

Peekskill Planning Commission OKs site plan for affordable, workforce housing

www.dailyvoiceplus.com
by Peter Katz
June 17, 2019 1:06 a.m.



A rendering of the project.

A proposed midrise apartment building aimed at bringing 82 units of affordable and workforce housing to Peekskill moved closer to becoming a reality at the city's Planning Commission meeting when the commission gave site-plan approval.

The development is designed to serve households with income levels ranging from 40% to 80% of the area median income. It is to be financed through the New York State Housing Finance Agency and Westchester County. The New York State Housing Finance Agency is a public benefit corporation created in 1960 to finance low- and moderate-income rental housing.

The building is proposed for 645 Main St. in Peekskill's Inland Waterfront Zoning District. The site is a 1.91-acre undeveloped property with frontage on Main Street and Central Avenue. During the review process, planning officials with both the county and city of Peekskill raised various issues, including items related to the site's topography, drainage as well as vehicular and pedestrian flows.

"It's a complicated development. The city has been very good to work with, which is an important factor because the property required zoning amendments, a special permit and site-plan approval," William G. Balter, president of the project's applicant, Wilder Balter Partners Inc. (WBP), told the Business Journal. "Our expectation is to be in the ground in the third or fourth quarter of 2019."

The application lists the owner of the project as Indian Brook IG LLC of Garrison.

Balter's company is in Chappaqua and has been active on Long Island and the Hudson Valley for about 30 years. It has a construction management and general contracting firm, Griffon Associates, Inc., which specializes in residential construction. It also has a management arm, WB Residential, which reports managing the 32 WBP properties with more than 3,200 apartments.

Balter said workforce housing generally is aimed at the demographic whose income is greater than 70% of the area median income.

"We've done market-rate developments where we have a percentage of units that are affordable, and we've done developments that are 100% affordable. In the case of Peekskill, it's affordable and workforce. In New Rochelle, we're doing a development that's 75% market, 25% affordable. We like the market-rate development as well."

The New Rochelle project is the first phase of a 550-unit development in two 27-story towers at 14 LeCount Place. Construction recently began on the first phase, which will have 379 units and extensive amenities, including an outdoor pool. WBP has also recently begun site work on a 42-unit affordable housing community in Lewisboro featuring one-, two- and three-bedroom rental units and the second phase of the Hillcrest Commons senior affordable rental development in Carmel. Phase one, which offered 76 units, was completed in 2012. Phase two would add 74 units.

Balter explained that there are differences in designing a project for an urban setting such as Peekskill as compared with more rural locations.

"Urban areas have tighter sites with zoning that allows denser developments. Our urban developments are often just a train ride away from job centers, have local services that our residents are seeking, are walkable and have less reliance on cars. Northern Westchester and the rest of the Hudson Valley tends to have low-density zoning so our developments there are spread out, often on 10 to 40 acres. These larger developments tend to have multiple buildings with on-grade parking in the development. In Peekskill, our site is just under two acres so our site requires us to build parking under our building."

He placed importance on gathering local support for affordable, workforce and even market-rate housing developments early in the application process.

"We typically talk to the stakeholders in the municipality in which we're working and we sort of see what is desired and workable with the funding available," he said. "Usually, very early in the process, we try to get the stakeholders in a community to visit projects that we've done in other municipalities." As to factors that help produce needed local support, "I think it's a combination of people seeing the developments and talking to the people who live there and, at times, talking to the community leaders where we've completed developments."

RELATED ARTICLES