

# Westbury Is Right Fit For Developer

BY FRANK RIZZO

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**“Y**our village checks every box that we are looking for,” said the developer. “We’ve been trying to work here for quite some time, so we’re thrilled to be here.”

Those were words that Westbury village leaders wanted to hear. On Aug. 19, they got a preview of the first of what they hope will be many projects that will transform Westbury’s railroad station district.

Developer Anthony Bartone, principal of Bartone & Terwilliger Properties of Farmingdale, has a track record of building transit-oriented developments in flourishing downtowns. He and his team made a presentation before the Village of Westbury Board of Trustees.

His company is proposing to build a \$24 million, 72-unit, four-story apartment complex at the property defined by the corners of Union Avenue, Railroad Avenue and School Street. It will be named Cornerstone at Westbury. The 32,370-square foot parcel is currently occupied by Arrow Produce, a food handling warehouse. Bartone told Anton Media Group his company is in the process of completing the purchase.

Under the old zoning, the area was mainly zoned industrial. But in 2016, Westbury became the first community on Long Island to garner the \$10 million Downtown Revitalization Initiative (DRI) from New York State. Part of the money was used to revamp the village code to encourage transit-oriented development in a 50-plus-acre area surrounding the train station. It was renamed the Maple Union Transit-Oriented Development Zone.

Mayor Peter Cavallaro called Bartone’s application the “beginning of the coming to fruition” of the re-zoning of the area that was codified in December 2019, “and that the project, as the first one, will hopefully spur other projects in the target area.” He added that “we had several preliminary meetings with the applicant, had certain additional information provided to us and some changes made to the plans that were ultimately submitted for the hearing.”

Bartone told the board, “Investment encourages investment. Revitalization encourages revitalization,” adding that his project would be a spark for further developments in the new mixed-use zoning area.

“We’ve been attracted to the village as a whole, given its downtown and its mass transit,” Bartone told Anton



Anthony Bartone gives a presentation at the Aug. 19 Village of Westbury public hearing on his proposed project. (Photo by Frank Rizzo)



The Cornerstone at Westbury, if approved by the village, will be the first project under the village’s new transit-oriented development zoning. (Photo by Frank Rizzo)

Media Group, adding that the property to be developed—less than a quarter-mile from the train station—was a natural fit. “It’s arguably way underutilized as a warehouse and this is a higher and better use. All of which we thought would be attractive.”

Bartone said that his firm was aware of the zoning change created by the DRI.

“We monitored that closely and were at a number of public hearings,” he said. “We certainly applaud the mayor and the board for the steps they took. It was a long process and they did a great job.”

The developer said a major underlying assumption of transit-oriented housing is that its inhabitants want to live within walking distance to the train and commute to work in the city.

“Yes, that does exist,” he went on. “But we found, and this was pre-COVID, so the world is redefining itself, but we found that the overwhelming number of our residents chose to live there not for work, but for the social amenities aspect of it. When they go out, it’s actually more important for them [to go downtown].”

## No Rats Here

You will not see “Scabby the Rat” at a Bartone site. The inflatable rat is placed by unions at construction sites using non-union labor.

“This project will generate a number of local construction jobs,” Bartone told the board. “At Bartone properties we are proud of the fact that we enjoy very strong relationships with organized labor.”

He introduced Tim McCarthy from IBEW Local 25, representing electrical workers.

“Bartone has been a great industry partner,” McCarthy affirmed. “They do the right thing in their community and they pay their bills, which in our industry is pretty important. We’re the electricians for Nassau and Suffolk counties, so we are the hyperlocal workforce for this job. We have folks that live in Westbury, as a matter of fact.”

Bartone listed a number of different unions that would be on the job, adding that, though its labor force is not 100 percent union, “we have very harmonious sites, we’ve never had a demonstration on our sites.”

## Money Talk

The current property, according to county records, paid \$62,461 in school and library taxes in 2020-21. County, town and special district taxes totaled \$30,800 in 2021.

Bartone stated that the warehouse pays \$9,647 in village taxes. He estimated that this figure will rise to \$52,403 once the building is done. He estimated that five or six school-age children will eventually live in the apartments. He put up a board showing the cost for the school to educate these students versus what the finished project would pay in taxes. The conclusion? The net positive to the district will be more than \$2 million over 20 years.

“It’s overwhelmingly tax positive to the Westbury School District,” he said.

Bartone said his firm had begun an application with the county’s Industrial Development Agency to receive tax benefits and payments in lieu of taxes (PILOT) for varying taxing districts. The village will not be part of the PILOT.

Assuming that the project gets village approval, the goal is to start construction in the first quarter of 2022. It is expected to take about 18 months.

Bartone has designated the Long Island Housing Partnership to manage the lottery for the 10 affordable units in the building. He noted that the Cornerstone Yorkshire in Lynbrook, nearing completion, had 378 applications for its eight affordable units.

“We’re excited to be here,” Bartone summed up to Anton.

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