

# The Hartford Business Journal

## Hartford's Front St. slated for \$1.5M boost



HBJ File Photo

**The State Bond Commission is scheduled to approve a \$1.5 grant for infrastructure improvements at Front Street in Hartford.**

By Greg Bordonaro

Efforts to bring apartments to the Front Street entertainment district in downtown Hartford are about to get a small boost.

The State Bond Commission, which is scheduled to meet June 4, has on its agenda a \$1.5 million allocation to help the city finance infrastructure improvements associated with the project's second phase. That phase will include 115

apartments and 27,500 square feet of retail space.

The funds will cover costs associated with environmental remediation and construction of streets, lighting, plazas, sidewalks, and other public amenities, officials said. The funds will be in the form of a grant-in-aid to the city, and will create 30 construction jobs, officials said.

The allocation comes as Front Street developer HB Nitkin Group searches for financing to help bring the apartments to fruition. Peter Christian, the head of development for HB Nitkin of Greenwich, did not return a call seeking comment. However, Christian told the Hartford Business Journal earlier this month his team is working on obtaining a construction loan for a residential building on one of the remaining Front Street parcels, between the existing retail/entertainment buildings and the Wadsworth Atheneum.

He said they had one interested lender going through the underwriting process, but no deal has been finalized.

If financing eventually gels, the building will contain predominately studio- and one-bedroom apartments, Christian said, along with ground-floor retail.

Front Street is the final phase of Adriaen's Landing, but the project has been hit with delays and false starts for years. Originally the residential and retail/entertainment components of the project were to be built in tandem, but those plans were scrapped in 2008 when the souring economy made financing nearly impossible. But it appears Nitkin sees an opening, even though the retail/entertainment venue remains vacant.

Spotlight Theatres has agreed to open screens at Front Street and began construction on its space in February. The 20,000-square-foot entertainment spot will include a restaurant from which moviegoers can take food into the theater. As previously reported, Norfolk music venue Infinity Hall has signed, or is close to signing, a lease on a live-music venue in Front Street.