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Affordable apartments in Farmingdale to be filled through June lottery following legal saga



Sterling Green, a 71-unit apartment complex on Route 109 in Farmingdale, will hold a lottery next month for people earning between 50% to 80% of area median income levels. Credit: Rick Kopstein

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The developer of a new 71-unit, all-affordable apartment building in Farmingdale will accept [rental applications](#) through June 25, capping a legal saga that began in 2006 when Hispanic tenants sued the village over a redevelopment plan that led to their displacement.

The apartments at Sterling Green, at 900 Fulton St.-Route 109, will all be income-restricted and affordable based on federal guidelines. The units will rent from \$1,294 for a one-bedroom to \$2,521 for a two-bedroom, and tenant incomes will range from 50% to 80% of area median income.

Sterling Green is the byproduct of a [federal lawsuit](#) filed by nine Farmingdale residents who alleged a village redevelopment plan targeted a building at 150 Secatogue Ave. where a majority of residents were Hispanic. Those tenants sued the village in 2006 alleging violations of the federal Fair Housing Act when their building was sold to make way for more expensive apartments.

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Under a [settlement](#) reached in 2014, Farmingdale village agreed to recruit a developer to build at least 54 affordable units. The village did not admit wrongdoing as part of the settlement and had contended the redevelopment “was done for legitimate, non-discriminatory reasons and did not have a disparate impact on Hispanics,” according to the agreement.

WHAT TO KNOW

- **The housing lottery** for a 71-unit apartment complex called Sterling Green in Farmingdale is open through June 25.
- **The development** came about following a settlement Farmingdale Village reached with Hispanic tenants who alleged a redevelopment plan led to their displacement.
- **A 2014 settlement** required the village to recruit a developer to build affordable housing and D&F Development Group in Levittown emerged to spearhead the project.

Stefan Krieger, a law professor at Hofstra University’s Maurice A. Deane School of Law, who represented the tenants, said he had tears in his eyes when he first saw the building.

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“It’s a monument to the nine tenants who really went through a very traumatic ordeal but wouldn’t give up,” he said.

Krieger oversaw about 100 law students who worked on the case for nearly a decade. Hofstra University [released a podcast series](#) about the case, “Que Pasa, Long Island? The Story of The Secatogue Nine,” earlier this year.

Who qualifies?

The nine plaintiffs in the case will have preference in the housing lottery followed by others who had leases at 150 Secatogue Ave. Beyond those preferences, anyone who meets the income requirements can apply.

Prospective tenants can earn as little as \$36,300 for the 10 most affordable units and a couple could earn as much as \$100,000 for the highest-price two-bedroom unit. Applicants must have a Social Security number or taxpayer identification number and documented income.

Interested applicants can find more details online in English and Spanish at rentalapp.us.

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Peter Florey, principal of D&F Development Group in Levittown, said his firm began working with the village about four years ago to create the new apartments. He said it's possible to provide solely affordable units through a mix of tax credit financing and low-interest loans.

"We're able to reach a broader income band and those with lower incomes," he said.

Florey said some of the obstacles to building more developments with all affordable units on Long Island include getting approvals from municipalities and securing tax-credit financing from the state and federal government. Those tax credits are awarded on a competitive basis, with developers vying for limited dollars, he said.

Even when financing is available, Florey often must still get support from the communities where he would like to build. The developer also has projects ongoing in Bellport and Freeport.

"Whenever I have skeptics, or people who are concerned about what this will represent or what this will look like, I invite those skeptics for a tour of our communities," Florey said. "I ask them, 'Does this look any different from a market-rate development?' and most will say no."

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Keeping people on LI

Farmingdale Mayor Ralph Ekstrand said he supported the project and was excited to see it open with all affordable units.

"They're affordable to the working people that keep Long Island strong, especially the younger generation, which is having problems finding affordable housing and wants to stay on Long Island," he said. "We always talk about how we can keep our younger generation here on Long Island with the high rents and high college bills that they have to pay off. This is an excellent example of how we can."

Ekstrand, who has served as mayor since 2012, said the village had added about 490 units of housing during his tenure and had applied to Gov. Kathy Hochul's [pro-housing communities program](#), which would qualify Farmingdale to receive certain economic development funds. Mineola is the sole Long Island community that is certified for the program thus far.

Ekstrand said previous development in the village had shown concerns about traffic to be overblown. The apartments are about a mile from the Farmingdale train station.

"Putting up a 71-unit development does not affect the traffic on a New York State highway," Ekstrand said, alluding to Route 109.

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The project received federal and state low-income housing tax credits, which are administered by New York State Homes and Community Renewal, the state's affordable housing agency. The agency also provided funding through the Low Income Housing Trust Fund.

Nassau County provided funding through the federal Home Investment Partnership Program and Community Development Block Grant programs. The project also received tax benefits from the Nassau County Industrial Development Agency.



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Jonathan LaMantia covers residential real estate and other business news on Long Island. He previously covered the business of health care for Crain's New York Business.

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