

Real Estate Journal

THE LARGEST WEEKLY COMMERCIAL/INVESTMENT NEWSPAPER IN THE WORLD

United Construction's Prospect Place will drive economic development in Upper Valley



Rendering, Prospect Place



Rendering, Prospect Place



Rendering, Prospect Place



Rendering, Prospect Place

Prospect Place, United Construction Corp.'s largest project to date, has operated mostly under the radar for the past two years. The Newport, NH-based company's plans to redevelop 6.3 acres and 1,600 linear feet of prime Connecticut River frontage property that has the potential to transform the Central Business District of Hartford, VT. The project is a gateway location via the U.S. Rte. 4 bridge connecting Vermont and New Hampshire and represents a continuation of the revitalization White River Junction has experienced over the last six years. The ground breaking of the new \$10 million replacement bridge will coincide with the redevelopment.

Prospect Place is a 245,000 s/f urban infill, mixed use project which, when completed, will contain 110,000 s/f of retail/mercantile and commercial/office space, 50,000 s/f of franchise hospitality space and 85,000 s/f of residential space.

Tod Whipple, vice president of real estate for United Const., said "The redevelopment of Prospect St. has been an amazing journey in a public/private partnership with tremendous support coming from both the town of Hartford and the state of Vermont. We all have a common vision of seeing Prospect St. become an economic engine for White River Junction and Upper Valley communities on both sides of the Connecticut River".

Challenges are not in short supply, particularly dispelling the perception that Vermont's is an unfriendly place to either develop real estate or locate a business.

Whipple said, "Our experience here in White River Junction has been very positive. Public sector professionals at both the local and state level have bent over backwards to assist us in the planning phase of Prospect Place. We are confident we will have all of our entitlements and permits in time for a planned construction start in mid-2010."

With regards to any lingering concerns about the local real estate market conditions in Hartford, VT, Whipple said, "We feel this project will transcend the 'Vermont vs. New Hampshire' mentality by offering Class A space and quality residential units at a tremendous value to the Upper Valley region. The location is remarkable and the proximity to Dartmouth Medical Center and Dartmouth College will continue to drive economic development in the region."

The project does seem to boast all the right buzz words with the elimination of slums and blight, high density urban redevelopment, smart growth, ample public transportation, riverwalks and public parks.

One outstanding question relates to United Construction's plans to finance a nearly \$30 million project in the midsts of one of the worst economic downturns since the Great Depression? "All the data suggests a bottom to this recession and with occupancy slated for fall 2011 the timing couldn't be better." Prospect Place will be built-out over a five year period with a complex financing formula.

The development team is working diligently to ensure the financing is in place through a combination of HUD Section 108, brownfield funding, CDBG funds, Tax Incremental financing, conventional financing and private equity from the EB5 program for a summer 2010 ground breaking," said Whipple

The latter being one of the more interesting components of the project with Whipple traveling to Shanghai, Hong Kong and Taipei City, Taiwan with Vermont Governor Douglas as part of a state-sponsored delegation to promote the Vermont brand and projects like Prospect Place to international investors.

UK Architects, a Hanover, NH-based architectural firm and Engineering Ventures, a civil and structural engineering firm with offices in Lebanon, NH and Burlington, VT, are also part of the development team.

United Construction, founded in 1960, has offices in NH and VT and focus on civil site, design-build and real estate projects in New England. The company is celebrating its 50th year in business.