

Watch Factory receives special permit for apartments

By Richard Conn/Daily News Staff

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WALTHAM - The City Council last night approved a special permit to allow for the construction of 96 apartments as part of the redevelopment of the Watch Factory complex on Crescent Street.

Boston-based developer Berkeley Investments Inc. plans to build the loft-style apartments as part of the second phase of the development, which will also include a cafe or deli along with a restaurant with riverfront dining. Construction is set to begin in August and be completed in early 2011.

"This is a good proposal," said Ward 9 Councilor Robert Logan. "It's a good adaptive reuse of this historic property."

The special permit was required because the property sits in the city's Riverfront Overlay District.

The council's Ordinances and Rules Committee required a number of conditions before it sent the special permit to the council with a favorable recommendation. Among the conditions required of the developer are several traffic improvements, including new traffic signals and the construction of a four-way stop at the Curtis Street intersection.

The factory buildings are the former site of the Waltham Watch Company which opened in 1854 and was a fixture in the city for about a century. Part of the redevelopment of the property will include a new exhibit detailing the Watch Company's history.

Ward 8 Councilor Stephen Rourke, whose ward includes the Watch Factory property, urged the council to approve the permit. He said the new development will have fewer total employees and daily hours of operation than when the buildings were used by the watch company.

However, Rourke said the redevelopment of the property will increase traffic and noise.

"The neighbors, the city, the property manager, and the new tenants will need to cooperate to minimize and mitigate those changes," Rourke said.

The first phase of the development, which is set to be completed this month, will feature 160,000 square feet of office space.

The third and final phase will another 77,000 square feet of offices.

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