

# New Plan for Riverhead Development



Newsday Photo / Daniel Goodrich

Developers John McInerney, left, and Bruce Barnett are proposing building 100 houses on farmland in Riverhead.

By Jamie Herzlich

STAFF WRITER

Robert Hartmann finds it hard to figure out exactly when his family started farming because it was more than a century ago.

"My father was born on a farm in Flushing in 1901," said Hartmann, 68, whose family has owned farmland in Riverhead for almost 40 years. "We're basically potato farmers."

But as farming has ebbed on Long Island and as Hartmann's family has grown older, it made easier the decision to sell part of its 300-plus acres abutting two golf courses just north of County Road 58 and south of Sound Avenue.

Hartmann said the family didn't want just any development built on the site, but one that would preserve much of the open space. And last week, Hartmann and developers from the DeMatteis Organization in Uniondale and Sunset Developers in Garden City presented the Riverhead Town Board with a plan — scaled back from an earlier proposal — they say will do just that.

The new plan calls for 100 homes on the east side of Cherry Creek Golf Links and 93 homes on the east side of Long Island National Golf Club. Seventy percent of the land would remain farmland and 30 percent would be developed. The earlier plan had 280 homes.

"These would be single-family, gated communities, much like what is found at Myrtle Beach and Hilton Head," said John McInerney, vice president of DeMatteis, referring to popular resort areas in South Carolina.

"We tried to come up with a better scheme," said Bruce Barnett, president of Sunset.

The town is under a six-month moratorium on housing developments. It ends in June, but the family and developers are seeking an exemption from the town board that would let them move forward.

"We have to look at the plan and see that it conforms to the 70/30 equation, which was an exemption built into the moratorium," said Riverhead Supervisor Robert Kozakiewicz, who thought the town could adopt a resolution to consider the exemption as soon as the next town board meeting, on April 16.

Planners have recommended in the town's master plan, which is being updated, that within the proposed agricultural zone residential subdivisions be clustered, resulting in 70 percent of the buildable land used for agriculture and the rest for homes, planning director Rick Hanley said.

Barnet and McInerney said the homes probably would cost at least \$400,000. A homeowners association would be formed to be responsible for amenities, such as a clubhouse, pool and tennis courts. The homes would not be affiliated with the abutting courses.

The Long Island Farm Bureau reacted positively to the plan while the North Fork Environmental Council was more reserved.

"If we're able to preserve a good amount of the farmland and bring some high end of residential development along a golf course . . . it makes a great deal of sense," Joseph Gergela, of the farm bureau, said.

Eve Kaplan of the environmental council said the town should grant as few exemptions as possible during the moratorium. "The point of the moratorium is to wait until a comprehensive plan is in place," she said.