rooks told city commissioners.

He said the extension of state Renaissance Zone tax breaks until 2023 was critical for the apartment development to be put together. Occupants of HighPoint Flats will not pay city or state income tax through the life of the Renaissance Zone.

Downtown Muskegon Now Manager Andrew Haan said the HighPoint Flats apartments will bring people into the downtown after business hours to create the 24-hour-a-day, seven-day-a-week central business district that the community is seeking. Downtown residents will prompt businesses to stay open longer and will increase foot traffic on the streets, he said.

"This is going to bring people into the downtown to live who have money to spend with our businesses and possibly invest in other projects throughout the downtown," Haan said.

Rooks told city commissioners that a successful HighPoint Flats will bring other developers, investors and businesses to explore opportunities in downtown Muskegon.

The Grand Rapids condominium developer is becoming a major investor in Muskegon's downtown. Rooks already had acquired and upgraded the Shoreline Inn and Conference Center and **the new Lake House restaurant on Muskegon Lake.**

"Thank you for your continued presence in Muskegon," Mayor Steve Gawron told Rooks. "This all sounds exciting and we will continue to stand with you as the developments progress."

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