

Raytheon builders moe on: Wayland land will likely be home to 40B project

By John Hilliard / Daily News Staff
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WAYLAND -- Despite pleas from town officials, Town Center developers say their failed commercial/residential project is dead and gone.

"I'm open to listening to this," developer Charles Irving told selectmen last week. "But I think what we're trying to make painfully clear -- because somebody seems to be missing it -- is we're not coming back with another proposal, under any scenario."

Now Twenty Wayland LLC, co-owned by Irving and Dean Stratouly, has abandoned its Town Center plan in favor of a Chapter 40B affordable housing project for Rte. 20.

The housing project could include 200 to 300 units on the 57-acre site, with market rate units costing about \$700,000.

Irving said the former Raytheon site could support about 400 bedrooms with an existing wastewater treatment plant, but that number could rise to about 600 bedrooms with additional septic systems.

Developers are compiling a market study to determine demand for the kind of housing to be built. Units would include two-car garages, plus the project would offer tennis and basketball courts.

"Our goal for the project is to build the highest quality project we can under the 40B process," he said.

But developers could dump housing if Wayland would support another Town Center project.

"If you came back with a proposal that was absolutely what we needed, we would reconsider it," said Irving.

Meanwhile, selectmen Chairman Michael Tichnor said he hopes there is some way to salvage the Town Center project.

A zoning bylaw allowing the project failed to carry a two-thirds vote at special Town Meeting on Nov. 1.

The bylaw would have allowed a 410,000-square-foot Town Center of housing, commercial and retail space at the former Raytheon site on Rte. 20, plus given the Planning Board oversight power during the project's permitting process. Twenty Wayland LLC also promised at least \$3 million to the town.

Tichnor said the revenue from the Town Center -- estimated at more than \$400,000 a year -- is needed to ease Wayland's growing budget woes. The town faces a \$3.3 million shortfall in fiscal 2007.

"If we could find some way to make them reconsider, I would enthusiastically support that," said Tichnor in an interview.

Selectman Joseph Nolan, who supported the Town Center with fellow selectmen, said he believed there is widespread interest in redeveloping the Raytheon site for the town.

"I think a lot of people in town...supported the idea, but not the specific concept," said Nolan.

But developers seemed cool to the idea of another months-long discussion with boards about the Town Center project.

"The experience at the Planning Board was terrible. The experience at the Road Commissioners was terrible," said Irving. "And those two experiences have absolutely disenchanted us from wanting to come back again. It's a terrible risk for our investors to reengage these two groups."

Stratouly said he wants to develop the site within existing zoning bylaws and not work with town officials to draft a new regulation to allow the Town Center.

"Looking back, I probably would not try to do it again," he said, adding that he and Irving place "no blame" on Wayland officials.



Michael Tichnor.

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He said if the town were to draw up a plan to resurrect the Town Center, developers would listen to any ideas. But investing more time and money on the now-abandoned project requires some certainty from town officials.

"If the town were to come back, all you're giving us...is the ability to enter into a special permit process," with no assurances the proposal would succeed, said Stratouly.

The selectmen will meet with the Planning Board to discuss ways of bringing a mixed-use project to Wayland, said Tichnor.

"Conceptually, we all (recognize) the need to increase the commercial tax base in town," said Tichnor.

John Hilliard can be reached at 508-626-4436 or jhilliar@cnc.com.

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