

LOCAL GOVERNMENT AND POLITICS, NEWS

LYNN BREAKS GROUND ON \$100M WATERFRONT DEVELOPMENT

BY DAILY ITEM STAFF | December 11, 2019



Shovels are at the ready for the groundbreaking ceremony of Breakwater North Harbor in Lynn on Wednesday. (Spenser Hasak)

LYNN — City and state officials have spent 40 years anxiously awaiting the redevelopment of the former Beacon Chevrolet site, but it turned out to be worth the wait, EDIC/Lynn Executive Director James Cowdell said at Wednesday's groundbreaking ceremony.

A \$100 million project would seem to be well worth waiting for.

Cowdell was joined by a host of city and state officials, including Mayor Thomas M. McGee and Gov. Charlie Baker, in celebrating a mixed-use development that will result in 331 market-rate apartments and commercial space. A mix of studios, one-bedroom and two-bedroom units will rent from \$1,800 to \$2,500.

"This is a momentous occasion for the City of Lynn," said McGee, who recalled filing legislation in the state Senate in 2002 and finding a *Daily Item* from 1996 that included a front-page story on plans for the redevelopment of the site, which has been vacant for more than three decades.

"This is the beginning of unlocking the waterfront and converting it to an urban, mixed-use development," he added. McGee said the development of the waterfront would include 60 acres of open space for public use.

Baker, a Swampscott resident, spoke of driving by the site on his way to work for more than two decades and thinking, "if ever a site needs to be developed, it's this one." He said upon becoming governor he told his former secretary of housing and economic development Jay Ash and former energy and environmental affairs secretary Matt Beaton to make it a priority.

The 14-acre site across from North Shore Community College on the Carroll Parkway, known as the North Harbor site, will be developed by Minco Corporation in partnership with the Dolben Company.

The project is already paying dividends for the city as Cowdell said last week the developers delivered a check for \$860,000 for permit fees.

Several speakers touched on the complexity of the project and the need for collaboration between city and state government in order for it to become a reality.

"People found the time to make the investment required — the intellectual capital, political capital and the real capital — to tee this up so it could happen," Baker said.

State Sen. Brendan Crighton (D-Lynn) started working on this project as a senate aide to McGee and has continued as a city councilor, state representative and in his current position. He credited former mayors Edward J. "Chip" Clancy Jr. and Judith Flanagan Kennedy with supporting the project, as well as McGee and current and former city councilors and legislators.

Louis P. Minicucci Jr., president of Minco Corporation, recalled first meeting with Cowdell seven years ago to talk about the possibility of developing the site.

"We were believers (in Lynn)," Minicucci said. "We thought the site was overlooked, and the rest is history. Lynn is a good place to do business. It's the next Cambridge, or Somerville."

Andrew K. Dolben, executive vice president of the Dolben Company, said the goal is to “create a sense of place where people want to live.”

Dolben said there will be a four-story building with an underground parking garage and extensive amenities. “We’re excited to bring that vision to the city,” he said. “It’s like putting a puzzle together to create a stunning gem on the waterfront in Lynn.”

But not everyone was happy.

A group of activists from Lynn United for Change protested on the site during the groundbreaking ceremony. The group took issue with the lack of affordable apartments in the development, a lack of retail space, and a “tax break” given to the developers by the city, according to a flyer distributed by Lynn United.

“We do not oppose development,” reads the flyer. “We want to see our city grow and improve. But new development should respond to the needs of the majority of Lynn residents, instead of focusing only on the profit of developers.”

Eric Loth, managing director of Minco, said the company is operating under a seven-year tax incentive, or Housing Development Tax Increment Exemption (TIE) Agreement. The biggest incentive was in the first year, with the benefit decreasing each year, he said.

Construction is expected to be completed in 24-26 months, Loth said.

Gayla Cawley of the Item staff contributed to this story.