

Rechler's Enterprise pitch

By Dawn Wotapka Hardesty

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Scott Rechler stressed his local ties Friday when his development team offered Riverhead's town board \$100 million for 755 acres at the Enterprise Park at Calverton, where it plans a \$1 billion project.

Reckson, chairman and chief executive of RexCorp Realty, joined forces with Long Island Destination Group LLC, which includes the Petrocelli family, to pitch Riverhead Centre, an entertainment destination with an equestrian facility, motor sports area, town marketplace, cultural and entertainment center, hotel rooms and hundreds of timeshare units.

"We're vested in this site," Rechler, who is the third generation of a development dynasty that shaped the Island's office and industrial markets, told the board. "We are not going to develop anything that turns out to be a burden to the community because our reputation is at stake."

The project, presented via one of most polished presentations this Suffolk town has ever seen, is one of several vying for the former Navy land donated to the town to spark economic development in the largely rural area.

Another contender is Pulte Homes, which had representatives at Friday's presentation. Pulte aims to build more than 600 units for senior adults.

There's also SnowValley Sports Park, a \$750 million sports and entertainment complex with indoor snow slopes, a white-water rafting course, timeshare suites and a hotel and conference center. Morton Weber, the Weber Law Group attorney representing SnowValley, couldn't be reach for comment.

"The other stuff is a waste of time," said Gary Cotungo, with Hi Tech Business Systems, an office equipment company, who was at town hall Friday. "I think we need a race track. I think it's long overdue. I think it will put Riverhead on the map."

That's included in Rechler's idea, the next generation of Top Gun Sports & Entertainment's pitch for the site just off the Long Island Expressway.

Riverhead Centre is divided into six sections that, for the most part, would not require rezoning to develop.

- The equestrian center would cover 150 acres. It would have 160 vacation residential units, trails, 500 horse boarding stalls, an equestrian medical facility and animal shelter.

- The Towne Square is slated for 87 acres. Plans include a 250-room hotel, 100,000-square-foot convention center, and a family resort with activities including a batting cage and indoor water park.

- The sports and recreation segment would be housed on 84 acres with two indoor sports facilities, seven outdoor sports fields and space for community fairs and festivals.

- The cultural and entertainment center would gobble 109 acres. It would have a visitor's center, community center, 8,000-seat arena, amphitheater and motor sports and veteran's museum.

- The Motor Sport Country Club needs 140 acres for a 2.5-mile road course for sports car enthusiasts, a showcase area for high-end cars, a clubhouse and 428 vacation town homes.

- The raceway village is planned for 150 acres. It includes an 80,000 seat three quarter-mile oval track and a quarter mile track for locals and another for professionals. It also has a restaurant and retail complex and 100 luxury corporate condominiums.

The developers pointed out that 500 acres, or 66 percent of the site, would be left open. The project would generate 2,000 construction jobs and 2,500 permanent positions.

The presentation, which included a video set to classical music, impressed Supervisor Phil Cardinale. But board member Barbara Blass was a tougher sell on the project she hesitantly labeled "quite ambitious."

"This will forever change Riverhead, good or bad or whatever," she pointed out.

That's why Rechler, who is also a partner to redevelop the Nassau Coliseum site, was very careful to call this project a "vision." He stressed that the community's input would play a big role in what is ultimately built.

"We recognize this is a preliminary vision that needs to be refined," Rechler told the town. "If there's feedback that needs to be addressed, we'll address it."