

Weymouth zoning changes allow new SouthField script



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WEYMOUTH

SouthField might be the place to go to watch the World Series on an outdoor widescreen TV in a restaurant district that is in the planning stages at the former Navy base, according to LStar Management Managing Partner Kyle Corkum.

Corkum said "SouthField Live" might have eight to 10 bars and restaurants that would attract visitors from around the region to enjoy a meal, watch a sporting event in a courtyard or listen to a concert.

"We have been contacted by two cinema groups that are interested in building two stories above the restaurants and bars," Corkum said. "There would be two upscale cinemas above them. It could be a fun entertainment district with a bowling alley that could be part of our downtown district."

Corkum said the restaurant district is among a wide range of amenities that could operate at SouthField under an amendment to the code of ordinances that Weymouth councilors approved on Nov. 16.

The zoning changes allow LStar to create a neighborhood sub district with an overlay district within a planned town center where a variety of shops, restaurants, bars, a hockey rink and a stadium that could seat upwards to 10,000 people would be located.

Corkum said his wife Sherry suggested having SouthField Live which would be patterned after Kansas City Live, an entertainment district in Missouri that has 25 restaurants, 14 nightclubs, 15 shops, six major hotels, and an apartment complex.

"It is a big city block and it has a ring of restaurants which opens to a courtyard that can hold several thousand people," Corkum said. "They can close access to the courtyard if they want to charge admission of an event. They can control who gets in. What they have done is create an unbelievable environment where bands can play on stage and they can show sports on a widescreen TV."

Corkum said Kansas City Live was a popular draw during the World Series between the Kansas City Royals and New York Mets last month.

"We would have a fine dining district on Main Street and a fun entertainment zone called SouthField Live which would be a draw unto itself," Corkum said. "That would be amazing."

Corkum said he has been approached by two major breweries that want to have casing rooms and bars to sell their beer.

"That was not part of the plan four weeks ago," Corkum said. "The reality of the zoning changes has made people get serious about this and that is a direct result of last Monday night."

Corkum said he is in discussions with several professional sports leagues that might be interested in playing in a planned 10,000 seat sports stadium.

"We've had numerous meetings but I can't talk about anything yet," Corkum said.

The zoning changes approved by the council also allows LStar to have a discovery district to accommodate a medical or bio-science firm.

"The medical office would be something we would own," Corkum said. "It would not be tax free and it would be a nice compliment to South Shore Hospital. These are viable options right this minute."

Corkum said LStar planners are also considering whether to lease buildings to colleges who could operate satellite campuses at SouthField.

"We have talked about having a facility with six to 10 schools within a satellite facility," Corkum said.

The zoning changes allow LStar to shift its commercial zone closer to the partially completed William Delahunt Parkway which could be extended to Trotter Road beginning this spring if all goes according to plan.

"The parkway construction could start as early spring and it could be in place by this summer," Corkum said.

MassDOT announced it would provide \$6.5 million to extend the parkway during a public hearing in October.

"Without the parkway extension we would be wasting time," Corkum said.

Corkum said he has been approached by three motion picture firms about filming a movie at SouthField since Columbia Pictures filmed portions of "Ghostbusters 3" on a tarmac.

"With Ghosbusters 3 we had as many as 300 people on the property," Corkum said. "There were a lot of local people that got hired. We had to do equipment rentals. They put a lot of money into the local economy."

Corkum said SouthField close proximity to downtown Boston makes it ideal for movie-making.

"The farther you go away, the costs for movie-making go up," Corkum said. "We are not only easy to work with. We have the runways to film scenes and the affordability of the union rules."

Corkum said the business market is great and LStar needs to move forward while the economy shows promises.

"It has to happen next spring," Corkum said. "We will be planning this winter and get ready for spring construction."

Weymouth Chamber of Commerce President David Robinson said the zoning changes and the redevelopment of SouthField would be transformative for Weymouth and the greater South Shore.

"Route 18 and Rockland center will be dramatically improved as a result of the SouthField development," Robinson said. "I'm hearing it will only get bigger as corporate headquarters

move there. The benefits of corporations moving to SouthField is exciting. We are very supportive of the zoning changes and we applaud the town council for making the changes."

District 6 Councilor Michael Smart said the economic possibilities SouthField could generate are exciting.

"We supported the zoning change to give LStar the tool it needs," Smart said. "We did not want to limit commercial development to 900,000 square-feet."

Smart said LStar will have to go through a state environmental review before it proceeds with any projects.

"We are aware as the project grows there will be traffic issues, but the council can weigh in during the MEPA (Massachusetts Environmental Protection Agency) review process," Smart said.