

# Long Island Business NEWS

Where Business Gets Down to Business

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## Hub challenge creates opportunities

By Richard Kessel

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Islanders' owner Charles Wang and developer Scott Rechler have now proposed a new and slimmed-down vision of developing the Nassau Hub. The plan, which was submitted to the Town of Hempstead, calls for a remaking of the Nassau Veterans Memorial Coliseum (where Wang's Islanders play), additional parking, several office towers and retail, commercial and housing facilities in the middle of Nassau's hub area which includes Uniondale, Garden City, Hempstead, East Meadow, Levittown and Westbury. The question is what happens from here and do Nassau's residents support such a complex in the middle of suburbia?

Actually, the plan is not new. Hub ideas have been discussed for the last two decades. And, in reality, the Hub is already being developed. Nassau County Executive Tom Suozzi's vision for a "museum row" is now a reality with the Cradle of Aviation Museum, and the Children's and Firefighters museums already operating to rave reviews. And, the growth and expansion of both Hofstra University and Nassau Community College has made the hub a central location for tens of thousands of people who travel through and into it daily. So the question is whether Nassau residents want major buildings rising vertically rather than the usual suburban horizontal direction. That would be a big change on Long Island but may be the only way for Nassau to grow and expand its tax base.

The debate should be an open and public process. To their credit, Wang and Rechler have put together a group of political, business, civic and educational leaders to advise them. This "Lighthouse" group should consider holding public hearings in all of the surrounding communities to gather public input on ways to make the project as neighborly as possible. There's no question that the plan as submitted will change; the public can be part of this process and make it better.

Just as important, environmental studies will need to be done to assess the impact on traffic, water resources, waste disposal, air quality and the neighborhoods. And, let's not forget that this new development will need added energy resources, especially electricity. We have a great opportunity to make this project the greenest in America. Compact fluorescent lighting, Energy Star and LEED certified buildings, and renewables including solar panels, fuel cells, geothermal and even small windmills could provide the 50-plus megawatts needed to power the area.

We can really have an enlightened debate about whether this project fits the suburban dream and, if not, what does? It's a challenge worth meeting.

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