

## Letter: Port Chester Deserves Better

I am writing in response to the recent advertisement released by Starwood Capital regarding the proposed development at the former United Hospital site. Its multi-colored ads highlight the many potential benefits the project will bring to Port Chester. However, I find several inconsistencies with its claims and feel compelled to comment.

Starwood claims that 70 percent of Port Chester residents support the plan to redevelop the United Hospital site: Who wouldn't want to see development occur on that site? The place is an eyesore. However, Starwood does not make clear whether the residents polled indicated their support for the specifics of Starwood's proposal or merely expressed favor for the general idea of redeveloping the site.

\$2 million to schools annually: Under Starwood's proposal, the project would actually provide \$1.785 million to schools annually, which is only about half of what it would provide to schools if Starwood paid its fair share of property taxes. In fact, according to Starwood's own estimates, its proposed payment-in-lieu-of-taxes or PILOT plan would cause the schools to lose out on \$34 million in revenue over 20 years. It is interesting to note that the Port Chester Board of Education says that even this figure is too low. They claim that Starwood's proposal would actually shortchange the public schools by more than \$80 million over this 20-year period.

The project will provide \$60 million in revenue for Port Chester: It is not clear where this figure comes from. Under the company's proposed PILOT, Port Chester would receive \$1.19 million from Starwood annually instead of its share of regular property taxes. What's more, the PILOT would cause the Village to forgo nearly \$10 million in revenue over 20 years.

More than 1,800 construction and nearly 1,000 permanent jobs: To date Starwood Capital has made no commitment to create good, safe jobs by paying family-sustaining wages and benefits at the project. Without such guarantee, we have no way of knowing that the jobs created to build and run this project won't pay poverty wages and lack any meaningful benefits. In addition, there is no guarantee that a significant number of these jobs would be committed to local laborers.

For decades, big developers like Starwood Capital have come to towns and villages like ours asking for zoning changes and tax incentives claiming in return huge economic boosts. Unfortunately, many of these claims never become a reality and our communities are left with high property taxes, disinvestments in our downtown areas, and larger concentrations of poverty. If Starwood seeks substantial public investment in this project by asking for a rezoning and a PILOT; Starwood should be offering more community benefits in return. It is time for Starwood Capital to come to the table and listen to what the community needs: adequate funding for our schools, workforce housing for Port Chester residents, safe jobs with livable wages, and an environmental inspector to oversee the demolition of the hospital.

As a proud resident of Port Chester, a member of Sustainable Port Chester Alliance, and your neighbor, I encourage you to learn more by visiting [www.portchesteralliance.org](http://www.portchesteralliance.org).

Port Chester deserves better.

Blanca Lopez  
Port Chester