

Development Of Simsbury Multi-Use Complex Expected To Begin This Summer

Slideshow of project renderings for the proposed development at The Hartford's former Simsbury campus.

By **MARLON PITTER**

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Transformation of the former site of The Hartford complex on Hopmeadow Street into residential housing, office space and an assisted living facility may begin soon.

Development of The Ridge at Talcott Mountain, a multi-use complex on a 40-acre portion of land owned by the Silverman Group, is expected to begin in "mid-to-late summer" according to Simsbury Director of Planning and Community Development James Rabbitt.

The Silverman Group, a New Jersey-based property management group, wrote in a statement the project will include 280 residential units, commercial, office and assisted living spaces. Chicago-based property group CA Ventures will manage the assisted living spaces.

"We are eager and proud to deliver irreplaceable housing options to the Greater Hartford area with some of the most impressive river and mountain views in the Northeast," the statement reads.

The developers will be able to begin work pending additional permits from the Office of the State Traffic Administration and the Department of Energy & Environmental Protection. From there, the developers will begin construction and work until the project is complete, Rabbitt said.

"From our perspective, that's good news for the community because [the construction] will not be broken up into phases," he said.

Rabbitt said the town reached out to the Silverman Group to consider nearby property owners in their development plans, including residents of the Riverwalk Properties, a collection of 35 condominiums adjacent to the new development site.

"They worked closely with them and their landscape architect, and it's my understanding they're in the process of working out an arrangement where additional landscaping will occur on Riverwalk's property, as well as additional landscaping that we've required internal to the site on Silverman's property," said Rabbitt.

He said he understands the concern for the town as well as Riverwalk residents knowing that their open view of the ridgeline would change after construction of the site. The 40-acre field, however, was previously zoned for development while owned by The Hartford.

"There was this sense of openness, but that openness was owned by the private sector," said Rabbitt.

The site plan for the development was approved at a town meeting in late May. The two-month process included discussions between the town and developers regarding the Hartford-Simsbury Form-Based Code, which this development is based on, Rabbitt said.

The code includes regulations on buildings' physical relations to streets and other buildings, as well as their uniformity, height and design and more. The Ridge at Talcott Mountain is the first project in the town to be designed under the form-based code, according to Rabbitt.

The Silverman Group purchased the 140 acres of land owned by The Hartford on Hopmeadow Street in late 2015 and has since announced they will demolish the office buildings left behind by the insurance company. The northern portion contains the untouched 40 acres the developers will work on this summer.

"It's less complicated to develop 40 acres than to develop 100-plus acres with regards to scale and market conditions," said Rabbitt.

Rabbitt said the project should cost \$55 to \$60 million, none of which will come from the town of Simsbury. The development should generate \$1 to \$2 million per year in tax revenue after completion, he said.

"We're hoping that it has a positive effect on our revenue stream in town," said Rabbitt.

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