

Borough gets two bids for special needs housing

by Frank J. McMahon

The Borough of Franklin Lakes has received two bids from housing developers to build, maintain, and manage a special needs affordable housing project on the vacant property at the corner of Colonial and McCoy roads. The borough has contracted to purchase that land from Temple Emanuel of North Jersey.

The bids were submitted by the BCUW/Madeline Partnership, comprised of The Madeline Corporation and the Bergen County United Way; and The Albert Group, LLC and the Housing Development Corporation of Bergen County.

The Bergen County United Way and the Madeline Corporation are both New Jersey-based non-profit organizations that formed a partnership in 2004 for the sole purpose of providing safe, affordable housing to serve families, seniors, and special needs individuals throughout the state.

The Albert Group is a family-owned and operated full-service real estate management and development company based in Bergen County that has over 40 years experience. The Housing Development Corporation of Bergen County is a non-profit housing development corporation that was incorporated in 1978.

According to Thomas M. Toronto, the president of the BCUW, the approach of the BCUW/Madeline Partnership to the development of the Colonial and McCoy Roads site is to use the contours of the land to create a distributed network of nine structures that present as a single family home development in a semi-rural setting. Their strategy is based on maintaining the character of the neighborhood, fulfilling the borough's desire to create housing opportunities for special needs individuals, including those who may currently live in Franklin Lakes, while adding returning veterans with special needs to the mix, and to be in harmony with the New Jersey Department of Developmental Disabilities' new policy of avoiding concentrating people with disabilities in large living clusters.

The BCUW/Madeline Partnership plan treats the site as two separate developments with their own entrances and exits, and diverse housing styles all reflecting the characteristics of a neighborhood of single-family homes.

"We believe our development plan achieves a mix of home ownership, rental apartments, and rental group homes creating a variety of desirable housing for 40 individuals with special needs and different supportive service needs to live meaningful lives," Toronto stated.

The BCUW/Madeline Partnership conceptual site plan shows an entrance off Colonial Road leading to a circle with two main parking lots and six buildings, with two being for-sale homes for veterans and four buildings for special needs rentals. There are two entrances from McCoy Road, with one accessing a group home serving four residents with a parking lot, and the other a cul-de-sac leading to a parking area with two buildings for special needs homeownership.

The Alpert Group/Housing Development Corporation of Bergen County plan would create 40 units of affordable,



permanent and supportive rental housing for low-income persons with disabilities. According to the developer, the project would be designed and operated as permanent, supportive housing for independent living with every apartment a private unit with one bedroom and a complete kitchen and bath.

Each resident would have a lease for his or her apartment and there would be no time limit for residency. All 40 apartments would be targeted for low-income persons with disabilities. Thirty-six of the 40 apartments in the project
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would be reserved for persons with incomes that do not exceed 50 percent of area median income, which is a maximum of \$31,833 for a one person household. Four apartments would be further income restricted to households with incomes that do not exceed 30 percent of the area median income, which is a maximum of \$19,100 for a one person household.

The conceptual plan shows an entrance drive from Colonial Road leading to two buildings on the north side of the driveway with a parking lot between them. Both buildings would have patios. Both buildings would contain 14 units.

The driveway would continue to a T intersection with an existing driveway that leads to McCoy Road and a driveway that would loop to the north to a parking lot and a building that would contain 12 units and have a patio.

Last summer, the borough signed a \$2 million contract to purchase all of the temple property, except about 49,000 square feet, which the temple will retain as a single-family residential lot for use as a future parsonage.

The borough's purchase of the property was motivated by the state's recent effort to seize any money that had been in the municipality's affordable housing trust fund for a period of four years or more, or since 2008, unless that money has been committed for the purposes of constructing affordable housing. The borough plans to address its state-imposed affordable housing obligation by building affordable housing for people with special needs on the temple site using the money in the trust fund that was subject to seizure by the state.

According to Borough Administrator Gregory Hart, the borough will use \$2 million of the total of \$2,622,820 in its affordable housing trust fund to purchase the temple property. Mayor Frank Bivona cautioned that the borough's contract to purchase the property from the temple is subject to the approval of the borough's spending plan by the Council on Affordable Housing.

The temple congregation had purchased the property about 15 years ago and planned to build a temple there. That plan was denied by the zoning board, but that denial was reversed in Superior Court. A revised plan was approved by the zoning board, but the temple was never built.