

Concerns about proposed housing plan seem misguided

Patricia Rosafort

I've just read your Jan. 7 article ("Hearings begin on Reader's Digest property in New Castle") on the proposed development of Chappaqua Crossing — 120 acres formerly owned by the Reader's Digest Association. As a lifelong resident of the Town of New Castle, I'm always amused by the reaction to development of any kind in the town.

I'm one of the "orphan" residents of New Castle. My children attended Bedford Central schools. My water is supplied by Mount Kisco, as is my fire protection. A similar situation exists with those New Castle residents who live in the Ossining area. All development is controlled by the residents who live in the Chappaqua school district — despite the fact that the rest of us are impacted by their decisions.

The current proposal seems to have brought back the traffic issue. (The developers, Summit Development and Greenfield Partners of Norwalk, Conn., want to build 32 affordable condos for families and 24 for those 55 and older, along with 222 market-rate units for people age 55 and older; at least one occupant would

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have to meet the age restriction and children would be banned from all but the family units. The units would be built in eight three-story buildings and 44 townhouses. The developers need a zoning change from the Town Board and are asking the Zoning Board of Appeals to allow an unrestricted number of commercial tenants in the existing office building. — Editor.)

If the concern of Chappaqua resident Jim Runde — he was quoted in the article — about access to Northern Westchester Hospital is legitimate, he ought to check out the number of vehicles parked along both sides of the roadway in question from about 2:15 p.m. until school dismissal on any school day. And I was attempting to access the Saw Mill Parkway

on a morning when there was a weather delay. Traffic was backed up from the south (I live north of the Digest property) and as I crossed the railroad tracks, I could see it was backed up onto the parkway. Most of those vehicles were carrying students going to Horace Greeley High School. An emergency vehicle could have had difficulty getting through on that morning.

I'm also a Reader's Digest retiree. I remember when the building housed upward of 3,500 employees. At its peak, there were 17 buses that carried employees to the workplace. Each had a capacity of 60 riders (expanded by standees on snowy days). The rest drove their cars. Added to that were the vendors, salespersons and guests who visited the property.

I'm puzzled. Why would the residents of approximately 300 housing units who would be coming and going at different times be more of a traffic problem than the 2,000-plus workers who were clogging the access to the property at specific times?

The other concern raised by area residents — the additional children in the school district — seems to have been ad-



Reader's Digest photo

Aerial view of Reader's Digest in New Castle.

dressed in the current proposal. I may be a little jaded, but this isn't China, where each family can have only one child. Unless there is a general memo about all residents having a limited number of chil-

dren, it's hard to know how the townspeople can make such demands.

And, by the way, the additional tax revenue would be welcome to most of us who don't have six-figure incomes.