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Nordblom sets stage for makeover

By [Nikki Misra](#)/ Staff Writer

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Hard-hat work is under way on Border Café, which will occupy the site of the former Victoria Station restaurant alongside the Middlesex Turnpike. Burlington-based developer Nordblom intends this to be the beginning of a revitalized landscape at its 1.4 million square-foot property at Northwest Park.

But while the changes at the restaurant site are taking place under existing zoning regulations, Nordblom's vision for the rest of the parcel - some 140 acres - will require a Town Meeting rezoning vote of 40 acres to become a reality. Nordblom hopes to be far enough along in its planning to ask for a rezoning vote in early 2007.



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Located along Middlesex Turnpike, Northwest Park is one among several Burlington-based business parks that suffered a rise in office vacancies following the dot-com bust. But what followed that bust was another trend, according to Nordblom's Todd Fremont-Smith, vice president of development: long-time tenants were leaving as well.

"For the same rent many of them preferred to move into Class A type multi-story office buildings," said Fremont-Smith, pointing to Burlington's high-rise Equity Office located toward the end of New England Executive Park as an example. Northwest is comprised of 42 single-story buildings.

That's when the management at Nordblom conceived a plan to completely make over Northwest Park and convert







the property into a more urban-like hub by building retail, housing, offices, and restaurants under one roof.

Although still in its early stages, Nordblom has prepared slide shows outlining its concept, after working closely with one of Boston's well-known architecture consultants, Elkus-Manfredi Architects Inc. Some of the slides are photos taken at different locations in downtown Boston

"Look at all these people taking a day break on a green patch. This is the kind of energetic and amenity-rich environment that we want to create," explained Fremont-Smith, pointing to one of the slides.

Another slide divides the property into areas A and B. Fremont-Smith explained Nordblom is already talking to companies willing to move into portion B, which shows 100 acres of multi-story office complex, if the 40-acre hub next to it offered amenities such as homes, parks, cafés, pedestrian friendly streets, and structured garages. The multi-use on those 40 acres requires a zoning change.

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"The working environment in recent years has undergone tremendous change," said Fremont-Smith. "Publicly-traded companies with success stories are driven by human resources rather than real estate to retain talent."

Consulting the public

Nordblom has taken on another business initiative: They are consulting with Town Meeting members to prepare the grounds.

In May, Nordblom sought the approval of Town Meeting members to create the Northwest Park Committee. The Committee has five Town Meeting members who met with Nordblom all summer to consult on issues such as traffic, sewer, and the housing component. [\[continue\]](#)

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