

Editorial: Southpointe on Grand Island fills a need

By [News Editorial Board](#)
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Western New York has a need for senior housing and, in general, we favor building a bigger and better Buffalo. Given that Grand Island is essentially, if not technically, a first-ring suburb, and that the town lacks this kind of housing, the revival of the 1990s Southpointe project is worthy of pursuit.

The lot is on a 300-acre property just off Interstate 190 heading toward Beaver Island State Park. More than 25 years ago, the proposed development was met with angry dissent. But this is a new, less dense plan that leaves more wetlands untouched.

The original developers had proposed a large senior housing and retail complex on the site. At issue were 284 acres of undeveloped land bounded by Baseline Road to the west, Interstate 190 and South Parkway to the east, Staley Road to the north and Love Road to the south.

Canadian investors originally planned big: Their project included retail outlets, offices and high-density residential units with 1 million square feet of commercial space. The developers scaled back the plan several times. Proponents who talked about the number of jobs the project would create and how it would boost the tax base were drowned out by critics who feared the impact on the town's sewer system and roads.

Nevertheless, the Town Board agreed in 1998 to rezone the property, opening the way for the project. Construction was supposed to begin the following year but never happened. Current Supervisor Nathan McMurray said the original ownership group ran out of money.

Enter SRI, a real estate asset management company in New York City. It bought the Southgate site in 2013 for about \$1.1 million. In the same year, the company submitted a new plan, using more of the site, but producing less sewage with about the same number of residential units. The plan also reduced the commercial space, lowered the expected resident population and, based on an increased number of health care workers, doubled the number of permanent jobs to 200 from the original plan's 100.

This proposal would dedicate the northern portion of the site to an assisted living campus, an independent living facility, multifamily residential buildings, commercial space and some single-family housing. The eastern portion would consist of single-family housing.

This plan meets a need, both for Grand Island and for much of Western New York. There may be room for negotiation on some specifics of the plan – there usually is – but the town should be in the business of looking for ways to make it happen.