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Mensch Capital Partners submit updated Westwood Conceptual Master Plan

Mensch Capital Partners, owners of the former Westwood Country Club on Sheridan Drive in Amherst, has submitted an Amended Rezoning Application to the Town of Amherst that includes an updated Conceptual Master Plan for the mixed-use redevelopment project.

The Amended Rezoning Application reflects numerous project modifications that have been made in response to comments received during the public hearing held by the Planning Board on Nov. 17, as well as input from town departments, committees and the public.

“We listened to our neighbors, town residents, and our town officials, and then modified the Conceptual Master Plan to incorporate as many of these ideas and suggestions as possible while still providing for an economically viable development,” said Andrew J. Shaevel, Mensch managing partner.

“The main objective was to substantially increase the publicly accessible permanent open space and further integrate the pedestrian friendly mixed use components to be included in the proposed neighborhood. The updated plan reserves 47 percent of the 170-acre site for permanent open space, while creating a new park that is almost 40 acres, featuring a new lake and a network of pedestrian trails,” Shaevel said.

Modifications to the Conceptual Master Plan for the mixed use neighborhood include:

- Increase of permanent open space and trail networks, from 38 percent of project site to 47 percent of project site.
- Redesign of the neighborhood center to provide a more pedestrian friendly and neighborhood scaled project; within the center of the neighborhood center, a focal “Town Green,” inspired by Chautauqua Institution’s Bester Plaza, consisting of two acres of new greenspace within the center of mixed use buildings has been added. The updated plan provides a new office/community facility that links the New Town Green to the lake - which has increased in size from 5 acres to 6.5 acres - with an outdoor amphitheater to provide town residents with additional gathering spaces.
- Preservation of most of the existing wooded areas including the area suggested for preservation by the Town’s Conservation Advisory Council

- New east-west connection from North Forest Road to Frankhauser Road. Based on input received regarding potential traffic impacts from various stakeholders including the Amherst Traffic Safety Board, a roundabout has been proposed on North Forest Road near the existing driveway to the site, eliminating the sharp curve on North Forest Road and a one way “entrance only” roadway has been added connecting Frankhauser Road to the neighborhood center.
- New fire substation for Snyder Fire Department - Mensch has been advised that a small substation would enable the Snyder Fire Department to continue its track record of excellent response times in the Sheridan Drive/North Forest Road neighborhood, which can be challenging for fire trucks responding from the Main Street station traveling down Harlem Road, which is heavily traveled during peak travel periods.
- Sanitary sewer capacity - while existing sanitary sewer infrastructure can accommodate the projected sanitary sewer flows from the mixed-use redevelopment project during typical conditions, there are downstream capacity issues during wet weather conditions attributable to inflow and infiltration. A detailed downstream sanitary sewer analysis conducted by Wendel Companies determined that there will be sufficient capacity for the project with the installation of a new dedicated forcemain along Maple Road that would connect to the existing lines along Amherst Manor Drive.

Mensch engaged the services of Wendel Companies for master planning. Dean Gowen, a well-known and respected landscape architect and site planner with the firm developed the new design which is much more sensitive to the existing landscape assets of the site, including several large stands of trees and all existing water features. The design was also modified to address specific concerns regarding sanitary sewer flows, storm water interaction with Ellicott Creek and traffic, including safety concerns.

“We believe redevelopment of the Westwood site as a mixed-use neighborhood is the only way to ensure the existing contamination on the property is remediated, while creating meaningful investments that will generate significant tax revenues for the Town of Amherst and the Williamsville School District that will benefit all town residents,” Shaevel said.

“We listened and responded with an updated plan that reflects a concerted effort to incorporate input from a broad range of stakeholders. We hope that the town and its residents, including our neighbors, will work with us to implement this significantly modified new plan with numerous benefits for all Town residents, including the enhancement of the tax base, a new town park, the remediation of a contaminated brownfield, numerous new housing options in a pedestrian friendly neighborhood setting, and much more.”

The nearly \$250 million project has several components, including single family homes, patio homes, townhouses, senior living, park space, apartments and the Westwood Neighborhood Center, which consists of residential living over neighborhood retail and restaurants, a hotel, professional office space and new public gathering spaces.

The updated plan can be viewed on the Related Documents page of the Westwood Amherst website: <http://www.westwoodamherst.com/overview/related-documents/>