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## Master-planned Town of Whitehall one step closer to reality

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The planned community will be located south of the C&D Canal, north of the Middletown area.

A new master-planned town south of the Chesapeake & Delaware Canal could be breaking ground at the end of October.

Plans for the Town of Whitehall were brought before the New Castle County's Land Use Committee on Tuesday for a procedural meeting before going to the full county council next week for the final blessing.

Whitehall representatives said the community will be the state's first town where many residents will be able to live, work, and play right within the boundaries of their community.

The town's master plan calls for the creation of seven neighborhoods totaling 3,783 housing units on 912 acres of what currently is mostly farm land. It will also boast of open green spaces, cafes, restaurants, office and commercial space, and even a charter school.

According to Brian DiSabatino, Whitehall's co-founder and president of the Wilmington-based EDiS Company, the process of planning and approvals has been 15 years in the making.

"This is a capstone event for the founders of Whitehall," DiSabatino said. "It's been a long journey."

At the Oct. 7 meeting, Larry Tarabicos, the lawyer for the project, addressed members of the committee.

"This is a monumental moment for New Castle County," he said. "I believe that this is a great economic development move for the state."

New Castle County Department of Land Use General Manager Eileen Fogarty spoke highly of the project and maintained that it is a great model for what the county intends to do for future projects.

"This is very exciting. The project has all the desirable elements of a development," Fogarty said. "It really reflects a commitment to smart growth."

According to Tarabicos, Whitehall will be an improvement over other planned communities across the nation. Such communities like Seaside in Florida, have received a lot of media attention for their utopian-like qualities which prefers pedestrian friendly amenities over cars and sprawl.

"We're finally doing it, but we're way behind the curve," Tarabicos said.

The \$1 billion master-planned town will start off by building 501 housing units on 149 acres in Village I, which according to project partner Richard Julian Jr. of Eastern State Development Company, will be completed before the end of next year. He briefly mentioned the public concerns regarding the extra traffic that will be generated from the influx of new residents.

"There are a lot of roads to put down there," Julian said. "But we have a long time before it's close to capacity."

According to Tarabico, fees from home sales will go to a fund that will be created for transportation improvement projects. The developers are also hopeful that DelDOT will come through with road construction plans in the vicinity of Whitehall, including the expansion of Route 301.

The town will also come with its own school, Mapletown Charter, a kindergarten-through-5th-grade institution which will be under the administration of the Appoquinimink School District.

The new community will be under the jurisdiction of New Castle County and will be served by county police, sewers, parks, and libraries, according county director of communications Antonio Prado.



PHOTO/ DOLORES M. BERNAL

A sign announcing the future location of the town of Whitehall which will be built in the vicinity of Lorewood Grove Road, south of the Chesapeake & Delaware Canal.