

Community In Progress

Downtown Crossing
New Haven



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City of New Haven
Toni H. Harp, Mayor

 Connecticut


PRESS RELEASE

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New Haven Downtown Crossing Progress: Ground is Broken on Phase 2 of Major Infrastructure Project of Statewide Economic Significance

Downtown Crossing, New Haven's premier infrastructure project, is transforming the former Rt. 34 highway into urban boulevards, reconnecting City streets and neighborhoods, and enabling economic development and job creation. Phase 2 will reconnect Orange Street across the former Rt. 34 corridor and feature Connecticut's first protected intersection for pedestrians and bicyclists

(New Haven, CT) The New Haven community today joined Mayor Toni Harp, Congresswoman Rosa DeLauro, representatives from the office of United States Senator Chris Murphy, Division Administrator of the Federal Highway Administration Amy Jackson-Grove, Connecticut's Deputy Commissioner of Economic and Community Development David Kooris, and numerous local officials to celebrate the commencement of construction of Downtown Crossing Phase 2: the reconnection of Orange Street.

The groundbreaking took place at the site of the future Orange Street intersection against the backdrop of a currently impenetrable portion of the Rt. 34 highway corridor at the corner of South Orange Street and Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Boulevard. Two years from now, the site will be home to Connecticut's first protected intersection for pedestrians and bicyclists.

"This grade-level, Orange Street crossing continues the work we've done these past six years to unify downtown New Haven with Union Station, the Hill, and the medical complex," Mayor Harp said. "Beyond that, progress on Downtown Crossing will continue to add jobs as we yield some ten acres of developable land to city's property tax base."

Construction on Phase 2 began earlier this spring and when completed in 2021 will reconnect Orange Street across the former Rt. 34 highway, restoring access between Downtown New Haven, Union Station, and the Hill neighborhood. Significant street and landscape improvements will beautify the area and create a new gateway to New Haven. The street and

landscape improvements, coupled with traffic calming measures, are designed to communicate to motor vehicle drivers the transition from high-way to a slower-speed, shared use, urban environment.

“I’m thrilled that Phase 2 of Downtown Crossing has begun. The first phase of the project was a game-changer for New Haven, and I know the second phase will be similarly transformational. Connecting the neighborhoods that were torn apart more than a half century ago by Route 34 will do wonders for residents, students, and economic development,” stated United States Senator Chris Murphy. “I am proud to have helped secure \$16 million for Phase 1 of this project and \$20 million for Phase 3 of this project, and I will continue to work to bring all federal resources to bear to help this city get the job done.”

“The groundbreaking of Phase 2 of the Downtown Crossing Project is the next step towards reconnecting and revitalizing New Haven,” said Congresswoman DeLauro. “This critical project will relieve congestion, improve traffic flow, address flooding, and create our state’s first protected intersection for bicyclists. It will also create good jobs that cannot be outsourced, spark economic growth, and open new opportunities for our city to flourish. That is why I am proud to have fought for and secured the federal funding New Haven needs for this project—including the initial \$16 million TIGER Grant from the U.S. Department of Transportation in 2010 and the \$20 million grant to fund this stage.”

Phase 2 is supported by the U.S. Department of Transportation’s Transportation Investment Generating Economic Recovery (TIGER) competitive grant program and the Connecticut Department of Economic and Community Development.

Phase 2 includes construction of Connecticut’s first protected intersection for bicyclists and pedestrians which will provide an off-street path across the intersection as well as raised plazas, protected by bollards, to provide a safe refuge while waiting for traffic signals.

“We have worked consistently to build a strong pedestrian and bike-friendly infrastructure in New Haven. I am proud that our City’s existing infrastructure will be strengthened with the introduction of the first protected bike intersection in Connecticut as well as a direct route to Union Station from Downtown New Haven,” stated Douglas Hausladen, New Haven’s Director of Transportation, Traffic, and Parking.

The construction of a bioswale (a landscaping structure designed to capture and remove pollutants from stormwater run-off) capable of holding over 40,000 gallons of water will help alleviate flooding, while also beautifying the area.

The infrastructure improvements will prime the area for the development of the Coliseum site’s mixed-use development of housing and retail, scheduled to begin construction in the spring of 2021.

