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New businesses open and expand or plan to open in Wallingford's downtown

March 18, 2009 - Connecticut

Although these are trying times for retail, I am happy to report that during this winter, new businesses opened, expanded or plan to open. Christian Rao, owner of the popular Café Ra at 1163 South Broad St., is opening a second location in downtown Wallingford at 9 North Main St. with a take-out café around the corner at 350 Center St. Christian, who also runs a successful catering business, plans to open the new restaurant this month. Efrain Nieves, owner of Tata's Family Restaurant on Quinnipiac St., completed the expansion of his restaurant to accommodate an additional 50 diners. Drizzles Chocolate Boutique, recently opened at 76 Center St. Sherry Cotrona, owner, said business has been brisk since her opening.

Other new downtown establishments include: Familia Bookstore, Aimee's Florals, The Toy Box, Superior Haircutters, Secret Closet, Mission Real Estate, and Macksimum Memories.

Retail Development

Within the past several months, eleven new retail establishments opened or plan to open shortly. Local businessman, Charles Mascola, who purchased the former Wallingford Spinning and Stamping Co. building at 428 South Cherry St., plans to convert the building into an expansive, upscale restaurant. Mascola anticipates his restaurant, called Cherry St., will open this spring. The interior of the 5,500 s/f former factory will be converted into two dining areas with a combined seating capacity of 200 seats. The restaurant will feature Northern Italian cuisine.

The Walgreens Pharmacy on South Colony Rd. reopened in the same spot where the 20-year old pharmacy was razed a year ago. The new store is 2,500 s/f larger, has a double drive-thru pharmacy, a digital photography kiosk and a larger grocery section. The store's pharmacy system links to all stores, making it possible to refill prescriptions at stores across the country.

Other new retail establishments in Wallingford include: Lee Garden Restaurant, Unger's Flooring America, FloraBella Designs, Puzzle Pizza, T.J.'s Autobody, The Perfect Treat, Red House Treasures, Colonial Flooring and the Redwood Grill.

Commercial Development

Recently, six commercial establishments relocated into/expanded in Wallingford. In January, Regency House, a 130-bed healthcare facility, held a grand opening for its newly constructed 33,000 s/f addition. The new addition includes a short-term rehabilitation center and rehabilitation gym. The new wing also recreates a homelike environment with a cafeteria-style lounge and appliances to ensure patients can cook and do laundry before they are discharged. Regency House is owned by National Health Care Associates.

Other new commercial businesses in Wallingford include: Comfort Keepers, Allstate Commercial Drivers Training, Coffee Pause, Directional Technologies, and Articulated Technologies.

Distribution

Three wholesale distributors recently relocated into Wallingford. Two distribution companies leased space in 2 Northrop Industrial Park Rd. West: Homans Associates, a distributor of industrial insulation, heating, ventilation and air conditioning products, leased 20,000 s/f and Electronic Environmental leased 6,000 s/f of space. Both companies will be tenants in Building #2 in Northrop Industrial Park, a newly constructed warehouse that is close to 100% occupancy. Construction of Building #3, a 45,000 s/f warehouse, is currently out to bid with completion of construction expected by 4th Quarter 2009. The third distributor who relocated into Wallingford is Northeast Steel, which leased 15,000 s/f at 22 North Plains Industrial Rd.

Residential

There are two residential projects currently on the drawing boards in Wallingford, one of which could commence construction in April. Construction of Simpson Village, an age-restricted development on Center St., is slated to get underway pending presales, according to Robert LaRosa, CEO. The LaRosa Building Group of Meriden closed on the former Simpson School property in March of 2007. Plans include the construction of a 28-unit, luxury condominium complex. Eight of the units will be designated as affordable. The units will range in size from 1,400 to 2,400 s/f and cost between \$299,999 and \$399,999.

Developer Greene-Woronick was granted Planning & Zoning Commission approval to change the zoning on a 1.1-acre site they recently purchased to allow for multifamily housing. Woronick is proposing to construct a 15-unit condominium complex with two units designated as handicapped accessible. The developer is planning to market the units to young professionals, particularly commuters who would benefit from the sites close proximity to the train station.

Doreen DeSarro is the business recruiter at Wallingford EDC.

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