

Developer Strives To Bring Darien's Downtown Alive

by [Jim Gerweck](#) (email) 10/18/11



David Genovese stands in front of sketches of some of the buildings he has developed in Darien.

Photo Credit: *Jim Gerweck*

DARIEN, Conn. — David Genovese likes that he grew up in Darien and is known by many people in town. He can more easily get their feeling about what they want to see in Darien. "I can just ask them on the street," he said. My life is somewhat of a walking focus group."

Genovese and his partners at [Baywater Properties](#), and fellow developer Penny Glassmyer have been instrumental in making Darien the type of town you want to walk in, thanks to the buildings they have developed over the past decade. As a result, the Post Road has been transformed from an automobile thoroughfare to a walking shopper's delight. "People said Darien could never have a real 'downtown' because of the Post Road," Genovese said. "But I think we've proved that it can."

After working in real estate investment banking in New York and London, Genovese made the decision after Sept. 11 to "stop living on airplanes" and work locally. His father had owned a building supply company, so it wasn't too far a jump to begin developing commercial real estate in Fairfield County. He started with buildings in South Norwalk and Wilton. But when he bought a property in Darien in 2003, Genovese's philosophy changed.

"I met Evonne Klein and she convinced me of the importance of revitalizing Darien's downtown," Genovese said of Klein, who was then the first selectman in town.

It resulted in a group of stores and buildings that draws people to the area for more than a quick grab-and-go purchase. A mixture of service, food and retail entices residents to linger, perhaps eating an ice cream cone while their kids are at a gymnastics class.

In collaboration with Glassmeyer, Genovese's next project is a group of high-end apartments located within walking distance of this revitalized downtown. They are targeted toward empty-nesters who want to downsize without leaving town or giving up the town amenities they have come to appreciate. Genovese believes there's a real need for the housing, but he's making sure it will continue his same high standards.

"Every decision has a local impact," he said. "Doing the right thing often means being patient."