

# CONNECTICUT GreenGuide

SUMMER 2013

## ELEVATING SUSTAINABILITY

Hartford, New Haven developer  
focuses on how tenants  
use his buildings



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# Elevating *the* Sustainability Standard

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furnishings,  
reducing need for  
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◀ Bruce Becker's 360 State St. development tracks the building's energy use on a Web page, where tenants can check each individual apartment.

PHOTO | STEVE LASCHEVER

## Hartford, New Haven developer finds location, use make for greenest buildings

By Brad Kane

**B**ruce Becker is proud of his bright orange cup. Becker purchased the cup of coffee from Elm City Market in New Haven, the grocery co-op inside his 360 State St. apartment building, Connecticut's largest LEED Platinum structure.

Becker certainly knows sustainability: efficient units, transit-oriented development, battling state regulators over clean energy projects. These lessons were learned in Norwich, New York City, and New Haven, and next will come to Hartford.

The cup, though, and the co-op where he purchased the coffee are the larger part of his green design.

"The most important factors about a green building are what the use will be and the location," Becker said.

Building the world's most energy efficient building in the suburbs still negatively impacts the environment, as tenants must drive cars.

On the flip side, creating the largest building in Connecticut with highest rating from the U.S. Green Building Council's Leadership in Energy & Environmental Design, or LEED, program in the downtown of one of the state's most populous cities can't have residents traveling far and wide for basic amenities, like groceries.

"Everybody talks that sustain- ▶

► ability game, but Bruce clearly has experience in that game,” said Karyn Gilvarg, executive director of the New Haven city plan department. “I find him a very creative thinker, undeterred by any obstacles along the way.”

After cutting his teeth redeveloping the Wauregan hotel in Norwich, Becker — head of Fairfield firm Becker + Becker — earned his sustainable education by remaking The Octagon in New York City, an old lunatic asylum that became LEED Silver housing with the help of state tax credits.

“New York state had realized that providing sustainable housing was as important as providing things like

**Green Tip:**  
Consult with facilities management personnel while planning a building to maximize the design’s use.



*The fuel cell at 360 State St. produces 400 kilowatts of power and repurposes its own waste heat.*

PHOTOS | STEVE LASCHEVER

affordable housing,” Becker said. “Now a lot of our projects use tax credits.”

At The Octagon, Becker installed a 50-kilowatt solar array — the largest residential solar installation at the time — using submetering, making residents responsible for their individual energy use rather than including those costs flatly in rent.

Becker’s next step in sustainable buildings came when

## WAUREGAN

**LOCATION:**  
Norwich

**USE:** Mixed-use residential with 70 units

**COST:**  
\$14 million

**BECKER’S ROLE:**  
Developer, architect & planner



**Wauregan is Becker’s earlier effort at limiting tenants’ need to travel**



**Becker was the first person in Connecticut to seek submetering for renewable energy**

## SUBMETERING BATTLE

**LOCATION:** Connecticut

**USE:** A common practice in states such as New York, submetered multi-unit buildings charge individual tenants for their own energy use. Property owners can use submetering to finance the extra expense of renewable energy installations.

**BATTLE:** Submetering is illegal in Connecticut. Consumer advocates and utilities oppose the practice because property owners become mini-utilities unto themselves. Becker has been fighting for submetering since he installed a fuel cell in 360 State St.

**BREAKTHROUGH:** In Connecticut's comprehensive energy strategy, Gov. Dannel Malloy and the Department of Energy & Environmental Protection agreed with Becker, saying submetering would promote energy conservation.

**STATUS:** The Public Utilities Regulatory Authority is using Becker's 360 State St. case to determine if submetering should be allowed under certain circumstances. The General Assembly also is considering a bill making the practice legal.

he responded to a request for proposals from New Haven to develop a parking lot on State Street across from the Metro-North Railroad station.

"We saw it as an opportunity to create the greenest building in Connecticut," Becker said.

For the project, 360 State St., Becker didn't get to recycle an old building this time, but he was intrigued by developing near a train station, where tenants wouldn't need cars.

"It is very exciting just to sit there in the evening to watch people get off the commuter train and just walk into downtown and into his building," said Tony Bialecki, deputy director for economic development in New Haven.

