

The Capital

321-unit city apartment plan detailed

By JEFF HORSEMAN Staff Writer

Months of work by a Washington firm have resulted in plans for a mammoth apartment complex in Annapolis that would drop 321 units at a congested intersection in the city's busiest commercial district.

Union Realty Partners will share details of Alta at Union Square, which would replace the old J.F. Johnson Lumber Co. warehouse at Chinquapin Round Road and West Street, tomorrow night at the Annapolis Planning Commission meeting.

Union Realty President Stephen Muller said the 7:30 p.m. work session at City Hall will give city planners a chance to comment on his plan, unveiled last fall as West Street Village, before it is submitted for consideration.

The company has an agreement to buy the 6.5-acre site from the lumber company, which operated there for 76 years before moving to Edgewater this year.

Mr. Muller could not put a price tag on the project, which still needs some engineering work. He described the market for Alta as a mix of singles, young families and empty-nesters.

Alta represents a major departure in planning for outer West Street, which a city study showed represents nearly 50 percent of the land zoned for commercial use in Annapolis.

Sensing a need for residential development and spurred by Union Realty's plan, the City Council in December amended the area's zoning to allow developments like Alta. City officials hope the project brings \$250,000 to \$300,000 a year in tax revenue.

Plans call for 321 apartments and 15,000 square feet of what Mr. Muller described as "amenity-oriented retail." That could include coffee shops or other businesses catering to residents.

Parking will be provided by a garage. Plans call for the three-building complex to be four stories tall with heights below 65 feet.

Other features include a clubhouse/community center, a pool, a small library and a place for people to exercise. But Mr. Muller cautioned plans are still preliminary - even the name could change.

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One question sure to face developers is how their project will affect the congested intersection.

County Councilman Barbara D. Samorajczyk, D-Annapolis Roads, hopes city planners keep in mind county studies which detail the area's horrendous traffic.

"We have a regional issue here that we all need to be addressing," she said.

But Mr. Muller said Alta will have a lesser impact than an office building or store.

Mr. Muller said he'll seek financing for Alta once the site plan is approved. He plans on developing the project with a partner.

Assuming no complications, Union hopes to break ground early next year. Construction could last 18 to 20 months.

The commission meeting is set for 7:30 p.m. at City Hall. While the public is invited to the work session, there will not be a chance to comment until a future public hearing.

Brew pubs

Another item on the commission agenda is a public hearing on a City Council resolution amending the Ward One Sector Study to allow microbreweries to obtain 2 a.m. liquor licenses.

No new 2 a.m. licenses have been issued as a result of the mid-1990s study.

While critics fear a proliferation of 2 a.m licenses could lead to more bar-related problems, the bill's sponsor, Alderman Michael W. Fox, R-Ward 7, has argued the bill would not result in a nightmare scenario.

According to Mr. Fox, brew pubs need the extra sales a 2 a.m. license can generate to offset the expenses of brewery equipment.