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DAILY HAMPSHIRE
GAZETTE

Veridian Village gears up Housing complex at college on tap for fall

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AMHERST - Construction could start this fall on 120 housing units for people over 50 who are willing to pay \$400,000 to \$650,000 to be part of an academic community.

Veridian Village, the long-planned complex across the street from Hampshire College, had its first public hearing this week.

The development is unusual because of the proposed connections between its residents and the Five Colleges, especially Hampshire. Residents can audit classes, use the college's library and athletic facilities and participate in social, academic and cultural events. They may also act as guest lecturers, mentors or tutors.

Veridian Village aims "to create a lifelong learning community for adults who, having reached a crossroads in their professional and personal lives, wish to return to the social and intellectual vibrancy of a college campus," according to a document on file at Town Hall.

Town Manager Laurence Shaffer has hailed Veridian Village as a model of low-impact economic development. He estimated that it could bring in \$750,000 a year in new tax revenue without adding many children to the public schools.

Hampshire, which will continue to own the land while leasing it to a condominium association, also sees the development as a generator of revenue. There is no requirement that residents have any academic connection to the college.

The cost of the units will range from just under \$400,000 for about 1,100 square feet of space to \$650,000 for about 2,000 square feet, said Josh Cohen of Beacon Communities, which is building the development.

The first units will open 12 to 14 months after construction starts, said Larry Archey, a Hampshire official. The phased development will be built at a rate of 40 units a year.

It is designed for the over-50 set but has no age restrictions, he said. It will have a 5,000-square-foot community building, gardens and hiking trails on the 50-acre site, which is a half mile north of the mixed-use village center planned near Atkins Farms Country Market.

It will also be near the National Yiddish Book Center and the Eric Carle Museum of Picture Book Art.



COURTESY OF Beacon Communities
An artist's rendering of Veridian Village, to be located on the Hampshire College campus.

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Veridian Village will adhere to the "silver," or intermediate, standard for green buildings set by the National Association of Homebuilders. It will have bamboo flooring, energy-efficient windows, rain gardens and vegetated areas to manage water runoff.

The development will disrupt 1,000 square feet of wetlands, but the developers plan to replace them elsewhere on the site, environmental consultant Ann Marton told the Conservation Commission Wednesday. The access road will cross an intermittent stream.

A habitat for wood turtles, including a nesting area, lies to the east of the development, she said. Plans call for a fence to keep turtles from venturing into the development.

Two members of the public spoke at Wednesday's hearing.

Connie Lentz, of Mountain View Circle, said the planners did an excellent job of communicating with neighbors, but she questioned whether the planned fence would be high enough to deter turtles. Jane Chalmers, of Potwine Lane, said she hoped that runoff from the development will not add to flooding problems in the area.

The commission plans to continue its hearing June 27. Town Engineer Jason Skeels will review the stormwater plan, and the commission will ask for a third-party evaluation as well.

The Planning Board has scheduled a hearing for July 18, but it's largely a courtesy because the project does not need the board's approval, said Planning Director Jonathan Tucker.

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