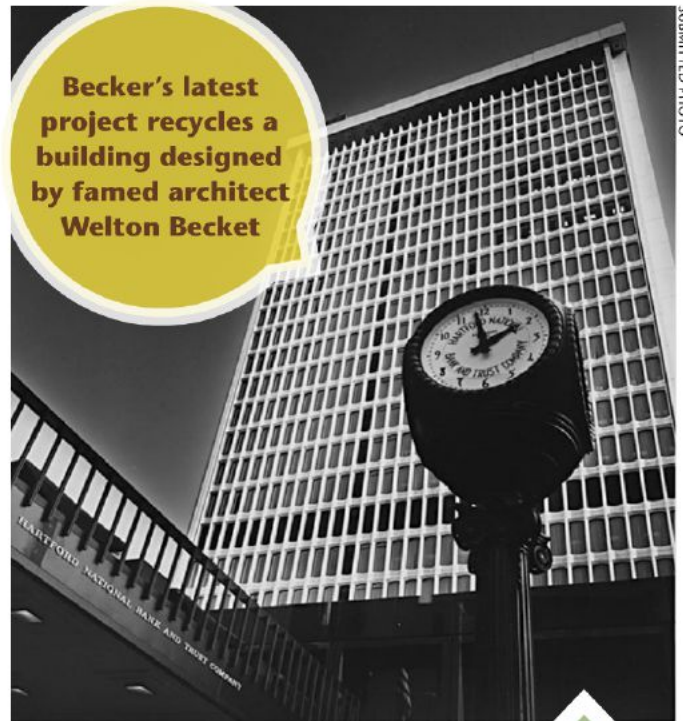
The 360 commercial tenants include Elm City Market and The Devil's Gear Bike Shop, both which seek to reduce New Haven residents dependence on cars.

"What Bruce Becker has developed here is really in harmony with the direction New Haven is going," said David Kahn, general manager for Devil's Gear, whose owners advocate for more biking opportunities in Connecticut.

Becker's next challenge is 777 Main St. in downtown Hartford. The former Bank of America building is the first project sponsored by the Capital Region Development Authority to convert vacant office space into residential.

"It is really a critical building in the heart of downtown," said Michael Freimuth, CRDA executive director. "Bringing it back to life is an important part of what we must do here."

CRDA kicked in \$17.7 million in loans and investments to remake 777 Main St., and the state Department of Economic & Community Development



**Becker's latest project recycles a building designed by famed architect Welton Becket**

## 777 MAIN ST.

**LOCATION:** Hartford

**USE:** Mixed-use residential with 285 units

**COST:** \$78 million (estimated)

**BECKER'S ROLE:** Developer & architect

## THE OCTAGON

**LOCATION:**

New York City

**USE:**

500  
apartments

**COST:**

\$100  
million

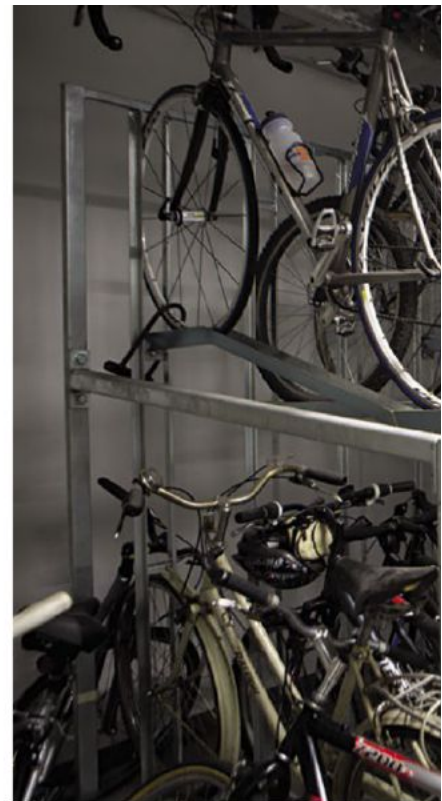
**BECKER'S ROLE:**

Developer,  
architect &  
planner



Becker's first submetering project earned him New York City's Green Apple Award

SUBMITTED PHOTO



► invested another \$3.9 million. Becker also has his private capital insured by the U.S. Department of Housing & Urban Development.

Becker hasn't decided on all the sustainable aspects of 777 Main St. yet, but the building will aim for LEED Silver at least. If Becker wins the battle over submetering in Connecticut that started when he installed a fuel cell at 360 State St., then he plans on doing the same in Hartford.

More than the LEED rating, Becker sees 777 Main St. as important to reviving one of Connecticut's urban centers with young, ambitious professionals.

"There is no LEED rating that quantifies the demographic ratings of a redevelopment, but it is something we

think about," Becker said.

Those plans include a grocery store in downtown Hartford. Becker is studying whether a grocery retailer, a co-op, or a second location for Elm City Market would fit into the two-story space formerly occupied by a Bank of America branch.

"It would be fantastic to have a full-service market downtown," said Thomas Deller, director of development services for the City of Hartford. "If Bruce Becker can make it happen at 777 Main, that would be incredible."

