

Construction Starts Ahead Of Time At Grist Mill Commons In Simsbury



By HILLARY FEDERICO
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CONSTRUCTION WORK at Grist Mill Commons, the first development to be built using the new “planned area” zoning regulation, has started months ahead of time thanks to this year’s unseasonably warm, dry weather.

Once completed, the project will add 20 tri-level townhouses, 88 upscale apartments, a restaurant and office space near the corner of West Street and Grist Mill Road. Construction on the apartments was originally scheduled to begin this spring.

Ron Janeczko, developer and partner of Farmington-based Landworks Development LLC, said the mild winter weather this season has provided an opportunity for construction crews to resume work earlier than anticipated. He added

that crews have already excavated the front portion of the 5-acre parcel where the 300-year-old grist and saw mill building sits. Crews were also able to get some work in to control drainage.

The newly renovated restaurant at 77 West St. is expected to open within the next couple of months, said Town Planner Hiram Peck. Construction crews have been working on a 90-space parking lot outside the building, which will also house a second office for Landworks Realty, currently based out of Farmington.

The project, which was unanimously approved by the zoning commission on April 4, is the first to be approved under the town’s planned area development zoning regulation, which went into effect in September 2010. It was developed with the intention of creating “attractive, livable, environmentally wholesome and pedestrian-friendly public spaces” in Simsbury, according to the town’s website.

Plans to construct upscale town homes, commercial space and apartments perfectly fits into the mixed-use focus of the regulation, Peck said.

“It’s exactly keeping with what we had envisioned for the town,” he said.

The roughly \$30 million project is expected to take another 2-plus years to complete.

Five buildings with a total of 20 townhouses are to be built on a 2-acre lot adjacent to that of the restaurant. Each will have with two bedrooms, a den and two-and-a-half bathrooms and will range in size from 1,800 to 2,100 square feet. The development, which overlooks the mill pond and gorge, will be called Mill Pond Crossing.

The largest area, about 10.5 acres off Grist Mill Road, will be converted into apartments called Grist Mill Commons, Janeczko said. Eighty-eight units will be built, of which four will be free-standing and 84 single-level with private garages and elevator access. Both 1- and 2-bedroom units are included in the plans and range in size from 900 to 1,500 square feet.

“We are building this as if we would be living there,” said Janeczko, a Farmington resident, in reference to his business partner Chris Nelson, also a Connecticut native. “We’re from here, we live here, we’ve raised our kids here.”

“Our vision is to create a place where people will want to live, where they will be happy and comfortable.”