

South End News

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Building along the Back Bay

Developers push swanky South End projects

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Take a look at the South End skyline. Cranes tower above the leafy trees and brick row houses. At street level, backhoes dig up earth and construction workers make regular appearances at popular lunch spots. At times the whole neighborhood seems like a construction site. Much of that construction is taking place along Washington Street and Harrison Avenue, but not all of it. A number of projects are getting built along the Back Bay border. Here's a look at three construction projects that will be complete in the next couple of years.

The Modern — 255 Northampton St.

Probably the farthest along in terms of construction, The Modern, as it's called, will ultimately feature 62 loft style condominium units, including 10 affordable artist live/work spaces. At the corner of Tremont and Northampton Streets, the development is getting built in two phases. Phase one is well under way. "[The] foundation is in, steel is up," said developer David Goldman, a principal, along with Dennis Kanin, at New Boston Housing Enterprises. The

steel work on phase one — which will house 25 of the total units — is expected to be done by the end of the month, and phase one will be complete in eight to 10 months, said Goldman. Construction on phase two will get started as phase one wraps up. In June the Boston Redevelopment Authority gave a go-ahead on phase two by selecting the development team, which also includes Peter Georgantas's PEG Properties, as the developer of 263-265 Northampton St. "What we're going to do is combine the parcels," explained Goldman.

"It really revitalizes the block," he said of the project. Goldman and company have experience in such matters, having rehabilitated the Allen House on Washington Street and also having developed Dover Lofts on East Berkeley Street, two South End projects that foreshadowed revitalization of the neighborhoods around them.

Goldman bragged that The Modern will be "the only loft-type development in the South End that's only one block from rapid transit." (The site is next to the Massachusetts Avenue Orange Line stop and close to the Green Line.)

Some notable features in The Modern include interior design work by Dennis Duffy of the Duffy Design Group, another South End-based business. A common roof deck will feature a zen garden and a working kitchen (along with great skyline

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views.) Clara Bachelor Couric will be designing the roof. The building will also have garage parking, and "almost every single unit has their own outdoor space," said Goldman.

Units will go for between \$300,000 and \$600,000. "We're already 40 percent sold," said Goldman. The total development costs are expected to be about \$11 million for phase one and about \$14.2 million for phase two.

The Bryant — 301 Columbus Ave.

This project "looks like a series of South End row houses," said Tina Bacci of Otis & Ahearn, the real estate agency listing the development. Once inside, however, The Bryant ceases to be your standard row house. "Each unit has direct elevator access," said Bacci. The 50-unit luxury development will have six units per floor and three elevator banks leading to those floors. Elevator doors will open to the right or left, directly into one's home. The units themselves will be large three-bedroom (or two bedroom plus a study) affairs, though the development will also include a few one-bedroom units. The development, run by the Wasserman Vornado Portfolio, based in Providence, includes nine au pair suites, smaller units that Bacci described as efficiency studios. They'll be sold separately but could get attached to larger units "for a home office or an au pair," she said. The development also includes five affordable units.

"It's more of a boutique building," said Bacci.

Other features include 83 "self park" parking spaces, storage units and ground-level retail space. Susan Orpin will design the "finish packages" — things like wooden floors and fancy appliances. Neshamkin French Architects, from Charlestown, are the architects.

Most of the units will go for over \$1 million, said Bacci, and the project is expected to be complete and fit for occupancy in late 2007 or early 2008.

285 Columbus Ave.

This project doesn't yet have a trendy name, but "we're making excellent progress," said Curtis Kemeny, President of the Boston Residential Group, which is developing the site. The building itself used to belong to the Red Cross, which sold the property to Boston Residential in October, 2005. The building will soon become 63 units of luxury loft space, eight of them affordable. "It's really a gut rehab of the building," said Kemeny.

The development team, which includes ADD Inc. as architects, is currently going through the permitting process. It recently won approvals from the Zoning Board of Appeals, and the next step is to go before the South End Landmarks Commission, said Kemeny, adding, "We actually are repairing and restoring the façade of the building."

Assuming all goes according to plan, shovel in the ground construction will begin early next year, and the total rehabilitation will take about a year to complete. Kemeny expects the building to be fit for occupancy early in 2008, and they'll begin to market the units, through Otis & Ahearn, in early 2007.

The lofts will "be contemporary and they'll feel like a SoHo loft unit," he said. They'll include high, 11-foot-tall, ceilings and big windows. The development team is also working on 360 Newbury St., in the Back Bay, and Kemeny said 285 Columbus will offer a "similar type of product in the South End." The ground floor of 285 Columbus will house 10,000 square feet of retail space, and developers have been speaking with restaurateurs and furniture/home good stores as potential tenants.

Pricing on the units is still up in the air, but the preliminary idea is they'll go between \$500,000 and \$1.5 million, said Kemeny. The total cost of the gut rehab is about \$50 million.