

Newsday

Nassau OKs tax breaks for 192 unit Mineola housing project

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Corpus Christi school in Mineola is seen in a Jan. 21, 2010 file photo. Photo Credit: Newsday / Patrick E. McCarthy

Nassau County awarded tax breaks last night to a proposed housing complex with 192 apartments near the Long Island Rail Road station in Mineola.

The \$70 million project is among more than 100 transit-oriented housing developments that have won local government approval in the past 10 years, according to Vision Long Island, which advocates for smart planning in Nassau and Suffolk counties. About 12,000 apartments have been authorized.

Housing near train stations boosts the economy by aiding commuters and maintaining a large pool of young workers, said Joseph J. Kearney, executive director of the Nassau County Industrial Development Agency. “We are helping keep young people in the county who might otherwise leave,” he said.

The IDA granted the developer, Mill Creek Residential Trust LLC, a sales-tax exemption of up to \$1.8 million on the purchase of construction materials, equipment and fixtures for the Mineola buildings, and \$479,900 off the mortgage recording tax.

Dallas-based Mill Creek also received a 20-year deal on property taxes, which provides savings to the company and gives local governments tax revenue they otherwise wouldn't have. No taxes have been paid on the land and buildings because a Catholic parish owns them.

Kearney projected local governments would receive about \$11 million in property taxes over 20 years from the parcels on Searing Avenue, which are being sold to Mill Creek by Corpus Christi Parish to help pay off \$400,000 owed to the Diocese of Rockville Centre.

The Rev. Malcolm J. Burns, pastor of Corpus Christi, said last night the parish was selling the former Corpus Christi Elementary School, which closed in 2010 because of declining enrollment.

“The parish is struggling a bit financially, but we will survive,” he said.

The IDA board approved the tax breaks unanimously but not before Christopher Fusco, a board member, questioned Mill Creek's commitment to using local workers and materials suppliers.

Fusco, who also is a member of the Carpenters union, said Mill Creek did not use enough unionized construction companies on its first transit-oriented project in Mineola: Modera Mineola and The Hudson House — which received IDA tax breaks.

“On your last project, a lot of local labor wasn't used; the framing contractor was from out of state,” Fusco said. “I don't want to see that happen again... . . . [it] has to be built by local labor, and the material has to come from local establishments.”

Mill Creek senior managing director Russell Tepper said, “There are local contractors bidding on every area of the building.”

The company's attorney, Lisa Cairo, said Mill Creek had received 42 bids from unionized contractors so far for the new Mineola apartment complex. She added, “There may be new bidding that goes out.”

Nassau County Executive Edward Mangano said the project would bring “millions in economic benefits for downtown shops and restaurants.”