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New Crestwood applicant presents revised plans



Written by CHARLIE JOHNSON
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A proposed business and residential development in Crestwood that drew opposition last year is now under new management and has a new plan that the new developers say will attract high-income singles to Tuckahoe and create little fallout for the community.



Last year, the developer Crestwood Station Plaza, LLC, successfully petitioned the Tuckahoe Village Board to rezone the property it owns at 300-308 Columbus Ave. – the former home of two gas stations – to allow for a mixed-use business/residential development.

In seeking the rezoning, the developer presented a plan for a three-story building with 26 dwelling units on the top two floors, 21 one-bedroom and five two-bedroom units, ranging in size from 750 to 900 sq. ft.

But a month ago, the company Street-Works Development, LLC entered into a contract to purchase the property from Crestwood Station Plaza, contingent upon its revised plan for the development receiving approval from the Tuckahoe Planning Board.

At the Planning Board's Sept. 20 meeting, representatives from Street-Works presented the new application for the site, a building that they say would maintain the fundamental structure found in the original plan but would have a different configuration for its residential units.

The new proposal would replace the 26 units with 49 open-plan loft-style studio apartments, ranging in size from 456 to 620 sq. ft. The plan would maintain the 3,600 sq. ft. of commercial space on the ground floor that existed in the previous proposal.

The developers stressed that their target demographic would be single high-earners with one car or no cars, who would be attracted most by the proximity to the train station and the access to local businesses.

"This plan is very, very simple," said Richard Heapes, co-founder of Street-Works. "The amenity that makes them [the dwellings] great is their address in Crestwood."

However, John Richman, another principal in the Street-Works application, also said that the units would be designed for residents who appreciated "a sophisticated architectural environment," embodied by features like large windows, wood floors, high ceilings and track lighting.

Community members who last year, urged the Village Board not to permit a residential use on the property expressed concerns that the project would exacerbate traffic problems and density in the village. They also argued that the proposal would overwhelm the Eastchester School District, which serves that section of Tuckahoe, with additional schoolchildren.

The previous applicant had estimated that its project would bring in three new schoolchildren to the Eastchester School District, a number fiercely contested by detractors of the plan.

The new applicant believes that without the specifically defined bedrooms of the previous plan, the new proposal would net zero additional schoolchildren.

Richman said that, based on other projects the developers have worked on, he expected 85 to 90 percent of the residents to be single.

The Planning Board had already declared that the project presented by Crestwood Station Plaza would have no significant environmental impact on the village and had been in the process of reviewing the architectural designs when Street-Works took over the application.

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Robert Davis, the attorney who represented Crestwood Station Plaza before the Village Board and is now representing Street-Works, said the current applicants do not believe their project will require a new environmental review.

Davis said that, in his understanding, the former developer was not planning on selling the property at the time that they petitioned the Village Board to rezone the property last year.

“This new developer solicited them,” said Davis. “Crestwood Station Plaza was not looking to sell the property actively.”

Tuckahoe’s village code requires that developers include two onsite parking spaces for each residential dwelling unit to be constructed. However, arguing that its residents will have very few cars, Street-Works is proposing 62 spaces for the building – 35 shy of what the code requires – meaning that the developers will have to seek a parking variance.

Planning Board Commissioner Clare Gorman, who was on the Village Board through March of this year and voted for the rezoning, said she was “surprised” at the developers’ request for a variance, arguing that the rezone vote had been made in light of the board’s opposition to lowering the parking requirements for the zone.

However, Davis countered that the Village Board’s function was solely to vote on the merits of the rezoning and had no ability to influence the specific design of the project. “That’s all they could have done with their legislative authority,” he said of the rezoning.

Davis noted his client’s intention to petition for a parking variance at the Oct. 12 meeting of the Tuckahoe Zoning Board. At the same time, Street-Works will also petition for the special permit required to construct upper-floor residences in the business/residential zone.
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