

LONG ISLAND **TOWNS** Only in Newsday

## Residents say tall apartments near Republic Airport would create hazard

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A view of Airport Plaza on Feb. 21, 2026. Credit: Thomas Hengge

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A Babylon Town proposal that could bring hundreds of apartments to East Farmingdale has some residents worried about the potential height of the new housing, citing its proximity to Republic Airport.

The town has started the environmental review required to develop a new overlay zoning district. The district has the potential to transform the Route 110 corridor and boost housing in the region, Babylon officials have said. It would span five properties and comprise 113 acres on the east side of Route 110, near Conklin Street.

The district would run north past Picone Boulevard and south to the southern property line of the Airport Plaza shopping center, according to the town.

The properties are now zoned for light industrial use, but the overlay district would permit the developers to build apartments, townhomes and mixed-use buildings.

The environmental review will determine how many apartments can be built on the properties, but Babylon Town Supervisor Rich Schaffer has said he doesn't expect there to be more than 1,400. The maximum building height would be 55 feet, but an exception could allow for 12 more feet for additional structures on the roof, such as stairwell or elevator bulkheads, water tanks and chimneys.

During a recent meeting of the Republic Airport Commission, East Farmingdale civic leader Nancy Cypser said residents are concerned about the proposed heights.

"The buildings are too tall for an airport with this much traffic," she told the commission. "You don't have anything else around here that's that tall, and it's right around the airport."

Commission chairman Robert Bodenmiller agreed with Cypser, saying "the height is an issue." The commission is an advisory board to the commissioner of the state Department of Transportation.

The DOT, which owns the airport, did not respond to requests for comment about the proposed heights.

### **Two developments on tap**

The town, in a notification sent to three dozen federal, state, county and local agencies and groups, laid out potential parameters for the district.

A state DOT-owned property just north of Conklin will be developed into a 495-multifamily-unit complex by Heatherwood Communities LLC. The notice also says a 372-multifamily-unit development is being proposed on a 10.7-acre portion of properties between the shopping center and Showcase Cinema de Lux movie theater.

In an email to Newsday, Cypser pointed to the Town of Huntington's decision to impose a four-story building height limit in a recently approved zoning district in Melville. The Melville overlay district encompasses a light industrial area targeted for mixed-use development, which is about 2½ miles to the north.

"There is no reason, other than greed, to construct five-story buildings for the Farmingdale Overlay with the possibility of additional 12 foot water towers, air conditioners, or other obstructions," Cypser wrote.

### **FAA can weigh in**

Any development must be studied under the State Environmental Quality Review Act, said Kevin Bonner, Babylon's deputy chief of staff. The review "will evaluate all potential impacts, including any concerns related to building heights and proximity to the airport."

Under the proposed code, town officials would forbid development in a buffer zone around the airport known as the runway protection zone unless the Federal Aviation Administration signs off on it. The FAA would have to determine that a proposal in that zone poses "no hazard to air navigation," the proposed code states. The proposed developments are not in the runway protection zone, he said. The majority of the proposed district lies outside of the RPZ.

FAA spokesman Ian Gregor told Newsday in an email that under federal law, the FAA has to have the opportunity to "evaluate proposed structures near airports to determine whether they could pose a hazard to aircraft or interfere with navigation aids."

This includes buildings both inside and out of the RPZ, he said.

The FAA's determination is only a recommendation and is not binding, he said. However, the FAA "encourages those with land use authority to consider the agency's determinations in making zoning and permitting decisions."

Agencies have until March 4 to submit comments to the town and state if they wish to lead the environmental review process. Bonner said if no one asks to

take on that role, the town board would vote to become the lead agency at its meeting March 11.

## Height concerns

- A proposed overlay zoning district in East Farmingdale could potentially bring more than 1,000 multifamily housing units to the area.
- But residents are concerned that, given the district's proximity to Republic Airport, building heights could pose a hazard.



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