

Project loses cinemas, gains Nova University

By Wendy Doscher

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There is mixed news for a Miami-Dade mixed-use project.

The bad news: Just when Jeff Berkowitz, developer of Kendall Village Center, thought he had leased out the 413,000 square feet of retail and office space in the project, Regal Cinemas is backing out.

The good news: Nova Southeastern University is coming in.

Knoxville-based Regal Cinemas, which signed a 20-year, 70,000-square-foot lease with Berkowitz, is not going to be part of the 40-acre project. That means not only the loss of an anchor tenant, but the loss of a \$10 million building that Berkowitz would eventually own.

Regal has been said to be near bankruptcy for several months. Regal executives didn't return phone calls Tuesday.

With Regal, Berkowitz had the Kendall center 95 percent leased. He has been trying to get the project under way for 14 years.

"This is a long time to be working on a project," Berkowitz



Jeff Berkowitz at Kendall Village Center.

said. "So when you finally have it done, and the theater pulls out, you have to look at it as character building."

All the same, when Regal said it was its canceling, Berkowitz said he made sure to have "litigation papers prepared."

Davie-based Nova Southeastern University is leasing 60,000 square feet in one of two office buildings on the site. Nova is expected to move into the space in April and conduct spring semester classes at the 70,000-square-foot, four-story office building. Berkowitz is trying to lease the remaining 10,000 square feet to, among others,

banks.

The other office complex, a three-story, 90,000-square-foot building, is not yet built. Berkowitz said he is looking for a single, large tenant or several medical tenants.

Also included in the plan are 87 town homes to be built at the corner of the project next to Florida's Turnpike.

Current tenants include restaurants Bahama Breeze, On the Border, Starlight Diner and Chuck E. Cheese and retailers Gap, Gap Kids and Famous Footwear. Pier 1 has signed a lease and Old Navy, the Latin American Café and Gatsby's restaurant and billiard club are also going in, as are Verizon Wireless, Payless Shoe Source and Vitamin Shop.

Berkowitz, along with partners Alan and Robert Potamkin, proposed an auto park nearly 14 years ago on the Kendall Village site. The plan fell through due to neighbor protests.

Berkowitz also developed retail centers Dadeland Station, Aventura Commons and Kendall Gate. ■