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from *The Lakeville Journal*

The Millerton News and Compass A&E

Published on *TriCornerNews* (<http://www.tricornernews.com>)

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Wed, 09/26/2018 - 10:25am [Pine Plains](#) ^[1]

By Kaitlin Lyle

kaitlinl@millertonnews.com

PINE PLAINS— After taking the public's comments regarding its Carvel Property Development project to heart, representatives from the Durst Organization presented their latest findings at a public meeting held on the morning of Monday, Sept. 17.

In 2001, Douglas Durst of the Durst Organization purchased the former Carvel Country Club land between Pine Plains and Milan in anticipation of constructing 645 luxury second-home properties. Incorporating roughly 1,900 acres in Pine Plains and 440 acres in Milan, the development project originally featured a total of 645 residential units, 591 of which would be in Pine Plains and 54 in Milan. However, after 17 years and countless meetings with community members and project stakeholders, the project never got off the ground and its managers are now in the midst of a proposed redesign.

Along with the change in the market, Durst spokesman Jordan Barowitz explained that a significant amount of time has passed since the last proposal was submitted in December of 2011. To that end, he said the organization will continue to refine the plan as it moves forward.

"Durst is dedicated to working closely with the community and stakeholders to create a design that works for everyone," said Durst Project Manager Lisa Baker. "We really took all of those comments and feedback to heart, and that's what really informed our redesign and reconceptualization of the idea."

In addition to several Durst representatives, the meeting at the Community room above the library welcomed a full house of local residents. As the meeting didn't include public comments, Pine Plains town Supervisor Darrah Cloud advised the public to contact her via email at supervisor@pineplains-ny.gov ^[2] with any questions about the project.

Durst Organization Chief Development Officer Alexander Durst explained that the meeting was organized to continue the discussion about the Carvel property with the town of Pine Plains. After introducing several members of the Carvel Project Development team and their roles in the project's development, he highlighted the various meetings the Durst Organization has held between February and June of this year. The process involved several months of soliciting project feedback from the communities and regulatory agencies, during which time Durst received hundreds of comments from stakeholders, residents and board members.

Organizing it into categories, Durst said the feedback was later broken into broader themes, including ecology and sustainability, financial considerations, connectivity, vibrancy and other similar

comments. Having received the public's input, developers needed to find a way to meet the towns' needs as the project was developed.

"The comments you shared with us this spring really caused us to rethink the project," Durst mused.

As a possible new design for the project, Durst said his team is studying the concept of creating resort-focused developments, perhaps including individual homes and a resort-type hotel. Having narrowed down the focus for the plan's alteration, he said The Durst Organization is now in process of identifying hospitality projects as well as partners that could aid in the project's development.

Naming Canyon Ranch Lenox in Lenox, Mass., and Mohonk Mountain House in New Paltz, as examples, Durst said there are quite a few regional resorts that are operating successfully. Furthermore, he mentioned that the majority of resorts in the area are well-established and fit in with the local towns and environments.

If The Durst Organization decides to proceed with this new design, Durst said the project's key element would focus on incorporating the local area into the DNA of the resort itself.

"The Hudson Valley, as we all know, is an amazing place," Durst said. "Pine Plains has so much to offer. Milan has so much to offer."

He anticipates a resort would attract visitors and residents to the Hudson Valley.

"We look forward to working with you on our forthcoming redesign," he said. "We look forward to communicating with you in the coming months."

At this time, The Durst Organization hopes to return with a broader update on the project by 2019.

"We'll continue to be in contact with people who live in the community," Barowitz said, at a later date. "If there are people who want to provide input to us, we're all ears. The Pine Plains Town Board will of course take the lead in this process."

Residents can always send an email to Project Manager Lisa Baker at lbaker@durst.org [3].

A video of the meeting can be found online at Pine Plains Views at www.pineplainsviews.com [4] under the Community Meetings tab.

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