

## Planned community in Daylesford raises eyebrows

by Noelle Via

A potential Tredyffrin development crafted by the architect who designed the Comcast Center is gaining the residents' attention even before official plans meet the township's eyes.

Robert A.M. Stern, dean of architecture at Yale University and designer of Comcast's headquarters as well as the high-end condos of 10 Rittenhouse Square, was inspired by transit-oriented developments (TOD) that were first built in England during the late 1800s for the potential development across from the R5 Daylesford train station at 1456 Lancaster Ave. in Paoli, according to Roger Friedman, principal of ARCWheeler. ARCWheeler handled the 10 Rittenhouse Square development and will be handling the Daylesford project.

Three residents approached the Tredyffrin Board of Supervisors during a meeting July 17 to express disapproval of the plan for development that has been informally presented by ARCWheeler to residents within 700 feet, the board of supervisors and Tredyffrin/Easttown School District.

ARCWheeler proposes to transform 12 properties on 13 acres into a preliminary 162 townhouses and condos, with some small commercial properties along Lancaster Avenue where Jimmy Duffy's Catering, which ARCWheeler has acquired, currently resides. However, after meeting with residents on two occasions, Friedman said the development reduced the number of units from 175 and might reduce it again below 162.

The development plans include the Duffy property on Lancaster and other back-lying residential properties that span west to Longecourse Lane, south to Pennsylvania Avenue and east near (but not including) Glenn Avenue.

The project is still in its preliminary stages, perhaps with months or years yet to come before the township approves or disapproves plans. There is no doubt that a long period of positive and negative comments during board meetings will accompany this project, as it will greatly impact one of the least-utilized train stops on the R5.

Friedman said a small group of residents will meet one more time sometime this month before ARCWheeler brings plans to the township.

### Early Opposition

Mrs. Cartularo, a resident of a property on Pennsylvania Avenue that ARCWheeler must acquire if it wants to complete its plans, said at the board meeting that she found comments that Supervisor Paul Drucker made "disturbing," when he suggested that the potential development might help with the township's sidewalk project.

"That project you're referring to involves the demolition of my home and our neighborhood. And to sit back and watch you smile when you said that, I just find disturbing.

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And there are many people in my neighborhood who oppose that development that is coming before not only the planning and zoning, but this committee as well. And we are not in favor of it, and we are not smiling," said Cartularo.

"I suggest that you come to the planning commission as well and tell them that," said Drucker in response. "What I was saying or trying to say was that a development is often an opportunity to gain funds to coordinate things such as sidewalks."

"It's going to be a very lengthy process. He [ARCWheeler] has to accumulate properties. He has to design a plan. I guess he's pretty far along with that. He has to make an application to the township, which he has not done yet. So, we're a little premature to even react I guess, a little bit," said Supervisor Chairman Judy DiFilippo, who encouraged those to speak out about their concerns about the development.

Ria Revenaugh, a resident of Longecourse Lane whose house would be next to the development, expressed concern that the development would negatively impact the suburban area.

"It's gonna really impact our neighbors, our neighborhood, and it's gonna be like an urban, dense... area packed into the middle of our charming, widespread suburban area, where we have an anchor on each house," she said.

## **TOD at Daylesford**

ARCWheeler had a second resident meeting Aug. 1 since the comments made at the board of supervisors meeting. The development company wanted to meet with all parties involved before the process began in hopes that it could change plans and eventually reach a compromise the community would stand behind, said Friedman during an interview Aug. 4 at company's offices for the not-yet-built 10 Rittenhouse Square. TODs like the Daylesford project are a popular trend in real estate right now because of their appeal to aging baby-boomers with proximity to transit, low-maintenance living and the option to permanently garage the family car.

Stern used England's Ebenezer Howard's "Town-Country" theory that blends the convenience of the town with the serenity of the country. The units in Stern's drawings look more like single-detached homes from certain angles rather than townhouses. The small commercial center features a circled roadway with buildings facing the courtyard. Friedman said the development has made it a point to preserve as many of the trees as possible.

Currently, about 170 people use the Daylesford train station on the R5 each day, Friedman said. About 150 people pack the parking lot every day. Friedman said ARCWheeler hopes to keep more cars off the road because the development lies within one-quarter mile of the station. Friedman said TOD studies prove that about 30 percent of people stop driving their cars to work in favor of public transit.

Friedman said greatest concerns raised by residents during the two informal meetings were traffic and density. The current area is zoned as R1, low-density residential district, and the zoning hearing board would have to approve of changes before the plan goes any further. ARCWheeler addressed the traffic concerns by closing off all roads to back streets. According to Friedman, the only way to enter or exit the development will be Lancaster Avenue. Friedman said the company is currently considering reducing the number of floors above the commercial units so the structures won't exceed three stories. Units closest to Pennsylvania Avenue have been eliminated to create more space between the road and the structures.

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“We are truly committed to the process of listening, sharing, going back to the drawing board and coming back and showing them what we’ve come up with,” said Friedman.

ARCWheeler intends to contribute to the surrounding community by making a donation or doing the work to improve the sidewalks along the entire length of the development, even the large portion that doesn’t touch Lancaster Avenue. In addition, the company plans to make a contribution or do the work to improve the Glenn Avenue underpass toward the outbound train platform as well as work with SEPTA to improve the platforms by creating enclosures for the winter months.

“Somebody has got to start to say, ‘we’ll make a commitment,’” said Friedman.

## **Community Impact**

The most obvious impact of the development will be on the 12 homeowners. According to Friedman, the houses near Daylesford have an average value of \$237 per square foot. The average home in the new development will cost more than double that figure at \$500 per square foot, many units with values of more than \$1 million. However, Friedman said several homeowners have expressed interest in buying new homes in the development, and ARCWheeler plans to “treat them like family” so they can afford to stay in the community. Friedman said all the homeowners included in the plans have some sort of agreement with the company. Though, as seen from the comments from the board of supervisors meeting, some may not be happy about it.

Friedman said neighbors have expressed concern that the value of their homes will decrease, but he insisted that study after study has supported the claim that larger-scale, high-density, mixed-income developments increase the value of surrounding homes. The interior design of the units will be the suburban sister of 10 Rittenhouse, with elements hand-designed by Stern, so ARCWheeler is confident nearby residents won’t be disappointed. In addition, the development was designed to be open to the community. Nearby residents will be welcome to stroll the neighborhood and shops.

ARCWheeler met informally with the township and school district to estimate the cost impact the development will have by hiring an independent financial firm to run the numbers. The school district predicted that about 30 children will enter T/E schools from the development. The company estimates that the majority of residents will be baby-boomers without young children, but it has planned for some young families. There is one student in the current community. The total cost of those new students was estimated at \$466,000, but the increased property taxes are estimated at \$1.265 million, leaving the school district with a net profit of \$799,000. Similarly, the cost to the township has been estimated at \$182,000, with profits estimated at \$300,000, leaving the township with a net profit of \$118,000 of incoming taxes.

The impact on the community near the Daylesford station as well as Tredyffrin as a whole will warrant further discussion encompassing many opinions as the project progresses.

*For more information about ARCWheeler and the Daylesford development, visit their Web site at [www.arcwheeler.com](http://www.arcwheeler.com). For more information about architect Robert A.M. Stern, visit his Web site at [www.ramsa.com](http://www.ramsa.com).*