

Business

Proposing loads of fun


Calverton complex with a raceway, resort is presented to town board with \$100M pledge for vacant land

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In a proposal that Riverhead Town Board member Barbara Blass termed "very ambitious," representatives of EPCAL Centre Friday unveiled a multi-use development plan that would turn 755 acres of abandoned former Grumman property in Calverton into a recreation destination.

If they get the necessary approvals for a project "very similar" to the proposal, RexCorp chief Scott Rechler told the board, the developers are prepared to pay the town \$100 million for the land. RexCorp and Long Island Destination Group Llc are partners in the Enterprise Park at Calverton Centre.

As presented, the project, designed by the North Hills-based Spector Group architecture firm, would include an 80,000-seat raceway with adjacent restaurants and retail stores, a family resort and conference center, an equestrian center, indoor and outdoor athletic facilities, and an 8,000-seat indoor stadium suitable for minor-league hockey - all situated along an existing runway that will be rebuilt as a transportation spine for the development.

The proposal also calls for more than 600 units of housing - an element several town officials said would require a change in the area's zoning code. Rechler assured the board all the housing would be "transient," with shares of equity sold to individuals or groups who would live there temporarily and would not add students to the school system.

Blass, who has expressed concern about housing on the site, said a code change allowing the housing would be "worthy of consideration."

"The development team seems very sincere about their intention to maintain the transient quality of the housing, and I intend to hold them to that if the project moves forward," she said.

The project also addresses Calverton residents' previously expressed concerns about traffic by funneling cars bound for the 80,000-seat venue - which Rechler said would probably host only one major event per year - north from LIE Exit 69, rather than relying on Middle Country Road.

Riverhead Supervisor Phil Cardinale said the presentation was "very professional and very complete," and said he will try to review additional documents from the development team during the weekend.

Having worked for years to help the town sell and develop the Calverton property, Newmark Knight Frank principal broker Jack O'Connor said he appreciated having a developer of RexCorp's reputation take an interest in the area. "These individuals are definitely of substance," he said, "so as long as they can work everything out with the town board and the civic associations and their approvals, they've got my vote."