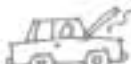





December '04 Progress Report On Hartford's Development Projects

An At-A-Glance Commentary On Selected Proposals To Rebuild And Enhance The City

CRANES & SCAFFOLDS

ARE THE PROJECTS...  STALLED  CREEPING  MOVING ALONG  OR ROCKETING AHEAD?

Trumbull Centre: 600-space parking garage due to open before year's end; 200 spaces under contract. 25 of 100 apartment units already reserved, with monthly rent starting at \$850. Hopes are for July opening. Floor plans, views available at www.trumbullapts.com. Best Cleaners (with tailor, shoe repair), wine and cheese shop (run by Vito's Rob Maffucci) to join Quizno's sandwich shop and Aniemma's restaurant in retail spaces.

Bond Hotel: Sudden strange silence from once-promising developer Sam Chang. Renovations have come to a screeching halt at what was to be a Homewood Suites hotel. Developer won't return city's phone calls, let alone pay needed fees. Health officials are eager to issue a remediation permit, but there's no application. What's going on?

Civic Center: Full steam ahead on \$160 million transformation of outdated mall into 36-story apartment tower at Asylum and Trumbull streets. Facades being installed, tower foundation laid and interior public areas tiled and painted. Look for new MSG marquee and erection of steel tower in January.

Hartford Hilton: On target to reopen in grand style just in time for the 2005 Big East tournament March 5-8 at the Civic Center. Players can walk from the games to the hotel through the skywalk, which remains in place, and relax in new pool and health club and at expanded restaurant. Developer Waterford will give preference to hiring back hotel's workers and Hartford residents, as the mayor has insisted.

Bradley International Airport: This project keeps up its fast pace. Concourse C is complete with 6 of 11 gates in use. The design phase for old Terminal A ticketing and baggage areas goes out to bid this month. Free WiFi in most of the airport offers great enticement for business travelers. With recent opening of sit-down restaurant, even Murphy Terminal is more welcoming. But a decision is needed on its future.

410 Asylum: Mayor Eddie Perez and Roseanne Haggerty, president of Common Ground, the building's nonprofit owner, sit down and have a heart-to-heart. Over mayor's objections, Haggerty has been planning to turn trophy landmark into supportive housing for homeless, working poor and mentally ill. Both sides characterize the meeting as constructive and agree to meet again next week. Stay tuned.

Sage-Allen: Progress is evident on \$49 million housing retail development in heart of downtown. Parking garage will open next year, followed by retail and apartments in spring 2006 and housing for University of Hartford students in fall 2006. Project will add new zest to Main Street and its expanding campus-retail-housing atmosphere.

Old State House/Historical Society: Listen for the sounds of construction in February for pending Old State House exhibit, hands-on education center and maybe a gift shop. Look for Hartford's oldest firefighting equipment, a 1905 pumper and original G. Fox sign when attraction opens on time in late 2005. Watch downtown visitors flock to revamped landmark. Ponder the historical society's next move: pursuing its dream of more exhibit space for its collections.

CPTV/WNPR: Check off one project that's finishing on schedule and under budget. CPTV broadcasts started Sept. 13; WNPR on Sept. 15. Last staff moved in on Sept. 8 - well ahead of the Oct. 1 deadline to vacate old building. High-definition 65-inch television screens offer a great show for passers-by on Asylum Avenue. Project is a model for doing it right.

Riverfront: 2004 a backwater for Riverfront Recapture, which had enjoyed smooth sailing. Riverwalk North, the 1,100-foot linear park planned between Bulkeley Bridge and Riverside Park, awaits permits; the plan to breach concrete dike off Van Dyke Avenue to open up view of river awaits funding. One bright spot: Lincoln Financial Group Foundation gives Greater Hartford Arts Council \$500,000 for sculptures along Hartford and East Hartford riverfronts over next three years.

Wadsworth Atheneum: The key to expansion and other long-range planning for America's oldest public museum is occupancy of the old Hartford Times building. Plans are for the structure to hold offices, storage, a café and a gift shop. That needs to happen soon. The gorgeous columned Times edifice has been empty - and thus subject to damage - for too long.

Connecticut Center for Science and Exploration: Speeding toward fall 2005 groundbreaking. Most exciting progress is choice of Cesar Pelli to design building. Public involvement showed strong interest. Recent pledges of \$10.5 million by private donors are also encouraging. Five-year master plan is ready for board's review this week. Website solicitation of ideas for a shorter name for center should bring interesting suggestions.

Hartford Public Library: Phase 2 of \$42 million project to expand and overhaul the main library started in August, three months behind schedule. Hartford's public works director predicts completion as early as next September - three months ahead of time. Sounds like a wash until you remember that problems with the general contractor for Phase 1 set project back 18 months. Plus, there are uncertainties: concrete softens under Park River Bridge need attention. Will state pick up tab?

Park Street: Arson fire forces demolition of 224-226 Park St. and slows revitalization. Pray that the spot doesn't remain an eyesore for too long. Streetscape improvement work crews begin installing antique lamp posts. City acquires all but one small parcel at Park and Main for the gateway project. Expect property owner to close soon. Best estimate is that bid specs will go out early in the new year.

Front Street: It's been three months since Capital City Economic Development Authority dumped Richard Cohen as developer of this key retail-residential-entertainment component of Adriaen's Landing. CCEDA sought new bids, but got poor response. Now it will negotiate with multiple developers to determine best mix for site. Meanwhile, construction has begun on roadways and 500-car parking garage. Project is behind schedule.

Coltville: Frenzied summer gets sawtooth building ready for tenants, but hammers are in hiatus pending paperwork for next phase. Developer gets federal approval on roofing, windows for historic armories. Needs city council vote on TIF bonds to resume renovations by month's end. Congress kicks in \$3 million for streetscape, lighting and access to riverfront. National Park study in full swing. Love those plans to replicate Armsmead Pond for skating.

Convention Center/Hotel: With structural and exterior work completed on Downtown Marriott and nearly done on Convention Center, the cranes are starting to depart. Imagine that! Both open July 2005. Elegant landscaping would add a fitting finishing touch. Officials say convention venue on target for attracting 250,000 guests in its first 12 months. We hope so. They'll pump more energy into Hartford.

Parking: State Bond Commission set to approve Monday \$680,000 for Temple Street parking garage. Forty spaces to be set aside at discounted rates for students and corporate interns. After turbulent year, calm has settled on parking authority. "Coming out" party on roof of Morgan Street garage in October for executive director Jim Kopenocoy. Partying is grand, but authority needs to tackle on-street parking mess.