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POKO Partners' Wall Street Place will reshape Norwalk's downtown into a thriving urban center

June 05, 2008 - Connecticut

As real estate development continues to surge throughout the United States, many developers are looking at ways to not only deliver a quality product that meets the needs of today's buyers, but also to address social responsibility. POKO Partners, LLC takes this one step further by not only producing sustainable affordable and mixed income housing, but the company is the industry pioneer in understanding the need to positively impact communities and encourage growth not solely by redevelopment, but by revitalization.

POKO Partners, LLC is a private real estate company changing neighborhoods throughout the tri-state area. Based in Norwalk and Port Chester, POKO Partners has, to date, assisted with the revitalization of numerous projects including developments in Bronx, Queens and Harlem in New York as well as in Norwalk, Stonington and Bridgeport, to name a few.

Since its inception in 1993, POKO Partners' main objective has always been to create attractive, diverse mixed income developments which set the standard for community growth by increasing foot traffic, encouraging organic and service oriented commerce and preserving the environment.

POKO's solution for a successful revitalization is creating a way for more families to move into a stagnant community. This is no easy task. One challenge every developer faces is working with local governments to create value as well as contributing to broader revitalization objectives. It's one thing to build in a decaying urban or industrial area, but it's another to accomplish this while still having a significant and positive impact on the surrounding neighborhood.

What makes its development style different from others is the use of innovative approaches to traditional problems. POKO's market rate units are priced accordingly to target the local workforce, allowing the people who work and serve the community to afford to live within that same community. On top of that, the company relies on the public's input and support and involves the neighborhood from the early planning phases through construction and marketing.

POKO also stands by its product by making long-term commitments because it not only develops residential projects, but also manages the properties. The dual role is instrumental in creating a positive and lasting relationship with stakeholders and the broader community. Local governments understand that POKO approaches every stage of the project from design and building materials to energy and resources with a long-term investment view.

POKO is implementing revitalization strategies successfully with the city of Norwalk by offering a multifamily environment where disposable income will be spent locally and the community will flourish. By working closely with the redevelopment agency and mayor's office to completely reshape Norwalk's historic downtown into a thriving urban center, POKO's latest development, Wall Street Place, will lead the city's economic revitalization by creating a pedestrian friendly hub filled with mixed-income housing, shops, restaurants and cultural activities.

Located on a 6.3-acre site extending from Wall and Isaacs Sts. to West Ave., Wall Street Place will be a sustainable, mixed-use community with approximately 380 residences and 60,000 s/f of retail. The design, created by Hartford-based Crosskey Architects, is a blend of historic and modern-day architecture with a series of newly constructed and renovated buildings presenting a unique opportunity to shape and rebuild a substantial portion of what was once the traditional downtown of the city of Norwalk.

With a variety of living options, Wall Street Place will feature spacious family-sized condominiums, brownstone style live-work town homes as well as service oriented retail and boutiques. The residential portion of Wall Street Place will be comprised of market rate and affordable rental apartments as well as condominiums. Unlike most mixed income housing, all of Wall Street Place's units will feature the same fixtures and finishes to ensure a true community within the development that offers diversity without economic segregation, something POKO strives to achieve with all its developments.

Wall Street Place will also seek LEED Silver certification by the USGBCS (US Green Building Council) with sustainable elements including Combined Heat and Power, also known as cogeneration, which produces energy on-site by taking the wasted combustion from conventional boilers and converting the energy into heat that may be reused for electricity. Other green features include bamboo flooring, Energy Star appliances and lighting fixtures, low E double-paned window glazing to minimize heat loss/gain and high-efficiency plumbing.

The project will be constructed in three phases, the first of which will produce a pedestrian-friendly meeting place with caf  s and retail by redirecting and calming traffic flow along West Ave. and Wall St. As the heart of the bustling urban center, West Ave. and Wall St. will have street level commercial space perfect for organic and service oriented retail. The interior of the development will have a residential feel that converges on a circle at the intersection of Isaacs and Academy Sts. Brownstone style homes along Isaacs St. will remind area residents of Boston's famous Newbury St. The first phase also includes an automated parking facility that will provide 212 public parking spaces housed in two levels below grade as well as an additional 23 conventional surface parking spaces. The highly anticipated state-of-the-art fully automated parking facility marks one of the first public parking amenities offering easy access to the city's new urban center, a key component to making any downtown revitalization a success.

Scheduled to begin construction in winter of 2008 with a target completion date of 2010, Wall Street Place will change the existing under used and dilapidated downtown area of Norwalk into a thriving urban center with shops, cultural institutions and restaurants in a pedestrian-friendly environment.