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Greater New Haven has new projects in various stages of planning and construction

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Greater New Haven, unlike many of Connecticut's large cities, has new projects that are in various stages of planning and construction. In addition to its geographic advantages, namely its proximity to Long Island Sound and the convergence of I-95 and I-91, New Haven has Yale University and two world class hospitals to drive its continued growth.

Construction of new buildings surround Yale-New Haven Hospital demonstrates that demand for medical space continues to be strong. The Smilow Cancer Hospital was started in 2006 and is scheduled to open at the end of 2009. The 14-story building on Park St. is just under 500,000 s/f and will offer inpatient and outpatient cancer services. Adjacent to Smilow will be a six-story, 146,000 s/f office building with some retail on the first floor. Construction on this project is scheduled to be completed in the first quarter of 2010.

Construction recently began on another project on Howe St. consisting of a 845 space parking garage, a 53,000 s/f office/retail building, and 24 residential units. The location of this property could be among the first steps in Mayor John DeStefano's vision to reconnect the neighborhoods that were split when the Rte. 34 connector was built.

Another long-awaited project broke ground in September. The Shartenberg Project at the intersections of State, Orange and Chapel Sts. will consist of a 31-story building with 470 apartments, a 500 space parking garage and street level retail with an early childhood center and an upscale grocer reportedly close to committing.

On the site of the former Malloys and Macy's a block away will be the new home for Gateway Community College. The project will house up to 7,000 students and combine the school's two branches into a state of the art facility with 360,000 s/f of space for the college and a 600 space parking garage. Both the Shartenberg and Gateway projects are being build to LEED standards, a designation that represents the developers' use of environmentally friendly designs that are energy efficient.

The city has chosen Northland Investment Corp. to redevelop the former New Haven Coliseum site. Although the design has not been finalized, the initial concepts included more than 500 units of owner-occupied and rental housing, office space, 1,000 car parking facility and the potential location of Long Wharf Theater. This will not be Northland's first foray into New Haven. They brought Church St. South, a 310-unit subsidized housing development close to Union Station over the summer.

Despite all the new large scale developments on board, local retailers are struggling. Mom and Pop stores that have been the backbone of the economic growth over the past eight to ten years have basically stopped growing. A combination of declining sales and the difficulty in obtaining funding to expand has made it more challenging for them. The loss of any home equity they had along with

banks' tighter lending requirements have caused that part of the business to come to a stop. The positive side is that there is still activity downtown. The Ecuadorian Consulate just leased space at the corner of Church and George Sts. The Consulate chose New Haven over Hartford or Bridgeport in part because of the mayor's illegal immigrant policies. The Consulate's main function will be to help its citizens with passports and other documentation.

New Haven is fortunate to be home to Yale University and two highly-regarded hospitals. Although vacancies for retail spaces are rising, the demand for high quality, specialized construction continues. Some positive news in this market is very welcome.

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