



OFFICE OF HOUSING AND INTERGOVERNMENTAL AFFAIRS

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County Executive
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Welcome to the inaugural issue of the OHIA Newsletter! Here we will periodically highlight the accomplishments of the members of the Nassau Urban County Consortium, discuss topics relevant to our members, and cover recent issues involving the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development's Consolidated Programs, which are: the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG), the HOME Investment Partnerships (HOME), the American Dream Down Payment Initiative (ADDI), the Emergency Shelter Grants (ESG), and the Housing for Persons With AIDS (HOPWA) Programs.

We at OHIA hope you find this a useful and informative source of information and ideas.

Using CDBG Funds to Enhance Your Downtown

Sprawl and disinvestment have negatively impacted many of the traditional downtowns in Nassau County. Numerous communities have turned to the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) Program to fund a varied number of projects directed toward revitalizing local shopping areas. The hoped for benefits include the restoration of a robust business community that meets the needs of its residents, a stronger local tax base, and nearby entertainment opportunities. With the recent surge in gas prices, Nassau residents may be looking for shopping opportunities that are closer to home. Revitalized downtowns meet all of these goals. Additionally, when businesses are economically strong they are better able to contribute to the local civic and sports organizations. In short, a vital downtown is essential for a community's sustainable quality of life.

The Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) Program, begun in 1974 and funded by the U.S. Department of Housing

and Urban Development, is a very flexible program that can be used by local municipalities to address many of its community development needs. While many activities focused on improving local downtowns are eligible under the Program, the requirement that all activities must also meet a "national objective" of the Program means that not all activities can be undertaken in all communities. Because "downtown revitalization" activities are generally seen to benefit the entire community serviced by the downtown, only those communities that meet HUD census criteria can fund such activities. However, even with this restriction many local communities have benefited from the use of CDBG funds in their downtowns. If you are uncertain whether your community includes an eligible area under these categories, contact your local community development representative at OHIA.

Obviously, the first step in undertaking a downtown improvement project is to make an as-

essment of the strengths and weaknesses of the district and to develop a plan to build on the strengths and address the identified weaknesses. It is important to realize that what works in one location will not necessarily work in another. Individual plans that target local needs are essential. CDBG funds can be used for general planning activities (subject to the cap on planning and administrative costs) and for project design costs.

On the infrastructure side, CDBG funds can be utilized to acquire property to be used for a municipal purpose such as parking, which is cited as a need in most older downtowns. Funds can also be used for the clearance of such properties and the design and construction of parking facilities serving a local shopping district. CDBG funding has recently been allocated toward such projects in the hamlet of Oyster Bay and the Villages of East Rockaway, and Cedarhurst. Many commu-

Continued on Page 4

Village of Westbury's Downtown

The Village of Westbury has been targeting the bulk of its CDBG resources to its ongoing downtown revitalization efforts. Led by Village Clerk Tom Savino and Mayor Ernest Strada, the Village has seen a revival as displayed by the video "Rebirth of a Downtown: Westbury Village 1999-2007" (see the video at the Village's website: www.VillageofWestbury.org). Approximately \$1.9 million in Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funds has assisted the Village in completing downtown streetscape im-

provements along its downtown core of Post Avenue north of the LIRR Station. Improvements include decorative brick pavers, ornate street lighting, benches and trash receptacles as well as enhanced signage directing shoppers to parking fields located behind the stores. The work was aided by a NYS Main Street grant of \$200,000 in 2005 as well as by Nassau County Community Revitalization Program funds from Legislators Richard Nicoletto and Roger Corbin. In April 2007 the Village offi-

cially opened and dedicated *The Westbury Village Square*, a beautiful piazza complete with a stone waterfall on the site of what was a blighted former gas station. CDBG funds aided in the acquisition and cleanup of the area.

Working with its Business Improvement District, Westbury has been able to offer its business owners funding for façade Improvements which have transformed the look of Post Ave. About 100 storefronts have benefited from the program.



The result has been the attraction of private dollars to Westbury to develop market rate housing located on or just off Post Avenue. The infusion of more than 220 units of housing in the area has added additional shoppers and vitality to the heart of Westbury.



Village of Freeport Downtown Revitalization

The Village of Freeport's Central Business District has been the focus of revitalization activity for many years in accordance with their General Neighborhood Renewal Plan. CDBG funds have been allocated yearly in conjunction with other leveraged state and federal grants to complete approximately 50 commercial facades. This ambitious commercial façade program continues to be a main priority and has provided loan funding totaling approximately \$800,000.00 since 1999 and is administered by

Community Development Corporation of Long Island (CDCLI). Freeport has also implemented a streetscape improvement initiative on South Main St. and Guy Lombardo Ave. Additional streetscape improvements are in the works along with a continued tree planting program to further beautify the village. These varied downtown revitalization projects have proven to enhance the aesthetic appeal of the downtown area towards the end of increased economic development.



