

# Restaurant, pub headed to Senoia

Riverwood Studios and Historic Development Ventures, LLC broke ground Wednesday in Senoia on the first phase in a series of buildings and improvements that will transform the look, but not the feel of the historic town.

The small ceremony included city officials, local residents, Riverwood Studios President Scott Tigchelaar, and Casey Smith, owner of The Redneck Gourmet restaurant in Newnan, which will be opening its second location on the main floor of the 3-story building to be constructed on the southwest corner of Main and Seavy streets.

Over the past nine months, Riverwood has purchased much of the available vacant land in the historic downtown district of the city of Senoia through Historic Development Ventures, an LLC set up to accommodate what has since been dubbed the "Historic Senoia Project." Vacant lots will be built out with period infill development, designed to look as though it were actually constructed from the late 1800s to early 1900s.

The first building will include a ground floor restaurant and retail space, with two upper stories of Class A office accessible by elevator, and a basement with elevator and sidewalk stairwell access. The second building will be an additional three stories on the northwest corner of Main and Seavy streets.

"The basement in the first building will be conducive to an old-fashioned neighborhood pub," Tigchelaar said, "located downstairs from The Redneck



City officials were out in force Wednesday for the beginning chapter of Senoia's downtown building program. Photo/Special.

Gourmet, much like the way "Cheers" was set beneath a restaurant" (referring to the popular 1980s sitcom). "We just need to find our own version of 'Sam Malone' to run the place."

"The rest of the building is booking up fast," Tigchelaar added. "The offices are going to be a nice location for a doctor,

lawyer, CPA and other professionals. Projected growth for east Coweta County is staggering, and it's already created a vacuum for these types of services in the area."

In fact, it was the encroaching growth in east Coweta that caused Riverwood Studios to take action in Senoia.

"We didn't want to see Senoia go the way of other historic towns, with modern development creating an inconsistent look and feel," Tigchelaar said. "The people of Senoia have worked hard to preserve the city's sense of place. We're proud to be part of a community effort to build on the foundation already here and help

protect the small-town historic feel that makes Senoia special."

Historic Development Ventures will be looking to fill available and future retail space with boutique-styled merchants and period businesses such as a pharmacy/soda fountain, bakery/deli

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and additional pubs/restaurants. "The emphasis will be on sole-proprietorships, 'mom and pop' operations rather than big chains," Tigchelaar said. "There's plenty of 'vanilla' out there already."

There will also be in-town residential and mixed-use components including brownstones, lofts and period single-family

homes.

To help formalize a framework for growth, the Senoia City Council recently adopted a historic pattern book, consisting of a list of architectural guidelines and ordinances contracted from the award-winning architectural design firm Historical Concepts, located in Peachtree City. "Senoia's guidelines were put in place to

ensure a consistent historic and architectural look and feel for all new development and improvements going forward," said Suzanne Helfman, head of the Senoia Downtown Development Authority.

Our primary goal is to make living in Senoia an experience reminiscent of the "good old days," said Tigchelaar, "a walk-

ing town for residents that's also an end destination for dining, tourism and the type of retail that one might have found in the early 1900s. Our best description of this project is '25 miles and 100 years from Atlanta.'"

Having said that, everything will also be built with an eye toward making Senoia even more conducive to future film and tele-

vision projects. "The production industry is a complementary fit for Senoia economically because it likes to capture on film the very essence of what the city's trying to preserve," Tigchelaar said.

With sprawling modern development at its doorstep, today's groundbreaking represents a new chapter for the city of Senoia. "It's positive economic growth in a

historic direction; it's just what Senoia has been looking for," said Richard Ferry, city administrator.

According to Todd Strickland of Historical Concepts, "It's one of the most exciting projects I've seen in years."