

OUR TOWNS

GREAT NECK

Jewish community center gains approval



Rendering of The United Mashadi Jewish Community of America's privately funded \$18 million project. MOJO STUMER + ASSOCIATES

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Village of Great Neck officials have passed the architectural review of a proposed Mashadi Jewish community center, the last major approval The United Mashadi Jewish Community of America needs to construct the project for its 7,000 members.

The privately funded \$18 million project on Steamboat Road will span three stories and 75,000 square feet, prompting concerns from some residents about its impact on traffic, parking and the nearby residential neighborhood.

The conflict between supporters and opponents played out visibly on July 16, the night the plan was approved by the village board. The two camps booed and applauded when speakers talked in opposition to the project.

Before Tuesday's meeting, the project had already received village approvals of its site plan and several variances, including a height of 54 feet, which is 24 feet taller than the maximum allowed by the code.

Mayor Pedram Bral tried — to no avail — to limit the discussion to the building's architectural aspects. Several residents told the board the issue that they have with the project is not with the design but its location.

"It's good architecture. . . . Good architecture in the wrong location," resident Ken Lee said. "The scale of this project is scary."

The project's architect acknowledged those concerns.

"There's nobody saying that this building is not a large building," said Mark Stumer, principal of Mojo Stumer Associates. "We've taken every measure to minimize the effect of this building against the community."

Representatives for the applicant and members of the Mashadi Jewish community said the center would not increase traffic because the community center would be used by the same population that uses two other Mashadi facilities on Steamboat Road. Also, they said a shuttle bus would be provided, and parking would be spread out among the three facilities.

Bral cited a traffic study that said the proposed center would not cause significant impact, though some remain unconvinced.

"I know the traffic there. It's a mess already," said Kelly Cunningham, who lives on the road. "This has a high possibility to create even more of a mess on Steamboat Road."

The community center would be built on a 2-acre parcel at 189-195 Steamboat Rd. Plans call for an auditorium, a pool, gyms, basketball courts and meeting rooms for youth after-school activities and senior programs.