

Remington site plan finds support

\$500m project finds support

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BRIDGEPORT — Plans for a \$500 million development that would involve five high-rise buildings and 1,200 units of housing at the former Remington shaver plant site received rave reviews from South End residents in a meeting with the developer Thursday.

"It's a wonderful project that will be a great asset to the city and an impetus to revive the South End," said Paul Boucher, a leader of the South End Neighborhood Council. "It should draw young professionals and empty nesters to live in the city."

"I think this plan is fantastic. It will rejuvenate the whole area," said council member Greg Breland, of Lafayette Street. "It's the best thing that's happened in the South End in years."

Stephen P. Grathwohl, a principal in Westport Property Management, which is proposing the project, spoke with residents at the University of Bridgeport student center in preparation for presentation of the plan to the Planning and Zoning Commission in June.

The real estate firm will seek commission approval of a master plan for the project along with a change of zone from industrial to waterfront mixed use for the site.

Grathwohl was joined in the meeting by Peter David Cavaluzzi, a principal in Ehrenkrantz, Eckstut & Kuhn Architects, which is drawing the plans.

All 18 residents who met with them had positive things to say about the plan for the 12 acre site at the foot of Main Street and the eastern end of Seaside Park on Long Island Sound.

"We will create a new skyline that will bring vitality to Bridgeport. The city will no longer be about factory smoke stacks or a power plant," Cavaluzzi said. "The site is a diamond in the rough, offering great views of Long Island Sound and Seaside Park."

When residents questioned who could afford the housing units that might cost \$600,000 or more, Grathwohl said many single-family homes in Fairfield County towns west of Bridgeport cost more than \$1 million, making the proposed units attractive for many people.

"This project will change how we see Bridgeport," Grathwohl said. "The project involves a lot of risk, but we think it is achievable."

He explained there is no market yet in Bridgeport for a mixed-use waterfront development, such as his partnership is proposing, because it will be the first of its kind in the city.

"That just means we'll have to do a bit more selling," he said. "We think there is a market. The question is how deep is it and how quickly will it come."

He said the project at the Remington shaver site will also help create a market for the Steel Point mixed-use development planned for Bridgeport Harbor and another development of this type planned for the Pequonnock site near Harbor Yard.

The overall plan for the Remington site, as presented by Cavaluzzi, calls for two 15-story buildings along with buildings of 25, 30- and 38 stories each.

These buildings would be surrounded by townhouses that would have parking structures hidden behind them.

The development would also have a restaurant and a banquet hall included in about 75,000 square feet of retail space to serve the residents.

The architect said small park areas around the buildings will connect the project to Seaside Park and the neighborhood.

"It's a fantastic plan. I admire anyone with the guts to do it," said Karl Zambon, of Waldemere Avenue. "It will enrich and change the city's old style of urban planning."