



Developers propose massive urban center near Fort Meade

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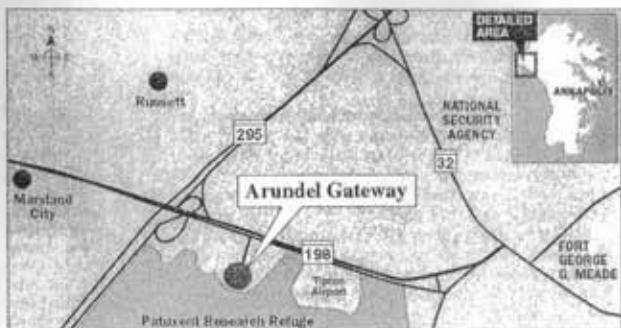
Two county developers this week unveiled plans to build a massive new urban center at the western edge of the county, mixing as many as 1,600 homes with shops, restaurants, and offices.

Ribera Development of Annapolis and Parkland Properties of Millersville cite the need for more housing to cope with thousands of new jobs coming to Fort George G. Meade as part of the base realignment process.

But county officials and area residents are expressing doubts both about changing the zoning of the land and the impact on roadways and water supplies.

In an interview with *The Capital* on Wednesday, Ribera President John Stamato said the \$500 million Arundel Gateway project would create a swath of condos, town homes and duplexes near the Patuxent Research Refuge. Ten percent of the housing will be priced within reach of police officers, teachers, firefighters and nurses.

The companies envision about 15



Capital graphic.

acres of the 300-acre site would be dedicated to retail, including a grocery store, such as Harris Teeter or a Balducci's, along with a variety of casual and upscale shops and restaurants, as well as offices for government contractors. Construction wouldn't begin until 2008, with the first homes ready by 2010 at the earliest.

"This is an opportunity to do some-

thing great with this property," said John Stamato, president of Ribera Development LLC.

"You've got 13,000 that are just (Base Realignment and Closure) jobs coming. You can imagine the number of people who are going to need housing."

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GATEWAY

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The partnership has not submitted plans to the county for the development near the intersection of Routes 198 and 295 and abutting the Patuxent Research Refuge, but began conversations with County Executive Janet S. Owens' administration six months ago. County Councilman Bill Burlison has agreed to submit legislation next month zoning the area from industrial to mixed use.

Planning and Zoning Officer Joe Rutter said the county's concerns involve the dwindling supply of land zoned for industrial use.

"There is very little W-1 industrial land," he said. "That is the county executive's concern ... There has been no evaluation of water, sewer, road capacity, schools. There's a lot of unknowns right now."

Area residents questioned the impact of the proposal.

"It's definitely going to affect traffic," said Tim Reyburn, president of the Russett Community Association. "It's definitely going to affect storage. It's definitely going to affect all of that. We already got a water shortage out there."

Ray Smallwood, president of the Maryland City Civic Association, he has "grave misgivings," especially about the impact on his community's water supply. Maryland City is already under water restrictions through October.

"This summer, it's been absolutely ridiculous," he said. "They don't have enough water now. We're wondering where we're going to get our next glass of water."

Mixed use spreads

The project — more than three times the size of the Waugh Chapel center in Gambrills — is the latest in a series of massive mixed-use projects proposed the county.

The 71-acre Village at Waugh Chapel on Route 3 in Gambrills was the first mixed-use development in the county. Developer are now planning an expansion called Waugh Chapel Village South that will include of 550,000 square feet of retail, 228 condos, and a Wegman's grocery store, among other amenities.

Odenton Town Center is a 1,622-acre site that will consist of 3,500 homes across from Fort Meade base, a community center and retail amenities.

Near Annapolis, Annapolis Towne Centre at Parole is a massive \$400 development, just outside the city, will include 685 housing units, along with 608,000 square feet of retail space, a Target and a Whole Foods.

The developers said Arundel Gateway would provide an opportunity to build homes close to Fort Meade, preventing workers from having to drive through Severna Park, Crofton, and Pasadena, clogging traffic.

"This literally puts the housing at the doorstep of the jobs," Mr. Stamato said.

Mr. Stamato said the firm already had "preliminary discussions" about the project with Maryland City and Russett residents, who expressed a need for upscale amenities.

Sam's Club, Target and Wal-Mart already provide shopping opportunities, area residents have few nice places to eat.

"What they're looking for is a nicer grocery store and to have

nice restaurants," Mr. Stamato said. "All the big box is already there. What they're missing is the Starbucks, the Talbots — the upscale-style store."

Mr. Stamato added that the development would provide Fort Meade employees with housing where they wouldn't have to deal with security checkpoints, as they would if they lived on base.

Mr. Burlison, D-Odenton, has agreed to submit rezoning legislation to the County Council on Sept. 5.

"For decades, it has been the plan and program to develop needed facilities in west county," said Mr. Burlison, who will step down after the November elections. "The reason for it seems logical and reasonable."

The two firms also plan to form an advisory committee comprised of officials from Maryland City and Russett communities and Fort Meade to discuss the layout and design of the project.

The companies would build a pump station hooking up to the Maryland City sewer facility, and possibly extend public sewer to a trailer park located on the property.

Mr. Stamato said the company plans to meet with officials from the Patuxent Research Refuge wildlife center.

In terms of traffic concerns, the county is looking into the possibility of widening two-lane Route 198 to a four- or six-lane lane divided highway all the way to the base, he said.

County concerns

Ribera Development met with county officials last spring to discuss the project. Mr. Stamato said they expressed opposition because there is a shortage of industrial zoned land in Anne-

Arundel.

Mr. Stamato's company went back and studied the undeveloped land, and found it wasn't conducive for office or industrial buildings because the property's terrain has between 10 to 15 foot slopes. Also, trucks are denied access from Route 198 to Route 295, forcing the vehicles to meander through routes 198 and 32 to get to the major roads.

"We have proved that this land is not suitable for" industrial use, Mr. Stamato said.

He said members of his community have asked for upscale restaurants, but that a development with up to 1,600 homes is a "little excessive."

Other local leaders also have said they believe this development has its pitfalls, but will draw attention to the area's issues.

State Sen. John A. Giannetti Jr., D-Laurel, said while there may be some infrastructure issues, the population boom this project will create will turn heads, which is a good thing.

"Route 198 is overtaxed right now, but I imagine that this is the type of thing that could make a strong argument for dualizing 198," and help build an elementary school, another police substation and post office, he said.

Until improvements are set in stone, Mr. Giannetti said he will have a community organization that monitors traffic on Route 198 follow the development and impact on the road.

"We know the growth is coming," Mr. Giannetti said. "We can't stop it, we just have to prepare for it," he said.

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