



Project of the Month: Urban Spaces and Diamond Sinacori break ground on \$20m downtown Salem condo complex - BRIX

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Salem, MA The joint venture of Urban Spaces and Diamond Sinacori held a groundbreaking ceremony for BRIX, a 61-unit, mixed-use condominium development in the city's downtown. Salem's first concierge building, BRIX will provide the downtown with urban residences and 3,000 s/f of retail/restaurant space. Located at 65 Washington St., BRIX is a short walk from the Salem Commuter Rail Station into Boston and just steps from the shops, restaurants, and museums of the Federal St. District, which is listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

"We're excited that the former Salem District courthouse will be replaced with a signature, mixed-use building," said mayor Kim Driscoll at the ceremony. "BRIX will bring much needed housing downtown – some affordable, some market-rate, some new commercial space. This building will be part of our community's ongoing effort to transform the northern part of our downtown to better serve as a welcoming entryway to Salem. It will really make a difference and I am thrilled to see this work starting today."

Designed by Tise Design Associates of Newton and to be constructed by Groom Construction of Salem, the 110,000 s/f BRIX development will be comprised of 8 one-bedroom, 44 two-bedroom and 9 three-bedroom units. Units will range in size from 800 to 1,700 s/f with prices starting in the mid-\$400,000 range. Building amenities will include a roof terrace, club room, pet spa, and fitness studio. The building will also include a two-level parking garage to accommodate 88 vehicles.

“A vibrant city requires an array of housing options and we’re excited to add a new home ownership opportunity to the heart of downtown Salem. The groundbreaking represents the culmination of many years of thoughtful planning. We’re pleased to have achieved this important project milestone and look forward to BRIX contributing to the streetscape and neighborhood,” said Paul Ognibene, chief executive officer of Urban Spaces.

Urban Spaces partnered with Ken Foster, SVP of commercial banking and Kevin Rourke, SVP and commercial banking division head at Salem Five Bank to secure \$20 million of debt financing. “With a partner like Urban Spaces/Diamond Sinacori, who has delivered on urban renewal work so successfully in other areas, we’re confident in the project’s potential to deliver a vibrant option for downtown living and retail in the city,” said Foster.

The project also benefited from the Commonwealth’s Housing Development Incentive Program (HDIP) which provides gateway cities like Salem with a tool to increase residential growth, expand diversity of housing stock, and support economic development. BRIX will be the first condominium project to utilize the HDIP program.

BRIX will be constructed on the site of the former federal district courthouse, which had been designed in the “Brutalist” style of architecture and had sat vacant for several years. The foundation of the courthouse will be repurposed for the project, which will speed up the construction process and reduce the level of disruption to the neighborhood.

BRIX will be constructed using fire-treated wood framing above a steel and concrete podium. The base of the building is a contemporary interpretation of urban storefront design, with stone and steel column covers, fretwork, planter boxes, and awnings. The overall building is designed to adhere to the current historic patterns of Washington St. with retail on the ground floor and residential above, using a combination of brick, metal panels, and stone details. Designed to appeal to young professionals and retiring baby boomers, the units will be marketed exclusively by Charlesgate Realty Group and Merry Fox Realty.

Urban Spaces, Diamond Sinacori, and Tise Design Associates previously collaborated on The Lancaster, a 55-unit condominium project in Brighton, that in 2016 became the first condominium complex in the city to earn LEED Gold certification.

David Groom, principal of Groom Const. said, “Our team at Groom has been collaborating closely with the developers, designers and city of Salem for over two years on this stunning landmark project in the center of downtown. As a Salem based company and active member of the business community, we are ecstatic to be a core member of the team and to have been selected as the project’s builder.”

Project team: Urban Spaces, developer; Diamond Sinacori LLC, developer; Groom Construction, general contractor; Tise Design Associates, architect; Sophava Framing, framing; Tocco Building Systems, electrical; Pella Windows & Doors, windows; and Form-Up Foundations LLC, commercial foundations and flatwork.