A downtown Hartford grocery still is a work in progress, much like the New Haven grocery store in 360 State St. was at one point. More than 60 retailers including

## ELM CITY MARKET

**LOCATION:**

New Haven

**USE:**

24,000-square-foot, co-op  
grocery store

**ANNUAL REVENUES:**

\$10 million

**DAILY CUSTOMERS:**

1,000

**EMPLOYEES:**

80

**BECKER'S ROLE:**

Developer &  
planner



The grocery in Becker's New Haven development sources 60 percent of its goods regionally

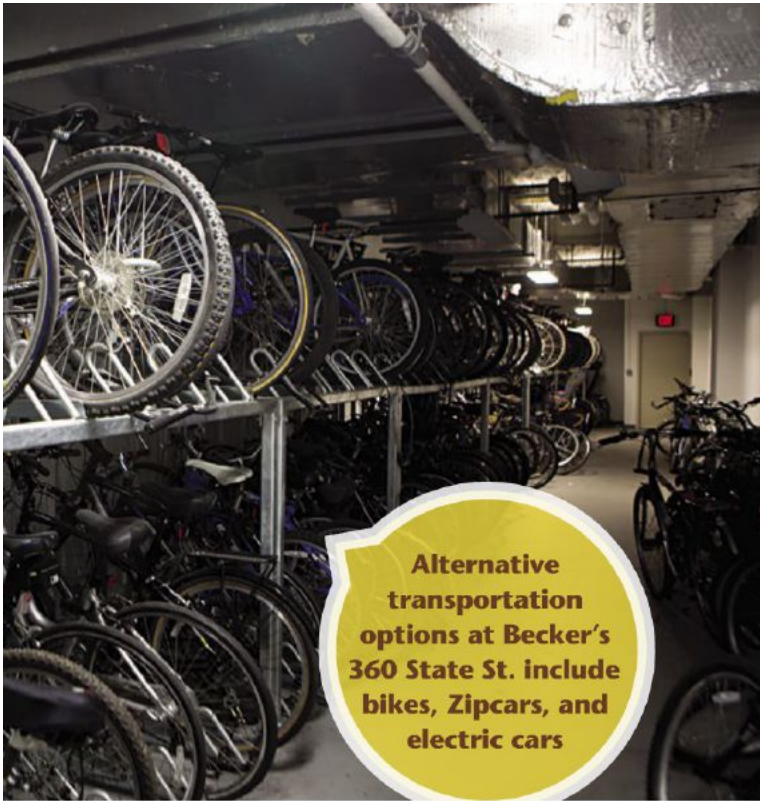
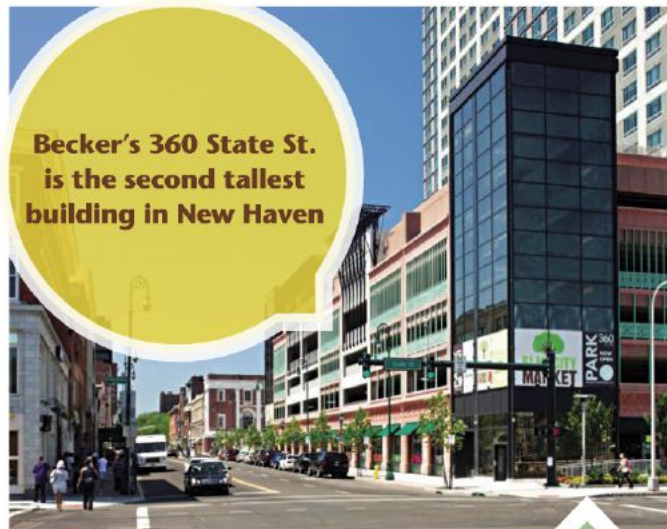


PHOTO | STEVE LASCHNER

**Alternative transportation options at Becker's 360 State St. include bikes, Zipcars, and electric cars**

Whole Foods, Trader Joe's, and Shop Rite turned down the space before Becker went with the co-op idea. Today, Elm City Market has nearly 1,900 members throughout south central Connecticut.

"What I really hope is our buildings can move the bar," Becker said. "We are always open to sharing out ideas." 🌱



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**Becker's 360 State St. is the second tallest building in New Haven**

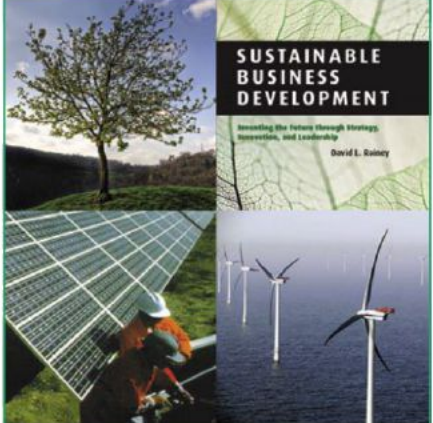
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**360 STATE ST.**  
**LOCATION:** New Haven  
**USE:** Mixed-use residential with 500 apartments  
**COST:** \$180 million  
**BECKER'S ROLE:** Developer & architect

**Green Fact:** Connecticut has 302 LEED certified spaces, including nine platinum, 42 gold, and 34 silver.

SOURCE: U.S. GREEN BUILDING COUNCIL

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