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Suffield seeks developer to create a dynamic, pedestrian-friendly town center

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Suffield is seeking a mixed-use developer to assemble and redevelop approximately 29 acres of land in Suffield town center (25.89 acres privately owned former lumberyard and 3.5 acres town-owned). Property has frontage on Rte. 168 (Mountain Rd). Subject parcel is relatively narrow and deep. Ffyer Place meets with Rte. 168 at a signalized intersection. 70 acre town park across Stony Brooke from subject property. Existing rail line could be converted to a bicycle trail or potentially be used as a secondary means of access to the property. The property is zoned Town Center Village District (TCVD) which allows: adult and child daycare, museums, school/education center, apartments or condominiums as an accessory use to a non-residential development, offices including medical, restaurants and outdoor caf   service, retail, and theaters. The Village District has design standards that can be viewed on the town's website at www.suffieldtownhall.com under Zoning Regs (Section IV F).

Suffield is a community of approximately 14,000. It has a picturesque main street and attractive country setting. The town has invested \$2 million over the last several years in streetscape and sidewalk improvements in the town center. Private sector activity has included the redevelopment of a gas station site into a very attractive two-story brick office building, construction of a Bright Horizons daycare center, and construction of a 20,000 s/f office building. Over 100 businesses call Suffield town center home. The prestigious Suffield Academy, a private secondary school, has continued to invest millions in capital improvements in the last several years.

The town-owned 3.5-acre parcel contains a highway garage, a dog pound and a telecommunications tower. The town will entertain relocating the highway garage and dog pound if an attractive redevelopment plan is offered that will generate substantial new taxes for the community and add vibrant uses to our town center. The cell tower would likely remain in place.

A prerequisite to the sale of the town property would be conceptual development plans and a pro forma tax generation analysis. An appraisal has been completed for the town property. No firm offer price has been established but it would need to be substantial enough to assist the town in the relocation of its operations.

The process to acquire town land includes a recommendation by the Zoning and Planning Commission, Board of Selectmen approval, Board of Finance approval and finally a town meeting. An agreement with the proposed developer would require a sufficient period of time to appropriately relocate our highway garage facility including identifying funds needed for the move.

Once these parcels are under the control of a prospective developer, the steps in the approval process would include: securing a capacity letter from our Water Pollution Control Authority,

Conservation Commission approval, Design Review Board and Zoning and Planning Commission approval.

Suffield is a quaint town with a rural heritage. The goals for the town center are to create a dynamic, pedestrian-friendly and attractive business district. The town worked diligently to develop the Town Center Village District regulations to guide future construction. The site layout, design and mix of the Ffyer Place development will be of great interest and importance to our local boards and commissions. We hope to work cooperatively with a developer in order to create a project that will make financial sense, as well as, fit the character of our community.

We understand this is a complex real estate transaction and the town is willing to assist in the redevelopment if the plan is an attractive one for the community. We can explore grants or bonding from the State of Connecticut. We may entertain tax increment financing. Appropriate revisions to the Village District regulations that are in keeping with the spirit of those regulations may be explored. A cooperative relationship between the town and the developer would need to be forged in order for a successful redevelopment effort.

Suffield Property LLC owns the 25-acre former lumberyard tract. Contact Mike Laureno for inquiries on this property. For more information on the town-owned land e-mail pmcmahon@suffieldtownhall.com.

Patrick McMahon is director of economic development for the Town of Suffield.

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