

Architect Chosen for Weymouth Air Base Movie Studio Complex

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Jack Encarnacao

Cambridge Seven, a firm whose résumé includes the conversion of the former Charles Street jail in Boston into a luxury hotel, is in the planning stage for SouthField Studios.

The \$100 million studio project is a joint venture by base developer LNR Property Corp. and International Studio Group of Los Angeles.

Gary Johnson, one of Cambridge Seven's principals, said the studio would be laid out much like a college campus.

"While this is a movie studio, it still is a collection of buildings with critical uses and offices and vehicular and pedestrian movements," he said. "It actually is very much designing a campus in many ways."

SouthField Studios, which is being planned at the same time a separate group is planning a film studio in Plymouth, would be built in two stages.

The first phase, which is expected to start in mid-fall, is to include the construction of six sound stages and 145,000 square feet of office and support space on about 22 acres.

"If all goes well, it should go up very quickly," said Robert Papazian, one of International Studio Group's principals. "If we start mid-fall, I hope to open the doors the following summer."

Papazian, a Belmont native, has produced several television shows, including "Nash Bridges" and "Rome."

SouthField Studios has also hired Vertex, an environmental and construction services firm, and Kimley-Horn, an engineering and land-planning firm, to work on the development.

Johnson said his company is gathering information in preparation for producing designs.

"We're looking at ways of tying these buildings into the landscape and making them feel very much part of New England," he said. "But at the same time, there are very high-tech things that go on inside of them. We're not afraid of showing that, either."

International Studio Group will be responsible for all marketing, leasing and day-to-day operations of the studio facilities. Papazian said he has heard from several producers and directors interested in reserving sound-stage space.

"It's starting to take a real bold shape now," he said.