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WORK IN PROGRESS

Developers Crazy for Chestnut Green 'Generational Living'

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The gothic buildings of the former Foxboro State Hospital still stand with the same grandeur they exhibited in 1891, but today they no longer hold the purpose of housing the mentally ill. Boston-based developer VinCo Properties purchased the site at an auction last year with plans that are now well under way to create a modern, fast-paced mixed-use community.



Chestnut Green will provide Foxboro with 203 residential units, some shown above in a rendering of the project.

Chestnut Green covers 93 acres of land that is being redeveloped into residential, commercial and retail parcels. The site was purchased for \$5.17 million from the Massachusetts Division of Capital Asset Management in February last year with a 1992 legislative redevelopment plan already in place. "We are executing what the town and state laid out," said David Crocini, president of Crocini Consulting.

The team of developers, which also includes Boston-based the Abrams Group, Foxboro-based Intoccia Construction Co. and North Easton-based Douglas A. King Builders, have benefited from the many years of planning already in place for the development.

The project is running smoothly despite a recent setback. On July 14 a four-alarm fire occurred in Building C, one of the 20 hospital buildings on the 93-acre site. According to Nickerson P.M.E., a preliminary walk through conducted by Foxboro Building Commissioner Bill Casbara and VinCo Properties development team members determined that the buildings are structurally sound and work can continue.

"We are going to rebuild because it's a historical building. It looked like a towering inferno, but it was mainly roof and attic space that was damaged," said Lisa McGonagle, principle of Wayland-based Nickerson P.M.E., the marketing and public relations firm working with Chestnut Green.

VinCo Properties is developing the retail and commercial space, some of which is historical rehabilitation. The Abrams Group, which focuses on the redevelopment of under-performing real estate assets, is responsible for developing all residential units, which includes some historical renovation in the old hospital buildings. Intoccia and Douglas A. King Builders are developing the single-family homes located in parcels of land away from the main hospital site and also the recreational aspects of the projects. Crocini is the project manager for Chestnut Green and oversees all aspects of the project, working closely with all the developers.

Eight of the proposed 73 single-family homes are currently under construction with an average price tag of \$700,000. The hospital buildings have been gutted and are awaiting permits so redevelopment can begin. Construction and redevelopment of all parcels of the development will be simultaneously ongoing over the next two years. "Permitting is the phase we are in right now [with the hospital buildings]. All the main buildings are gutted [which has] helped us to get engineers in to see the buildings, and the buildings are in good structural condition; [all that's needed] are upgrades and other minor [things]," said Crocini.

The scope of the project is extensive with 203 residential homes – 73 single-family homes measuring between 2,200 square feet and 7,000 square feet and 130 condominiums measuring between 500 square feet and 3,000 square feet – 100,000 square feet of commercial office space and 55,000 square feet of retail space planned. The site will offer 40 acres of recreational services: two football fields, two baseball fields, bocce courts, volleyball courts and an already-completed playground.

"When you get off work it won't be dead, there will be a lot of activity, there will be public safety buildings, the retail parcel, kids being dropped off at soccer practice, people running and walking ... everything's really going to be tied in with the residential [aspect of the development]," said Crocini.

The combination of single-family homes, starter homes and assisted living is something Crocini terms, "generational living." For example, Crocini said, a couple could buy a condo, get married and buy their first starter home, then as your career progresses they'd be able to move to a bigger home across the street and retire in the 55-plus active adult community town homes.

"Sales for the condos start in October. The office space will be delivered in the spring, maybe as early as mid- to late-winter. The residential [parcel] should be complete by the summer," said Crocini. The commercial space is being managed by Boston-based Richards Barry Joyce & Partners, a full-service commercial real estate firm.

The old hospital buildings and the site are listed on the national and state Registers of Historic Places. Developers working on the project aim to keep as many of the original structures as possible. "You just couldn't afford to build buildings like this anymore," said McGonagle.



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