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More development on the horizon

By STEVE DeMARCO

BURLINGTON — There are several factors these days driving the pace of development in town, according to Planning Director Tony Fields, and he adds that while it is not the busiest time, it is not the slowest, either.

"It does seem slightly slower," Fields said, in a telephone interview recently.

"But, it is busier than the really slow days of 1990 and 1991," the planning director went on to say. "However, it is not as busy as the boom years of 1998 and 1999."

"There are a lot of things waiting in the wings now, and there are some things we can expect to unfold in the coming years," Fields went on to say.

Some are as follows:

- The planning director noted that "the Burlington Mall has been busy (the Nordstrom store is set to open next month)," and that there are "things at Lahey under construction (a helipad is currently on the Planning Board's agenda)."

- Fields also mentioned the Trammell Crow Planned Development District (PDD) on Corporate Drive and that it is in Phase 5.

There is a 107,000-square-foot office building currently on the Planning Board's docket, and Fields added that is "the biggest building under construction" in town now.

- Also noted by Fields as a key player in development for the town is the Nordblom Co. which has

approval for the Northwest Park PDD, which will include a 90,000-square-foot retail location, as well as restaurants, a residential component, and Class A office space.

"There is that Northwest Park development, and its interplay with the Sun Microsystems property (also owned by Nordblom)," Fields said. "There could be some changes there in the coming year."

- There is also Blanchard Road. Fields called this an area "primed for redevelopment proposals."

The planning director said there was bid to purchase some land at 76-80 Blanchard Road some years back, and the bid was withdrawn. Fields said there are "three, '70s-era buildings" on this property which could be razed, with the property redeveloped.

"Overall, it is slower than the peak years," Fields said. "But, it has been busier than the heavy recession years of 1990 and 1991."

Stock market a factor

Fields said he is aware of "a lot of big companies who would like to move their corporate headquarters to Greater Boston and who have space needs," and one of those locations could be Burlington.

But, Fields added, "A lot of these companies have put their growth plans on hold" based on what has been a fluctuating stock market.

"They want to look at that (stock market) before

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they make any decisions on investing in infrastructure," Fields stated.

"They are looking for stability in stock value to report back to the stockholders ... They don't want them spending if their dividends aren't being paid," the planning director con-

tinued. "There are a number of issues impacted by stock value."

One such factor, Fields said, is the rising cost of construction materials, and that companies take this into account when they are debating whether to go forward with a project.