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FEATURED

New year, new look: Haverhill expects more downtown development in 2017

By Mike LaBella mibella@eagletribune.com Jan 1, 2017



Paul Bilodeau

The Prescott Building on Washington Street, which is slated for redevelopment in downtown Haverhill.

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HAVERHILL — The recent opening of Harbor Place to residential tenants — soon to be followed by the first commercial occupants — is just the start of a new look for downtown Haverhill.

City leaders are optimistic about economic climate of the downtown this year. Several planned developments about to be launched.

“This is going to be an exciting year ahead for downtown Haverhill,” City Economic and Development Director William Pillsbury said.

Projects that are winding through approvals are expected to get underway in 2017, including the refitting of a mostly vacant and underused building at 24 Essex St., next to an old fire station. The building, at the corner of Essex and Wingate streets, will be a mixed commercial-residential project, according to Pillsbury. Construction is scheduled to begin in the spring,



24 Essex St., which is slated for redevelopment in downtown Haverhill

PAUL BILODEAU/Staff photo

New Hampshire developer Eric Chinburg is planning to open commercial space on the first floor and residential units on the upper floors of the six-story building.

Other projects on the horizon include the redevelopment of the former Trattoria Al Forno on Washington Street by David Traggorth of Traggorth Companies of Boston.

Traggorth recently opened J.M. Lofts, a mixed-use building at the former Surplus Office Supply building, also on Washington Street.

Pillsbury said Traggorth's plan for a mixed use of retail/commercial on the first floor, and residential loft-style apartments have received the necessary city approvals.

"This year I believe we will see the downtown move to a whole new level," Pillsbury said.

More commercial shops will be occupying space on the street level of Traggorth's J.M. Lofts at 34 Washington St., joining and the recently opened Battle Grounds Coffee Co.

"We're also excited about a new project that will be revealed soon, which is the re-use of the former Blue Finn Grill at 128 Washington St., with a new restaurant to be named and two new residential apartments above," he said.

Pillsbury said there's also a strong indication that the Haverhill Music Centre building will undergo redevelopment.

"They will begin construction on this previously approved redevelopment," Pillsbury said. "And we hope to see similar things evolving at the Merrimack Street end of downtown."

What's ahead

Pillsbury said the new boardwalk behind Harbor Place will be open next spring, as will the Bradford Rail Trail with new lighting, benches, pavement and other amenities — and create a walking and bicycling loop to connect the downtown via the Basiliere and Comeau bridges.

“We’re also talking about extending the boardwalk as part of a proposal by Sal Lupoli, which also involves the potential for significant new development,” Pillsbury said.

The city plans to sell a three-quarter acre lot on Merrimack Street to The Lupoli Companies for \$701,000, where Salvatore Lupoli, a Chelmsford developer and restaurateur, plans to construct an 8-12 story building on property between the Merrimack Street Rent-A-Center and Haverhill Bank.



The parking lot next to the Haverhill Bank on Merrimack Street, on which a developer plans to build an 8-12 story building featuring retail and office space as well as housing.

PAUL BILODEAU/Staff photo

The project will offer office space, market-rate housing, and a ground level Salvatore's Restaurant.

Mayor James Fiorentini called it “one of the best projects ever to come to the city of Haverhill” and claims it will be a beacon people will see for miles around.

Pillsbury said there are several other projects being discussed for Merrimack Street that take the city’s transformative development initiative to another level.

“We continue to look forward to working with existing property owners, including the Landmark Building, which has plans to tie their building into the city’s new boardwalk,” Pillsbury said.

Gerry McSweeney, COO for City North Development LLC, which manages the Landmark building at 76-80 Merrimack St., said the lower level of the building is being completely renovated.

"We've added 42 new windows for the lower level while at street level we are adding a new rear glass entryway right onto the boardwalk," McSweeney said. "As part of that entry we're adding a new stairway, which will connect the lower level."

"We're the only building that directly abuts the boardwalk," McSweeney added. "Because of it, we've been able to work with the city to connect to the boardwalk."

McSweeney said the city installed four cutouts in the boardwalk that allow natural light to reach the Landmark building's lower level.

"A lot of older buildings downtown are great candidates for renovation for mixed use," McSweeney said. "Our lower level is being almost completely renovated over the winter, all for commercial tenants, of which we've already signed our first lease."

Pillsbury said the city is also looking at redevelopment alternatives for Merrimack Street based on an urban design study.

"We continue to look at the implementation of the study that talks about the transformation of the Goecke parking deck and that entire area of Merrimack Street," Pillsbury said.

"It remains our hope that as we see UMass Lowell launch its innovation hub and introduce faculty and students to downtown Haverhill, it will herald an exciting time for the downtown," Pillsbury said. "And we are looking forward to the complete occupancy of the Harbor Place project."

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