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Former air base to get completed 'superhighway'

WEYMOUTH – Two excavators sit at the end of the Delahunt Parkway on the former South Weymouth Naval Air Station prepared to begin work on an extension that project supporters say is one of the final pieces needed for a massive redevelopment to finally kick into high gear.

Work is expected to begin this month on the half-mile extension of the parkway that will run from where it currently ends at Shea Memorial Drive to Trotter Road, which connects to Route 18 in Weymouth.

The state Department of Transportation has committed about \$6.5 million to the project. Proponents say that once it's finished the thousands of vehicles that travel across it each day will entice developers to put up new buildings and companies to move into them.

"The fact that we have a superhighway that takes you to Route 3 right in the middle of the site makes it more viable and increases demand significantly," said Kyle Corkum, managing partner of project master developer LStar Communities. "It allows us to begin planning major projects."

LStar changed the name of the base redevelopment from SouthField to Union Point on Thursday.

Construction of the first section of the parkway began in 2010 and it opened in 2013. The \$43 million to pay for the project came from a mix of state and federal money.

The new, smaller section will run through an area planned for the development's downtown section. It will include one lane in each direction, along with sidewalks, bike lanes and parking spaces. The bike lanes and parking spaces can be converted into additional traffic lanes in the future without having to widen the road.

Once completed, the parkway will run from Weymouth Street in Rockland near Route 3 to Route 18 in Weymouth. The property includes land in Weymouth, Rockland and Abington.

Corkum said the date of an official groundbreaking ceremony with local and state officials hasn't yet been set but that it should take place this month.

Plans for Union Point include 3,900 homes and apartments and up to 6 million square feet of commercial space.

Residential development has picked up but commercial construction has yet to materialize. Project supporters hope the new road will help change that.

"It links one end of the site to the other and some of the development is based around that unfinished portion that will now be finished," Weymouth Mayor Robert Hedlund said. "The timing is good because we've seen a lot of interest from commercial tenants."

The last major hurdle for LStar is finding a permanent source of water and sewer capacity to serve the influx of new commercial buildings, apartments and homes. Company officials say they're finalizing a plan that includes hooking up to the Massachusetts Water Resources Authority water supply and Weymouth's sewers.

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A section of the Delahunt Parkway completed in 2013. Work on a half-mile extension to connect it to Route 18 in Weymouth is scheduled to start this month.