

Sutton Court Slated to be Like a Luxury Hotel

An application for an assisted living facility was discussed at the October 27, 2010 North Castle Town Board meeting. The applicant, The Engel Burman Group, requested that the Town Board modify the Planned Light District, (PLI), for the entire Business Park development, so that an assisted living community could be built on 90 Business Park Drive, Armonk. The Engel Burman Group's Bristol Assisted Living chain currently consists of seven properties located throughout Long Island, New York.

Steven Kreiger, one of the founding principals and owner of The Engel Burman Group, recommended that the Armonk assisted living facility in Business Park become the eighth or ninth assisted living community in The Bristol Assisted Living chain.

The assisted living community would be situated on half of the 6.4 acres of the property located at the southeast corner of Route 22 and Business Park Drive. The plan calls for a 105,000 square foot building, consisting of 140 rental units, with approximately 160 to 170 beds.

The proposal is not for a nursing home, but rather, a residence for elderly people in their golden years. There will not be doctors on staff, although doctors such as podiatrists will make regular visits. Three meals a day and housekeeping services will be provided, and a bus will offer transportation to local shopping and community outings, Kreiger said, "Just like a luxury hotel." Rents will range from approximately \$2300 to \$7800, and apartments will vary in size and services. For instance, there will be studios available at the starting price points, as well as friendship suites offering full-time assistance, in the most expensive price category. A private room and bathroom would be standard for each unit. Based upon their other communities, Kreiger estimates the average age of a resident would be between 80 and 85 years old.

The employee shifts reflect the standard nursing times of three eight-hour shifts: the 7:00 A.M. to 3:00 P.M. and 3:00 P.M. to 11:00 P.M. would require more employees than the late night shift. They anticipate the need for between 50 and 60 full-time employees, as well as some part-time employees. The proposed site plan has an access road with parking allotted for employees and additional space on the southern section of the property. Kreiger said if they have 10 residents that own their own cars, that would be a lot for a typical residence. They presented the proposal with 64 parking spaces, assuming there would not be a lot of parking activity. The most frequent use of parking spaces would be Saturday and Sunday afternoons, when family members usually visit. There were no plans presented for the other half of the site.

Architect David Mammina has designed six facilities for Engel Burman Group. His design for the Armonk assisted living community features golden arches in a European Norman style, creating an atmosphere of elegance and quality. The designs have been well received; they offer the same ambience as a fine hotel, including the following amenities: an elegant dining room, card and pool rooms, a library, an exercise facility, and a sunroom. The community encourages socializing among the residents.

Kreiger promotes the properties, citing the benefit of positive fiscal impacts on the communities. The Engel Burman Group strategically chooses locations near stores, restaurants and hospitals, making Armonk, which is situated between Northern Westchester Hospital and White Plains Hospital, an ideal location. There are also the added benefits of generating jobs and helping support various local community organizations. 90% of the residents in a typical assisted living facility managed by the Bristol Assisted Living chain have families that live in the community, or within five miles of the facility.

According to Engel Burman's web site, Kreiger secures land approvals and municipal entitlements for all The Bristol locations, the group's flagship line of assisted living communities. He is "especially adept at discovering opportunities, perceiving their potential and nurturing them into successful properties – concept to completion." Kreiger added that they are also planning to build an assisted living facility in White Plains.

North Castle's comprehensive plan does not include mixed use for Westchester Business Park; however, it has been suggested that the plan be revised. While Business Park is occupied primarily by offices, it also has a health club, hotel, two public eating places, a recreation facility, and town-owned outdoor ball fields and a track.

Barbara DiGiacinto, owner of downtown Armonk commercial real estate and Chairwoman of the North Castle Middle Income Housing Committee, offered her support of the assisted living project; she feels the community would be a great addition to the town. She believes Business Park is a better location than Maryland Avenue, although she is concerned that the town's comprehensive plan doesn't define the mixed use in Business Park. She added that she would hate to see applicants chipping away at the PLI zoning, which could lead to a hodgepodge of development. Furthermore, she stressed that although we don't need to be concerned about the burden on the school district with this particular project, we should look beyond how Business Park will eventually be developed. Specifically, we need to consider how the development of other properties in town might change the character of our community, and how development may also impact the retail businesses on Main Street.

The PLI District appears on the town web site as the Planned Light Industry, and was last amended in 2008. The principal uses of this district include the following: motels, business and professional offices and studios, warehouses, recreation centers, taxi and limousine dispatch facilities, and day spas.

Both Supervisor Weaver and Councilman Roth expressed their support of this type of development. The Town Board moved the application to the Planning Board.

Engineers need to review what type a burden this might place on the community. The water usage is projected to be similar to the rates of Bristol's Long Island's facilities, which ranges from use of 75,000 to 100,000 gallons of water per day.

While the town needs to complete additional work on this application, it is important to keep in mind an important benefit of new developments, such as the assisted living community: the strengthening of our tax base and reduction of the tax burden on residents.