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SoNo Factory Apartments a 'Revolution' for Norwalk

by [Nancy Chapman](#) 09/24/11

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Rudy's Executive Transportation
salutes **Tony Brown**

An artist's rendering of 11 Chestnut St. in South Norwalk.

Photo Credit: [Nancy Chapman](#)

NORWALK, Conn. — A brick building on Chestnut Street may be in for a transformation now that developers have gotten zoning approval to turn the old factory into office space and apartments.

SoNo Metric LLC plans to turn 11 Chestnut St. into 11,000 square feet of office space on the first floor, and 17 residential units on the second floor, including 11 studio apartments and six one-bedroom apartments.

"This is the sort of project that will revolutionize Norwalk," David McCarthy, secretary of the Zoning Commission, said in an e-mail. "Where you once thought of industrial uses (near the tracks, near the water) now you think of mixed-use residential/commercial."

The building was zoned Industrial 1. It is now zoned SoNo Station Design District, as are 13 and 15 Chestnut, the other buildings owned by Richard Aron of Lantana, Fla. Beinfeld Architecture has drawn up the plans. Keith Brown, SoNo Metric LLC is listed as the applicant for the zoning change, care of RBA Properties of 261 Wilson Ave.

Landscaping will include a privacy fence, a wrought iron fence, a fire pit and a pergola, according to plans drawn up by Eric Rains Landscape Architecture.

The building was once home to the LeRoy Shirt Company Factory. It borders the South Norwalk train station parking lot, which McCarthy said means it will attract young couples. "What you are doing is creating an affordable place for people to live without needing a motor vehicle," he said. "These will be the starter units for young couples, most likely with no kids. [It's] housing for the people that will one day buy 'your' house.

"In this way we are re-creating the Norwalk of days gone by, where you can spend your whole life in the city while going through the stages of life," McCarthy continued. "We are also stemming the brain drain by providing a place that could be considered the farthest neighborhood of Manhattan. We

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The office space is a different market. "For a small building with a shop or two and or an individual office or two, I think you can find tenants, especially considering the proximity to the trains," he said. "It is in the macro that this is more difficult."

Chestnut Street has been the scene of numerous shootings. "I don't know about the crime stats," McCarthy said. "... I am sure there are issues, but they are also right down the street from the police station."

McCarthy is a member of the South Western Regional Planning Association. As chairman of the economic development committee, the Republican has made Transit Oriented Development the focus of development efforts in the near future. The factory conversion is a model, he said, adding, "This can be repeated over and over in East Norwalk and beyond."

What do you think of this conversion plan? Leave a comment below. Follow The Daily Norwalk on Facebook and Twitter.

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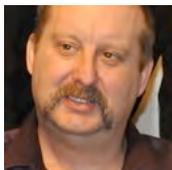
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dunnebster:

I've heard Dave McCarthy advocating for "transit oriented development" before, but I wasn't sure what it meant. Now I do. This project will be an excellent step forward in making that whole area around the South Norwalk train station a vibrant and attractive place to live. Three cheers for the Zoning Commission.

Submitted on September 24, 2011 - 10:40pm.

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