

## IN THE REGION/New Jersey

## In-Town Living in Morristown

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## MORRISTOWN

THIS community's plan to make over its historic downtown into a modern commuter mecca is being realized as two residential developments are under construction now, three more are near to groundbreaking, and two others will follow next year.

They will provide a total of 526 units, all within walking distance of the colonial-era Morristown Green and a train station that provides Midtown Direct service to Manhattan.

Along with the housing will come 70,000 square feet of new street-level retail space and 750 new garage parking spaces.

"It's really happening," said the developer Jonathan Stein, whose firm, the Roseland Property Company, is a partner on five of the buildings. "In the 'new Morristown,' you can really experience in-town living — walking to shops, restaurants, culture — and have great transit access at the same time."

Morristown was one of the first downtown areas designated seven years ago by the state as a beneficiary of its Transit Village program, which provides planning and monetary support for redevelopment around mass transit centers. In addition to the New Jersey Transit train station at Lafayette Avenue and Morris Street, the downtown has highway access in the form of two downtown exits for Route 287, and connections to Routes 24 and 80.

Within the first two years after the Transit Village designation, two small condominium developments — one 18 units, and the other 10 town houses — were completed not far from the green.

In addition, Morristown's nightlife began to awaken. The downtown area gained some trendy bars, cafes and restaurants, and considerable buzz about how it might be "the next Hoboken."

Now, the transformation to that kind of a 24-hour live/work/shop/play downtown seems concretely under way in Morristown.

The century-old Vail Mansion on South Street was once used as Town Hall, but never occupied by its builder, Theodore Vail, the American Telephone and Telegraph Company executive behind the Bell system. It



Minn &amp; Wasko Architects and Planners, top; Neoscape, bottom

## COMING SOON

Renderings of DeHart Place, nine four-story town homes with elevators, above, and of the Residences at the Vail Mansion, where a three-story condo structure will wrap around the mansion, below.



is to be the centerpiece of a 36-unit condo addition, the first level of which is up. The three-story condominium structure is to wrap around the sides and back of the mansion, which is being refurbished for a new life as a restaurant.

The stone mansion's Italian Renaissance style is to be precisely mirrored in the condo structure.

Already, 25 of the units, which range from 1,650 to 2,240 square feet, and cost from the mid-\$700,000s to well over \$1 million, have been sold. Sales agents at Weichert Realtors said the location, two blocks from the train station and adjacent to the well-regarded Morristown Community Theater, was a major selling point. But the Residences at the Vail Mansion, as the condo structure is called, also offers a full array of amenities

and concierge service.

Around the corner, on DeHart Place, framing is nearly completed on a row of nine four-story Victorian-style town houses, each offering a minimum of 3,400 square feet of space and an elevator. The homes cost \$1.2 million to \$1.4 million and are being marketed by Weichert as "just steps away from the superb dining, shopping and culture that have established the area as a landmark."

The first of the town houses was bought last week.

Roseland is the developer for DeHart Place and is in a partnership with Woodmont Properties and Applied Development on the Vail mansion project. Roseland and Woodmont are also partners on three other projects for which ground will be

broken this summer, according to Mr. Stein.

One of these developments involves a 217-unit rental apartment building to go up on what is now a parking lot directly opposite the train station. The building will have about 20 units designated as "affordable," meaning that the rents are capped and that the units are made available to people based on their income, Mr. Stein said.

The building will have 8,000 square feet of retail space. A 415-unit parking garage to accommodate commuters will be built into its core.

The other two residential projects are part of the redevelopment of the Epstein's Department Store site at Market and South Streets, opposite the Morristown Green. The department store's nine buildings were carefully taken down last summer, with pieces of the structure saved for recycling into the new 750-unit parking structure that will form the core of the high-end condo building.

The parking garage is to be built with an eye to energy conservation and environmental friendliness, with solar panels on its roof. An attached office building at the back will house the Morristown Parking Authority and other nonprofit agencies, under the redevelopment plan worked out by the town, the developers and the Epstein family.

The prime street-level space facing the green across Market Street will become 40,000 square feet of retail shops. The condos will occupy six stepped-back floors above that. Plans call for the approximately 80 units to have balconies and terraces that directly overlook the green and the historic area just to the east, where George Washington's Continental Army troops camped during the winter of 1779.

South of the condominium building on Market Street, a 130-unit rental building will rise. That structure will also offer stores at street level, and on its lower level. The apartments will have one or two bedrooms, and the building includes 10 affordable units.

Also planned for the Epstein's redevelopment site are a building with 36 loft-style units, and a complex of 20 town houses. Groundbreaking is expected to take place for those projects within the next year, Mr. Stein said.