

# Newsday

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# Farmingdale plan OK'd

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Farmingdale officials last night approved a mixed-used development in the village's downtown district, ushering in the first of what growth advocates hope are many higher-density, transit-focused projects there.

The board of trustees with a unanimous 5-0 vote approved a \$30-million, three-story building by Farmingdale-based developer Anthony Bartone.

"It's a done deal," Mayor Ralph Ekrstrand said.

The development, which is to have 115 apartments and 17,000 square feet of retail space and be located by the Long Island Rail Road station, is the first mixed-use project to win approval in the village's

newly rezoned downtown.

Though officials have approved the overall project, they said Bartone still must provide a "satisfactory" plan for buffering his development from single-family homes to its south.

Jim Orobona, whose home will abut the project, asked the trustees to "honor" neighbors with a buffer to limit noise, lights and other factors. He was the only resident to speak during last night's public hearing.

Before the board meeting, Ekrstrand said Bartone Plaza is representative of the forward-looking intentions of Farmingdale's revitalization plan and is "what we need to do to promote economic development and growth."

Apartment, rather than houses will help keep young professionals on Long Island,

he said. The development is "green" and encourages residents to commute using the LIRR, he said.

Bartone Plaza would be built on nearly two acres of what now houses a warehouse at South Front Street and Secatogue Avenue. It includes a first floor of retail space with a coffee shop and bank as potential tenants. It also includes underground parking for its residents. A public pocket park, a promenade linking the train station and downtown, a widening of Front Street and annual payouts are among "incentives" offered by Bartone for exceeding the village's density cap.

Anthony Bartone before yesterday's meeting said Farmingdale is sending the message that it is development-ready.

"The feedback has been so resoundingly positive and it's very, very refreshing," he said. Bartone said he knows developer colleagues ready to "come running back to Farmingdale."

Critics have raised concerns about increased traffic that might accompany mixed-use projects and the ambitious scope of the revitalization plans.

Proponents such as Eric Alexander, executive director of Vision Long Island, have said such projects will bring sustainability to Long Island.

The revitalization plan, the result of several years of studies, sends a positive message, said former Mayor George Starke.

"It's a dream come true after four years of the most painstaking work," Starke said. "It's telling people, 'We're open for business.'"