



An aerial view of Capital Station in Dover.

Capital Station

Dead factory to lively shopping center BY CHARLES RODRIGUEZ

PART OF THE REASON abandoned industrial sites sit empty is because repurposing them can be a massive undertaking. The amount of work that must take place before the first shovel bites dirt is often mind-boggling.

First developers must be willing to invest a large amount of capital in the project. These funds usually stay tied up in the project for its duration and the returns are speculative, making it a risky proposition. Plus, there's always the chance the project could go belly up for any one of a thousand reasons, resulting in the forfeit of the invested funds.

Obtaining all the prior approvals, permits, and engineering and architectural documents often takes longer than the demolition or construction. Depending on the site, a developer will have to navigate a complex labyrinth of federal and state regulations to ensure any pollutants left over from industrial activity are properly remediated. Moreover, developers must work alongside municipalities and county governments to be sure the project meets local standards and complements their individual vision for the community.

Only then can the real work of tearing down the past and building the future can start.

Despite these odds, this is exactly what Capital Station Dover LLC – a group of developers – just completed on the site of the old Playtex factory in Dover.

When Playtex mothballed the facility on the intersection of Division Street and DuPont Highway, the corner went dark for nearly two decades. An important part of Dover's history, this factory on the edge of downtown employed hundreds. As it sat empty, weeds began pushing their way up through the asphalt and the old teal water tower browned with rust.

By the early 2010s, the facility was in a state of disrepair. Nevertheless, the idea of transforming it into a modern, high-traffic shopping center began to percolate.

After working through the permitting and engineering stumbling blocks, Capital Station Dover LLC initiated the project



A schematic showing space still available for lease at the site.

in 2017. Several years of careful demolition and construction later, the vision was realized and Capital Station rose from the rubble.

The 60,000 square-foot shopping center quickly caught the attention of large international brands like Starbucks and Aldi. They were joined soon after by SuperCuts, Village Optical, Massage Envy, Verizon and Orangetheory Fitness. Red Robin Gourmet Burgers and Brews climbed aboard as well and is currently putting the final touches on their new location.

Not only did the development do away with a long-idle factory, it breathed new life into the busy corner. From dawn till dusk, on-the-go Doverites now file into the Starbucks drive thru, pick up groceries, get a massage or drop in for a quick workout. Where there was once a perimeter of barbed wire fencing, there's now a network of brand-new sidewalks – transforming it into a walkable business district. Helping to ease added traffic, multiple entrance and egress points were added to make Capital Station accessible from Maple Parkway and Kings Highway in addition to the highway and Division Street. With approximately 400 parking spots, the center holds a lot of visitors.

We at R&R Commercial Realty – the firm responsible for leasing the retail space – were thrilled to be a part of the project. Revitalizing the area with a shopping center has helped provide more high-quality amenities for nearby residents and businesses while adding jobs to the local economy and increasing the total amount of commerce taking place on Rt. 13. Although the biggest retail spaces were snatched up, some great storefronts still

remain. They'll likely be filled soon, but several spots from 1,490 to 5,225 square feet are currently available for lease.

For some, seeing the old factory fade into Dover's past was bittersweet. Yet it's undeniable that Capital Station is a part of the city's future, and the future is bright. ■

Charles Rodriguez is the broker/owner of R&R Commercial Realty.

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