

Who Will Live at Northshore 770?

Northbrook is making a \$140 million bet on an untapped market of renters in the 'burbs—its biggest development in years will have luxury apartments, a Mariano's, and more.

By Ian Spula, Chicago Magazine

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The fever for multiunit rental construction and the buzz around mixed use has made it to the suburbs. Northshore 770 is, on one hand, the epitome of this new development attitude. On the other hand, it's business as usual.

The retail- and luxury apartment-driven development at Skokie Boulevard and Dundee Road broke ground Wednesday with the usual rosy forecasts from development and government reps. There are indeed some figures to hang your hat on: more than 100,000 square feet of chain retail (95% leased) anchored by a Mariano's grocery store, and 347 rental units. This will create some 2,800 union construction jobs and 700 permanent retail jobs—facts that the director of the Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity Adam Pollet was careful to underscore.

But the remarkable and somewhat dumbfounding aspect of this 16-acre, \$140 million project at the Northbrook/Glencoe border is that it took this long to arrive. The land it will occupy has sat vacant for a decade, as the village of Northbrook pursued a project even more dense than the one now on display. It was called Center of the Northshore and had twice the retail space, a hotel, movie theater, and 74 condos. According to village trustee Michael Scolaro, there was fierce vocal opposition in the community. It wouldn't have mattered—the financing fell apart all on its own in 2008.

The residential component of Northshore 770 will be in a standalone nine-story building looking onto the conventional retail plaza. Morningside Group is developing the apartments, while Crossroads Development Partners does the retail. Northshore 770 is only able to be called mixed use because the developers are partnering on some aspects of construction and it's all happening simultaneously. Bring in Skokie Boulevard's office park corridor and 'live, work, and play' are reasonably well bundled.

With residential opening 16 months off, Morningside president David Strosberg is already claiming a lot of renter interest. He points out that this will be the largest rental in Northbrook and the neighboring suburbs, and

expects a strong gravitational pull. “We’re in a very affluent area and so a lot of tenants will come from a three-mile radius—empty nesters, single parent households, and young professionals.”

“There has been so little rental development in the last 25 years,” Strosberg continues. “that the market is virtually untapped. Now, there are projects proposed in Deerfield and Glenview and we just finished Wheaton 121.” Strosberg is referring to another luxury rental development by the Wheaton Metra station with 306 units. Northshore 770 is projected to lease up in 18 months following its December 2015 opening—a standard amount of time.

Starting rents haven’t been set for the one- and two-bedroom units, but they won’t be cheap. Like the newest projects in downtown Chicago, residential amenities are through the roof. Here’s the big stuff:

- A heated outdoor pool and sundeck
- Putting green and golf simulator
- Outdoor fire pits and BBQ stations
- Cabanas
- Theater room
- Fitness center
- Bocce court
- Game Room
- Chef’s catering kitchen

This development may be mixed use in a rudimentary sense, but it’s not very human-scaled. The apartment building alone comes with 595 garage parking spaces. The nearest Metra (Glencoe) is two miles away, and walking or biking through the beastly intersections nearby takes determination.

According to Scolaro, the only other residential development being considered anywhere close by is a project of 37 single-family homes at Waukegan and Voltz Roads. The ultimate hope is that as more and more mixed-use projects are greenlighted in the suburbs, there will be a critical mass reached of people living near their places of work. “If you look at the megatrends, it’s what’s going to happen in 20, 50, 100 years from now,” says Scolaro. “The village is very cognizant of that.”