

Harbor Place to open by late 2016

By Mike LaBella Staff Writer | Posted: Thursday, May 28, 2015 4:00 am

It's coming together quickly.

Locals are excited to see the progress that is being made on the Harbor Place project, following the relatively quick demolition of the Woolworth and other Merrimack Street buildings this year.

The construction timetable calls for most of the new project to be built by mid- to late 2016. Students will be able to start attending classes at the UMass Lowell satellite campus as early as the fall of 2016. People will begin moving into the project's new housing units and shopping at its retail stores. The public will begin using the boardwalk along the river.

The \$70 million Merrimack Street Ventures project is a partnership between the nonprofit Greater Haverhill Foundation, the same group that developed the Ward Hill Business Park in the 1960s, and the Planning Office for Urban Affairs, the nonprofit residential development arm of the Boston Catholic Archdiocese. In 2010, the Planning Office for Urban Affairs converted the old Hayes factory building on Granite Street near the downtown train station to 57 one- and two-bedroom apartments.

The first phase of the Harbor Place project is a five-story building at the Woolworth site, the eastern gateway to downtown.

That building will have HC Media on the first floor, UMass Lowell's satellite campus on the second and third floors, and Pentucket Bank on the fourth floor. Discussions with prospective tenants for the fifth floor have begun. A plaza and two other public entrance points will provide public access to the river. An adjacent six-story building will include 50 units of workforce housing, 30 units of market-rate housing, and first-floor retail shops and restaurants.

The second phase of the project will expand renovations farther down Merrimack Street and is still in the planning stages

City Economic Development and Planning Director William Pillsbury said demolition is complete and the next steps are to work on underground utilities that will service the new buildings. He said



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MARY SCHWALM/Staff photo A project manager looks on as a claw brings down the corner of the Woolworth building on Merrimack Street in March.3/19/15

site preparation will be followed by pouring of concrete footings and the foundations, including for an underground parking garage.

The project is expected to be ready to turn over to tenants for final interior work in the summer of 2016. Pillsbury said both buildings will be under construction at the same time.

Greater Haverhill Foundation managing director Ronald Trombley said site preparation work happening now includes pile driving, with construction of footings and foundations planned for early June.

The steel skeletons of the buildings will begin going up late this fall, followed by interior construction throughout the winter and into next spring, when the outdoor plaza and boardwalk will be built and landscaping done.

The goal is to open the five-story building, called the Harbor Place commercial building, which will include the satellite campus for UMass Lowell, to tenants for the completion of their interior work in June 2016. Students could be taking classes as early as the fall of 2016 or in January of 2017.

The neighboring six-story building, referred to as the Merrimack Street building and its connected Riverfront wing, is expected to be available in the fall of 2016, with the first floor restaurant/retail space to be made available first, followed by the opening in late fall of the residential apartments.