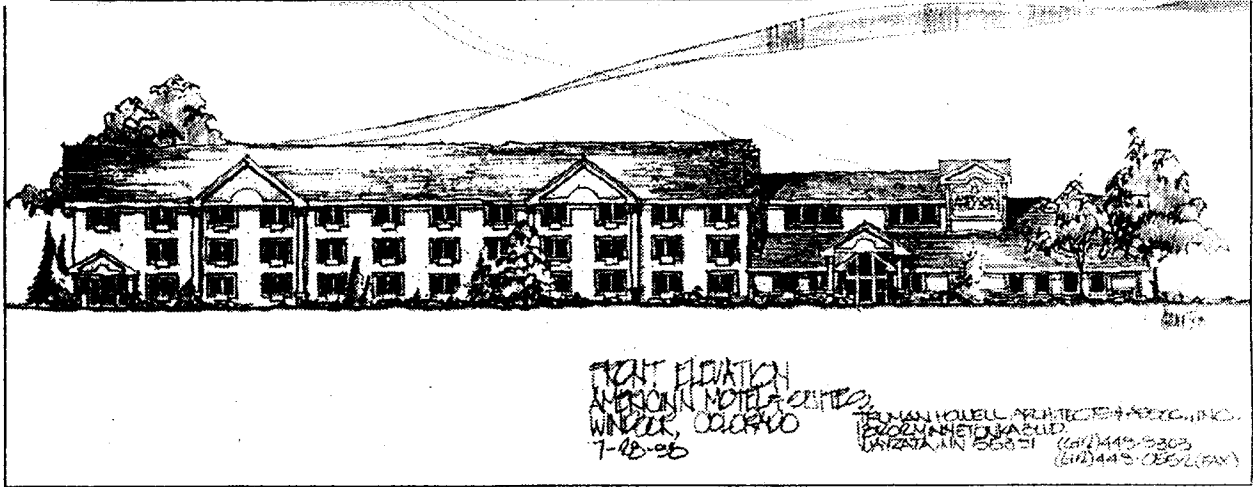


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ARTIST RENDITION SUBMITTED

An AmericInn hotel project slated for Fairfield is in the planning stage as developers John Kuster and David Thebodo have yet to complete a site plan and design for the hotel, but it could possibly resemble another AmericInn like the one above.

Businessmen plan to build hotel near bypass

By LACEY JACOBS
Ledger staff writer

After considering other communities along Highway 34, local businessmen John Kuster and David Thebodo have announced plans to build an AmericInn hotel, south of Fairfield near the new Highway 34 bypass.

"We decided we liked this location best. We're both from Fairfield, and we wanted to develop this project first," Kuster said.

The more than \$10 million project calls for the construction of a \$4 million three-story hotel with 58 to 62 rooms, including suites and a sit-down restaurant, as

well as a convenience store with fuel and food.

A feasibility study conducted by Kuster determined the most viable location for the new lodging would be near the new interchange to catch more traffic.

"We see the south interchange as sort of the gateway to our community, and the challenge for our community will be to get people off the highway — and then once they're off the highway, to invite them to become visitors to our community," Thebodo said.

The partners purchased approximately 8.8 acres of land at the southwest corner of the interchange from

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Mary Leathers last week. As the property is currently in the county, Kuster and Thebodo said they will be working with city officials to get the property rezoned and annexed into Fairfield.

Thebodo, who had been considering such a development for many years, said all of the necessary factors have finally come together, especially with the upcoming completion of the Fairfield Arts and Convention Center and Fairfield's designation as an Iowa Great Place.

At this point, the project is still very much in the planning stage, as the developers have yet to complete a site plan and design for the hotel. Thebodo did, however, say they hope to use green materials where the

budget allows. They may attempt also to blend the hotel with the surroundings, which include the Maasdam Barns, by giving the hotel a barn or agricultural feel.

The feasibility of a water park at the hotel is being studied, but Thebodo said the hotel will have a pool and spa.

Thebodo and Kuster expect to open the hotel in 2008, around the same time the bypass will be completed. Thebodo said the hotel will offer a "full-service experience" for the growing number of travelers who come to Fairfield for events such as 1st Fridays Art Walks.