

# Groundbreaking Ceremony Marks Milestone For \$60 Million Development in Simsbury



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By **Jordan Otero Sisson**

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**W**ednesday morning marked a milestone in the year-long efforts to bring a planned multi-use development complex to the former site of The Hartford's Simsbury campus.

Dozens of local and state leaders, including Lt. Gov. Nancy Wyman, were joined at a symbolic groundbreaking ceremony by officials from property management firms the Silverman Group, of New Jersey and CA Ventures, of Chicago.

Once complete, The Ridge at Talcott Mountain will bring 280 residential units, as well as various commercial, office and assisted living spaces to the 40-acre property on Hopmeadow Street.

"We really think this is going to be a great benefit, not only for the town of Simsbury but the state of Connecticut because it really shows how you can work together to come up with a vision and that great things are still happening in the state of Connecticut," First Selectwoman Lisa Heavner said.

The project is estimated to cost is \$60 million to build and the development is expected to generate up to \$2 million per year in tax revenue.

Construction is expected to officially begin in September, due to delays with the state permitting process.

Wyman praised the collaborative efforts between the town and the Silverman Group to find a solution to Simsbury **losing its largest taxpayer**.

"Sometimes you get a little sadness but you get a lot of joy, and you really are bringing that here," Wyman said.

"This proposal is something I hope is copied throughout the state," she said. "This is a great place for Connecticut and the people of Connecticut."

Blake Silverman, president of the Silverman Group, said his firm saw an opportunity to meet a need in Simsbury. He added that despite **recent news of some of the state's top businesses relocating**, the Silverman Group is committed to the town and the state.

"We're here because we believe in Simsbury and Connecticut," Silverman said.

"I think at the end of the day we recognize ... that we can do whatever we put our minds to," he said. "We're not there yet, we're a quarter of the way ... but we're excited and we're really happy to be here."

The site plan for the development was approved in late May after **nearly a year of discussions** between the town and developers.

The plan was formulated using The Hartford-Simsbury Form-Based Code, created by the town in collaboration with The Hartford in August 2014. The code stipulated the town's expectations for use of the property to "implement a long-term, sustainable redevelopment strategy for The Hartford site," according to the 63-page document.

Director of Planning and Community Development James Rabbitt said Wednesday that there is a potential demographic change on the horizon, with younger generations delaying their entry into the housing market, but still wanting to live in a nice community with strong schools and community amenities.

"A development at this market point allows someone that opportunity," Rabbitt said. "This is not your traditional apartment complex."

The Silverman Group purchased the 140 acres of land owned by The Hartford in late 2015 and **has demolished the 641-square-foot of office buildings** left behind by the insurance company. The northern portion contains the untouched 40 acres the developers will work on this summer.

