

THE LONG ROAD TO ‘COLLICELLO NORTH’ THE LONG ROAD TO ‘COLLICELLO NORTH’

Project Aims To Build In ‘Community’

City Development Plans To Promote Efficient Living Through ‘Urbanist’ Design

By PRESTON KNIGHT

Daily News-Record

HARRISONBURG — The latest housing development concept for the city mixes urban and Antarctic principles.

Collicello North, which as the name suggests will be at the northern part of Collicello Street, will feature “urbanist” ideas, including smaller homes and narrow streets in a community that promotes walking and biking, said Dean Weaver, the lead developer from Linville.

Rooflines for the 30- plus homes would be oriented toward the southeast for maximum solar-power results.

“We’ve kind of turned our back to the north, kind of like a penguin would,” Weaver said, referencing the animals that live in the Southern Hemisphere.

Yet for the development team, Kin Group LLC, several hurdles remain, including funding for the \$10 million project.

The “best-case” scenario is that Harrisonburg City Council approves a rezoning request for the roughly 3-acre site off Virginia Avenue this summer, followed by groundbreaking in late 2013, said Weaver, 47, of Blue Ridge Architects.

Before that, the challenge is buying a number of “paper alleys” — designated roads platted on the city land map that aren’t planned for development — from Harrisonburg, including an undeveloped part of Sixth Street.

Since the alleys are owned by the city, neighbors are entitled to purchase them if an outsider, such as Weaver, attempts to buy them.

He is optimistic that he can secure all the land he needs. If not, he said, “I’d have to adapt pretty hard.”

At most, Collicello North would have a mix of 36 single-family homes and townhouses, including places in which people can run at-home businesses. The homes would range from 1,000 to 1,750 square feet and have price tags in the \$180,000 to \$330,000 range.

Request Tabled Once

In June, the Harrisonburg Planning Commission tabled a rezoning request from Kin Group.

Weaver said he was not prepared to move forward at the time.

The zoning classification he seeks is R- 7, a rarely sought type that gives developers the leeway to create their own zoning rules, such as setback requirements, city planner Adam Fletcher said.

“ It’s super flexible,” Fletcher said. “You have to really know what you want to build upfront.”

Open space must be mixed into an R-7 district, and multiple modes of travel in a connected system should be provided.

Fletcher said only two areas in Harrisonburg have the R-7 designation: a project site known as the “The Quarry,” an abandoned Frazier Quarry location between Country Club and Smithland roads; and a collection of single-family homes and duplexes off Jefferson and Suter streets.

In 2007, City Council approved more than 500 houses on the quarry site, but the development never panned out.

That could happen to Collicello North, too, if the alley, rezoning and funding situations do not work in the developers’ favor. “But I hope to continue forward and actually develop it,” Weaver said.

Culligan Water last used the land. A vacant building with a three-bay garage that belonged to the company would be torn down for the development.

Collicello Extension Planned

One of the draws to living in Collicello North would be its links to the city: It’s close to downtown and 1,000 feet away from the proposed path of the Northend Greenway, a multiuse trail in the works from Park View to downtown, Weaver said.

Entry points into the development would be from an extended Collicello Street, which now dead-ends at Fifth Street; a new, yet- to- be- named street off Virginia Avenue; and from Edom Road, near Shenandoah Valley Livestock Sales Inc.

A large central common area will have open space, a pavilion and community garden.

“It’s not meant to be a close-ended community,” Weaver said. “It’s a neighborhood connected to the greater community. ... With this neighborhood, the selling point is the community aspect of it. It’s not the houses with a backyard and a half-acre. The benefit is the community itself.”

Contact Preston Knight at 574 6272 or pknight@dnronline.com



Michael Reilly / DN-R

Developer Dean Weaver says Collicello North is “not meant to be a close-ended community. ... It’s not the houses with a backyard and a half-acre.”