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Brick by brick

More development coming to Hudson in 2009

by Timothy J. Carroll

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The resurrection of Journal Square, the possible rise of an 80-story office tower near the Hoboken train station, two new luxury hotels near the Hudson County waterfront, and the long-awaited opening of the retail and entertainment complex Xanadu in the Meadowlands will be the main topics of development discussion in 2009.

The Hudson County waterfront earned the moniker of "Gold Coast" years ago because of its proximity to and easy transportation to New York City. Even in an economic downturn, people like living here for its commute, views, and amenities.

Several major projects are scheduled to rise in formerly industrial areas of our towns this year.

Jersey City

In October, Mayor Jerramiah Healy released his "vision" for Journal Square. The Greater Journal Square Redevelopment Plan – which has been proposed by the administration but not yet approved by the city's boards – calls for 10,000 to 15,000 new residential units, thousands of square feet of commercial and retail development, and 9 acres of parks.

The entire project encompasses 244 acres, from Vroom Street to the south, Tonnelle Avenue to the west, State Highway 139 to the north, and Baldwin Avenue to the east. Some officials think it could take between 20 to 50 years for completion of the entire project.

The centerpiece will be two \$400 million towers, 50 and 68 stories high, built adjacent to the Journal Square Transportation Center by a private developer who already owns that land.



The Journal Square area is not the only one that the city intends to revitalize over a long period of time.

Designs are also in the works to redevelop a 111-acre stretch of industrial land east of Garfield Avenue, known as the Canal Crossing Redevelopment Area.

This area was formed from the southern portion of the Morris Canal Redevelopment Area and a portion of the Claremont Industrial Redevelopment Area.

Part of that area, an 18-acre factory site, is said to be contaminated by chromium, and the city hopes to wrap up negotiations with owner PPG Industries to clean it up. City lawyers have said that they may take legal action at the end of the year if no plan is in place.

The redevelopment plan will require buildings to abide by "Green Building" guidelines and is scheduled to be an example of a sustainable community that reduces reliance on automobiles and includes a diversity of building sizes, housing types, and affordability ranges.

In yet a third massive redevelopment area, a 100-acre site off of Route 440 will be developed once a different chromium contamination is addressed.

Honeywell International Inc., a Morristown-based multinational conglomerate, owns some of the land and settled a lawsuit in January filed by the city over cleanup of the land. The settlement leaves the city on the hook for cleanup of a portion of the site that was granted to them off Route 440.

Honeywell also paid the city \$13 million for relocation of city-owned buildings near the site.

The area is part of a redevelopment plan the city has in place that calls for 8,000 housing units 20 acres of open space, and more than 1 million square feet of commercial and retail space.

Meanwhile, tall condo buildings and a hotel are still on the rise in various parts of town.

On the waterfront, Crystal Point, a 42-story luxury condominium building, is expected to open for sales in March of 2009. The new structure is on Second Street about 25 feet from the Hudson River, on the final piece of developable waterfront land in Jersey City that directly faces Manhattan. The building features 269 premium residences and views of the skyline stretching from lower Manhattan to the George Washington Bridge.

Also in that area, Ironstate Development will officially break ground on 225 Grand in early 2009. The 15-story rental building will be adjacent to the Marin Boulevard Light Rail Station in the Liberty Harbor redevelopment zone. Designed by the architectural firm HLW, the new residential tower will feature 348 rental residences, an enclosed parking garage with up to 350 spaces, and 1,700 square feet of retail space. The building will offer views of the Manhattan skyline and the Statue of Liberty.

The Westin Hotel in Jersey City, at Washington Boulevard and Sixth Street near the Newport Mall, will open its doors in February 2009. The hotel is currently accepting reservations. The joint venture of LeFrak Organization and Melvin Simon & Associates, in the heart of the waterfront financial district of Jersey City, is just minutes from New York City. It will provide 429 guest rooms, expansive meeting facilities, upscale dining, and all of the Westin's signature amenities and services.

As far as smaller buildings go, Crescent Court, 54 new condominium homes being developed by The Matzel and Mumford Organization, is located at Second and Merseles Streets in the Village neighborhood west of Hamilton Park.

This new mid-rise building features one- and two-bedroom residences, with one enclosed parking space per unit.