

In Boston, Re-Knitting the Urban Fabric

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Where 1960s urban renewal split the city of Boston at Brookline Avenue and Beacon Street, a new mixed-use development soon will knit it back together.

“We’re building on air,” says Mike Binette, principal in the Architectural Team, a 70-person, Chelsea, Mass.-based firm. “We’re putting a deck over the Mass. Pike – the client is leasing the air rights from the department of transportation.”

The developer is John Rosenthal, known in Boston for his work with Friends of the Homeless, a non-profit that seeks to house and find jobs for the homeless population, and for his efforts on handgun control.

“Those are his two hobbies, and it’s helped him shore up community support,” he says.

By the time the first phase of Fenway Center is complete in late 2015, his support may be substantially stronger. Currently, access between neighborhoods is only by bridge; the new design calls for connection via elevated streetscape.

“It will reconnect the Fenway neighborhood with Back Bay,” he says. “Where folks now look down to a pit below, there will be six story residential tower with first floor retail.”

The new design incorporates residences, offices and neighborhood-oriented retail in a transit-oriented development adjacent to the new, net-zero Yawkey Commuter Rail Station. It connects and integrates the new buildings into the existing Fenway, Kenmore, and Longwood Medical Area neighborhoods. The plan respects the urban grid and adds significant green spaces. It also offers one of the largest solar plants in the state.

“The first phase is 417 units, in three residential buildings” he says. “Two are on terra firma adjacent to deck, and one wraps around the garage.”

Each will address the personalities of the different streets. Because Brookline Avenue is more adjacent to Fenway Park and a more historically established streetscape, the structure will be seven stories. Along Beacon Street, Street, there’s a higher flow of traffic and a lesser defined building rhythm, so the buildings will be bigger: eight and 14 stories.

“There’s a sensitivity to scale and the unique nature of the streets,” he says. And there’s a diversity of uses, to break down the overall scale.”



Groundbreaking is scheduled for the fall.

For more on Fenway Center, go to <http://fenway-center.com/>

For more on the Architectural Team, go to <http://www.architecturalteam.com/#/home/>

