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West Hempstead: Seedy hotel finally closed

January 9, 2011 by SID CASSESE / sid.cassese@newsday.com



After a more than 10-year battle to close the Courtyard Hotel in West [Hempstead](#), community, religious and government leaders said they're pleased it was finally shuttered last week and eagerly await the proposed upscale residential complex that's expected to replace it.

"We are delighted that community and town efforts have resulted in the closing of this eyesore," said Rabbi Art Vernon of the Jewish Community Center of West

[Hempstead](#).

Bruce Zwelsky, a principal and manager with the hotel owner, Piedmont Properties, would not comment when reached at his [Bellmore](#) home Friday after the property was seen boarded up.

Rosalee Norton, head of the West [Hempstead](#) Community Support Association, said the group is happy to see the hotel close, but even more excited to see what will replace it. "Pleased would be putting it mildly - we're absolutely delighted," she said.

For years, residents have cited dozens of arrests monthly for violent sex and drug crimes at the hotel, as well as reports of registered sex offenders living there.

While [Nassau County Police](#) officials said they don't have specific crime data for the hotel, they said there had been problems inside it and on its grounds over the years.

"The 5th Precinct has responded numerous times to disturbances and criminal acts at that hotel," said departmental spokesman Lt. Kevin Smith.

Town of Hempstead Supervisor [Kate Murray](#) said Friday: "We've worked very hard to rid West Hempstead of this community blight, and we eagerly await its replacement with the proposed residential complex that will be both beautiful and commuter-friendly."

That complex was not easy to come by. Developers, such as [Trammell Crow Residential](#), liked the 2.7-acre site, but not its zoning for light industrial, which did not lend itself to their desired housing density.

In late 2008, the town created a special "Transit Oriented Development" zoning classification for the area, which allowed for greater density. That, along with a promise from the [LIRR](#) that a 1-acre site it owned between the hotel and the West Hempstead train station would remain vacant, enabled the proposed project to proceed, town officials said.

Tramwell, now called Millcreek Residential Trust, based in Wilton, Conn., is the developer. It has proposed a four-story residential building with 150 upscale rental units atop a two-story underground parking garage. Maria Rigopoulos, a spokeswoman for the developer, said the closing on the property has not been completed, but is expected later this month.

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