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Mixed-use project eyed for Burlington site

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BURLINGTON — Nordblom Co., one of Burlington's largest commercial property owners, is ready to hop on the mixed-use bandwagon.

The firm has asked the town to consider rezoning Northwest Park — a 140-acre site with 42 one- and two-story buildings — to allow for residential, retail and cultural or civic uses.

The town has agreed to consider a zoning change and to work to identify possible uses for the property over the summer. Under the current industrial zoning, Nordblom can't add a bank, restaurant or

dry cleaner.

That is a major handicap for suburban office and industrial campuses these days, as tenants have begun to lean toward newer office parks where they can walk to nearby restaurants and where other amenities are on site. Just a couple of exits down Route 128 in Waltham, developers are building new mixed-use office parks with built-in amenities and refashioning older parks to incorporate coffee shops, gyms and day care centers.

"The environment top tenants are looking for tend to be more of a dynamic, mixed-use environment," said Todd Fremont-Smith, vice president of develop-

ment for Nordblom. "Frankly, for us to compete with Waltham, we need to build a better mousetrap."

Nordblom's Northwest Park campus, which is 60 percent office space and 40 percent industrial space, was built in the late 1950s and 1960s. Major tenants on the site include Acme Packet, Thoratec Corp., Unisys Corp. and iBasis Inc.

Recent project approved by town officials in Burlington have already created a mixed-use corridor on the other side of Route 128.

Patriot Partners LLC is developing a

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NORDBLOM: Developer works with Burlington on mixed-use project

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190,500-square-foot, 38-store "retail lifestyle center" called Wayside Commons on the site of a former Raytheon Co. plant. The site was rezoned from industrial to retail.

The open-air "village," scheduled to open this fall, will have a mixture of stores and restaurants. About a mile away on Route 128, Newton-based National Development is building a 331-unit apartment project known as Arborpoint at Seven Springs, and Northland Residential Corp. is developing a 94-unit condominium project called the Village at Seven Springs.

Robert Buckley, a real estate attorney with Reimer & Braunstein LLP, which is working with Nordblom, said Nordblom is trying to create a place where people can "live, work and play."

"It's not convenient," said Buckley. "The bottom line is, if you think about it, what we're proposing is nothing more than what worked 100 years ago."

Fremont-Smith said Nordblom is working with a task force and the company's architect, Elkus-Manfredi Architects Ltd., to try to "re-imagine" what the campus could be.

Nordblom could invest hundreds of millions in the redevelopment of Northwest Park, he said, but it is too early to put a price tag on the redevelopment



PHOTO COURTESY OF NORDBLOM CO.

Northwest Park, a 140-acre site in Burlington, may be developed into a mixed-use project by Nordblom Co.

since it hinges on what zoning uses the town approves.

"If we get it right and we create the

kind of environment we both want, it could be an amenity to the residents of Burlington," said Fremont-Smith.

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