

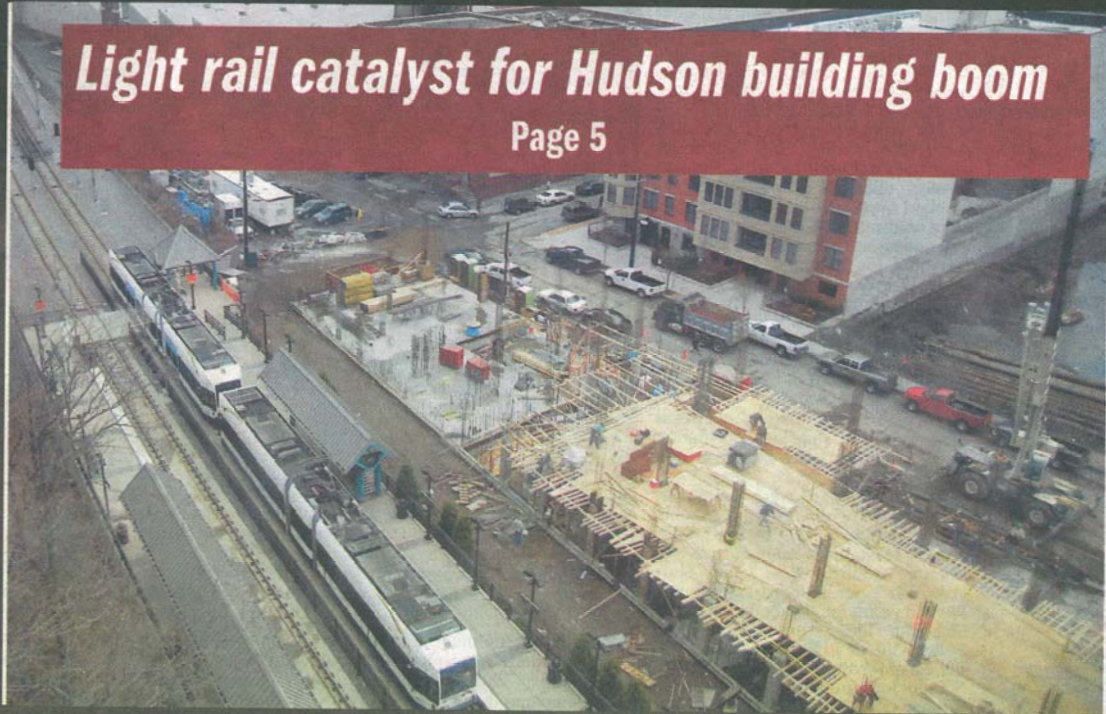
# The JERSEY JOURNAL

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# FAST TRACK

*Light rail catalyst for Hudson building boom*

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A HUDSON-BERGEN Light Rail train passes by the construction site of a new luxury highrise building in Hoboken.

REENA ROSE SIBAYAN JOURNAL PHOTO



# BOOM'S BEST FRIEND

## *Light rail is called key catalyst to wealth of new condo complexes*

By **COTTON DELO**  
JOURNAL STAFF WRITER

Ringling in its seventh year this month, the Hudson-Bergen Light Rail continues to be an engine fueling development in Hudson County, judging from the wealth of condo complexes springing up in its path.

"Wherever we are, especially on the waterfront, we've been a tremendous catalyst for redevelopment," said Joe North, NJ Transit's general manager of light rail. "I think that's going to be part of our legacy."

NJ Transit officials point to the light rail as a crucial factor in making projects like Liberty Harbor — the 28-block residential and commercial development between Jersey Avenue and Marin Boulevard stations, due for the first phase of moves on May 15 — feasible.

Situated in the midst of former brownfields, Liberty Harbor will be linked to various modes of transport via light rail.

"It's a straight shot to Exchange Place or Grove Street PATH station," observed Jan Wells, who researches transit-oriented development and is

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**JAN WELLS**  
RESEARCHER

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completing an impact study on the HBLR for NJ Transit through Rutgers. "The secret of success here is the connectivity."

Five thousand residential units have built been or are under construction in the half-mile stretch between Essex Street and Jersey Avenue stations since 2000, she said.

Wells also cited the impending development at the Peninsula at Bayonne Harbor and intense building activity at Weehawken's Port Imperial — where the HBLR went on line in October 2005 — as evidence of the light rail's magnetism.

For some marketers, the light rail has become an integral addition to the catalogue of amenities used to entice buyers.

Shortly before the New Year, Linda Cantatore of the Hoboken-based Renaissance Realty Group started dangling free passes — good for light rail and bus transfers for one year — to prospective buyers at The Neopolitan near Hoboken's Second Street station and Bella Vista Estates in Weehawken.

She thinks the light rail is largely responsible for the influx of residents on the western side of Hoboken.

"I think it's introduced lifestyle into our southwest end," she said.

"It's all about the light rail," said Dean Geibel, a Hoboken-based developer whose holdings include Trump Plaza in Jersey City and MetroStop, adjacent to Hoboken's Ninth Street station, both under construction.

"That's what's driving development in Hudson County — mass transportation."

Some of the effects are still speculative.

Developer Peter Mocco expects the 350,000 square feet of commercial retail space — due to be completed in two and a half years — on Liberty Harbor's main drag to attract local shoppers in droves.

The light rail will run through the middle of the future Morris Boulevard, with traffic on either side.

"What happens is it brings Jersey City back to being a retail hub," he said.





REENA ROSE SIBAYAN JOURNAL PHOTOS

**THE LIBERTY HARBOR** development near Grand Street in Jersey City, as seen from a passing light rail train.



**CONSTRUCTION PROCEEDS** on the Metro Stop luxury highrise next to the Ninth Street/Congress Street stop in Hoboken.



**THE HARSIMUS COVE** light rail station is crowded with commuters.