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BRISTOL

Retail, Living Space Eyed In Bristol

Developer Outlines Plan For Old Mall

By DON STACOM

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BRISTOL —

A developer from Long Island who wants to coordinate the downtown revitalization told 130 residents Monday night that two groups of people will be the core market for the housing and retail complex he envisions along North Main Street.

Young professionals, along with middle-aged and older "empty-nesters," are the people who will want to live and shop in the sort of "urban suburbia" that Renaissance Downtowns LLC hopes to develop, according to Don Monti, chairman of the company.

Emphasizing that it's too early to discuss specifics, Monti told a public forum at Bristol Eastern High School that best overall concept for redeveloping the vacant Bristol Centre Mall is clear.

"We know this will be residential, retail, we'd like to see a hotel and some commercial (uses)," Monti said. "We want to get some more restaurants here, some cultural spaces, some public spaces, so people will think of Bristol as a destination."

The company is making a pitch to be named "preferred developer" of the 17-acre site, and has won the recommendation of the Bristol Downtown Development Corp. If the city council endorses the choice this month, Renaissance will go into negotiations with the city and the BDDC to determine exactly what rights and responsibilities Renaissance would have. In some communities, a "preferred developer" is given tax incentives to either directly redevelop a property or assemble investors and builders to redevelop it.

Renaissance has said it wants to create about 750 apartments or condos — probably in mid-rise towers — on the property.

"I'm very excited about the idea of housing," former Mayor William Stortz told Monti Monday night. "The biggest concern is the possibility of low-income or subsidized housing."

Monti assured Stortz that he doesn't plan subsidized housing as part of the project. Instead, mixed-income housing targeted to working people and retirees is the plan.

"People want some of the amenities of a big city — transit, a vibrant center," said Brandon Palanker, Renaissance's marketing manager. He said they also want entertainment venues, ethnic restaurants and low crime.

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