

## Plan to save historic Ames shovel factory in Easton to be unveiled tonight

By **Vicki-Ann Downing**

ENTERPRISE STAFF WRITER

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EASTON — The town and a private developer are working to rescue the historic Ames shovel factory, which has been alternately threatened by demolition and development for two years.

Town Administrator David A. Colton said Beacon Communities Development, a Boston-based residential developer, has a purchase and sales agreement to buy the shovel factory property off Main Street from George and Robert Turner of Easton for a price not yet disclosed.



Beacon would build 119 apartments in the 19th Century shovel factory buildings — 63 fewer than the Turners planned — by making use of tax credits for historic preservation and affordable housing.

Colton said the project will require a substantial investment from the town's Community Preservation fund — possibly as much as \$7.5 million, though details are still being negotiated.

Selectman Chairman Colleen A. Corona said the town is investigating all possible grants and funding from affordable housing sources to reduce the town's contribution.

Twenty-four of the apartments would be affordable, rented at below-market prices, Colton said. There would be no commercial structures on the site.

The project "would all be consistent with Department of the Interior standards for historic preservation," said Colton. "(Beacon is) not adding any stories, not cutting the Long Shop in half, not doing all the things that were so offensive to the town that the Turners proposed."

Colton estimated that \$3.5 million from the CPA fund would be needed from the fund to purchase a historic preservation restriction that would preserve the shovel factory from further development forever.

Another approximately \$4 million would be loaned by the Community Preservation fund to Beacon to defray the upfront costs of historic development and affordable housing, Colton said.

That loan would be repaid to the town through the sale of the historic and affordable housing tax credits, probably by a nonprofit corporation the town would establish. The loan would also be repaid when the apartments are eventually sold as condominiums, Colton said.

The proposed agreement calls for the market-rate apartments to be sold as condominiums after five years and the affordable units after 15 years.

The town would also pay to build a wastewater treatment plant for the site, at a cost estimated at \$1.5 million. That amount would be repaid by users of the sewer system, who would include not only residents of the shovel factory complex but also businesses in North Easton center.

Colton said the Turners have a draft permit from the state Department of Environmental Protection that would allow construction of a wastewater treatment plant to handle up to 36,000 gallons per day. The Beacon development would use only 21,500 gallons, leaving 14,500 available for businesses or homes in North Easton Village, Colton said.

Corona said the town's water enterprise fund would be converted to a water and sewer enterprise fund, an action that would require town meeting approval.

Other aspects of the proposal that would be presented to voters at the spring annual town meeting include:

Appropriating money from the Community Preservation fund to pay for the historic preservation restriction.

Loaning money to Beacon from the Community Preservation fund for the development.

Approving a bond for construction of the wastewater treatment plant.

Colton said the project would also require a freeze on real estate taxes for the shovel shop property for at least five years.

The Beacon proposal mirrors the project envisioned for the site last year by the Friends of the Ames Shovel Works, Colton said.

Beacon would deed the so-called "tenement house" on Main Street to the Easton Historical Society. It would create a 1.5-acre park along Oliver Street and establish a walking path linking the Ames Free Library and Oakes Ames Memorial Hall to Mechanics Street, the Children's Museum of Easton and the Easton Historical Society.

Colton is to unveil the plan at tonight's selectmen's meeting.

Residents interested in hearing more details can attend the Easton Historical Commission meeting on Nov. 10, the selectmen's meeting on Nov. 16 or the Planning Board meeting on Nov. 23, Colton said.

*Vicki-Ann Downing can be reached at [vdowning@enterpriseneews.com](mailto:vdowning@enterpriseneews.com).*

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