

The Capital

City approves 300-unit apartment complex

By JEFF HORSEMAN Staff Writer

The city Planning Commission has given its blessing to a 300-unit apartment complex that officials hope signals a shift for a commercial stretch of outer West Street.

Westbridge Village will occupy the former site of the J.F. Johnson Lumber Co. at West Street and Chinquapin Round Road. The commission unanimously signed off on the project, the only regulatory hurdle the project had to clear.

Aldерwoman Classie G. Hoyle, D-Ward 3, who represents outer West Street, said Westbridge Village will give an old area of the city "a shot in the arm."

"We're going to have something that looks good," Mrs. Hoyle said.

Union Realty Partners of Washington is developing Westbridge Village, which will sit near one of Annapolis' most congested intersections.

Union Realty President Stephen Muller said the project will alleviate traffic jams at the intersection of Chinquapin Round Road and West Street.

Mr. Muller said Union Realty has agreed to pay for a second left-turn lane from Chinquapin to West Street and a right-turn lane from West Street to Chinquapin.

The company will also fund improvements of traffic signals at West Street and Chinquapin so there's better coordination with signals at the adjacent West Street-Admiral Drive intersection.

A city Planning and Zoning report on Westbridge Village found that the development would generate fewer peak-hour trips than a shopping center or general office use.

The 6.54-acre site in Parole will house three brick four-story buildings with 18,621 square feet of ground-floor retail space. Each building will be less than 65 feet tall.

Mr. Muller hopes Westbridge Village will cater to what he said is an underserved rental housing market in the city.

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Annapolis has suffered from a chronic dearth of affordable housing. Westbridge Village may or may not lessen the crunch, as Mr. Muller said rents would be market-rate.

He didn't give specifics, but rent estimates for the project in the past have ranged from \$750 for a one-bedroom apartment to \$1,500 for a two-bedroom unit.

Westbridge Village is a mixed-use development, combining residential and commercial uses. The retail stores will serve the apartments and surrounding neighborhood, Mr. Muller said.

The project could generate \$250,000 to \$300,000 annually in property-tax revenue.

The boarded-up Johnson Lumber site has long been seen as a prime redevelopment opportunity. The company moved to Edgewater in February after 76 years.

Westbridge Village is the result of more than a year of meetings between city planners, community members and Union Realty.

It's the type of project the city wants to see more of on outer West Street, currently dominated by commercial uses such as auto showrooms. The area contains more than 50 percent of the land zoned for commercial use in Annapolis.

"We wanted to set the standard for things to come," Mr. Muller said. "We'll look like you're in Annapolis when you're there."

Union Realty is building Westbridge Village with Wood Partners of Washington. The company hopes to have building permits in hand by the first quarter of next year, with construction to begin in late spring or summer.