



Hamilton OKs factory redevelopment plan

By Erin Duffy

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HAMILTON — Council has unanimously voted to approve a redevelopment plan for the ambitious renovation of a former shirt factory.

In a 4-0 vote Tuesday, the redevelopment plan for the Mill One project, proposed by Trenton nonprofit Isles Inc. and Ewing-based Modern Recycled Spaces, was given the go-ahead by council.

"I believe this is a spectacular project," said Councilwoman Kelly Yaede.

The site, located at the former location of the Atlantic Products mill on North Johnston Avenue, is part of the township redevelopment zone established in 2004.

The second step of a process that begins with terming a region an "area in need of development," the redevelopment plan and its creation of a zoning overlay district should simplify the zoning process for the project, which is expected to combine residential, commercial, art, education and warehouse spaces into one 240,000-square foot "sustainable urban village."

The development also anchors the proposed arts and cultural district in the southernmost portion of the township, and Isles founder and president Marty Johnson said Isles expects to apply for a gold or platinum Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) certification for their environmentally friendly portion of the site.

Isles will utilize 80,000-square feet for their headquarters, training and classroom spaces. Another jointly owned 50,000 square feet will be developed into roughly 45 residential lofts that include dual live/work space for artists. Modern Recycled Spaces will incorporate the remaining 110,000 square feet into warehouse and office space.

The project has been called a "re-energizer" for the Bromley section of Hamilton, and would contribute more than \$12 million in annual spending to local economies.

"This is what I call a no-brainer," said resident Gary Gray. "This will be a shining jewel for this area of Hamilton Township."

Former zoning board member and council candidate Fred Dumont applauded the plan, saying his father had worked for 30 years in the Atlantic Products Mill.

A union leader, Dumont asked Isles and Modern Recycled Spaces to consider using union and local workers for the construction and renovation phases of the project.

"I'd love to see Isles have a component in their package here that prefers local workers," he said.

Council members said they were happy to see the developers planned to conduct a fiscal impact study and that they would be contributing in some way to the township's coffers.

As a nonprofit, Isles Inc. is tax-exempt, but portions of the building would not be, and the nonprofit has been in talks with the township to establish a payment-in-lieu-of-taxes (PILOT) program that would compensate the township.

With the redevelopment plan now approved, the next step would be presenting site plans in front of the township planning board. Johnson has said he hopes Isles could move its headquarters into the building in 18 months or so.

"This is really exciting for Hamilton Township," said acting Council President Dave Kenny. "We look forward to seeing this open."