“The continued reconnection of New Haven’s street grid with pedestrian and bike-friendly streets will spur transit-oriented private development and fuel the next generation of the

region's growth," said David Kooris, Deputy Commissioner for the Connecticut Department of Economic and Community Development. "This project is leveraging state and federal resources to make important infrastructure investments that will spur further economic development in one of Connecticut's major cities."

When Phase 2 is completed in the summer of 2021, construction of Phase 3 is scheduled to begin and last for approximately two years. Phase 3 will connect Temple Street to Congress Avenue via a bridge that will be designed to accommodate motor vehicle, pedestrian, and bicycle traffic. Phase 3 construction will enable access to two land parcels for development: 1.63 acres between College and Temple Streets and 1.23 acres between Temple and Church Streets.

"On behalf of our entire City team working on Downtown Crossing, we are very appreciative of the opportunity to reconnect neighborhoods and further develop a vibrant center city with a global reach. In tandem with these infrastructure investments, the community is connecting to jobs in a growing economy. The Bio Path program at Southern Connecticut State University is just one example of the many ways our partners are planning for jobs in the innovation sector."

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ABOUT DOWNTOWN CROSSING

Downtown Crossing is a City of New Haven infrastructure project that is rebuilding the former Route 34 highway into a system of urban boulevards designed for use by pedestrians and bicyclists, as well as slower speed motor vehicle traffic.

In three phases, the Downtown Crossing is installing three new intersections—or crossings—along the Route 34 corridor, reconnecting the previously severed connections between Downtown New Haven, Union Station (with Metro North, Hartford Line, and regional Amtrak service), the medical district, and the Hill neighborhood. Over the course of the project, total of approximately 10 acres of prime land will be reclaimed and made available for economic development, without the displacement of existing residential or business districts.

In 1959, a portion of Route 34 was transformed from a route that wound along New Haven's urban streets into a "limited access expressway"—a road designed for high speed traffic only and not suitable for walking, biking, parking, or conducive to economic development. 881 households and 350 businesses were displaced, homes and stores demolished. In their place, a portion of new expressway was constructed to carry Route 34 from Interstate 95 and through the heart of New Haven. The newly built approximately mile-long stretch of highway was dubbed the "Oak Street Connector," a reference to the neighborhood that was removed to build it. At the time, the new highway was viewed as progress. The Route 34 expressway was originally planned to continue beyond New Haven and into suburban towns to the west. However, plans to extend the expressway were eventually abandoned and the Oak Street Connector came to be referred to as "the expressway to nowhere."

Initial planning for the removal of the highway began in the early 2000s, with the goals of enabling economic growth on land prohibited for use by the highway rights of way, restoring the urban street grid, and creating a more welcoming and safer environment for pedestrians and bicyclists. The Downtown Crossing project was able to move forward when the City of New Haven was awarded a \$16 million competitive federal Transportation Investment Generating Economic Recovery II (TIGER) grant from the U.S. Department of Transportation in 2010. New Haven was then awarded \$20 million in TIGER funding in 2016. The Connecticut Department of Economic and Community Development has supported the economic development aspects of the Downtown Crossing project with \$21.5 million in funding. Additional support for the project comes from the Connecticut Department of Transportation and City of New Haven.

Construction on Phase 1 of Downtown Crossing began in 2013 and was completed in 2016. Phase 1 began the process of converting the expressway into to urban boulevards and reconstructed College Street with pedestrian and bicyclist amenities. Through Phase 1 work, 2.4 acres of land was reclaimed (formerly unusable due to the highway's right of way) upon which a 14-story, 450,000 square-foot medical lab and research facility was constructed through private investment and was built to Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) standards. 100 College Street is fully leased, contributing to the City's tax base, and has added over 600 new jobs in New Haven.

Construction on Phase 2 began earlier this spring and when completed in 2021, will reconnect Orange Street across the former Rt. 34 highway, restoring access between Downtown New Haven, Union Station, and the Hill neighborhood. Phase 2 includes construction of Connecticut's first protected intersection for bicyclists and pedestrians, street and landscape improvements, flood reduction measures, traffic calming, a new gateway to the City of New Haven, and will prime the area for economic development.

Phase 3 will connect Temple Street to Congress Avenue via a bridge that will be designed to accommodate motor vehicle, pedestrian, and bicycle traffic. Phase 3 construction will enable access to two land parcels for development: 1.63 acres between College and Temple Streets and 1.23 acres between Temple and Church Streets. Construction on Phase 3 is set to begin in 2021 and be completed in 2023.

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