

# Developer Touts Vision to ‘Build A Community’

By [Jenna Cho](#)

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**North Stonington —** The application that opened to a public hearing at Thursday’s Planning and Zoning Commission meeting was for a text amendment to create a New England Village Special Design District.

But Alan Pesch, of Milltown Commons LLC, spoke mainly on his vision for a mixed-use village and the positive impact he said it would have on the town.

Pesch, who is working to create a “Milltown Commons” village with brothers Robert and Richard “Skip” Hayward on 187 acres of land by the Route 2 rotary, came prepared with attorneys, a project planner and an architect to sell his vision: a self-sustained village that would include everything from a variety of residential dwellings to possible offices, retail shops, grocery store and hotels.

“The concept of mixed use probably is one of the most leading, emerging changes in zoning,” Pesch said.

Pesch said people now want to move past suburban lifestyles and feel a sense of community in the area they live in. This district, he said, would allow Milltown Commons to “build from scratch and build a community.”

Pesch first applied for the text amendment in December. That application was withdrawn and resubmitted in May. Robert Hayward, under the company DanRob LLC, had previously proposed mixed-use development in the same area.

The proposed district would be a floating zone that could be implemented within a one-mile radius of the Route 2 rotary.

Conceptual plans – which were not part of the text amendment application but were meant to illustrate what types of development could come with approval of such a district – were available for viewing at the public hearing.

The plans showed two village areas, each centered around a village green. There were apartments, single-family homes and multifamily units, a medical center, private roads, and a village-owned water and sewage system.

Pesch said Milltown Commons, estimated to be a \$150-million to \$175-million project that would be developed in phases, would not be a tax burden to the town because its water and sewage system and roads would be maintained privately.

The main entrance to the village would be on Route 2, while two exits on Route 184 would help alleviate traffic impact on the more popular Route 2, Pesch said.

“It’s a way of controlling traffic and still having development in context,” Pesch said.

Pesch said the only other mixed-use village district approved in the state was a recently adopted one in Storrs, hometown of the University of Connecticut. Pesch’s proposed district would include plenty of walking and biking trails as well as “green” space to lessen the need for motorized travel within the village.

Lewis Wise, an attorney representing the applicant, said the commission would first review the text amendment. If adopted, Pesch and his business associates would then submit a master plan, or a detailed overview of what they planned to develop within the zone. If that were approved, the applicant would then seek special permits for specific development.

Kevin Tubridy, the project's conceptual design and project planner, acknowledged that the idea of a mixed-use village in town was "a really chancy project."

"This is something that's not an easy project to do," he said.

But Tubridy said a mixed-use village would create a "downtown element" that would be naturally diverse because of the types of residences that would be available in the village.

"So people can grow here and grow with the neighborhood," Tubridy said. "They don't have to move on."

The public hearing ran late Thursday night and will be continued at next month's meeting.

*j.cho@theday.com*