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SouthField parkway extension expected to drive business to Weymouth

Motion picture production props rest on a tarmac at the former South Weymouth Naval Air Station where Navy jets once took off and the sky seems to be the limit for new projects in the works at the SouthField community under construction by LStar Management.

LStar managing partner Kyle Corkum said construction on the long awaited extension of the William Delahunt Parkway to Trotter Road would get underway within a few weeks and it would steer volumes of potential business traffic into SouthField when it is completed.

"Imagine what that parkway will do," Corkum said. "That road will drive all kinds of deals that we are finalizing. We have contracts in the works for over 1,000 age-restricted housing just as we promised. We have plans for a collection of restaurants and an entertainment district, which is being finalized. We plan to have 28 liquor licenses and it will be a hub of entertainment."

The parkway extension is expected to cost \$6.5 million and take several months to complete, according to project planners.

Mass DOT agreed to finance the parkway extension in October 2015

Construction of the parkway's first phase cost approximately \$42.5 million and was largely paid for with state aid and federal stimulus funds when it opened in August 2013.

LStar has been managing the redevelopment of SouthField since it bought Starwood Land Ventures' stake in the project in April 2015.

Construction on single-family homes and townhouses has taken off since LStar has been overseeing development and the new structures are being built a short distance away from a runway where scenes from the movie "Patriots' Day" starring Mark Wahlberg was recently filmed.

A miniature Fenway Park whiffle ball field with a "green monster" outfield wall was built last year on Shea Memorial Boulevard near some restored athletic fields that enjoy regular use by sports leagues from Weymouth, Rockland and Abington.

Corkum said the pace with which development of SouthField has occurred is being made possible by the support from community leaders and residents in Weymouth, Rockland and Abington.

"Without their encouragement and support, nothing was possible," Corkum said. "What we inherited was a suburban subdivision. It took a lot of courage for people to trust us."

Mayor Robert Hedlund said development at SouthField is increasing because LStar is focused on improving the site and economic factors are encouraging interest in the location by businesses.

"The last master developer had no interest in the site and they had a huge portfolio," Hedlund said.

Weymouth councilors gave LStar an assist with accommodating its planned entertainment complex by approving an amendment to the code of zoning ordinances in November 2015 that allows upwards to 3 million square feet of commercial amenities.

Approval of the amendment allows LStar to possibly have a 10,000 seat stadium, a bio-tech firm, an office complex, and a new entertainment complex being planned called SouthField Live.

The entertainment complex being planned will include an outdoor courtyard where there will a series of restaurants, bars, a high-end movie theater and an office complex when the site is fully redeveloped in 16 years.

Corkum said SouthField Live would be an adult playground.

"It will be one city block with buildings that are five or six stories," Corkum said. "People will be able to decide where they can go to dinner with an I-pad."

Corkum said the entertainment block would embrace a "smart city" plan that allows patrons to use an I-pad to make restaurant reservations

"Your I-Pad will direct you to the closet parking space and you won't have to drive around," Corkum said. "You will be able to go to a restaurant with minimal effort."

Corkum said plans are in the works in the planned entertainment complex to accommodate driverless cars when they become available in the future.

"A lot of this technology has originated in Cambridge, but we are probably the only place where people can build a smart city," Corkum said. "Even something like an entertainment district will be more exciting because it will be high tech where people can make reservations online. It will be pretty cool."

Corkum said SouthField's entertainment appeal was evident when a food truck rodeo, complete with musical entertainment that featured Kristen Merlin, a



The parkway extension is intended to connect to Trotter Road, shown in this photo. Wicked Local file photo

finalist on the ABC-TV hit series "The Voice," attracted upwards to 8,000 people on May 28.

"We had our first traffic jam," Corkum said. "There was a redline of traffic on Shea Memorial Boulevard to Route 18. We had 21 food trucks and they all sold out. People are coming to see SouthField as a place where you go to have fun. We will be having more food truck rodeos and there will be a farmers market, art classes and all kinds of things at SouthField."

The zoning amendment also allows LStar to construct an additional 1,000 homes for people age 55 and over.

LStar got an assist with commercial development in the Rockland portion of SouthField last month when Rockland Town Meeting approved creating zoning that allows up to 2 million square feet of commercial development.

Corkum said LStar intends to break ground for a world-class recreation facility on October 2.

"There will be fields for soccer, lacrosse, and softball," Corkum said. "There will be tennis courts, basketball courts, and a dog park. We will relocate the "Little Fenway" to Memorial Grove. We will keep all of the iconic elements like the Citgo sign, the Coke bottles."

Corkum said LStar is negotiating with an international high tech company that has expressed an interest in having a business at SouthField.

"We are being taken seriously by every major company," Corkum said. "A major medical office company has approached us. They have been trying to get into Boston for a decade, but land prices are too high along with an uncertain regulatory process. What they realize with us is, they can break ground here within six months. We are becoming appealing to major companies."

Corkum said the negotiation process does not allow him to name which firms are seeking to do business at SouthField.

"We have had three movies filmed here during the past 12 months," Corkum said. "We are in discussions with a TV production company and other motion picture companies want to come to SouthField. We intend to keep the movie sets used in Patriots' Day."

Movies filmed at SouthField during the past 14 months in addition to Patriots' Day include Columbia Pictures "Ghostbusters 3" and "Stronger," a film based on the story of Boston Marathon bombing survivor Jeff Bauman.

Corkum said mitigating the impacts of traffic generated by SouthField will be focused on by LStar planners as the site is redeveloped.

"We are already talking to regional planners about that," Corkum said. "We will be submitting a Notice of Project change to MEPA (Massachusetts Environmental Protection Agency) to bring that issue (traffic) to the forefront. Everything we do is based on how we are impacting our neighbors and how to make it better.

Hedlund said the key to managing traffic would be a widening of Route 18 and his administration convinced state officials to keep it eligible for funding.

"They were going to pull funding on that, but we were able to salvage that last week," Hedlund said.

Hedlund said MassDOT has not established a timeline for widening the highway.

"They are trying to address some (projected) cost overruns," Hedlund said.

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