

Saratoga Polo's \$60M project moving ahead  
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GREENFIELD -- The Saratoga Polo Association's proposed \$60 million development is poised to clear the second of three major hurdles.

The proposed development, called Saratoga Polo Retreat, features a banquet hall, conference center and upscale residences at the historic Whitney Field.

On Tuesday, following months of review, the town Planning Board gave a positive recommendation to the Town Board, saying it should approve zoning changes needed for the project to become reality.

That was the first of three significant steps.

The Town Board set a public hearing for Nov. 10, when it will entertain discussion about whether to approve zoning changes in the form of a planned unit development. A PUD can only be approved by the Town Board, and allows developers creativity in designing projects, with clustering of buildings and more green space.

The Town Board could approve a PUD at its Nov. 10 meeting, the second major step.

From there, the 42-acre project must go back to the Planning Board for site plan review and final approval.

'It's keeping along the timeline and schedule we had hoped for and anticipated,' polo association President Jack Daley said.

Groundbreaking is expected next spring with several buildings slated for construction in 2006. The entire project will take three years to complete, Daley said.

The Planning Board could begin site plan review in December but more likely in January after the holidays.

'That's where the hard engineering takes place,' said board Chairman Gary Dake. 'There's still a lot of hard work to do.'

But Daley said, 'We've done quite a lot of work already, more than most potential developers would do at this stage.'

The project's engineer is Connecticut-based BL Companies. Elan Planning & Design of Saratoga Springs is handling the landscape architectural work.

'There are a lot of partners that will be included in this project,' Daley said.

The association has not yet decided on a construction firm.

Buildings will have Adirondack and Kentucky horse-stable architecture, and shingle-style design.

The retreat's focal point is a 72,000-square-foot structure called The Lodge. The first floor will have meeting space, a spa and exercise facilities along with indoor and outdoor pools. A second floor will have two-bedroom residential units, with potential for third-floor dwellings as well.

The basement will have a 32,000-square-foot service area. Several other buildings are called for:

- Clubhouse: The existing 4,000-square-foot clubhouse will be modernized to include a pub-style restaurant, bar and retail shop for polo-related merchandise.
- Banquet center: A first-floor banquet hall is expected to hold 400 people. A second-floor restaurant and lounge will overlook the polo field. There will also be exterior skyboxes for viewing polo matches. This building will total 19,000 square feet.
- Residential buildings: Plans call for five such buildings, with each one having six four-bedroom and six two-bedroom units. Four-bedroom dwellings will have 3,200 square feet, and two-bedroom units will have 1,800 square feet.

Units are called 'fractional residences,' a new concept for Saratoga Springs. Residents own deeded shares of a unit for extended periods, ranging from one month to a year. They're different from timeshares, which are typically rented, usually for a week at a time.

Fractional communities are most common at golf or ski resorts. Saratoga Polo Retreat is the first one centered on a polo club.

- Maintenance: A two-story, 4,500-square-foot building with restrooms, polo team rooms, changing room and showers, meeting space and equipment storage.

The Town Board's Nov. 10 public hearing is set for 7:25 p.m. at Town Hall.

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