

Norwalk's urban core to see further redevelopment in 2017

By Robert Koch



Photo: Erik Trautmann / Hearst Connecticut Media

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Ongoing construction at Head-of-the-Harbor South on upper Smith Street Thursday, December 29, 2016, in Norwalk, Conn. Driven by ongoing apartment construction, the year 2016 marked a near-record year in the ... more

NORWALK — Norwalk's urban renaissance will continue to gather steam in 2017 with the reconstruction of one of Connecticut's oldest public-housing complexes.

For decades, Washington Village residents have suffered undersized apartments and the constant threat of flooding.

In January, the [Norwalk Housing Authority](#) and Trinity Financial plan to break ground on 80 new apartments at 13 and 20 Day St. as part of the first phase of a roughly \$140-million Washington Village Transformation Plan.

“We’re looking forward to it. Our clients will not have to worry about stuff like this,” said NHA Executive Director [Curtis O. Law](#) while pointing at rain falling on South Norwalk on Thursday afternoon.

[Thomas J. Ivers](#), NHA Choice Neighborhoods director, expects the first phase to be substantially completed by the end of 2017.

If Connecticut’s sixth-largest city appeared to many residents to be one big construction site last year — the [Norwalk Building Department](#) issued 1,328 building permits during 2016 — the trend will only continue in 2017.

Among other things, the new year promises to bring more apartments, the rumblings of the massive Walk Bridge replacement project and the start of work on The SoNo Collection.

The SoNo Collection

The [Norwalk Zoning Commission](#) in June approved General Growth Properties’ plan for a nearly million-square-foot upscale regional shopping center off West Avenue and Interstate 95.

GGP Senior Director [Douglas T. Adams](#) predicts 2017 will be an important year for The SoNo Collection.

“We expect to complete our pre-construction and permitting tasks with the hope to get in the ground as soon as we can in 2017,” Adams said. “Initial construction in 2017 would be excavation and foundations.”

As such, motorists and pedestrians passing by the long-vacant, dozen-acre development will see by year’s end concrete being poured to form the foundation of the mall. When finished, The SoNo Collection will be home to

Bloomington's and Nordstrom's department stores, 80 smaller retailers, an eight-story boutique hotel and lots of public space.

Waypointe

The West Avenue redevelopment project known as Waypointe will move into its final phases in 2017 with occupancy of The Berkeley — a six-story apartment building with offices, retail and restaurants at 500 and 520 West Ave. — beginning in January.

“People will be moving into The Berkeley starting January 15,” said Belpointe Capital partner [Paxton B. Kinol](#). “We already have certificates of occupancy for the first 38 apartments.”

Belpointe Capital hopes to break ground this year on the Waypointe South Block — 138,630 square feet of development, including retail, restaurants, a 620-seat iPic theater and new apartment building off West Avenue and Butler Street.

After including The Berkeley, 640 apartments have been built along West Avenue as part of the Waypointe development. Kinol said residents and visitors should look for additional restaurants to come online this year as part of the project.

“Bobby Q's barbeque should open in January and we expect the rest of the restaurants at Waypointe to open in 2017,” Kinol said.

Highpointe East & West

Waypointe isn't the only mixed-use redevelopment project being undertaken by Kinol in Norwalk.

Last February, the Norwalk Zoning Commission approved plans for Highpointe East and Highpointe West — 278 apartments in six-story buildings along High Street, Main Street and Route 1.

“Demolition will start in the first half of the year and new construction in the summer,” Kinol said. “If we start real construction in June, it would be the following June (2018) that people would move in.”

Head of the Harbor

Closer to Wall Street, local developer [M.F. DiScala](#) & Co. is looking to wrap up work on 60 residential units, retail and a public waterfront boardwalk along upper Smith Street as part of Head of the Harbor South.

“We’re shooting for mid-second quarter for occupancy of HOTH South,” said [Alan Webber](#), CFO for M.F. DiScala.

Webber said M.F. DiScala is negotiating with the city over land that would become Head of the Harbor North. Conceptual plans show a five-story and 80-unit apartment building rising along High Street and a two-story retail building on Main Street.

“We hope to be under construction before the end of the 2017, but don’t know for sure,” Webber said.

Wall Street Place

Officials hope to see construction resume in 2017 on Wall Street Place. Last August, work ground to a halt on 101 apartments, retail space and parking garage off Isaac Street amid financing issues between developer [POKO Partners](#) and CitiBank.

“CitiBank has committed to continuing that project to the completion of phase one and then exploring the possibilities for phases two and three,” said Mayor [Harry W. Rilling](#).

Last fall, some construction resumed at the site with the pouring of concrete and sealing of the half-completed building to protect exposed plywood from the elements.

Wall Street Theater

In early 2017, the historic red-brick building that opened at 71 Wall St. a century ago as a vaudeville venue will emerge from a \$9 million rehabilitation and become a “next-generation performance space,” according to [Wall Street Theater Co.](#)

“We’re going to be done in December with the substantial construction,” developer [Frank Farricker](#) said in November as work proceeded inside. “Obviously, we’ll have little things to do — the decorations and getting all the systems in place — but we hope to be performing in February or March.”

Drawn by the theater, Connecticut Public Broadcasting Network has submitted drawings to the city for a “Connecticut [Public Broadcasting Norwalk Innovation and Tech Center](#)” at the adjacent building at 67-69 Wall St.

Walk Bridge

While the [Connecticut Department of Transportation](#) doesn’t plan to begin replacing the 120-year-old Walk Bridge until mid-2018, work on several related projects may start in spring 2017.

In April, the DOT expects to begin realigning tracks, replacing catenary structures, installing new signals and putting in a drainage system along the New Haven Line east of the bridge.

At the same time, the state plans to start work on track improvements and a new dockyard along [Metro-North Railroad](#)’s Danbury Line in Norwalk. The work will occur between the New Haven Line and Jennings Road crossing.

“The work includes the addition of two new track sidings, switch improvements, replacement of overhead catenary wires and structures, signal improvements, installation of a new balancing substation at Science Road, and the replacement of the superstructure of the rail bridge over Ann Street

with a new ballasted deck,” said DOT spokesman Judd Everhart.

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