

July 25, 2017

by Kevin Redding



Mark Baisch discusses his proposal for senior homes in Miller Place at the July 10 Sound Beach Civic Association meeting. Photo by Ginny Drews

Low-cost, community-based apartments for seniors may be heading to Miller Place.

During a July 10 Sound Beach Civic Association meeting, Mark Baisch, owner of the Rocky Point-based development company Landmark Properties Ltd., proposed 44 600-square-foot, one bedroom apartment units be built as a cul-de-sac on the northwest corner of Sylvan Avenue and Echo Avenue.

The plan is for the senior-exclusive apartment complex, temporarily named Echo Run, to be developed on half of the heavily wooded 3.7-acre site, while the other half would remain in its natural state.

According to Baisch's proposal, all four units in each of the 11 buildings would have a high Energy Star rating with geothermal heating and cooling systems. Rent is expected to be between \$1,000 and \$1,400 per month.

“It’s kind of lifting a weight off their shoulders because now, this whole homeownership responsibility at 75 years old goes away.”

— Mark Baisch

He said the project aims to provide older residents a new, much-needed living option.

“There’s a huge demand for reasonably priced apartments for seniors who have lived here for a significant portion of their life because for them, there is no place to go,” Baisch said of his plan, which targets senior citizens burdened with paying high taxes to live in homes or basement apartments they might not need anymore. “It’s kind of lifting a weight off their shoulders because now, this whole homeownership responsibility at 75 years old goes away and you end up living the rest of your life without that worry.”

He said senior citizens would not have to worry about upkeep and maintenance around their yard and home while in the complex.

“Here’s what would be a bunch of accessory apartments all in an area where everybody’s in the same boat — they can all support one another and that’s the way it really should be,” Baisch said. “The psychological benefit alone probably exceeds the housing benefit.”

Sound Beach Civic Association President Bea Ruberto, 70, said she’s ready to sign up.

“I can envision myself living there,” Ruberto said. “As baby boomers, we’re getting to the age where we want to live somewhere like that and we have very few rental apartments in the area. More senior rental is definitely needed.”

Ruberto said the proposal was well-received by other civic board members, especially Baisch’s idea to give each building in the complex a different color and design so it better fits the look of the community.

“I can envision myself living there. ... More senior rental is definitely needed.”

— Bea Ruberto

The Miller Place proposal mirrors Baisch’s On the Commons apartment complex in development in Rocky Point on the site of the old Thurber Lumber Co. Inc. He said Miller Place and Sound Beach residents requested to be placed on the Rocky Point housing list, prompting him to add a second location.

Like On the Commons, Echo Run plans to reserve a significant percentage of its homes for United States military veterans. The minimum percentage for veterans in Miller Place would be 10 percent, Baisch said, but that number may be adjusted pending an upcoming meeting with Joe Cognitore, commander of Rocky Point Veteran of Foreign Wars Post 6249.

Mary McDonald, 66, who has lived in Miller Place for 32 years, is pleased the proposal is pushing for residential development as opposed to commercial.

“Affordable housing for seniors is something that’s going to be needed all through Suffolk County, because taxes are so high seniors have to leave,” she said. “I’m getting to that point myself.”

Brookhaven Town Councilwoman Jane Bonner (C-Rocky Point) said she has already received positive feedback from seniors.

“Several residents have reached out to me and are very excited for it,” Bonner said.

Baisch has discussed the estimated two-year plan with the president of the Miller Place Civic Association and members of Brookhaven Town, and will be meeting with the Mount Sinai Civic Association in the near future.

“I know this will be a homerun in Miller Place,” he said, “just like it’s a homerun in Rocky Point.”