

NEWS RELEASE

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COMMUNITY GROUP SUES RIVERHEAD ON REGIONAL MALL Says Town Broke the Law by Approving Knightland in Wading River

December 16, 2011: The Riverhead Neighborhood Preservation Coalition has filed suit against the Town of Riverhead in New York State Supreme Court for their approval of a regional shopping center at the intersection of Route 25A and Sound Avenue in Wading River. The legal action charges that the Town Planning Board lacks the authority to approve the project because it does not conform to existing zoning and says the project's review was required to consider the proposal in combination with five other projects currently proposed for a 1.5-mile stretch of Route 25A and Sound Avenue.

The Town is considering nearly 200,000 square feet of new commercial development along the main corridor in the rural hamlet — a 50% increase over what is currently there. RNPC President Dominique Mendez said, "The proposed Knightland Mall is arguably the worst of the retail projects as far as its location and its ability to transform the area into a regional shopping destination, something few who actually live in this currently quiet, small hamlet want to see."

The suit points out that current zoning permits only "a cluster of stores to meet the daily needs of residents" and not a "destination retail" project such as Knightland — a regional shopping mall consisting of dozens of stores, a food court and a tourist information center intended to draw thousands of shoppers from across the region.

"Not only does the Knightland Mall plan violate zoning but, by failing to study the cumulative impacts of this project along with the growing list of other projects, the Town left us no choice but to challenge this outrageous approval," Mendez said, adding, "What is the point of the current corridor study if game-changing projects like Knightland are to be approved before the study is even completed?"

Riverhead Town officials are currently considering three more shopping centers (the 52,000-square-foot Central Square, the 42,000-square-foot Venezia Square, and the approximately 45,000-square-foot North Country Plaza at Wading River) plus two pro-

fessional buildings totaling over 8,000 square feet next to Mays Farm and a 7,200-square-foot clubhouse addition for a catering hall with a 6,000-square-foot basement at Great Rock along with the 37,000-square-foot Knightland Mall approved on December 15. "Anything remotely close to this level of new commercial development would decimate the character of the Wading River community, create nightmare traffic, reduce property values and put existing local retailers out of business," Mendez said, "We've received hundreds of donations from people who live in and around Wading River because they wanted the RNPC to fight this overdevelopment and that's exactly what we're doing!"

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