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**DEVELOPER:** Wants to  
hear what residents want

## Bell Labs site's future is topic of Holmdel forum

**HOLMDEL** — The Lakewood commercial and residential developer that signed a deal with Alcatel-Lucent last month to buy its former Lucent Technologies' Bell Labs site wants to meet with residents in a town hall-style meeting to hear ideas.

"We are looking forward to the Sept. 24 public forum as an opportunity to engage members of the Holmdel community in a dialogue about the options that exist with regard to Bell Labs," said Ralph Zucker, president of Somerset Development, in an e-mailed statement.

"Our focus during the public forum will be on the Bell Labs building itself. It is clear to us, from following the public processes that took place earlier this year and through our own knowledge of market conditions, that the direct course of action is to support a mixed-use plan, not only to preserve Bell Labs, but also to ensure the financial

Zucker said the next step after the public forum would be to identify which mix of uses will best serve the community and result in the preservation of the building.

"We maintain that we are still in the listening stage of this process, and are approaching the upcoming public forum, not as a venue to present plans for the site, but as a critical step in the process to solidify our plans," he said.

"We hope to see as many members of the community present for the public meeting as possible, as we are well aware of this property's incredible significance, and are interested in

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what the residents of Holmdel have to say about it."

Alcatel-Lucent officials announced in August that Somerset Development had signed a deal with the company to purchase the 473-acre historic research site.

Zucker said the contract has

not been sealed yet, and the terms and conditions of the agreement cannot be disclosed.

"I'm glad that Somerset is taking this first step to meet our residents," said Mayor Serena DiMaso. "I hope that Somerset will listen and address the concerns and suggestions of our residents. As mayor, I will do what is best for Holmdel and the future of our town."

Two years ago, Preferred Real Estate Investments, a private developer of Conshohocken, Pa., agreed to buy the property. Preferred officials wanted to tear down the 2-million-square foot building and turn the property into a mix of commercial and age-restricted residential development.

Michael O'Neill, Preferred's CEO, told the residents that he doesn't think purely commercial development would work for the site and that the building was not reusable.

Several residents opposed the housing component of that plan, concerned it would increase traffic, raise taxes and negatively affect the township's quality of life.

In June 2007, by a 3-2 vote, the Township Committee passed a resolution opposing housing on the former Lucent Technologies' Bell Labs site.

In November of the same year, a purchase agreement between Lucent and Preferred was terminated. Officials from the development company did not say why.

The Bell Labs building, designed by Eero Saarinen, was erected in 1962 and was expanded in 1966 and 1982.

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