

‘Knightland’ application goes to planning board; civics protest

By [Tim Gannon](#) | July 21, 2011 in [Featured Stories](#), [News](#)



TIM GANNON PHOTO | A model of Kenney Barra's proposed Knightland project of small shops and a restaurant on Route 25A.

While the Riverhead Town Board has committed to studying zoning along the Route 25A corridor in Wading River, where four large commercial applications are pending, civics and environmentalists continue to insist that a moratorium be declared on reviewing those projects until the results of that study are finalized. Representatives of the Riverhead Neighborhood Preservation Coalition, the Group for the East End and the Wading River Civic Associations made their comments during Thursday's town planning board meeting, where one of the four projects, developer Kenney Barra's Knightland vision for the intersection of Route 25A and Sound Avenue, was being discussed.

The Knightland application, which would replace the beverage store at that intersection, calls for the construction of a 4,900-square-foot restaurant and 32,518 square feet of retail in 24 buildings.

Dominique Mendez of the neighborhood preservation group said her members don't believe the planning board should continue to review the Knightland application. The group claims the proposed project doesn't conform to the intent of the zone, which is "to allow for the development of small clusters of shops, including eating and drinking establishments and professional offices, geared primarily toward providing daily services to residents in the adjacent residential areas."

They feel the project is intended to draw people from outside the area, a point Mr. Barra has contested. Mr. Mendez also believes that doing separate reviews of the four projects, which are within a two-mile stretch, violates a section of state environmental review law that bars segmented review of projects.

"The town should impose a moratorium on all plans in the Rte 25A corridor study area, which should include this property, a property that might be recommended for a zone change," she said.

The Town Board recently hired BFJ Planning of Manhattan to study the zoning and land uses along Route 25A, a move civic and environmental groups had called for. But the board has not declared a moratorium while the study is ongoing.

Riverhead Supervisor Sean Walter said recently that the board has not gotten to the point of declaring a moratorium yet, but Councilman George Gabrielsen said he doesn't think there's any support on the board for such a measure.

Ms. Mendez said the proposed restaurant in Knightland seems more like a food court, which is not permitted. She based that assessment on the fact that the proposed bathroom is 875 square foot. And she asked that Knightland redo its traffic study, which was done in February, at summer or fall peak times. Knightland has already taken new traffic counts just last week, according to their traffic consultant, Dan Winkelman.

Ms. Mendez also suggested that the proposed entrances to the project on Sound Avenue be eliminated because they're too close to two residential streets off Sound Avenue.

Peter Danowski, Mr. Barra's attorney, said the developer would consider that request. He said they have already agreed to do most of the changes the town has suggested.

Wading River resident Eric Schulman, who said he's been in retail for 35 years, told the board that the project is not needed, because "brick and mortar" stores are in decline, while internet business is growing.

Mr. Barra said the Yankee Candle company has already contacted him and expressed interest in being in the proposed shopping center.

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