

Developer hopes for Ronkonkoma Hub groundbreaking in early 2016

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Artists rendering of proposed new buildings on Main Street in the Ronkonkoma Hub project, near the Long Island Rail Road's Ronkonkoma station. (Credit: TRITEC Real Estate)

The Ronkonkoma Hub's developer is ready to submit building-permit applications this week on the massive housing, retail and office complex and hopes to break ground early next year, the firm's chief operating officer told regional planners Thursday.

Robert Loscalzo of Tritec, the East Setauket-based real estate firm developing the project, gave a progress report to the Long Island Regional Planning Council at its regular meeting, held in Hauppauge. The hub already received site plan approval from the Town of Brookhaven.

"We are 95 percent complete with construction drawings," Loscalzo said, and the company is "in contract on 12 acres" of property.

When completed, the hub is expected to encompass about 50 acres, with 1,450 apartments and 545,000 square feet of retail and office space.

Loscalzo said the first phase of the project -- which includes 489 rental units and a sewage treatment pumping station -- is expected to take three years to complete. He estimated it would create 1,260 construction jobs over three years and 145 full-time jobs.

Phase II, if it receives town approval, would involve development of a "downtown core" of 261 housing units, 95,000 square feet of retail space and 60,000 square feet of office space. Four phases of the project are planned.

Loscalzo laid out a vision of the Ronkonkoma

Hub as Suffolk's "grand station," with proximity to rail, nearby Long Island MacArthur Airport and the Long Island Expressway. He also called it the "Gateway to Eastern Long Island," citing beaches, recreational facilities and popular dining options.

"It's the center of Suffolk County," he said. "We've modeled it after the great stations" in such places as New York City and London, bringing together residents, employers, restaurants and entertainment.

James Coughlan, a principal at Tritec, said the hub will cause a "paradigm shift" by integrating residential, retail, public and business spaces. The project's "sense of community," as well as dining and entertainment venues, will attract businesses there, he said.

The planning council last year designated the Ronkonkoma Hub as a project of "regional significance."

Thursday, council chairman John Cameron said, "Long Island needs this project." He said the hub could generate more travelers for the Islip Town-owned Long Island MacArthur Airport, which has faced years of declining revenue and travelers.

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