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## Senior citizen housing proposed in Linden

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Linden residents and city councilors heard details on Monday for a proposed \$45 million to \$50 million development that would provide senior citizens with a variety of housing options. Professional offices, including doctors and lawyers, could also be part of proposal, Caretel Inns of Linden.

The elder housing and care development, modeled after a bed and breakfast hotel instead of a hospital, would be located on 11 acres of land Linden Community Schools sold to the Terra Land Group of Novi. Each portion of the development would have a separate name, dining room and living units, said Horace D'Angelo Jr., president of Caretel, Royal Oak.

The site is located off South Bridge Street across from the Linden United Methodist Church. Terra Land Group and Caretel Inns of America are working together on developing the land.

It would eventually house 250 to 300 people, and create 250 to 300 jobs. Housing a senior citizen, referred to as a guest by Caretel, there would cost \$2,000 to \$4,000 per month, depending upon the accommodations. The development would be divided into nursing home and Alzheimer's/memory care, assisted living apartment rentals, and condominiums. Condominium prices would be comparable with others in the area.

D'Angelo Jr. said he would like footings to be installed in November or December, with above ground construction beginning in the spring. Work must start very quickly in order for the state to give permission for a skilled nursing facility to be built. Caretel Inns of Linden would have three licenses, for elder care, a home for the aged and a nursing home.

The entire development, if Linden city officials approve it, will take three to four years to complete, he said. The first phase, the skilled nursing facility, will take 12 months to build.

Councilor Ray Culbert, also chairman of the Planning Commission, said he doesn't believe Linden officials should be placed under extreme time constraints. There are a lot of residents, employees and parking spaces involved in the proposal, and officials need to see how plans fit with the site.

"Give us enough time to work with you," Culbert said.

The developers said they want to bring a quality facility to Linden that will allow senior citizens to remain in the community.



"We're not just saying we'll do it," D'Angelo Jr. said. "We've done it in the past."

Caretel Inns of Linden would be similar to Caretel Inns of Brighton, at 1014 E. Grand River Ave. In addition, there is Caretel Inns of St. Joseph, which won a daVinci award in 2003, one of 12 award winners in Michigan.

The award, from the National Multiple Sclerosis Society and The Engineering Society of Detroit, is for "its breakthrough building design, which allows superior handicapped accessibility and individual empowerment." Other Michigan winners included the University of Michigan, Ford Field and the Southfield Public Library. Nationwide, winners included Universal Studios and Disney Studios.

Geof Greeneisen, vice present of Terra Land Group, said the plan is a concept at this point, and his firm and Caretel brought it to the council and community for feedback.

A resident spoke in opposition, saying people wanted a promise the land would be used for the whole community after the former Linden Community Schools administration building was torn down and the school district sold the property. Residents want a playground for children and a place people can congregate, she said.

Councilor Edward Ciesielski said he likes the concept for the development, although it might not be the perception people first thought of for the former school property. He believes the proposal would benefit the community and the city, and add jobs.

"I like what I see so far," he said.

Councilor Diane Eldred said if the proposed development were available earlier, she would have placed her mother there instead of a facility outside of Linden. She visited her mother, who has since passed away, regularly and agrees Caretel would draw visitors to Linden.

Eldred said she would like to see parks and ballfields in the city, but the community needs to think about where to locate them. She doesn't believe it is the problem of developers. And she can think of "a hundred worse things" that could move into the 11 acres off South Bridge Street.

Mayor David Lossing, whose father was in an assisted living facility and passed away this year, said he is intrigued by the Caretel Inns concept. He asked the developers to submit their plans as soon as they are able so the planning commission and city planning consultant can examine them.

"We were encouraged to take it to the next step," D'Angelo Jr. said.

City Manager Dale Martin said it would be a Planned Unit Development, or PUD. City Attorney Charles McKone would draft a formal development agreement, to be agreed upon by the city and the developers. A PUD allows the city and developers to agree to compromises in zoning.

James Eppink of J. Eppink Partners Inc., Clarkston, is a planner and another member of the development team. He said many mature members of the community are being forced to move out due to lack of accommodations for them.

Debra Durham, director of development for Caretel Inns of America, said the Linden proposal would also draw visitors to the downtown. Each Caretel resident has three frequent visitors who stop by one to five times a week, along with less frequent guests.

"These people will want to walk downtown," Durham said.

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