

COMMENTARY

PROGRESS REPORT ON HARTFORD'S DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS

Cranes & Scaffolds

HARTFORD 21: A quarter of apartments are leased, ahead of owner's expectations. Bliss Market moves in later this winter. Talks continue with other retailers, restaurants. Will empty storefronts show life soon?

BOND HOTEL: Reopening as a Homewood Suites by Hilton in February, or so Hilton says. They've missed deadlines before. Grand old hotel revealed several surprises during her makeover, like hidden asbestos, a barbershop under the sidewalk.

410 ASYLUM: Developer Roseanne Haggerty of Common Ground says she's meeting with officials of the Connecticut Housing Finance Authority in January to secure state financing to convert the building into 70 mixed-income rental apartments. Let's hope so. We've been down this road before.

METROPOLITAN: Lights twinkling again in old Hartford Electric Light Co. building at Pearl and Ann streets. New condo owners moving in. Sixth-floor penthouses done. The pulse of city life quickens on this block.

GOODWIN HOTEL: Three-year labor agreement with hotel workers paves way for first-rate renovation of landmark. Work begins in new year on floor-by-floor makeover while hotel remains open. Great expectations for high-end restaurant.

101 PEARL: City is still talking to local developer Carlos Mouta, second highest bidder on this city-owned building. Highest bidder had promised luxury condos, backed out because of renovation, environmental costs.

LIBRARY: Expansion, renovation of Main Street library still undergoing finishing touches. Patio and stairway in front will be fitted with marble and granite. Two bus stops being installed. Ribbon-cutting on \$42 million project in first week of February.

PARKING: Furniture store opens on ground floor of Morgan Street garage next week; city's Office of Parking Management open for business. Negotiations ongoing on downtown garage site. Trials of high-tech parking meters put on hold.

PARK STREET: Streetscape project all but finished. First 16 of 50 surveillance cameras up. Expect February grand opening for new El Gitano Food Warehouse. Big lenders show interest in financing redesigned Plaza Mayor gateway.

CAPEWELL: New Boston Fund, which was to be an equity partner in the renovation of former horse nail factory, has backed out. Developer John Reveruzzi is starting anyway. He's begun environmental and permitting work, believes he can bring in another lender: "We're moving this thing along," he says.

COLTSVILLE: Historic factory gets another shot at National Landmark designation. Temporary hitch didn't stop progress. Twenty new apartments occupied in South Armory; 30 more ready next month. Retail announcement pending. Long-awaited facade fix for blue-domed building this spring.



STALLED



MOVING



ZOOMING

RIVERFRONT: First five sculptures donated by Lincoln Financial Group installed at Riverfront Plaza, Founders Bridge and near Bulkeley Bridge; 10 more next summer. Riverwalk North, final 1,100-foot section of path along Connecticut River linking Riverside Park and Bulkeley Bridge, is almost done; finishing touches in spring. Expect new handicapped-accessible boat ramp by Memorial Day.

1 AMERICAN PLAZA: Workers cranking on 160,000-square-foot housing project. Building two-thirds finished. Discovery of historic details as facade was removed led to redesign to protect windows. A nice touch.

SAGE-ALLEN: Splendid facade of old department store is restored, apartments behind it almost complete. 78 loft-style apartments in main building open in January, as will most (very cool) student-oriented townhouses on Market Street. Citibank is on the ground floor, with major restaurant to follow in May.

SCIENCE CENTER: Garage taking shape, skeleton of main structure visible by spring. Interactive exhibits ready for the fabricators. Combined with classrooms, theater, teacher programs, science forums, finished product in 2008 will have real reach.

ATHENEUM: Scaffolding is up on former Hartford Times Building for conservation assessment of facade's moldings, cornices, other elements salvaged from a Sanford White church demolished in 1919 in New York. Design development of museum's expansion to Times building almost complete; first two floors for art, retail, restaurant and education. Construction starts in spring.

FRONT STREET: After years of delays there is a hole in the ground. Excavation crews are digging out old foundations and gas tanks. For first phase of 115 apartments and 60,000 square feet of retail space, expect a summer construction start.

A Fresh Road Map To Hartford's Progress

The Courant is updating the look of Cranes & Scaffolds eight years after its launch with this new bird's-eye view of downtown Hartford by Courant artist Wes Rand. The feature started in September 1998 with the idea of being "an at-a-glance commentary on selected proposals to rebuild and enhance Hartford." It warned developers that "promises should not remain in limbo. There should be timetables and an expectation that developers

stick to them. And those who make promises and fail or are slow to deliver should be identified." Eight years later, Cranes & Scaffolds is still faithful to that pledge. Three times a year, it scolds the sluggish, nudges the plodding, lauds the high-achieving. Among those high achievers of the past eight years — early Cranes projects that were completed and retired from this list — are the G. Fox Building, the Learning Corridor and Bushnell II. One project from the very

PLEASE LOOK FOR THE INTERACTIVE CRANES & SCAFFOLDS ON WWW.COURANT.COM/OPINION. first Cranes & Scaffolds has yet to start: 410 Asylum. And some projects appear to — finally! — be close to retirement, such as Hartford Public Library. "Hartford voters authorized \$16 million to renovate and expand city's cramped central library two years ago!" the first Cranes & Scaffolds complained. "Talk about OVERDUE!" One heartening measure of how far

Hartford has come since 1998 is housing: Where few apartment buildings and even fewer condominium complexes existed, many are now springing up, including Hartford 21, the largest residential tower between New York and Boston; the Metropolitan condos in the former Hartford Electric Light Co.; and the former American Airlines building, now 1 American Plaza. Nor was the Wadsworth Atheneum's expansion across the street into the Hartford Times

Building in the works eight years ago. To retrofit such a grand old plan as the original Cranes & Scaffolds with a sleek new scheme is no easy task. It took many discussions and drawings to come up with icons worthy of the quirky snail and broken-down car that readers will remember from the old Cranes. Wes Rand's busy little construction workers are a nice fit with the Cranes theme. Please let us know what you think by emailing letters@courant.com.