

# The New York Times

## Projects With Mass Appeal



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THE island never seems to lack for grand building plans. But that is sometimes less obvious than it might be, because of what usually happens when plans meet reality. Years can go by before a shovel enters the ground, what with a tangled approvals process and a tough climate for financing.

Taking stock at year's end, Mitchell H. Pally, the chief executive of the [Long Island Builders Institute](#), cited the persisting decline in new single-family-home construction, but saw it as partly offset by a rise in multifamily construction. "Sites that are not appropriate for single-family are now available for multifamily," Mr. Pally said, pointing to "infill" spots in downtown areas, particularly in Nassau County, where land is scarce.

According to Eric Alexander, the executive director of [Vision Long Island](#), a smart-growth group, 12 multifamily projects with a total of 1,588 new units were approved last year. Of those, Mr. Alexander said, four are under construction. He cited an "increased demand for multifamily housing stock," adding that in 2011, the most sought-after sites were "in downtowns, near transit and other amenities." He anticipates approval this year for roughly 15 projects with more than 2,000 units.

The round tower entry to Metro 303, a rental apartment complex approved last year on a triangular 1.8-acre lot at the northern gateway to Hempstead village, is framed and sheathed. Four of its five stories, which will house 166 one-, two- and three-bedrooms, have gone up on the site of a former Ford dealership.

“It will kick off that Main Street redevelopment,” said Maria Rigopoulos, a managing director of Mill Creek Residential Trust, the developer of Metro 303, referring to the Plainview developer Renaissance Downtown’s extensive makeover plans for Hempstead Village, for which \$5 million in sewer infrastructure work is to start soon. “It’s starting to really change the look and feel.”

Metro 303 is expected to be ready for occupants by fall. It has two landscaped courtyards, a swimming pool, a sundeck and a clubhouse, and is a short walk from both the Hempstead and the Country Life Press stations of the Long Island Rail Road. Rents have not yet been set.

Work is also about half done on Mill Creek’s West Hempstead Station, a 150-unit rental building on the former site of the Courtesy Hotel in West Hempstead, Ms. Rigopoulos added.

In downtown Riverhead last week, concrete was poured for the foundation of Summer Wind Square, a four-story 52-unit rental complex that is also to have a 100-seat restaurant, and possibly a market, a cafe and shops, on the first floor.

The complex — which will restrict residency to those earning no more than \$58,000 a year, or 80 percent of median income in [Suffolk County](#) — will have balconies overlooking the Peconic River, Grangebél Park or a parking lot. According to Jodi Giglio, a Riverhead councilwoman and a partner in Epic Development, the owner, “there are 300 people in Riverhead looking for this type of housing and 14,000 throughout the county.”

Studios with lofts will rent for about \$900 a month, one-bedrooms for \$1,150, and the three two-bedrooms for \$1,350, including heat. Renters will be selected via a [Long Island Housing Partnership](#) lottery. Site plan approval took a year and a half, Ms. Giglio said. Suffolk County, “realizing the need for construction jobs and housing, helped push it along,” she said.

What may be the Island’s fanciest rental apartment, Plaza Landmark, is quickly rising on the site of a former office building in the village of Great Neck Plaza. Lalezarian Associates of Lake Success bought the property last year after another developer scrapped its plans for a condominium. Construction started six months ago. Kevin

Lalezarian, a principal, said the 94-unit modern glass building, with a residents-only “green rooftop” park and a fitness center, would start leasing this summer. One- and two-bedroom apartments from about \$3,000 to \$4,500 a month, as well as a handful of three-bedroom penthouses, should be ready for occupancy in late summer or early fall, with 19 set aside as income-restricted housing.

The units, which are described as “very upscale,” are to have round-the-clock concierge service and underground parking. Each one is to have 10-foot ceilings, surround sound, a washer/dryer, and Italian kitchen cabinets with stainless steel appliances and granite countertops.

The first 210 units at Avalon [Rockville Centre](#), which was finished last year, were leased and occupied within seven months. “It was not unusual in a market as deprived for high-quality rental units as Long Island,” said Matthew Whalen, a vice president of AvalonBay, the developer, “but definitely a very pleasant experience for us.” The site, a former brownfield, was acquired four years ago.

And the complex is growing. Phase 2 will be 139 apartments in a separate three-story building with a courtyard and a “very cool” fire pit lounge, Mr. Whalen said. Rents for the units, to be completed this year, range from the low \$2,000s, for a one-bedroom, to more than \$4,000 for two.

At AvalonBay’s Mitchel Field development, the clubhouse will be finished next month and construction is under way on 160 rental apartments, 44 rental town homes and 19 single-family homes, which will be for sale. New colonials and preserved and renovated homes along General’s Row on the former military housing site are listed for \$649,000.

With a few hundred names on the waiting list, Mr. Whalen expects the first building, Manor House, to be ready for tenants in March, with town homes completed later in the spring.

Finally there’s the 860-unit Glen Isle — which has been on the drawing board in Glen Cove since 2003. The plan got the green light last month, and Donald Monti, the managing partner with RXR Glen Isle Partners, the developer, said site plans and construction drawings were in the works. Glen Isle “could be shovel-ready potentially in the fourth quarter of 2012.”

He added, “Everyone is looking forward now to really seeing something happen.”