

A Sweeping Proposal for East Shore Road

Calls for 10 Percent Workforce Housing

By Wendy Karpel Kreitzman

A glimmer of light is peeking through the dingy, large, abandoned East Shore Road waterfront property in the Village of Great Neck; property that could now one day be redeveloped into an inviting residential complex, complete with waterfront and park-like space dedicated to the community, as well as a welcome provision for workforce housing. Ben Ringel of Armstrong Capital has proposed a project that would include the entire piece of waterfront property rezoned by the village three years ago (following extensive public hearings and studies), as the Waterfront Development District. Although Mr. Ringel presently owns the old Waldbaum's property, in order to bring this development to fruition, he would also have to purchase the surrounding property and dredge the adjacent waterway.

At the Village of Great Neck's March 20 board of trustees meeting, Mr. Ringel and Great Neck architect Michael Spector (the Spector Group) presented the concept to the board and to the community. "This is the gateway to the community," Mr. Ringel said, as he explained that he was seeking board input.

Mr. Ringel went on to state that this "complicated development" would also probably satisfy the rezoning. "This would be a partnership with the village," he said. Included would be townhouses, multi-family buildings, adequate parking, and a waterfront promenade and amphitheater facility, along with 10 percent of the housing units dedicated to workforce housing.

Mr. Spector, who designed the project, opened his presentation by stating that "this is one of the most significant properties ever to be built on the Great Neck peninsula ... It was our mission to have a model development, something special ..."

A longtime Great Neck resident and well-known local architect, Mr. Spector said that "this is just a first blush," and he said that the provision for 10 percent of the housing to be dedicated to workforce housing included all housing units. When questioned, he said that all units would be done equally well, with no differences between the average housing units and those for workforce housing.



East Shore Road as it looks today. The proposed project would encompass Waldbaum's (at the far left of the photo), which the developer has already purchased, and the property at the far right of the photo, property that is currently for sale.

Mr. Spector, too, stated that the project would follow zoning, and if there were any variances needed, they would be few and not major ones. The project, he assured, meets zoning such as parking, number of units, height, etc. And though he admitted that Mr. Ringel and Armstrong Capital do not currently own all of the property envisioned in the project, the anticipation is that they will be able to buy it all.

Mr. Spector clarified that the property goes from 310 East Shore Road to the water and south to the sewer treatment plant. However, he did note that the sewage treatment plant would not be visible from the planned homes, nor did he indicate that the presence of a sewage plant would interfere with the plans for the project.

Phase I of the project, 7.68 acres, would include 119 residential units, with townhouses facing the water and East Shore Road. Multi-family housing would be built next to the extension of Vista Hill Road. The sewer treatment plant is on the other side of the road. Eighty percent of the parking would be indoors. An esplanade and amphitheater would be built as public areas. A mini-marina would be featured in the renewed, dredged waterway.

Phase II, 2.8 acres to the north, would have 28 residential units (probably townhouses). There would also be a third phase to the project.

The entire project would be well-landscaped, according to Mr. Spector and Mr. Ringel, and the contemporary buildings would be built of taupe and beige masonry.

"I think you're going to see this entire development," Mr. Spector said as he concluded his presentation.

Mr. Ringel added, "We're really excited about this and we're working very hard."