

LONG ISLAND

NASSAU

Plan for Center Ok'd

But Residents concerned about traffic, parking

BY DANDAN ZOU

dandan.zou@newsday.com

Village of Great Neck officials approved the site plan last week of a proposed three-story, 75,000-square-foot Mashadi Jewish community center in a residential neighborhood that has some residents concerned about its impact on traffic, parking and the community at large.

The estimated \$18 million project would be built on a 2-acre parcel on 189-195 Steamboat Rd. Plans call for an auditorium, a pool, gyms, basketball courts and meeting rooms for youth afterschool activities and senior programs.

The site plan was modified after The United Mashadi Jewish Community of America reduced the building height from four to three stories and scaled back the building size by 7,000 square feet.

"You can change these plans all you want. But how are you going to change that traffic chaos you have on Steamboat Road?" resident Jean Pierce said at the July 2 meeting.

Representatives for the applicant cited a traffic study conducted by Woodbury-based Cameron Engineering & Associates last September that said the proposed center "will not have an adverse effect on local roadways."

How to calculate the building's maximum occupancy, which affects traffic flow and determines required parking spaces, also commanded a large portion of the more than two-hour-long discussion.



The United Mashadi Jewish Community of America will build a community center in Great Neck.
MOJO STUMER + ASSOCIATES

The building can accommodate about 1,600 people when they stand within 7 feet of each other in every room at the same time, the applicant's representatives said. Mojo Stumer Associates, the organization's architect for the project, estimated the maximum occupancy to be 526 people in a letter sent in September to the village officials.

Paul Bloom, a Melville-based attorney who represents the applicant, said there would be 77 parking spots onsite as well as street parking. More parking is available at the organization's two existing facilities nearby on Steamboat Road.

Given parking would be spread out among the three facilities, "we are not anticipating the need to utilize that on-street parking, but it is available," Bloom said.

A couple of residents took issue with people outside the Iranian Jewish community being unable to use the facility, even though they would be shouldering its impact.

"If this were in, let's say in Memphis, Tennessee, or somewhere in Arkansas or

Alabama, and you were creating a segregated space that took up so much space and created so many problems in parking and traffic, would we look upon this the same way?" said resident Rebecca Rosenblatt Gilliar. "Would you say segregated space is OK, the whole community should put up with it because this piece of the community wants it?"

Mayor Pedram Bral, who recently was re-elected to a third term, said building a community requires looking beyond oneself.

"There are certain things that are good for me that I hope that my neighbor says: 'You know what? Go ahead. God bless. Do what you want to do.' There are certain things that are good for my neighbor that may not be good for me. I say: 'You know what? If you really want it, God bless, go do what you have to do,'" Bral said. "That's how you create a neighboring community."

The applicant is scheduled to return to the village board on July 16 for architectural review and to present a detailed shuttle bus plan.