

Letter: Accessible to whom?

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It was disturbing to learn last week that a major Port Chester real estate developer, Lighthouse Living LLC, is facing accusations that it has violated the Fair Housing Act and the New York Human Rights Law by building housing which illegally discriminates against the disabled ([“Lighthouse Living accused of building apartments with barriers,” Westchester County Business Journal 5/28/2020](#)). Port Chester residents will be familiar with Lighthouse Living from The Light House project on North Pearl Street, stuck between two gas stations and a block away from an intersection that floods every time it rains a little too much. An 800-square-foot, one-bedroom apartment goes for \$2,300 a month. Disability advocates at the Fair Housing Justice Center found that this 50-unit building has an entrance that is inaccessible to the handicapped and kitchens which would be unusable for wheelchair-bound people. Is this the energized, intimate culture The Light House aims for? Worse still, this is part of a larger pattern: the FHJC found similar problems in at least two other buildings.

How did the developer receive a CO for this building? Whose responsibility was it to give this building the free and clear?

This should be of concern to every Port Chester resident, especially because Lighthouse Living is now proposing a far larger 242-unit, seven-story project, the so-called “Tarry Lighthouse” project on the site of the Tarry Lodge restaurant. Village residents have raised numerous concerns about this development and its effect on parking, traffic and quality of life; we now need to add accessibility to that list.

Laws on fair housing and disability rights exist for a reason: buildings that aren’t accessible to everyone discriminate against the disabled and their families. Here in Port Chester, we should be particularly concerned given our growing senior population; homes that are not accessible or livable for disabled individuals or mobility-impaired seniors are not what we need in our village. Furthermore, we should ask whether a developer like Lighthouse Living, which is apparently willing to skirt the law on accessibility, can be trusted to behave responsibly in other respects.

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