

SCHODACK PLANS FOR LAND PARCEL

By Deborah Gaylord Special to the Times Union

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SCHODACK -- Leaders from the town, Rensselaer County and the Schodack schools are working on a plan to transform a 544-acre area of underused land off I-90 between exits 10 and 12 into a hub of economic activity that would create jobs and increase the tax base.

The town is in the preliminary stages of reviewing current zoning rules and the topography of the area so information is readily available for potential business investors.

Two extensive economic development plans funded by grants from the state, the county and the federal government are also under way. The first calls for revitalization of the town center area on the Route 9 corridor off exits 10 and 11, with plans for a mix of commercial, residential, cultural and recreational uses. The second would focus on commercial development along the southern portion of Route 9 near Exit 12. The latter has the potential to help the school district, which has suffered from a decrease in state aid combined with a loss of the commercial tax base.

Town officials and the school district recognize they need to work in tandem.

"Many people in the town recognize the need for economic development to balance out the cost of local government," said Paul Puccio, a school board member and chairman of the town Planning Board's committee on economic development.

Town Supervisor Dennis Dowds says, "If we do not attract a commercial tax base, we will not increase revenues enough to help residents. As long as I am here, I want everybody on the same page. I don't want to make the same mistakes as in the past. We want to be business-friendly not business-difficult."

Schodack Central Schools Superintendent [Robert Horan](#) agrees that long-term planning could help the district minimize tax increases without a loss of programs. Horan is optimistic about the future, and has organized walk-through events for local realtors to promote the school.

"Companies moving in from other states or from abroad will see the school as beneficial to the quality of life for their employees," said Horan.

In the past, zoning issues and lack of infrastructure have been seen as discouraging new businesses from relocating in Schodack. According to Puccio, one of the biggest obstacles is the lack of a comprehensive water and sewer system. Right now, any future development off exits 10 and 11 would require permission from East Greenbush to use its water and sewer systems. In Schodack, the water system is a hodgepodge of small systems that supply some of the town but not the area around Route 9. The only sewer system for Exit 12 is located in the village of Castleton.

The long-term goal would be to create one water and sewer system for Schodack that would supply the exit 10-12 corridor of Route 9.

"There is a lot to do but what I like is that if everything falls into place we will have a rational, well planned community that is welcoming to business," said Puccio.

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