

Investor proposes single homes for Gray Craig land

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MIDDLETOWN — The man who spearheaded the purchase of the Harbor Court mansion for the New York Yacht Club in 1987 has signed a sales agreement to buy the Gray Craig mansion and roughly a third of the 78 acres of property that make up the estate, according to Gerry Dwyer, president of Gustave White Real Estate.

Dwyer said yesterday that Charles Dana of South Dartmouth, Mass., had agreed to buy the portion of the property, for an undisclosed price, from Gray Craig Associates, a group headed by Robert Kempenaar.

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The group bought the estate nearly three years ago for \$3.5 million.

In recent weeks, opposition has been building to Kempenaar's plan to build 56 residential units on the property. Supporters of the Norman Bird Sanctuary, which abuts the property, have complained that development on such a scale could be fatal to the habitat of many of the bird species that nest in the sanctuary and nearby.

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Dwyer said that Dana has also signed an option to buy the remainder of the estate, but that the entire deal is contingent on negotiations between Kempenaar and supporters of the bird sanctuary. Dwyer said those talks would be aimed at buying development rights from Kempenaar that would reduce the number of potential residential units from 56 to 20.

"If the sanctuary people can give a Mr. Kempenaar a fair price for the loss of those 36 units, then he'd be happy to sell the remainder of the property to Mr. Dana and walk away," said Dwyer.

Dwyer said that Dana would then be able to develop the property on the reduced scale, a development that would involve building no more than seven new single family residences and converting buildings already in place.

In August, 1987, Dana led a partnership composed of 12 members of New York Yacht Club in the \$3.5 million purchase of Harbor Court, the 28-room estate on Newport Harbor once owned by the late John Nicholas Brown. The group has since turned the property over to the club, which has headquarters in midtown Manhattan and until then had no waterfront facility.