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## \$500M Westmont Station's Phase One Passes Muster



Westmont Station

WOOD-RIDGE, NJ-Local officials of this Bergen County community have granted first-phase approvals and construction will start "soon" for Wesmont Station, a transit village-style mixed use on 70 acres. Somerset Development had picked up site plan approval in mid-2006 for the project, which carries an estimated price tag of \$500 million.

"We are gratified to have received this show of support from Wood-Ridge and we're looking forward to starting the construction process," says Ralph Zucker, president of the Lakewood, NJ-based Somerset, which is the project's designated master developer. The 70-acre site is part of a former Curtiss-Wright industrial complex.

The project's initial phase will consist of more than 400 apartments in four buildings, being built by Alexandria, VA-based AvalonBay Communities Inc., which signed on as a partner in Wesmont Station in May. Of those apartments, 61 will be classified as "affordable housing" to satisfy the state's Council on Affordable Housing requirements. Also part of phase one are 36 townhouses, 11 live/work units, 27 single-family homes and 25,000 sf of mixed commercial space. Completion of the phase is slated for 2010.

"There is already great demand for rental housing in New Jersey," says Ron Ladell, vice president of AvalonBay's New Jersey division in Woodbridge. "But here, that demand is enhanced by the lifestyle experience that comes with living near retail, recreational and community facilities, as well as commuter rail."

Wesmont Station will rise around a new NJ Transit train station that will connect with the

Bergen Line commuter rail to Manhattan. Construction of the station is scheduled to start in 2009 and be completed in 2011. Additional phases will bump the residential total up to 788 units and the retail/commercial space to more than 130,000 sf. The site plan, which was developed by Graviano Planning Group of Howell, NJ, also calls for a public square, community center, new middle school, athletic fields and walking and biking paths. The timeline for the subsequent phases has not been released.

Wesmont Station also will be "green." It's been selected as a pilot project in the US Green Building Council's LEED neighborhood development initiative.

Curtiss-Wright had used the site and its two million sf of industrial space for many years to make and test jet engines. More recently, it housed a multi-tenant warehouse facility. Wesmont Station's footprint will be within a part of the larger site that had been used as a parking lot for the complex.