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METRO EDITOR: JOHN SCHWING
330-6248 ■ jschwing@ctpost.com

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Condos, retail project proposed for former Miller VW property

By **ANDREW BROPHY**
abrophy@ctpost.com

FAIRFIELD — A proposal to demolish and rebuild the Miller Volkswagen dealership on Kings Highway is no longer in gear.

Instead, a Stamford-based developer wants to buy the 2.4 acres at 355 Kings Highway, knock down the vacant dealership and build 42 condominiums and 26,400 square feet of retail space in its place.

Seth Weinstein, of Hannah Real Estate Investors LLC, said Fairfield has great potential for development, noting that the Fairfield Metro Center, a development that will include the town's third train station and 1 million square feet of commercial space, will be built less than a mile away.

"I think that Fairfield is a wonderful town with the new Metro Center. I think Fairfield will experience the same kind of development and growth we saw in Stamford," Weinstein said.

Weinstein's company is now building 450 units of housing in Stamford in five separate projects, he said.

Pricing on the Fairfield condos, which would be on the upper floors of the proposed building, isn't set, but they would include a mix of two- and three-bedroom units.

Retail tenants that would occupy the proposed building's ground floor haven't been identified.

First Selectman Kenneth Flatto expressed support for the proposed development Monday, saying it had an "absolutely spectacular" design and would generate

less traffic than another car dealership.

Flatto said that for the Kings Highway area, "which has long been neglected, this concept of a quality, upscale, mixed-use proposal that's not too large — that's not going to be large compared to what might have been proposed — is a step in the right direction."

But Joseph Gall, a District 5 member of the Representative Town Meeting, said Miller's property by Arising Street is prone to flooding during heavy rains and he didn't think a new development on the site is feasible.

"I don't know what could be put in there, to be honest with you. I'd feel sorry for anyone who bought the property," Gall said. "When the weather's bad, you go swimming."

Gall said he expects to oppose the pro-

posed development when it goes before the town's land-use boards.

Weinstein said he is aware of flooding problems in the Kings Highway area and that he's hired environmental consultants and is working with town conservation officials. Weinstein said he's also built a lot of waterfront developments in his 30-year career.

The amount of Miller's property covered by impervious surfaces would drop from 72 percent to 65 percent after the retail/residential development is built. Two retention basins would collect and cleanse storm water, according to the development application.

Assistant Town Planner James Wendt said the Miller family, which owns several car dealerships in Fairfield, won approval to demolish and rebuild its Volkswagen

dealership from town land-use agencies, but never went forward with the project.

On Friday, Weinstein and his partner, Paxton B. Kinol, filed a conceptual development application in the town's Conservation Department, which is the first step toward filing an inland wetlands permit application.

The proposed development will require approvals from the town's Inland Wetlands Agency, Town Plan and Zoning Commission and possibly the Zoning Board of Appeals.

The overall size and cost of Weinstein and Kinol's project were not available Monday.

In addition to condos and retail space, a 3,000-square-foot lobby and two-level parking garage also are proposed, according to the plans.