



# CITY OF NEW BRITAIN

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THE HONORABLE ERIN E. STEWART

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## **New Britain Unveils \$58 million Downtown Redevelopment Project** *Columbus Common—former police station site*

**NEW BRITAIN**—Today, Mayor Erin E. Stewart joined POKO Partners, LLC to announce that the city has chosen the New York-based developer to build a brand new \$58 million, mixed-use project adjacent to CTfastrak—New England’s first bus rapid transit system.

POKO submitted their plan on March 10, 2016 to the city in response to a request for proposal to redevelop 125 Columbus Boulevard, the 2.26-acre site of the former New Britain Police Department. POKO’s submission will be recommended by the Mayor to the Common Council for approval at the July 13<sup>th</sup> meeting.

“This development is the catalyst for making downtown New Britain come alive once again,” said Mayor Stewart. “The parcel is a short distance from the downtown CTfastrak station and the development will blend seamlessly into the streetscape enhancement projects we are undertaking to make our downtown more walkable and inviting. Columbus Commons will provide access to attractive housing and easy connections to highways, CTfastrak, and a multiuse trail.”

“Columbus Commons” will be a two-phase, mixed-use development which is set to include the construction of two complementary L-shaped buildings framing an interior courtyard. The courtyard will create ample open space for active and passive recreation, community events, artisan retail pop-ups, food fairs, even musical performances.

“The buildings feature elements of active design, encouraging residents to move around the commons: to live, work and play in this revitalized corner of downtown New Britain,” said Andrea Kretchmer from POKO.

The development components include:

- Two five-story “L-shaped” mixed-use buildings
- A large “gateway” plaza between the two buildings
- Retail, office space, and/or restaurant entrances on the first floor that will be accentuated by expansive windows and intimate, tree-shaded terraces
- 168 apartment units in a 230,000 square foot mixed-use building
- “Activity areas,” such as a large office/health care tenant space and a large day care center featuring an outside play area, accessible from an interior courtyard
- Expansive use of green space

Mayor Stewart added, “We are extremely excited to begin this partnership and look forward to opening the door to the future of our city. Columbus Commons fits in with our vision for a dynamic and walkable downtown.”

POKO will be seeking funding for the development from several sources, including: the Federal Housing Finance Agency, Competitive Housing Assistance for Multiple Families Properties, Urban Act funds, and others.

The former police station was taken down over the last few months through funding from the state's Office of Brownfields Remediation and the Department of Economic and Community Development.

“Governor Malloy’s investment in transportation and brownfields is encouraging private development all across the state, and we are proud to be partnering with Mayor Stewart and the City of New Britain to bring new life to a long underused and blighted site in the heart of New Britain,” said Tim Sullivan, Deputy Commissioner of the Department of Economic and Community Development.

POKO is currently undertaking a \$26.32 million redevelopment of an abandoned mill in Stonington, Conn., and converting it into a 129,000-square-foot mixed-use development featuring 58 rental units and retail space. The firm has also worked with New York City to convert properties in the Harlem neighborhood into high quality housing.

A sale price will need to be negotiated if the project gains approval. The land is currently appraised at about \$200,000.

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