

The Long Island Advance December 23, 2004

Breaking New Ground in Brookhaven
Non-subsidized affordable housing complex targets middle-income earners

By Sharon Hartmann

Touted as the first non-government-subsidized affordable housing project to be built in Suffolk County, a 36-unit townhouse complex to be located on 12.75 acres of land in West Yaphank is targeting young, upwardly mobile families as its niche clientele.

Officials broke ground on December 15 for the complex, planned and conceived by Jerrold and Jeremy Gorelick, the father-and-son team who own and operate Emanon Equities, a Holtsville-based real estate development firm.

The complex, called Chelmsford Weald, will offer 12 one-, two-, and three-bedroom units for \$268,900, \$273,900 and \$283,450, respectively, and meets the definition of affordable housing: families earning 80 percent of the average median income in the area, estimated at \$66,960, can afford to purchase and maintain their homes.

“We’re looking to target young couples or couples with kids who are just starting out and in 20 years will be successful. Two new teachers are the perfect example of the kind of couple who would need a place like this,” said Jeremy Gorelick, president of the company.

The project, which has already attracted well over 100 applicants, is unique because all of the 36 units have been dedicated to a workforce clientele that is not receiving Section 8 subsidies.

The use of subsidies to build housing and fund buyers is necessary and fills a need for one segment of the population. However, Gorelick and others feel that another segment of the home-buying population (Those that make too much money to qualify for subsidies but still cannot afford a home) has largely been ignored.

The Long Island Housing Partnership (LIHP), which has long championed and built subsidized affordable housing throughout the region, was able to fund and sell townhouses in the Bay Shore development of South Wind Village for \$83,375 in 2002.

By comparison, Chelmsford Weald is clearly more expensive but given its target clientele and the market, experts consider it to be affordable.

According to quotes provided by the residential lending department of Astoria Federal Savings Bank, a potential buyer of a Chelmsford property with a 30-year fixed rate of 5 7/8 percent who made a 20 percent downpayment of \$56,690 would pay \$1,894.82 per month for the three-bedroom unit.

Real estate broker Parker Hough of Hough and Giudice Realty in Selden explained that most people in this niche realistically would put anywhere from 2 to 5 percent down. “In this way, their monthly payments would be higher. Still, it is affordable,” he said.

Hough further explained that housing like this is scarce. In mid October only 23 properties in the Longwood School District were available below prices listed for Chelmsford Weald. In the Patchogue-Medford District only 17 properties were available. And none were new.”

The complex’s units will offer a little less space (1,600 as compared to 1,700) and there will be no tennis courts or swimming pools, explained Gorelick, who noted that Country Point, a development being built a mile away, has these amenities and more.

“But then the homes become more expensive. Theirs start at \$350,000 but by the time you add the fireplace and the upgraded cabinets and the countertops, the price goes appreciably higher,” he said.

Still, homeowners at Chelmsford will have a playground, an outdoor recreation area, walking trails and a homeowners association.

In order to keep the complex affordable Gorelick explained that a covenant would run with the land to deter speculators from buying up units at affordable prices and reselling at higher prices.

Because of the number of applicants already lining up to buy the units, Gorelick said that the names of all potential buyers would be placed in a lottery to be held on January 31. “By February 1, we’ll be calling people and signing contracts,” said Gorelick. He also asserted that the property should be fully cleared by the beginning of January so that building can commence.

“The project is a homerun. We’d like to see builders and developers do projects like this to keep our youth here on Long Island and in our town,” said Brookhaven Councilman James Tullo (4th District).

Supervisor John Jay LaValle went even further. “We need hundreds of these projects within the town. With workforce housing we’re going to put our money where our mouth is and offer preferential housing, that is workforce housing units that will be sold only to Brookhaven Town residents. We’re working on a provision for it in our code right now,” he said.

Gorelick, who is committed to creating affordable housing and smart growth communities, is also pursuing three projects upstate in Sullivan County. The largest is a planned unit development that would incorporate 575 residential units and 45,000 square feet of commercial space into a stand-alone community that has been described as a traditional neighborhood district.▪

For more information about Chelmsford Weald, contact Jeremy Gorelick at 696-5658.