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Lottery To Be Held For Workforce Housing

By Barbara LaMonica

Town officials and developers broke ground recently on what will pave the way for workforce housing in West Yaphank. The Townhouses at Chelmsford Weald will yield a community development of 36 townhouse units on a nearly-13 acre site, zoned for multi-family dwellings.

According to developer Jeremy Gorelick, a lottery is being held for residences that will range in prices from \$268,900 for one-bedroom units; \$273,900 for two-bedroom units and \$283,450 for three-bedroom units. To ensure "fairness" to those interested in the townhouses, Gorelick said he is meeting with each individual or family who has expressed interest. As of press time, 175 people came forward to inquire about the condominiums. "This is not on a first-come, first-served basis and because I want to ensure fairness, I am showing packages and giving the names of several banks to every person who is interested, and all who prequalify will go into the lottery which closes January 31," Gorelick explained.

The concept of workforce housing has been embraced by town officials as "necessary for Long Island's survival," but something that is in short supply and high demand. Brookhaven's Fourth District Councilman James Tullo explained that the process gives young people, who don't qualify for affordable or low-income housing or have earned too much money but couldn't afford to buy the \$400,000 to \$600,000 houses being built across Brookhaven, to meet the criteria to help them buy a home in the area. According to Tullo, this housing targets that sector.

Gorelick said candidates likely to qualify for the workforce condominiums being built in West Yaphank are those earning 80% of the average median Suffolk County income of \$83,000. The developer said that means persons earning between \$66,000 to \$70,000 may qualify. Gorelick, whose company has been in real estate development on Long Island for the past 25 years, said the company has "always built for upper middle class families" and has in the last 10 years constructed over 500 single family homes, condominiums and housing projects.

In gaining an awareness of the "tremendous demand" for young families and senior citizens alike for housing that is within their means, Gorelick said that often "they earn too much money to qualify as Section 8 recipients, and not enough for a \$400,000 home" and that workforce housing provides those opportunities.

The creation of increased workforce housing is high on Brookhaven Town Supervisor John Jay LaValle's agenda of priorities in 2005. "We pay an investment through taxes, the vast majority of which is to provide our children with the best schools, tremendous universities and colleges and a good education, but after we spend a considerable amount

of money to education our children, many have nowhere to live, so they move away,” LaValle said. “There is a housing crisis for people in the middle class and what we have to do is create opportunities for young men and women to remain here to be productive members of our economic society or Long Island is not going to survive.”

To that end, Gorelick said his company has yet another workforce housing proposal on the table in Brookhaven – this one slated for the hamlet of Middle Island. Pending approval by the Town of Brookhaven’s Planning Board, Gorelick explained that a 70-unit apartment complex is also under consideration, also priced as workforce housing.

To inquire about the lottery for the West Yaphank townhouses, please call 696-5658.