

Farmingdale mixed-use project advances

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Last November, Farmingdale Village amended its downtown zoning code to usher in a new era of high-density, transit-oriented development.

Come August, that legislation may prove to be literally groundbreaking.

A proposal to erect a \$30 million mixed-use building on a blighted warehouse site near the [Long Island Rail Road](#) station was mostly well-received at a public hearing Monday.



The development by Farmingdale-based Bartone Properties could be approved by next month with construction under way by fall, village officials said. The timeline is dependent on [Nassau County](#) approval, whether Bartone can secure financing and other factors, they said.

"We are hoping that when we reconvene on May 7 -- when everything is said and done -- I can bang the gavel and they can put a shovel in the ground in August," Mayor Ralph Ekstrand said Tuesday.

Monday's public hearing on the 162,000-square-foot, three-story Bartone Plaza coincided with Ekstrand's first day as mayor. Ekstrand, who voted for the rezoning as a trustee, ran for mayor with the Farmingdale 2035 Party -- a nod to the name of the village's revitalization plan.

The Bartone development on South Front Street would be the first mixed-use project approved since the revitalization plan was passed.

Residents and trustees Monday lauded the project but also voiced concerns about its scope, garbage pickup and parking.

Jim Orobona, who lives on the street south of the site, called the project beautiful and the right thing to do, but added, "My feeling is it's too dense for development that abuts single-family housing."

Farmingdale officials voted unanimously Monday -- among other enabling actions -- to seek approval from the [Nassau County Planning Commission](#), which Ekstrand said is a [common](#) practice with every development. They will continue the public hearing at the May 7 board of trustees meeting.

Bartone Plaza boasts 115 apartment units, 17,000 square feet of retail space -- with a coffee shop and bank as potential tenants -- and underground parking, developer Anthony Bartone said.

Its construction would be accompanied by a pocket park, a promenade leading from the [LIRR](#) station to downtown, a widening of Front Street and annual payouts to Farmingdale as part of a package of "incentives" offered by Bartone for exceeding the village's new density cap.

Eric Alexander, executive director of "smart growth" advocacy group Vision [Long Island](#), said if approved, the Bartone apartments would be among 6,000 units of transit-oriented housing built in the past six years on the Island.

"I would say a trend is well under way," he said. "A certain part of the market wants to live in downtowns with easy transit access to Manhattan. We see communities across [Long Island](#) do what Farmingdale is doing."

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