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Bradley Nitkin's Vision, Tenacity Honored At Hartford's Front Street



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When Front Street developer Bradley Nitkin died in 2009, the project was still mostly a vision for connecting the riverfront to the rest of downtown.

Today, the restaurant and entertainment district is nearly all leased; an apartment building is all but fully rented; and the University of Connecticut's new downtown campus is on track to open this fall. Construction is expected to begin on the fourth and final phase of Front Street — apartments and retail space — this year.

On Friday, Nitkin's wife, Helen, unveiled and dedicated a plaque in her husband's memory mounted near the entrance of the Front Street Lofts.

"We had done many real estate developments but this was a place where new ideas could be envisioned and real changes could be made," Helen Nitkin said. "It was Brad at his most creative, and all his pistons were firing."

Helen Nitkin co-founded Greenwich-based HB Nitkin Group and stepped in to lead it after her husband's death from cancer. She took over in the midst of a deep recession: The entertainment district was completed in 2010, but it stood empty for nearly two years.

"We were not the first or second developer tackling the site, and it's fair to say there were many naysayers, both fellow real estate professionals and the community," Helen Nitkin said. "But tenacity and perseverance were qualities of Brad's and our team's."

Friday's ceremony was attended by about 30 people — family, friends, real estate professionals and state officials. The sound of construction at the UConn campus site was a constant backdrop. The development of Front Street has unfolded differently than Bradley Nitkin first envisioned. For instance, the UConn campus is now going where apartments were first planned.

Would her husband have believed what exists at Front Street today?

"Yes and no," Helen Nitkin said. "Yes, he was a person of great vision, and no, he wouldn't have known how it would play out."



Front Street developer Bradley Nitkin, who died in 2009, honored Friday with a plaque mounted outside the Front Street Lofts building. (Kenneth R. Gosselin/Hartford Courant)