

Development plans soar at Union Point

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Planning for an entertainment district at Union Point with recreational amenities nearby and a 350,000 square-foot robotics firm is in high gear at the former South Weymouth Naval Air Station, according to master developer LStar Communities executives.

LStar managing partner Kyle Corkum said four rectangular artificial turf fields to accommodate soccer and a rugby playing surface should be operational by Labor Day weekend.

“The recreation complex is before the SRA (SouthField Redevelopment Authority) for approval,” he said during a Weymouth town council meeting, Monday, March 27. “Three fields will have plastic bubbles on them. We will have turf fields that can be used during the winter.”

The plan calls for allowing an existing gymnasium near the site to remain and a new restaurant to be built near the recreation complex,

Corkum said a hangar used by Navy jets would be converted into a grocery store.

“We will have an office building and a high end cinema,” he said. “These are the phase 1 projects.”

The projects in the developmental stages are requiring LStar to file a notice of project change with the state Secretary of Energy and Environmental Affairs Matthew Beaton’s office.

“We are changing our project from two million square feet to eight million square feet and that requires a MEPA (Massachusetts Environmental Policy Act) review,” said Matthew Barry, LStar Communities president.

Weymouth councilors approved a zoning amendment in November 2015 that allows L Star Communities to have an additional three million square-feet to construct the commercial amenities.

Rockland Town Meeting approved a zoning change in May that allows upwards to two million square feet of commercial development at Union Point within the town’s borders.

Abington Town Meeting also approved a zoning change in May that allows upwards to 1 million square feet of commercial development at Union Point within the town's borders

Barry said the MEPA review is needed to determine what types of impacts the proposed amenities would have on communities that border Union Point.

The long-range development plan at Union Point calls for 3,855 homes, of which 1,000 residences would be restricted to people age 55 and older in addition to the commercial amenities.

Barry said there are plans to have upwards to 40 restaurants at Union Point with some of the businesses located in a planned entertainment center and a market square

The redevelopment design includes a plan by Prodrive Technologies, a Dutch robotics firm to break ground in late spring for a 350,000 square-foot facility.

Barry said Prodrive could generate between 750 to 900 jobs in electronics, robotics and engineering.

"This commercial facility will be one of the largest facilities on the South Shore and we are excited about that," he said.

District 6 Councilor Michael Smart said the council is excited about the development underway at Union Point, but the growth might require some adjustments to the parkway following a MEPA review.

Fore River Bridge lowered during MassDOT demonstration

"My suggestion is you connect with MassDOT and have the (transportation) secretary look at that," he said "We would like to see you work on that so we don't have any delays even though it would be years down the road."

Councilor-at-large Jane Hackett said the notice of project change filed by LStar is a milestone, but she has concerns about additional traffic being generated by the planned amenities.

"Tonight is a great beginning," she said. "But I think there will be a lot of focus on traffic."

Corkum said LStar wants to create the greatest environment it can at the site and not impose additional traffic burdens on the towns.

"We will put our best plan out there," he said. "We will have to balance it against the adverse effects. We will find the right balance and what we end up with will be the best balanced solution."

Mayor Robert Hedlund chief of staff Ted Langill said all town departments would oversee the development plans being implemented at Union Point.

“We are in constant contact with the SouthField Redevelopment Authority,” he said.

Council president Patrick O’Connor said legislative overhauls in August 2014 on how Union Point is governed have jumpstarted development.

“Thank you for coming before us tonight,” he said as the discussion neared a conclusion.

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