

New hotels could boost Fort Lee's tax revenue

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FORT LEE -- Business travelers and tourists could have two new places to stay just steps from the George Washington Bridge as part of redevelopment along Route 4.

The Planning Board is scheduled to hear a proposal on the project Monday.

If the project is approved, borough coffers could see hundreds of thousands of dollars in additional tax revenue.

The proposal, by developers Sapthagiri LLC, includes demolishing the Courtesy Motel and an abandoned service station and replacing them with a six-story, 101-room Comfort Suites hotel and a seven-story, 160-room Sheraton hotel.



▲ A rendering of the proposed Comfort Suites, left, and Sheraton hotels on Route 4.

Included will be a five-level parking garage with 369 spaces. The hotels will have restaurants, conference and meeting facilities, and fitness centers, but no banquet facilities, plans show.

The project also includes subdividing the rear of the property into five single-family residential lots facing Jones Road.

The proposed lots for the five single-family homes will be 75 feet deep and will extend to the base of a 60-foot cliff. That land is vacant.

The project does not seek any zoning variances, but it will need permission for the free-standing parking garage, instead of attaching it to one of the hotels, as is required by borough zoning ordinance. Monday's meeting will be the second on the proposal.

The Borough Council has had its eye on revitalizing the site for more than 18 months.

The Planning Board designated the 3.37-acre parcel an area in need of redevelopment in May 2006, and the Borough Council confirmed the designation several days later.

A redevelopment plan, prepared in June 2006 by Fort Lee's planning firm, states that revitalizing the property with mid- and high-rise hotels and other commercial development is in agreement with the 1988 master plan.

Hotels with a minimum of 100 guest rooms are a permitted use within the redevelopment zone.

A report by Sapthagiri's planner, Joseph Burgis, states that proposed redevelopment could bring the borough and school district a total of \$588,000 in tax revenue.

The current development on the parcel brings in \$132,000 in tax revenue, the report stated.

The council named Sapthagiri as redeveloper in April and signed a redevelopment agreement in June.

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