



April 29, 2024

An Open Letter to the Residents of Melville,

I campaigned for Supervisor (and Town Council in 2017), on a platform to stop overdevelopment. I am still committed to that platform. Overdevelopment exacerbates the daunting strain on our existing infrastructure, traffic, environment, and resources. Melville Town Center is not over developed.

Melville is already fully developed with many large empty parking lots and vacant or underutilized office buildings. There are a few buildings that are fully occupied but, the forecasted future demand for office space is minimal. The reality is Melville over the next 3-5 years will likely consist of a few occupied office buildings surrounded by warehouses and self-storage facilities. The number of vacant office buildings will grow and create a public safety and quality-of-life issues. As the rent-rolls of the existing buildings go down, so does the value of the property, triggering tax grievances to lower the assessed value.

I don't want Huntington to turn into Queens either but, I also don't want Huntington to look like Scranton, Pennsylvania; or any other community strewn with the skeletal remains of a once thriving industry.

Over the past year, the Town of Huntington has been working diligently with the Melville Community to create a walkable downtown with mixed-use development entirely south of the Long Island Expressway. We did not get to this initial concept by accident. We listened to the residents, we listened to the civics, we listened to first responders, school districts, property owners and developers. These meetings provided guidance on the needs and wants of the local Melville community. The process was transparent and engaging. We began by going to the community stakeholders and we are continuing to do so.

Our goal all along has been to transform Melville into an economically viable region of Huntington, without diminishing the value of surrounding homes. This proposal will stimulate economic and social activity in Melville by attracting major investments of private money into the area.

The central feature of this plan is a walkable downtown running North/South along Maxess Road. This includes plaza-style sidewalks 30 feet wide for outdoor dining and shopping. All buildings adjoining along a common façade line for continuity, similar to Huntington Village and other downtown areas. The existing town-owned properties on Maxess Road will be converted to useable parks that will add to the community and neighborhood feel of the area. This greenspace will encourage residents and families to linger in the Town Center for relaxation and recreation.

The proposed new code requires the retail/commercial use on the first floor with residential space above. The new code would also provide for rooftop dining. The areas outside the downtown area are entirely south of LIE and (primarily north of Ruland Road, east of Walt Whitman Road and west of Pinelawn Road) calls for general mixed use of residential over commercial space.

After five general listening sessions and over 20 breakout meetings, we are presenting an ambitious plan - the “Melville Town Center” concept - to the public through not one but, three public hearings. And, we are committed to adding more, if necessary.

It is important to point out that scheduling a public hearing does not mean the underlying code change will be enacted. In fact, it is likely to be amended and re-noticed after hearing public comments.

The proposed zone changes are attached to the scheduling resolutions. A copy of Resolutions 2024-178 and Resolution 2024-179, and are posted on the Town’s website. There you will also find a fact sheet on the Melville Town Center concept, an interim Environmental Assessment Form (EAF), a power point showing maps of Melville and the area of interest, conceptual renderings of mixed-use development around Long Island and a video overview of the Melville Town Center that we produced. Hopefully this information will afford those interested in this redevelopment concept additional detail to answer questions.

A critical part of this process is to hear from those that are impacted. I encourage all interested stakeholders to review those resolutions and share your questions, comments, and concerns to melvilleredevelopment@huntingtonny.gov. All correspondence will be reviewed and entered into public record.

To ensure residents have every opportunity to weigh-in on the Melville Town Center concept, the Town will be scheduling a series of public hearings at different times and locations to accommodate those wishing to participate.

The following is the Public Hearing schedule:

- April 30, 2024 at 7:00 pm – West Hollow Middle School Auditorium –
- May 7, 2024 at 2:00 pm – Huntington town Hall – Town Board Meeting
- June 12, 2024 at 7:00 pm - Huntington town Hall – Town Board Meeting

All Town Board Meetings are live-streamed on channel 18 on Optimum and Verizon and on the Town’s website. A recording of the full hearing will be available online on the Town’s website later that evening.

There is a lot of misinformation out there and I am sure the fear-mongers among us will attempt to keep stakeholder in the dark. I am committing the time to ensure that this process is transparent, factual, and inclusive. It is my hope that all Melville will turn a deaf ear to the ignorance and participate in this process and get the facts so we can make the best decision for everyone involved.

Regards,



Ed Smyth
Supervisor



Edmund J. Smyth
Supervisor

Dr. Dave Bennardo
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