

Plan revealed for race track

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Richard Hein, left, and Frank Cantatore of Progress Partners Ltd. display their new master...



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POWNA — Renovation work at the former Green Mountain Race Track is expected to begin this spring with a new focus on job creation through industrial and research business tenants, the property owners said Thursday.

A new master plan for the idle facility on Route 7 relies on light industrial and commercial use of the property at the beginning, with housing expected to follow. "We've had several inquires on the industrial and commercial use of the land. The main focus will be job creation," said Frank Cantatore of Progress Partners Ltd., the ownership group. "It's a slight shift in dynamic."

According to Cantatore, several companies have inquired about use of the property, so instead of bringing the people into housing and then having business follow, the group now plans to bring jobs to the site and hope the people follow.

"We have been continuing discussion with prospective clients. As soon as the snow melts, we're going to clean up the site," said Cantatore.

The master plan, which was finalized this week, is broken into four phases with housing sections and four large corporate parks, which will be tailored to certain businesses. Homes will be oriented along the Hoosic River, near the north entrance to the land and along a pond in the center.

"You'll notice a lot of green space and a river walk," said Richard Hein of Progress Partners. "Frank has taken the lead on this and taken it to a very high level of work."

The owners met the Select Board Thursday night to discuss the master plan.

Cantatore said that multiple businesses have agreed in principal to locate at the 147-acre property. Each phase of the project will take approximately five years before moving onto the next, Cantatore said. The group will begin work with the old grandstand in the spring and repair the entry points, he said.

"While we're not making public notice, we're doing our work," he said. "There is still a lot to be done."

Hein and Cantatore said they've been visiting the track once a week in the last year, meeting with prospective clients and having engineering studies done. On Thursday, Hein and Cantatore held a series of meetings with clients but did not reveal who the businesses are.

With a binder full of reports, Cantatore said that environmental studies for the entire park have been completed, setting the base for construction.

The group has also picked out planners to make their vision come alive. Urban Development Associates of Pittsburgh is waiting to work with the town and state, companies and Progress Partners to take the next step.

Hein said that the planners will be working to integrate the plan with the ideas of those groups as part of a team effort to develop the land, which will include receiving growth center designation from the state. The Select Board has sent out a request for proposals for a consultant to help develop the plans of the designation after receiving a growth center planning grant.

"This is just the beginning," said Hein.

A growth center designation will allow for the developers to borrow tax money from the state to assist in the development and repay it later.

Hein added that the group has not had to solicit businesses; the prospective clients came to them. He also apologized for the "eye-sore" of the rubble from the old track barns, which were knocked down during the summer but still have to be cleaned up.

The race track opened in 1963, holding thoroughbred and harness racing. During the 1970s it switched to greyhound races and closed in 1991. The track was purchased by John C. Tietgens, of Clarksburg, Mass., at auction in 1993 for \$250,000.

In 2004, Progress Partners purchased the property for \$1 million, and last year Cantatore, a White Plains, N.Y., developer joined the project.