

How GE's new Boston home went from cold to hot (Update)

January 14 2016, by William J. Kole



Construction takes place for three different buildings in the Seaport District Thursday, Jan. 14, 2016, in Boston. General Electric said Wednesday, Jan. 13, it will begin relocating its global headquarters to the district in the summer from Fairfield, Conn., and complete the move by 2018. Boston's Seaport District long was filled with docks, warehouses and parking lots. But in recent years it has become the city's hottest and fastest-growing neighborhood. (AP Photo/Bill Sikes)

Before it became a boomtown, Boston's Seaport District—soon the new

home of General Electric's global headquarters—was a dreary backwater.

Derided for decades as a soulless and barren wasteland, the eastern district on the waterfront long was filled with docks, warehouses and sprawling lots offering cheap parking for commuters. Today, it's undisputedly the city's hottest and fastest-growing neighborhood.

GE's move from Fairfield, Connecticut, is set to begin this summer and will be completed by 2018.

Here's a closer look at the area GE will call home:

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'INNOVATION DISTRICT'

Former Boston Mayor Thomas Menino rechristened the area the "Innovation District," and the city has aggressively marketed it to technology companies and startups over the past decade. In 2014, Vertex Pharmaceuticals moved 1,200 employees to a new \$800 million headquarters there. The area also is home to Boston's World Trade Center and the Boston Convention & Exhibition Center. It's also the location of the federal courthouse where mobster James "Whitey" Bulger and Boston Marathon bomber Dzhokhar Tsarnaev were tried and convicted.

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BLEAK BACKWATER

The Seaport area was underwater in the late 1800s, and long after it was reclaimed from the sea, it lived up to its name as a muddy, pancake-flat,

pothole-rutted warren of oil-stained piers frequented by dockworkers and few others. In the 1920s, and well into the '90s, it was known as the Harbor Wharves for its blue-collar laborers unloading catches of fish. It was pocked with seedy bars and a place best avoided at night unless you were looking for a brawl.



Construction takes place on two buildings, left, adjacent to three recently built buildings, right, in the Seaport District, Thursday, Jan. 14, 2016, in Boston. General Electric said Wednesday it will begin relocating its global headquarters to the district in the summer from Fairfield, Conn., and complete the move by 2018. Boston's Seaport District long was filled with docks, warehouses and parking lots. But in recent years it has become the city's hottest and fastest-growing neighborhood. (AP Photo/Bill Sikes)

HIP BOOMTOWN

Old brick textile buildings have been transformed into trendy loft-style apartments that have drawn thousands of newcomers. Celebrity chefs and gourmet grocers also have set up shop, spicing the neighborhood with a hipster foodie feel. Harpoon Brewery and popular microbreweries such as Trillium are making suds there. Gleaming office towers are going up alongside hundreds of residential units, and much of the 1,000-acre swath is bristling with cranes. Estimates vary, but some say the district employs 33,000 people and pumps \$10 billion into Boston's economy.



In this May 4, 2015, file photo, a construction project is taking place in the Seaport District in Boston. General Electric said Wednesday, Jan. 13, 2016, it will begin relocating its global headquarters to the district in the summer from Fairfield, Conn., and complete the move by 2018. Boston's Seaport District long was filled with docks, warehouses and parking lots. But in recent years it has become the city's hottest and fastest-growing neighborhood. (AP Photo/Elise

Amendola, File)

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WHERE EDISON BEGAN

GE's move to Boston will bring it back to the city where the company's illustrious founder, inventor Thomas Edison, got his start and invented a stock ticker he patented in 1868. The Seaport also is a short walk from the spot where American revolutionaries unceremoniously dumped British tea into the harbor, setting the stage for war and independence from the English crown. GE hasn't yet said exactly where in the neighborhood it will put down roots.



In this April 4, 2014, file photo, several commercial construction projects take

place in Boston's Seaport District against the backdrop of the city's skyline. General Electric said Wednesday, Jan. 13, 2016, it will begin relocating its global headquarters to the district in the summer from Fairfield, Conn., and complete the move by 2018. Boston's Seaport District long was filled with docks, warehouses and parking lots. But in recent years it has become the city's hottest and fastest-growing neighborhood. (AP Photo/Stephan Savoia, File)

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