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Plans look to revitalize Derby - The team hires QA+M Architecture for architectural design services

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QA+M Architecture's conceptual renderings of downtown Derby on Factory Street.
(rendering credit QA+M Architecture)

Derby, CT Plans are moving forward in town with a proposal that would bring new life into the south side of the downtown area. During the Planning and Zoning Commission's October 18th meeting, the commission unanimously approved making the south side of Main St., where the nearly-vacant Factory St. is, into a planned development district., clearing the way for the development in downtown Derby.

The commission's amendment is allowing a developer, Derby Downtown, LLC, to propose their \$400 million project. Derby Downtown's conceptual plan includes four-story buildings with a total of 400 apartments as well as shops, restaurants and residential services on the first floor of each

building. Approximately 100 units will be built in each phase over the next 4-6 years.

QA+M Architecture's conceptual renderings of downtown Derby on Factory Street. (rendering credit QA+M Architecture)

More details and a firmer timeline will be established once Downtown Derby LLC submits documents for the commission to review. The Downtown Derby collective comprises Chris and Jena Barretta, of Milford, who operate Barretta Landscaping and Garden on the Factory St. site. They have owned the nearly 5 acres comprising the former Housatonic Lumber site for 11 years. The Barrettas combined with Steve and Jim Lepore of Lepore and Sons, a design and construction firm in West Hartford to form Derby Downtown LLC.

The team hired QA+M Architecture for architectural design services, as well as Rob Rowson, the former West Hartford economic development director who runs the RM Rowson LLC real estate firm, and Karl Nilsen, a land use planner who owns Zoning Info LLC, as consultants.

The redevelopment zone, which stretches from the Derby-Shelton bridge to the Rte. 8 south onramp along the Housatonic River, has been the focus of three decades of meetings, suggestions, proposals, and redevelopment plans that have fallen apart and never materialized.

City officials say Downtown Derby LLC's proposal has merit because the developer owns most of the property to be developed. This project also focuses on just one portion of the redevelopment zone – not the entire area. City officials have expressed hope that this project, if approved, will be the catalyst for future development on the south side of Main St., and jump-start the local economy and redevelopment throughout the central downtown district of the town, an economically distressed city.