
November 15, 2007

Envisioning Lively Downtown at Edge of Nassau Coliseum

By [PAUL VITELLO](#)

HEMPSTEAD, N.Y., Nov. 14 — An ambitious plan to transform the vast concrete tundra around the Nassau Coliseum into a downtown district with restaurants, cafes, a pedestrian mall, shops and artificial canals was presented to the local planning agency on Wednesday.

The idea first emerged almost a decade ago, but had been promoted unsuccessfully by various developers and officials. The filing of rezoning applications on Wednesday marked the first time that developers had presented planning authorities with blueprints.

The plan, dubbed the Lighthouse project, is backed by two of Long Island's most prominent businessmen, the software billionaire Charles Wang and the real estate developer Scott Rechler. They proposed a \$320 million gut renovation of the aging coliseum, which opened in 1972 and is home to Mr. Wang's hockey team, the Islanders; the construction of a 300-room, five-star hotel and 2,000 housing units; and the creation of one million square feet of office space and 500,000 square feet of space for shops, restaurants and cafes.

The construction would take place on about 150 acres owned by Nassau County, and the land would be leased to the developers at rates still to be negotiated. Planning and zoning authorities in the Town of Hempstead, where the site is located, will review the developers' plans. The review of traffic, population density and overall environmental impact is expected to take one to two years, after which county legislators must approve a lease. Construction is likely to take 10 years.

The Nassau county executive, [Thomas R. Suozzi](#), who has made development of the area one of the major goals of his administration, has described the project as critical to maintaining the vitality of Long Island by attracting new business, new homeowners and, not least of all, new tax revenues.

Matthew Frank, managing director of the Lighthouse Development Group, the company formed by Mr. Wang and Mr. Rechler, said the hope was that the new site would become a

destination for people throughout the region.

Community groups and merchants in the area around the coliseum have expressed concern that the Lighthouse project would create congestion and crush local businesses.

“Obviously, there are going to be very extensive investigations on traffic, air, water, density and quality-of-life impact,” said Kate Murray, the town supervisor. “From the models I’ve seen, it looks extremely dense. Traffic will be a major issue.”

The county land at the site was originally part of Mitchel Air Force Base, and after the base closed, the federal government turned over the property to Nassau County in 1963.

[Copyright 2007 The New York Times Company](#)

[Privacy Policy](#) | [Search](#) | [Corrections](#) | [RSS](#) | [First Look](#) | [Help](#) | [Contact Us](#) | [Work for Us](#) | [Site Map](#)
