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How Bridgeport is transforming itself through revitalization and transit-oriented developments

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Bridgeport, being the most populous city in Connecticut, is going through a revitalization period with the intention of bringing back business's and investments to not only stabilize the area but also develop it into a transit-oriented hub. Bridgeport, along with the state of Connecticut, is striving to build success and infrastructure for the city to thrive on for years to come. From new developments, schools, and a focus on transit, the city is looking to position itself to become a model for other metro areas who are trying to promote business away from the suburbs and back to Main St. Being the 5th largest city in New England, Bridgeport is leading the way for other metro areas to redevelop themselves to handle whatever the future may bring.

To start, the Greater Bridgeport Transit, or GBT, is leading the way in promoting what they call transit-oriented development, or TOD. The rational behind this is to improve public transit between communities within travel corridors so that surrounding neighborhoods will benefit from subsequent increases in economic activity through better housing, improved health, and more walk-able neighborhoods. To achieve this, GBT has to improve travel options within the region, and they are doing this by focusing on buses, trains, biking, and walking paths all to correspond with one another. The TOD's goals are to change focus of both local and regional governments to promote growth of business away from the suburbs and toward centralized accessible public transportation corridors. Benefits of these kinds of projects include the increase in walking and use of public transit by the public, while decreasing the use of autos, commuting times, traffic, congestion, obesity, air quality, and finally our carbon footprint.

With all of this transit-oriented development going on, there are two projects in particular that need to be addressed. The first project is the addition of a train station in Bridgeport's East End, the Barnum Train Station. Still in preliminary stages, this station will be constructed to not only assist in the transit-oriented development feel of the city, but also to improve the life and increase economic development in Bridgeport's East Side by stabilizing the neighborhood and encouraging reinvestment. Currently, 2/3 of the land within a one-fourth mile radius of the proposed site is either vacant or underutilized. The area currently has strong anchors, such as Bridgeport Hospital and the addition of two new schools: Waltersville and Barnum Elementary. Directly across for this proposed site are discussions of adding a housing development as well as a mixed-development consisting of commercial and retail establishments.

The second project that has already begun is the Steelpointe Harbor Project. This project is situated on the shore of the East End and is a massive undertaking. The Project, when completed, will consist of approximately 2.8 million s/f of mixed-use, urban oriented waterfront space. There is a public- private partnership between the City of Bridgeport and the developer, Bridgeport Landing Development LLC. Steelpointe will consist of approximately 800,000 s/f of retail space, 200,000 s/f

of commercial and office space, and another 300,000 s/f for hotel and meeting areas. Along with a 250-slip marina, an estimated 1,000 to 1,500 residential units will also be available.

The entire composition of the site is engineered to create an approximately scaled space, consisting of a network of streets, open spaces, water views, and harbor side strolling mixed together with residential areas, restaurants, commercial spaces and retail establishments all set within a livable and pedestrian-friendly environment. East Main St. will serve as a connection between the project and its atmosphere and the East End neighborhood north of I-95. The project also will help stimulate growth and expansion of the revitalized Stratford Ave. corridor as well.

Benefits from a project of this scale are hard to ignore. Along with bringing back business and investment to the East End of Bridgeport, the project also will serve two major metro areas: New Haven & Milford Metro area as well as the Bridgeport, Norwalk, and Stamford Metro area. Within 45 minutes of Steelpointe there are over 1.7 million residents, comprising of nearly half of Connecticut's population. Residents within a 7-mile radius of Steelpointe also account for approximately 46% of the overall trade area population.

With all of these developments and programs being implemented throughout the city of Bridgeport, the outlook for the future looks very promising. With an increase in development and infrastructure and the goals of becoming a transit-oriented city, Bridgeport has high hopes and expectations for what is to come.

Soon, not only will Steelpointe be attracting consumers from as far south as Stamford and as far north as New Haven, but the entire city and the East End of Bridgeport will also see a rise in business's relocating to the area and a population that will have an easier and more healthy way to move about the city. The future is looking brighter every day for Bridgeport and everyone from business owners to residents should be excited about it.

Chris Carmody is an associate at EAC Commercial, Bridgeport, Conn.

New England Real Estate Journal - 17 Accord Park Drive #207, Norwell MA 02061 - (781) 878-4540