

Mixed-use development underway in Pike Creek



Xerxes Wilson, The News Journal

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Project seeks to include residential, retail and other uses on one site



(Photo: SUCHAT PEDERSON/THE NEWS JOURNAL)

Demolition has been started to make way for a new mixed-use development at New Linden Hill and Limestone roads in Pike Creek. It's the kind of project that may become more common as a way to combine retail, housing and restaurants.

The development, Linden Hill Station, is planned on seven acres on the south corner occupied by Citibank offices.

Plans call for the site to be anchored by two, three-story buildings arranged in an L-shape and connected by a covered walkway.

One will front New Linden Hill Road and feature 17,000 square feet of shops and restaurants. Second and third stories will contain 30 apartments.

"It is going to be high-end, primarily one or two bedroom units," said Larry Tarabicos, attorney for developer Todd Bariglio.

The other primary building will front Limestone Road and contain another 12,000 square feet of retail on the ground floor. The top two floors will be home to 26,000 square feet of office space.

No tenants have been signed for development, which is scheduled to open at the end of the year, Tarabicos said.

The property also will be home to 32 three-story rental town homes ranging from 1,400 feet to 1,700 square feet.

The parcel, which has Pike Creek Shopping Center to the northwest and Goldey-Beacom College to the north, was home to the Citibank offices until 2012.

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The New Castle County Council gave final approval (<http://www3.nccde.org/project/details/default.aspx?ProjectKey=493032>) to the project in February. Tarabicos said pedestrian-friendly features will be an emphasis of the project.

"It is a true mixed-use development. Frankly, you'd think we have more of these, but we don't," Tarabicos said.

Bariglio also developed a similar mixed-use project called Rittenhouse Station in the 200 block of South Main Street in Newark. The Capano family, who are prominent developers in New Castle County, also have ownership interest in Linden Hill Station, Tarabicos said.

George Haggerty, New Castle County's land use acting general manager, said there have not been many such mixed-use projects built in the county.

"For me it is always great when you can go and show it and people can see it," Haggerty said. "If it is something that people like it is something that people can see more often."

Tarabicos said municipalities like Newark have more mixed-use developments that are tightly knit with pedestrian-friendly sidewalks and other amenities, but the nature of New Castle County suburbia has seen fewer of them built in non-incorporated areas of the county.



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"Delawareans like their single-family home on their lot and they like to drive their car everywhere. That is the nature of suburban communities," Tarabicos said. "We are slow to the table, but the idea that people now don't want to drive and sit in traffic an hour each way and want to live close to where they work eat and shop is gaining momentum."

Tarabicos said, to a lesser extent, difficulties with the county's development code discourage such mixed-use developments. Linden Hill Station required 15 variances from county development rules to receive final approval.

Jeff Peters, president of the Pike Creek Valley Civic League, an umbrella group representing about 20 active subdivisions, said the development plan caused a little apprehension among neighbors.

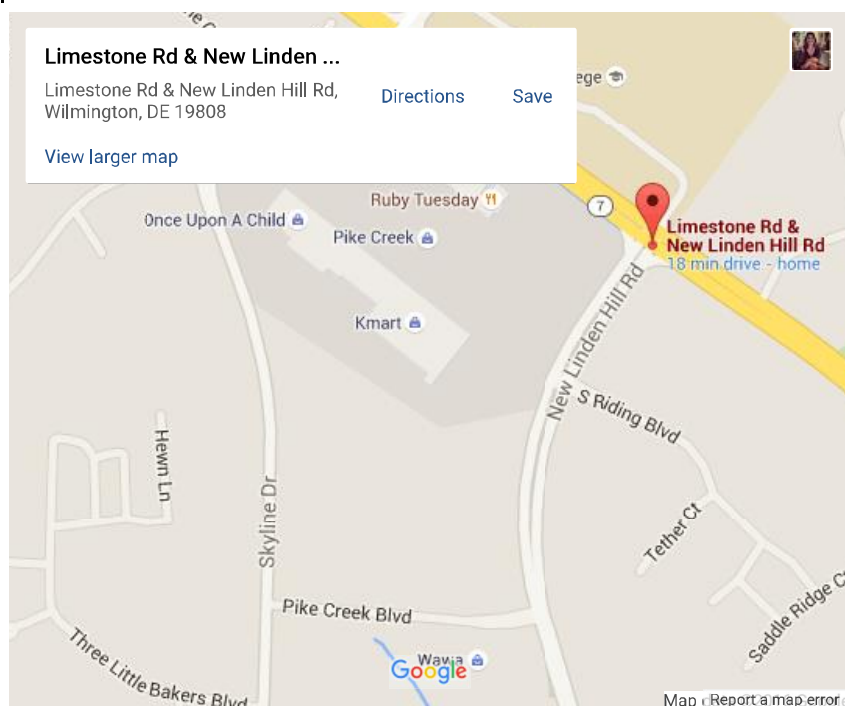
"It is the Newark model: apartments over retail. It seems like there is a lot of it coming in. We don't have much of that in Pike Creek. There wasn't any real negatives for us. It was better than a gas station, quicky-mart there," Peters said.



The site of the future Linden Hill Station in Pike Creek is shown on Feb. 15. The existing office building is being demolished to make way for the mixed-use project. (Photo: SUCHAT PEDERSON/THE NEWS JOURNAL)

Some neighbors also hope that the new development will spur some action at the nearby Pike Creek Bowling Center and Charcoal Pit, which has been abandoned for years.

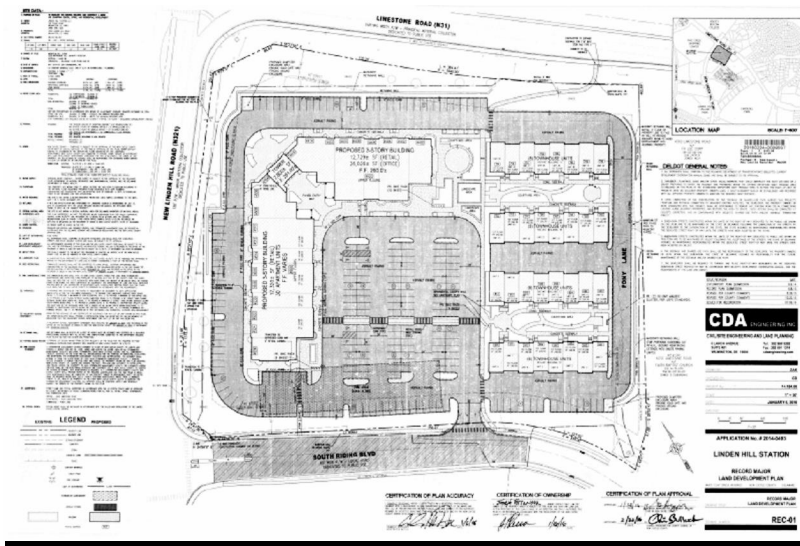
That property was eyed for an 80,000-square-foot development dedicated largely to retail in 2009 but has seen no movement. Peters said community members met with the owners, also the Capano family, last year. He said they discussed some redevelopment concepts, but have not been in contact since.



Peters said options for a developer are hindered by deed restrictions on the property that limit its potential use and the consumption of alcohol. Also, the deed has strict guidelines for lifting those restrictions that require wide support among the surrounding neighborhoods, he said.

"Unfortunately the deed restrictions are awkwardly worded and will be a challenge to change. But we are willing to work with them," Peters said.

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