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## Reader's Digest developers present new plans

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NEW CASTLE - The new developers of the Reader's Digest property came back to the town last night to start another round in the search of approvals for a major residential development on the green corporate campus.

The developers, Summit Development and Greenfield Partners of Norwalk, Conn., presented new, smaller plans to replace a proposal that the town rejected in December. Despite the changes, the developers still have an uphill battle convincing nearby residents that they should be allowed to build condominiums and townhouses on the slopes surrounding the landmark office building on Bedford Road. There was an outpouring of opposition to the earlier plans.

Don Leitch, who lives on Cowdin Lane bordering the campus, said his neighbors' property values have already fallen and his main concern is the view of the new construction from his and his neighbors' homes.

"There's no house more impacted by this project than myself," he told town officials, pointing to his house on a rendering of the plans for the development, called Chappaqua Crossing.

But some residents came to lend their support.

"I think this is a project that could satisfy a very important housing need in the town of New Castle," Donald Weisstuch, a 35-year resident of the town and a former Planning Board member, said after the meeting. "The town is graying. It's getting older."

Weisstuch said he moved into the town when his children were in school and he would like to stay by moving into a community like the one proposed for Reader's Digest.

In the presentation to last night's joint meeting of the Town Board and the Planning Board, the developers' representatives argued that the new plans satisfy many concerns raised earlier and would provide benefits to the town, including more tax revenue and some affordable housing.

The earlier plans, rejected in December by the Town Board, included 348 condominiums in townhouses and low- and mid-rise buildings designed for active seniors.

In July, the developers presented plans to build 278 units in eight three-story buildings and 44 townhouses. Most would be market-rated housing for seniors with a ban on children. But 32 would be designated affordable for families and 24 affordable for senior citizens.

Instead of asking the town to adopt a newly written zone for the housing and commercial uses, the developers are asking the town to rezone 64 acres of the 120-acre campus to a multifamily district already on the books. They are already working with the town's Zoning Board on their application to allow an unlimited number of tenants in the office building. Reader's Digest still leases a chunk of the building, but the developers have had trouble finding another large company to take the rest of the space.

Only four tenants are allowed in the historic and well-appointed office building now, and the developers have applied for a zoning variance to allow more.

New Castle for Responsible Development, an organization formed to fight the earlier plans, has again been

organizing residents to pressure the town to reject the plans. They say on their Web site, [www.NewCastleRD.org](http://www.NewCastleRD.org), that the new plans are worse than the earlier ones, larger plans.

The Town Board organized last night's presentation as it considered referring the rezoning application to the Planning Board and starting the environmental review process.

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