

Senior housing planned for former North Village Mall site

Developer seeking tax abatement to aid project

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A large sign still stands at the empty lot where the North Village Mall once stood.
(South Bend Tribune Photo/ROBERT FRANKLIN)
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SOUTH BEND — An Indianapolis development company plans to construct a senior housing complex on a portion of the former North Village Mall property at Indiana 933 and Darden Road.

In connection to the project, Diversified Real Estate, which owns the property, has filed a petition for tax abatement. It is seeking a three-year abatement on real property in connection to a portion of the land.

Pending approval of the abatement, the company plans to sell the land to Equal Development of Indianapolis, which would, in turn, invest about \$12.5 million to construct a senior housing complex on it.

The project would be financed, in part, by state tax credits, which would be made available through the adoption of a proposed "State Highway 933 Corridor Plan" currently before the County Council.

Bill Hollingsworth, president of Equal Development, could not be reached Friday for comment on the project.

According to information included in the petition, however, the four-story housing complex would sit on about 2.55 acres of land at the southwest corner of the site and include 74 units.

Those units would meet a demand for affordable senior housing in the area, the petition states, and also act as a catalyst for future development.

A preliminary site plan attached to the petition shows a proposed two-story office building to the north of the complex, along Darden Road, and a proposed retail building to the east, along Indiana 933.

Drive-up windows are shown on the north and south sides of the retail building, and a stand-alone ATM appears farther north of the structure, across an entrance drive.

Mike Dobson, president of Diversified Real Estate, said a number of potential tenants have expressed interest in the those buildings, "but the only thing definite right now ... is the senior housing complex."

He noted that the current site plan is only conceptual and could change. The area designated for the ATM, for example, could become more retail space.

"It's not definitive," he said. "We're really just showing what can be accomplished."

The proposed housing complex is one of five senior housing projects currently under development in the county. Developers are reportedly reacting to an anticipated increase in demand connected to the aging Baby Boomer population.

"In discussions with those in the medical field, the statistic that has stuck out is that, in 10 years, one in four people in the county will be older than 65," Dobson said. "So there is going to be a need for this type of development."

Asked about the lack of supermarket options in the area of Darden and 933, he noted that Transpo operates in the area, providing service to Meijer and Wal-Mart on Portage Road.

The County Council will vote on both the petition for abatement and corridor plan at its monthly meeting on Tuesday at the County-City Building.

Assuming both pass, Dobson said, work could begin on the project as soon as next spring.

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