

Arsenal Yards welcomes new stores as it nears completion



Arsenal Yards at dusk

ARSENAL YARDS

By Beth Treffeisen – Staff Reporter
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After a slowdown due to the pandemic and a changing retail environment, Arsenal Yards in Watertown is welcoming new retail tenants this year, with the completion of its final residential and lab science buildings coming in spring 2023.

Since Boylston Properties and Wilder teamed up to redevelop the site of the former Arsenal Mall in 2017, the more than 1 million square foot mixed-use neighborhood is beginning to fill up with restaurants, gyms, retail stores, and entertainment complexes.

With over 10 new stores set to come in this summer and fall, the storefronts are now 95% filled, according to Wilder. There are now only six retail locations to fill.

This summer, Arsenal Yards are welcoming new stores such as Pokeworks, Taffer's Tavern, Restore Hyper Wellness, Central Rock Gym, Bond Vet, and F45 Training. Other services including Starbucks, James Joseph Salon, AT&T and GNC, are all slated to open before the end of the year. KinderCare is slated to open by early 2023.

This past spring and summer have also welcomed new tenants, including Buttermilk & Bourbon, Tori Jiro, Condesa Restaurante Mexicano and Tequila Bar, Kura Sushi, Sweetgreen, and Vitality Bowls.

"Arsenal has been a very interesting ride," said Tom Wilder, co-developer of the site. "We bought it with the intent of redeveloping it because the site was a phenomenal site. We are right where Cambridge meets Boston, so it definitely lent itself to density and a mix of uses."

Blvd & Bond, the residential offering with 302 units across three buildings, is nearly 100% leased, while all life science space within Arsenal yards and the new building at 100 Forge is entirely leased.

When construction is complete, Arsenal Yards will have nearly 400,000 square feet of life science space, luxury residences, and a 146-room Hampton by Hilton.

"We wanted to make it a place where we can reconnect with the community," said Wilder. "That could be a shopping visit, dining, entertainment, strolling, they can live there, they can work there, they can access the Charles River."

In 2013, the site was a 150,000-square-foot outlet center that didn't fit the needs of the surrounding neighborhood, Wilder said. Working alongside Watertown city officials, Wilder restored the historic brick buildings, which were converted into a mall in the 1980s, and built a mix-use office and retail destination.

The plans changed after the life science market soared in Boston. Wilder reworked the final design to accommodate labs, including converting the residential towers to include 200,000 square feet of life science office space.

“It’s beyond what we imagined it,” said Wilder. “The life science certainly changed the dynamic in terms of office space and that everyday development. But, it all fits with our long-term goal.”

Wilder said that the Covid-19 pandemic slowed development because of supply chain issues, but every tenant that opened before has remained. Even The Majestic 7, which Covid-19 regulations forced to close, is now starting to see moviegoers again, he said.

“People are coming back and going,” said Wilder.

– *Beth Treffeisen is an ACBJ reporting intern*