

ROSLYN HEIGHTS

Residents claim zoning victory

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The century-old Victorian house on the corner of Warner and Mineola avenues in Roslyn Heights isn't going anywhere — at least for now — and area residents are claiming victory.

The home's owner, who manages the Porsche dealership next door on Mineola Avenue, has dropped a request with North Hempstead's Board of Zoning and Appeals to replace the house with a parking lot.

At a hearing, and through letters to local officials, neighbors vigorously opposed razing the house built in 1908. Dolores Augustine, a St. John's University history professor who lives next door, led the charge, saying she feared an unruly commercial incursion. The lot, she

said, would have abutted her backyard, spoiling the character of the neighborhood.

"It's a victory for all the residents of Roslyn Heights," Augustine said. "Our lovely residential neighborhood will continue to remain intact."

Michael Sahn, attorney for developer JDN Properties, said the dealership may eye an expansion at a later time, one that does not involve razing the house. "In the practical world, everyone has to be neighbors," Sahn said. A future extension, he said, would occur "solely within the business zone." (The house sits partly in the business zone, Sahn said.)

Both sides faced hurdles in their pursuits. The corner house is not part of the Roslyn Heights Historic District, which was created in 1999 and



The dealership on Mineola Avenue had sought to turn the adjacent house into a parking lot.

has expanded to protect 77 properties on parts of Elm, Garden and Willow streets, and Jefferson Avenue.

The developer had to overcome the home's partial residential zoning status; the town had said the developer might need to request a use variance, which would have required JDN to prove the plans would not "alter the essential charac-

ter of the neighborhood." Sahn had said that might be necessary, but merely for the part of the home zoned residential.

The agency approved a request for continued use of a car storage lot across the street from the dealership on Mineola Avenue until 2015.

Still, Augustine noted, the withdrawal leaves matters unsettled.

"This was an attempt to open the door to commercial expansion into the residential area and now that's been halted," she said. But persuading neighbors to join the historic district is still a far-off prospect.

"We're a little bit farther away from the historical district," she said. "There's nothing I can do, really, if they don't want to join."

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