

BUSINESS

FIRST PHASE OF PROJECT - After months of demolition and utility work, construction begins at former Hingham shipyard

By STEVE ADAMS, The Patriot Ledger



Construction of a new 8,800-square-foot office building and bathhouse is under way at the Hingham Shipyard Marinas. (GREG DERR/The Patriot Ledger)

HINGHAM - Construction of three condominium buildings has begun in the latest sign that the Hingham shipyard redevelopment is in high gear.

Lennar Urban Northeast, of Boston, a division of national homebuilder Lennar Corp., has broken ground on three two-story buildings containing townhouses that are being marketed at prices beginning in the mid-\$800,000 range. The first units in the complex are expected to be ready for occupancy next summer.

The condos are the first phase of a 150-unit complex called Waterscape at Hewitt's Cove. A 7,000-foot clubhouse containing a billiard room, fitness center and swimming pool also is being built as part of the initial phase of development, said Jed Lowry, director of asset management for Lennar Urban Northeast.

Meanwhile, Boston developer Samuels & Associates is negotiating leases for storefronts and offices that will comprise the 240,000-square-foot commercial segment of the 1.2-million-square-foot redevelopment.

A six-screen movie theater run by Patriot Cinemas of Hanover will set the retail center apart from the competition, an executive at Samuels & Associates said.

“We really felt that is the way to differentiate this site from (The Village at Colony Place in Plymouth) and Derby Street Shoppes,” said Leslie Cohen, vice president of development. “Derby Street has wonderful tenants and they’re our closest competitor, but they’re really more of a traditional shopping center.”

Samuels & Associates expects to begin laying the foundation for The Launch this fall, with construction taking place in the spring.

Patriot Cinemas is negotiating a lease for a six-screen, 1,000-seat theater complex. Other major tenants will include a health club, day-care center, specialty shops and up to 10 restaurants.

“There will be a mixture (of restaurants) where we really want to service all needs, from people who want to grab breakfast before getting on the (commuter) boat all the way to a great white-tablecloth restaurant to go to dinner on the weekend on the waterfront,” Cohen said.

Samuels & Associates has not yet released the names of any other tenants. Cohen estimated that The Launch will contain 25 to 40 shops, with at least half of the shops locally owned.

The company also is leasing 30,000 square feet of office space built above retail shops in a mixed-use building.

The addition of the theater, which delayed the permitting process by 11 months, and health club are keys to attracting shoppers in a competitive retail environment south of Boston.

“They offer someplace people come to that offers more than just shopping,” Cohen said. “Both of those extend the day of the customer and provide a real amenity in addition to the waterfront.”

The Village at Colony Place, a 150,000-square-foot lifestyle center, opened last week as part of a broader retail development off Route 3 in Plymouth. Built by Saxon Real Estate Partners of Middleboro, the new center contains 21 specialty retailers and several restaurants.

Developers are pursuing plans for a 530,000-square-foot outdoor shopping center called Legacy Place in Dedham and 1.2 million square feet of retail space at the mixed-use Westwood Station project on University Avenue.

The Kraft family, owners of the New England Patriots, will open the first phase of their 1.3-million-square-foot Patriot Place shopping center behind Gillette Stadium in Foxboro in November. And Foxboro developer Michael Intoccia is building a 450,000-square-foot lifestyle center near Route 95 in Sharon.

Like Westwood Station, the Hingham shipyard project includes a substantial housing component, ensuring a steady flow of activity on the site throughout the day.

David Scott, treasurer of Patriot Cinemas, said the six-screen theater complex will have showtimes beginning as early as noon each day.

“We’ll be open every day for matinees, starting every day at noon or 1 p.m. and continuing from there on out,” Scott said.

Construction of a new 8,800-square-foot office building and bathhouse is under way at the Hingham Shipyard Marinas. The structure replaces a pair of aging buildings that have been torn down. Completion is expected in two months, said Howard Hirsh, managing partner of Hingham Shipyard Marinas.

Work on the residential part of the project also will take place throughout the winter.

AvalonBay Communities is preparing to build 235 apartments in a cluster of buildings known as Avalon at the Hingham Shipyard.

After breaking ground on three condominium buildings recently, Lennar expects to begin construction of a second phase of three-story waterfront condos next month, Lowry said. About one quarter of the 22 units in the first two phases are already under agreement, he said.

The Hingham development is one of Lennar's first three residential projects in Greater Boston. Lennar also is building nearly 1,500 apartments and condos on the Malden-Revere line and 550 housing units at East Pier in East Boston.

"We're committed to the area," Lowry said. "We're excited to have three communities that are each very different and we take a bit of pride in that."

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