



March 24, 2009

Bedford planners OK condos, business park

By STEPHEN BEALE
Union Leader Correspondent

BEDFORD – A plan for 160 age-restricted condos, an assisted-living facility, as well as a bank, pharmacy, restaurant and medical office building on 38 acres behind the corner of routes 101 and 114 was approved by the planning board last night.

St. Anselm College is selling the land to Hawthorne Partners, LLC, a developer based in Woburn, Mass. The eastern side, next to Route 101, will be the business park. In the center will be an 84-unit assisted-living facility and on the west will be 160 condos for owners 55 and older -- 88 units would be townhouses, leaving two three-story buildings each with 36 garden-style flats.

No deals have been reached for tenants for the bank, pharmacy, restaurant or coffee shop, according Dick Anagnost and Alex Vailas, local developers who will buy the site from Hawthorne and lease the buildings. A 45,000-square-foot medical office building would be filled with doctor practices. Anagnost said he was not ready to name of them.

The board gave Hawthorne Partners two years -- double the normal time -- to pull a building permit. A groundbreaking is expected for the middle of 2010, according to Bill Tucker, an attorney representing Hawthorne Partners.

He was not sure when the project would be finished. Tucker said the recession was having an impact. "Tenants are reluctant to make commitments for leases until they know a project is for real," he said.

The proposal was first presented to the board in 2007. Since then, the architecture of the business buildings has been altered to make them more compatible with a traditional New England look. The developer has also added sidewalks to the business park from Old Bedford Road and from the Bedford Springs office building at the corner of routes 101 and 114.

A quarter of the condos must be affordable to households earning \$61,120, which is 80 percent of the median area income, according to Tucker. Much of the discussion at the meeting last night centered on the services that will be available to the condo residents.

An agreement with Benchmark Assisted Living, which will build and run the assisted-living facility, says residents of the condominium could eat in its dining hall, if there is enough seating and enough of a demand for the service. An effort by board member Deb Sklar to make that service mandatory was defeated in a voice vote.

The development will deliver a shot of economic growth to a town that is welcoming it with open arms. Town Manager Russ Marcoux said the project met the economic development goals set by the town council.

"I think it's a great project. It's a mixed-use project that has been a long time in the making," Marcoux said. "I'm very encouraged this project is moving forward."

The development, once it is done, could generate a total of \$1,141,351 in local property tax revenue for Bedford, according to E. J. Powers, a spokesman for Hawthorne Partners. That estimate is based on the 2007 tax rate.

<http://www.unionleader.com/article.aspx?headline=Bedford+planners+OK+condos%2c+business+park&articleId=1b50a0c9-6cdc-46dd-8f49-57839dd86372>