

New ADA dock, Reid and Hughes groundbreaking mark progress in Norwich: what's happening

The Bulletin • April 25, 2024
By Matt Grahn, Norwich Bulletin

The Norwich Community Development Corporation showed off two key projects for downtown Norwich Wednesday.

First, there was a ribbon cutting at the new ADA-compliant docks at Howard T. Brown Memorial Park. After that was the groundbreaking for the restoration of the Reid and Hughes Building into apartments and a first-floor retail space.

These projects represent “the continued, sustained drumbeat of us trying to get things to move in the downtown,” NCDC President Kevin Brown said

It also shows the power of public and private investment working together, Norwich Mayor Peter Nystrom said.

New docks

Norwich’s legislative delegation has sought accessibility for the dock since 2015. The city has worked on accessibility since at least 2017. Norwich set \$200,000 aside for the dock work in 2019.

The state, through the Small Harbor Improvement Projects Program, provided \$800,000, Port Authority Interim Executive Director Ulysses Hammond said.

“This is a destination here in Norwich,” he said.

Work done on the dock included new docks at the front of the park, and adding safety rails and an Americans with Disabilities Act compliant ramp.

Norwich’s harbor is an estuary where the Thames, Shetucket and Yantic Rivers meet. Fishing enthusiasts will come from as far as Massachusetts to fish striped bass in Norwich, Norwich Harbor Management Commission Chair H. Tucker Braddock said.

More projects to come

The Connecticut Port Authority opened the fourth round of SHIPP Grant applications in March. The city is still seeking more money

for the park and waterfront, including efforts to further fund the work new Norwich marina owners Patrick and Brittany Dwyer in revitalizing it, Braddock said.

“It’s one step at a time,” he said. “It takes a long time for economic development.”

To drive the point home, Braddock gave Hammond a portrait of the completed Norwich Harbor.

“He’s reminding me of all the projects we have to do in this harbor,” Hammond said.

Reid and Hughes

The remodel of the Reid and Hughes building have started, and is expected to finish next spring. When completed, it will have 17 apartments units, a 2,000 square foot retail space on the first floor, and will remain in compliance with regulations for renovations to historic buildings, Heritage Housing Inc. President David McCarthy said.

The project is funded by a construction to permanent loan from Capital for Change, a \$600,000 loan from Norwich, and a \$500,000 grant from the Connecticut Department of Economic Development, McCarthy said.

Heritage Housing first took over the Wauregan building across the street in 2020, and soon got involved with the Reid and Hughes building as its then owner went bankrupt, despite the challenges McCarthy said.

“The building appeared to be barely standing, and walking through it reminded me of YouTube videos of visits to the Chernobyl containment zone.” he said. “So naturally, we said of course.”

The Reid and Hughes building is named for a department store which was there for over 100 years. The building was built in 1869, expanded in 1898, and it closed in 1987, McCarthy said.