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Huntington Town hears debate on \$85M Cornerstone Melville proposal

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Vibrant downtown or overbuilding?

Residents on Tuesday urged Huntington officials not to approve a plan to build an \$85 million four-story, mixed-use luxury residential community in Melville. NewsdayTV's Andrew Ehinger reports. Credit: Newsday/Howard Schnapp, Steve Pfost; Renderings Credit: Terwilliger & Bartone Properties; Photo Credit: Newsday / John Paraskevas; Thomas Hengge

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A packed Huntington Town Board hearing Tuesday night to consider an \$85 million four-story, luxury residential community in Melville drew debate over the pace of development in the community.

Developer Terwilliger & Bartone is seeking a special use permit to allow the development of 168 units and 20,000 square feet of mixed-use retail east of Maxess Road at 115 Baylis Rd.

The Cornerstone Melville development is the second project proposed under the [Melville Town Center Overlay District](#). The community also would include a couple of two-story townhomes.

An overflow crowd spilled into the hallway. Some speakers, including the superintendent of the Half Hollow Hills School District, urged a pause in approvals so impacts on enrollment and other factors can be considered. But supporters of the project, including labor union leaders, said it would add jobs. Other proponents said the development would bring much-needed housing.

A pause, backers of the project say, could hinder the overall plan to revitalize a largely industrial section of Melville. The overlay district was created to allow mixed-used development in certain light-industrial areas of Melville. The town board must approve the projects, which according to the overlay district would be allowed to have buildings up to four stories tall that otherwise would not have been considered.

"These two projects bookend the downtown," developer Anthony Bartone told the board. "Creating the vibrancy that was envisioned with this downtown."

The roughly 50 people who signed up to address the board waited almost three hours to speak following other public hearings.

Bruce Meyer, treasurer of the homeowner association of Stratford Park, which is opposite from the Cornerstone proposal, told the board that while they expect development in the area, it should fit with the character of the neighborhood. He said what's being proposed lacks open space and is too big.

"It's a four-story building," Meyer said after the meeting. "Cut down the size, cut down the number of units and we'd be in favor of it."

"We're happy to have reasonable development in the area, we would support that, we expect that," he added. We don't expect it to be an empty piece of property."

'Resort-style' amenities

The units are expected to cost between \$985,000 and \$1.2 million, with the affordable units going for around \$330,000.

There would be a preference category for veterans and first responders, with 20% of all units designated as workforce housing.

The community is expected to have "resort-style amenities" including on-site staff, "a state-of-the-art fitness center, oversized club room, golf simulator, dog run, and courtyard featuring a heated pool and fireplaces," according to Cornerstone. High ceilings, floor-to-ceiling windows, balconies, stone countertops, stainless steel appliances and washers and dryers are among the features planned for the units.

Bartone said the combination of Cornerstone Melville and Melville Crossing, the first proposal under the overlay district approved in the spring, creates the critical mass needed in order for the town's vision of revitalizing the area with a walkable downtown.

Centerport mother of six Suzi Pastorelli said she welcomed the project because her children and her 22 nieces and nephews want to reside in the Town of Huntington but have no place to live.

"I want my kids to come back," Pastorelli said. "And have the opportunity to live around here, raise their kids with me and just be around each other."

Superintendent calls for pause

[Half Hollow Hills school district](#) Superintendent John O'Farrell read a summary of a letter submitted to the town board signed by him and Board of Education President Stephanie Gurin that asked the town board to delay consideration of the Cornerstone project until the district can see the "actual cumulative impacts" of Melville Crossing on the community.

The first application approved under the overlay district is [Steel 75 Maxess LLC's proposal for 400 housing units](#) in several buildings, to be built at Maxess Road and Corporate Center Drive.

The legislation includes language that there will be a pause in accepting new applications once submissions reach 400 units.

At an [August town board meeting](#) when the public hearing was scheduled, some residents said they thought the pause meant town officials would wait until the 400 units were completed and occupied.

Town Supervisor Ed Smyth said the pause was meant to control the pace at which applications are accepted for review by the town.

The town has 90 days to vote on the Cornerstone application.

Development debate

- A crowd packed a Huntington Town Board meeting Tuesday to debate an \$85 million development planned in Melville.
- Critics are calling for a delay in approvals so the impact of the proposals can be determined.



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