



HBI PHOTO | MICHAEL PUFFER

Unitex President David Potack (left) and Director of Engineering Jim Curiale at a 130,000-square-foot Hartford warehouse the medical linen and uniform rental company is converting into a massive laundry facility.

# Cleaning Up

## \$30M warehouse conversion into industrial laundry facility expected to bring more than 200 jobs to Hartford

By Michael Puffer  
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About 115 years ago, Polish immigrant Max Potack went to work at a small laundry service in Brooklyn, New York, operated by two of his uncles.

A&P Coat and Apron Supply laundered linens and aprons for butcher shops and restaurants, making deliveries with a rented horse and carriage.

Over the past century, the company evolved into Unitex Textile Services LLC, with about 2,200 staff operating out of 13 facilities in New York, New Jersey, Connecticut and Massachusetts.

Run by Potack's descendants, the company sanitizes and rents medical uniforms and linens to hospitals, nursing homes and other care facilities in a territory stretching from Bangor, Maine, to northern Delaware.

In Hartford, the family-owned company is undertaking a \$21-million expansion and renovation of a 130,000-square-foot industrial building, transforming it into a massive laundry facility that will eventually employ about 220 people.

The building, at 121 Wawarme Ave., had housed a Hartford Courant newspaper inserting operation. A Unitex subsidiary bought it in early 2024 for \$9 million.

In about a year, the building will begin its new life as a washing, sorting and distribution facility for Unitex, providing a constant stream of cleaned linens to medical facilities in Connecticut and parts of Massachusetts.

"This will be the sixth (and largest) plant we've constructed in the last 20 years, and we continue on that growth trajectory," Unitex President David

Potack said during a recent tour of the Hartford development site. "There is no one in our market that has added that type of capacity, or has that type of investment, or need for investment that we have. And that's all coming from growth over time."

The company's growth has been propelled by existing clients that have absorbed other operations, as well as a proliferation of outpatient centers, he said.

"There has been a lot of consolidation in the healthcare industry over the past 10 years," Potack said. "We have been fortunate to grow with our clients."

### More automation

Unitex currently owns and operates four smaller industrial laundry facilities in Connecticut — two in Hartford, and one each in South Windsor and

Waterbury. As the Wawarme Avenue facility opens, Unitex will close three of its Connecticut sites and consolidate operations in the Capital City.

An existing 18,205-square-foot facility on Ledyard Street in Hartford will remain open. That property is already outfitted with modern equipment and focuses on uniform services, said Unitex CEO Robert Potack.

The facilities slated to close currently handle about 850,000 pounds of laundry per week. The new facility is designed to accommodate 1.2 million pounds weekly.

All staff from the shuttered facilities will be invited to work at the new one, Robert Potack said. He expects to launch the Wawarme Avenue facility with 160 to 170 staff, and eventually increase to 220 employees as the client base expands.

The new plant will also have a higher degree of automation and use more energy-efficient equipment, company leaders said.

The project will be financed through revolving credit lines with JPMorgan Chase & Co. and Citizens Bank, Robert Potack said.

### Raising the roof

One unique aspect of the project is that Unitex is paying contractors to raise the roof — from 22 feet to 32 feet — of the Wawarme Avenue building.

The complex operation is being overseen by Maryland-based Rooflift Specialists and Florida-based Rooflifters.

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PHOTO | MICHAEL PUFFER

A worker cuts a section of the roof at Unitex's new Hartford warehouse, at 121 Wawarme Ave. The roof is being raised by 10 feet.

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The job involves anchoring the building's concrete walls, then cutting the roof into three sections, each of which will be raised, separately, at a snail's pace by dozens of synchronized hydraulic jacks. The roof will then be secured to new, taller beams.

The extra height will allow Unitex to install about a mile of gravity-powered track and elevated platforms. This will allow sacks of laundry to cycle through different stations within the plant without intense labor.

This is the second time in five years Rooflifters and Rooflift Specialists have worked on a project for Unitex.

**Rooflift Specialists President Craig Jones** said he has seen increasing demand for roof-raising projects in the industrial sector, given the increasingly scarce land suitable for new construction, and more stringent land-use regulations.

In recent years, Jones said, his company has averaged about nine to 10 jobs annually, double what it

performed a decade earlier. "There has been a constant increase in demand for this service," Jones said. "It makes financial sense, and the more people that learn about it, the more they spread the good word."

### Local support

The Hartford City Council two years ago signed off on a 10-year, tax-fixing agreement to support Unitex's expansion.

Under the agreement, taxes on equipment and real estate will hold at \$125,200 in fiscal 2026, then jump to \$513,540 the following year. After that, the company's property taxes will fall gradually to \$330,000 in fiscal 2031, when the tax level will hold for another five years.

Potack said Hartford officials have been enthusiastic in their support of the expansion, including by quickly processing permit requests.

"They were very appreciative of us bringing more jobs into the city," Robert Potack said. ◀

# Minneapolis developer eyes \$225M upscale housing project in Farmington

By Andrew Larson  
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A Minneapolis-based developer is proposing a housing development in Farmington with hundreds of units, including a mix of upscale apartments, owner-occupied townhomes and detached single-family dwellings.

Crown Equities LLC has filed an architectural master plan with the town for the development, called

Enclave at the Farmington River. The project, estimated to cost \$225 million, would be located on two properties that span a combined 63.5 acres at 3 Bridgewater Road and 1179 Farmington Ave. Plans show three lots, each with different housing types: Lot A with upscale, owner-occupied townhomes; Lot B with 138 to 180 upscale rental units; and Lot C, which runs along the Farmington River, with 72 to 86 luxury



CONTRIBUTED IMAGES

(Image above and below) Renderings of the proposed owner-occupied townhomes at the 'Enclave at The Farmington River.'



single-family residences.

The developer plans to include an affordable component and will seek financing through Build for CT, a state program that incentivizes housing construction for middle-income residents.

According to the project plans, which will need local land-use approvals, 20% of the Lot B units would be restricted to middle-income renters.

Crown Equities has completed dozens of projects in states that include Minnesota, Florida, New Jersey, Ohio, Pennsylvania and Kansas. It's currently developing two projects in Simsbury, a 72-unit apartment complex and 54-unit townhome rental development.

The L-shaped parcel at 3 Bridgewater Road in Farmington contains

15 acres of commercial vacant land behind an assisted living facility, Riverbend at Farmington. The lot is owned by Waterside Ten LLC, which is controlled by Peter Fishman, president of Farmington-based property management firm PKT Development.

The 48.5-acre property at 1179 Farmington Ave. is sandwiched between 3 Bridgewater Road and the Farmington River. It contains a quarry and is owned by Plant 17 LLC, which is controlled by Stanley Mierzejewski, president of Plainville-based Mizzy Construction.

Enclave at the Farmington River would offer a direct connection to the Farmington Canal Heritage Trail. Other proposed amenities include boat docks and slips, riverview gazebos, resident kayak and canoe storage, and picnic areas with grills. ◀