

Ardsley schools: Curb residential development



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(Photo: Submitted, Courtesy of Rivertowns Square)

The Ardsley school board wants municipalities within the district's borders to enact a five-year moratorium on new residential development over concerns they will feed large numbers of children into the schools.

District officials hope a moratorium would help slow a boom in new developments, and allow time to assess the impact of 300 units already under construction or approved by the villages of Ardsley, Dobbs Ferry and Hastings and the town of Greenburgh.

The moratorium the board wants would only impact the parts of those municipalities that fall within the school district.

"We need to see and, in fairness, the villages and town need to see, what this all means," said Ardsley Trustee Joanne Sold, the co-chairwoman of the district's long range planning committee.

Ardsley Village Manager Meredith Robson said she hadn't received any direct communication from the school district. But, she said, municipalities need a good reason to impose a moratorium.

The school district, which has about 2,100 students, saw a dip in its population with the economic downturn, but has begun to grow again, Sold said. Next year, the district is adding two new sections, including one for kindergarten.

"We're not clear as this trend continues where it's going to leave us budgetarily," Sold said. The district has a budget of \$63.9 million next year with a 2.1 percent tax increase.

In passing a resolution Tuesday calling for the moratorium, the board noted Ardsley has approved 22 units at the Waterwheel Condominium, and 13 single-family homes are in the works. Dobbs Ferry approved 202 units at Rivertowns Square, along with other developments, and Hastings has approved 66 units at [Saw Mill Lofts \(/story/news/2015/05/06/ginsburg-hastings-breaking-ground-rental-complex-westchester-new-york-live-affordable-housing/70911868/\)](http://www.lohud.com/story/news/2015/05/06/ginsburg-hastings-breaking-ground-rental-complex-westchester-new-york-live-affordable-housing/70911868/). All are within the school district.

In Greenburgh, a new 272-unit development on Lawrence Street recently filed for approval.

Sold said it was the Greenburgh development, named the [Jefferson at Saw Mill River \(http://jeffersonsawmill.com/\)](http://jeffersonsawmill.com/), and its unknown number of school children that spurred the board to call for a pause in development. She said they plan to fight the project.

Greenburgh Supervisor Paul Feiner said since the application for the Jefferson has already been filed, it likely could not be stopped by a moratorium. But he would favor delaying the review of the proposal, if legally possible, until the impact of Rivertowns across the street is known. The area is already choked with traffic, he said.

"I personally think it's one of the worst proposals I've ever seen," Feiner said. "The traffic, I just think the community can't handle it."

A spokesman for Jefferson Saw Mill could not immediately be reached for comment. Its website says it plans to provide a bicycle-friendly, affordable housing for millennials, and would contribute to the tax base.

Moratoriums can be subject to a legal challenge if they are too broad, said John Marwell, an attorney with Shamburg Marwell Hollis Andreycak & Laidlaw, which has offices in Mount Kisco, White Plains and New York City.

"They do have to be narrowly and specifically defined for the purpose the moratorium is being imposed," said Marwell, who specializes in land use and zoning.

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