

MAKING A PLAY IN RONKONKOMA

17,500-seat arena is one of 4 plans developers envision for 40-acre site

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Suffolk County officials are reviewing proposals from four development groups vying to build on a 40-acre site near Long Island MacArthur Airport in Ronkonkoma, including a plan for a professional sports-sized arena.

County officials last year launched an effort to seek a master developer for the property, which includes sprawling parking fields south of the Long Island Rail Road's Ronkonkoma station, as well as vacant land on the airport's northern border.

Ronkonkoma civic leaders have long sought development of the property, which is mostly owned by the county and Islip Town.

Among the proposals are a 17,500-seat arena, an e-commerce facility including a new north terminal at MacArthur Airport, and walkable downtowns with a mix of apartments, restaurants and offices, according to documents filed with the county. The winning bidder is required to replace 3,000 parking spaces that would be lost during construction.

The bidders include Plain-View-based Renaissance Downtowns, RXR Realty of Uniondale, Chicago global real estate developer Jones Lang LaSalle, and East Sea-tuket-based Tritac Real Estate. Tritac last year broke ground on the Ronkonkoma Hub housing and retail development on the north side of the LIRR tracks.

Suffolk County spokesman Jason Elan said officials were reviewing the proposals. He declined to comment further.

Bruce Edwards, president of the Ronkonkoma Civic Association, whose members viewed the proposals at a meeting last month, said each had appealing elements. He said residents



hope the project spurs job creation and a downtown or entertainment hub, which he said Ronkonkoma lacks.

The civic group has not taken a position on any of the proposals, Edwards said.

"You're always going to have some people say, 'I want nothing, I want it like it was 50 years ago,'" he said. "But the reality is, that's not the way it is today."

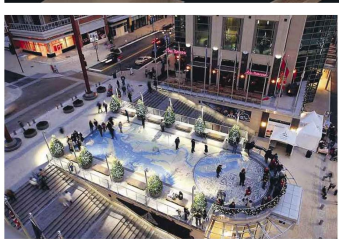
Islip spokeswoman Caroline Smith said Town Supervisor Angie Carpenter declined to assess the proposals but "looks forward to hearing the details in the future."

Here is a look at the four proposals:

Jones Lang LaSalle

Jones Lang LaSalle, which has offices in Manhattan and Melville, is pitching a privately financed \$1 billion mixed-use project featuring the arena, two community ice rinks, a recreation center and a sports medicine facility. Spectra, a subsidiary of Comcast Spectacor, which also owns the NHL's Philadelphia Flyers and the Wells Fargo Arena in Philadelphia, would manage the arena.

"We believe there's an opportunity here for sports and entertainment, because people who want to go a sporting event or show, they're going all the way to the Garden, Barclays Center, Nassau Coliseum," said John Cameron,



Rendering of a street scene for Tritac Real Estate's proposal.

managing partner of Woodbury-based Cameron Engineering, which also is involved in the proposal.

No professional sports teams or leagues have committed as a

potential anchor tenant, but Cameron said he did not court-bury them. "Once you're real, then teams want to talk to you," he said.

Also included in the proposal are 200,000 square feet of com-

mercial office space, 160,000 square feet of medical research space, and 90,000 square feet of retail and dining. Cameron said housing wasn't included in the proposal because "we didn't feel it was needed. We felt this proposal complements what's already being done on the other side by Tritac."

Edwards said residents want more entertainment options, although some are concerned about potential traffic. "That's the same concern with every project," he said. "The community is going to be concerned about traffic."

Renaissance Downtowns

Renaissance Downtowns, which is involved in major developments in Huntington Station and Hempstead Village, proposed an industrial facility that would make use of the airport and train station to distrib-

ute products such as food and household goods, the company said in documents submitted to the county. Details of the project, which could include housing, would be worked out in collaboration with local officials and community members, according to the documents.

Company officials could not be reached for comment.

Edwards described the Renaissance proposal as "an interesting concept, different than anything else."

RXR Realty

RXR is proposing 1,920 apartments, 110,000 square feet of offices, 175,000 square feet of shops, movie theaters and restaurants, and a hotel and convention center, documents filed with the county show. The project, including a town square, would create 11,000 construction jobs and

1,600 permanent jobs, according to the documents.

RXR has been involved in numerous projects on Long Island, such as the Ritz-Carlton Residences, a deluxe condominium complex in North Hills. Company officials could not be reached for comment.

Tritac Real Estate

Tritac also is proposing a mix of housing, retail and office space, including 1,200 homes, a 350-room hotel and convention center, a 1,200-seat performing arts center, 160,000 square feet of shops and 500,000 square feet of offices.

Tritac chief operating officer Rob Loscalzo said a pedestrian bridge would link the developments on the north and south sides of the train tracks and be used to

promote Long Island tourist sites. "They need to complement one another for the long-term sustainability of the project," he said of the two development sites.

Loscalzo said he wasn't sure whether his company had an advantage because of the Ronkonkoma Hub project. "We're hopeful that we have the advantage, but it's a wait-and-see," he said.

Edwards gave high marks to the RXR and Tritac projects, both of which would offer places where the community can gather for special events.

"A lot of our residents wanted more places to go," he said. "We don't have a neighborhood now. That would be a benefit."