

When Darien's Three Huge Business Development Projects are Expected To Break Ground

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Three large commercial developments are expected to begin with the knocking down of buildings as early as this summer, for one project; fall or winter, for another, and "late in 2019" for a third, according to Darien Planning & Zoning Director Jeremy Ginsberg.

Ginsberg, who spoke Monday to the Representative Town Meeting, said each of the three projects may be built over the course of years, and it's possible that some businesses could still be operating out of some buildings in a particular project while other buildings in it are demolished or replaced.

"You're not likely to see a lot of movement on these fronts between now and, say July or August," Ginsberg told the RTM. "Starting in the fall or in the winter, you're going to see a lot of buildings coming down, and in the interim, some commercial tenants starting to move."

The Corbin-Post Road development downtown has the vaguest timeline: Ginsberg would only say that it's expected to start "no earlier than later in 2019."

The Noroton Heights Shopping Center, owned by the Palmer family, could be demolished first, either partially or entirely, by sometime this summer, Ginsberg said.

"You may have noticed that the Noroton Heights Post Office will soon be moving to be under Palmer's Market in anticipation of this redevelopment," he said.

The project owned by Federal Realty, to be called "The Commons at Noroton Heights," could start demolition work this winter, he said.

Both the Federal Realty project and the Noroton Heights Shopping Center project have received state Department of Transportation approval, Ginsberg said.

Where Each Project Is

- The Noroton Heights Shopping Center, north of Heights Road, extends from property on the east side of Hollow Tree Ridge Road to the edge of the parking lot of Palmer's Market, which is in a building that won't be demolished. (The Wells Fargo bank, between that parking lot and Heights Road, is also not part of the project, and neither are the houses at the north side of the same block, on West Avenue between Hollow Tree Ridge Road and People's Bank.)
- The Federal Realty project, "The Commons at Noroton Heights" includes the lot where Stop & Shop and Walgreen's are located, as well as Equinox, and the buildings close to and on either side of the Heights Road entrance to the Stop & Shop parking lot. A building between the Chase Bank and the gas station at the southwest corner of West and Noroton Avenues is expected to be demolished to make way for an eastern walkway entrance to the project.
- The Baywater Corbin project includes lots on both sides of Corbin Drive, as well as the land in the entire block between Old Kings Highway South, Interstate 95 and the Post Road.

Baywater Corbin — Earliest Start: 'Later in 2019'

[The Baywater Corbin project](#) was delayed when David Genovese, principle of Baywater Properties (the lead partner in the project) decided to change the expensive parking design and was able to expand the project to

cover both sides of Corbin Drive. The project went before land use boards again and got Planning & Zoning Commission approval in November 2018.

The state Department of Transportation is in the process of considering approval, Ginsberg said. DOT civil and traffic engineers are preparing a written response to the application, he said.

"We expect DOT to give their final approval over the next few months," Ginsberg said. "Once they do that, they can apply for the building demolition permits first, certainly, then building permits."

With about nine buildings in the large project, he said, "It's likely [...] that it's going to be built in phases over a number of years, probably starting no earlier than later in 2019."

Federal Realty — Earliest Start: Next Winter

They received their Planning & Zoning Commission approval in September of 2017, they then got their state DOT approval, and they expect to start their project — the demolition — in the winter of 2019 [...] and the completion of the project is anticipated in summer or fall of 2021 at the earliest — again, multi-years of construction.

They're working with both their existing tenants and their proposed tenants to try to come up with buildings that work for them, construction documents that their architects are working on, they're working with potential tenants in getting those construction documents to match the tenants' needs.

Palmer Project—Earliest Start: Fall 2019

The buildings replacing the shopping center, owned by members of the Palmer family, will have about the same amount of commercial space, but with 59 one- and two-bedroom apartments or condominiums in the upper stories, Ginsberg said.

Final construction plans are being worked on, he said. Those plans will involve whether there will be enough parking for some tenants to remain in some spaces while other parts of the project are being built, he said.

"All of their local approvals have been obtained," Ginsberg said.

"All of the projects I'm talking about tonight, all of the studies, plans, reports, documents and the Planning & Zoning Commission approvals have been posted to the town website [...] if you want to take a closer look," Ginsberg said. "Of course, all the plans are also available in our office."

Darien TV79 Video

Ginsberg's remarks can be heard from timestamps 10:29 to 16:20 in this Darien TV79 video:

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