Village of Freeport commercial façade improvements

Restore New York Communities Initiative

For more information please visit
www.empire.state.ny.us

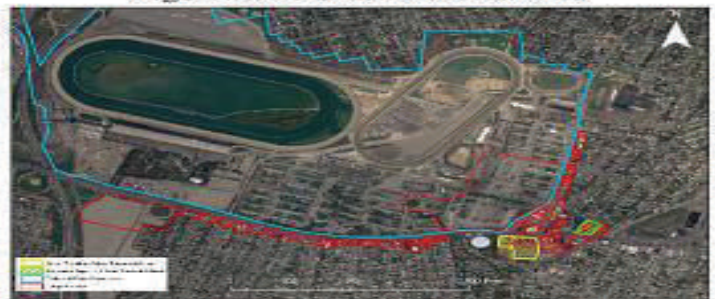
The Empire State Development Corporation's Restore New York Communities Initiative has awarded more than \$7 million for redevelopment projects on Long Island. Restore NY funds municipally-sponsored projects for the demolition, deconstruction, rehabilitation or reconstruction of vacant or obsolete structures. Our communities are leveraging these resources with CDBG funding to undertake comprehensive community revitalization projects. The largest grant of \$2.5 mil-

lion, was awarded to the **Town of Hempstead** for the revitalization of a three acre site at the intersection of Hempstead Turnpike and Elmont Road. The **Village of Freeport** received funds in the amount of \$1.7 million to continue the revitalization of Sunrise Hwy, including a 210,000 square foot, mixed use building and approximately 200 housing units. The **Village of Hempstead** received \$585,000 to improve several buildings on the Main Street shopping

area and the **City of Glen Cove** was awarded funds (\$695,000) to build a ferry terminal as part of their waterfront revitalization

project. In Suffolk County, Huntington Town was awarded \$1.6 million for rehabilitation purposes in Huntington Station.

Argo Theatre Urban Renewal Area



Nassau County Visioning Program

County Executive Suozzi, after a series of town-hall meetings, developed Nassau County's 10-Point Plan for Economic Development – "New Suburbia". Pursuant to this plan, the Nassau County Visioning Program was borne where grants are allocated to targeted municipalities to cultivate public participation and consensus building for local improvement projects.

Visioning projects are slated for the Village of Freeport, City of Glen Cove, Town of Hempstead (Elmont, Inwood, Baldwin and Roosevelt), Village of Hempstead, and the Town of North Hempstead (New Casel, Great Neck Peninsula).

Currently, the Elmont Visioning Project funded jointly by Nassau



New Downtown Hempstead

Nassau County is assisting the Village of Hempstead with its revitalization efforts through a \$3 million investment initiative for the revitalization of Franklin Avenue in the Village of Hempstead's downtown.

"The Village of Hempstead has many assets: it is a major public transportation center with rail and bus terminals, it has a large downtown, and most importantly, it is centrally located. These improvements will reflect the pride of the residents of the Village of Hempstead and help spur economic activity", said County Executive Thomas Suozzi, in announcing the funding in early 2007.

"Improving the image and overall quality of life in the Village of Hempstead is not only critical to economic growth in the Village and the Hub at large, it also helps create the kind of community that we want our children - and their children - to grow up in," said Mayor Wayne Hall.

The plan calls for a new Franklin Avenue streetscape, including brick pavers, sidewalks, decorative street lights, benches, and trash cans. The \$3 million cost will be covered by funding from Nassau County's Capital Project. Construction began in Spring 2008, following a series of public meetings. Nassau County has selected the firm of Urbitrans Associates, Inc. to provide design services. As part of the county's "Community Environment Improvement" project, a county-wide effort to beautify specific areas throughout Nassau County, the center median of Peninsula Boulevard from Franklin Avenue to President Street will be upgraded. "Village of Hempstead gateway" signs welcoming visitors to downtown Hempstead from northern and southern approaches also will be incorporated into the project.



Entrance to the Village of Hempstead.

East Rockaway Improvements

East Rockaway continues its' assertive agenda for downtown revitalization with projects going forward to include additional storefront facades at the waterfront and streetscape programs along the Long Island Rail Road station at Davison Plaza and Atlantic Avenue. Additionally the Village will seek to acquire blighted properties to enhance additional downtown parking availability. Adjacent to the recently renovated waterfront promenade and along Main Street, several commercial rehabilitation projects were completed to include new store front facades and several blocks of streetscape improvements.

Village of New Hyde Park Restored

"New Hyde Park is a prime example of best practices in Downtown Revitalization," stated County Executive Suozzi. "Through sound planning and design, leveraging of a variety of grant funding sources and strong community support for the project, they have successfully completed Phase I of an ambitious downtown project."

U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) Community Development Block Grant Funds in excess of \$1.5 million obtained through the Nassau County Office of Housing and Intergovernmental Affairs (OHIA) were utilized in the project. In addition, the County Legislature, on behalf of Richard Nicoletto, contributed \$100,000 in CRP funds as well as an additional grant from the

Town of North Hempstead, Supervisor Jon Kaiman. Improvements include design, engineering, and the installation of brick pavers, pocket parks, decorative lighting, benches, trash cans and plant-

ings of trees, flowers and shrubs along Jericho Turnpike between Ingraham Lane and Hillside Boulevard.

This project is a laudable example of a public-private partnership focused on achieving

the goals of "New Suburbia" - revitalizing downtowns, addressing the needs of emerging minority communities, encouraging the redevelopment of Brownfields properties and developing the Nassau Hub.

New Cassel Revitalization

The New Cassel Revitalization Project has been the primary focus of the Town of North Hempstead's efforts utilizing community development block grant funds. Through a collaborative effort, the hamlet now sees significant economic development activities which include seven mixed-income, mixed-use developments in progress. An investment of Nassau County's Community Development Block Grant and HOME Investment Partnerships Program, has leveraged over \$60 million in new investment in the community. With a million dollar investment of Federal funds from Senator Hillary Clinton and Rep. Carolyn McCarthy, New Cassel is well on its way to a genuine rebirth. The redevelopment project began with a community visioning process that included the entire New Cassel community. In addition to streetscape improvements and traffic calming enhancements, the Prospect Avenue developments will include over 238 units of housing and commercial space that includes a bank, a pharmacy, a supermarket and other important community amenities. In particular, a 46,151 square foot site, known as the "Gateway to New Cassel" boasts the development of a mixed-use building overlooking a 4,500 sq. ft. park.



Westbury Piazza

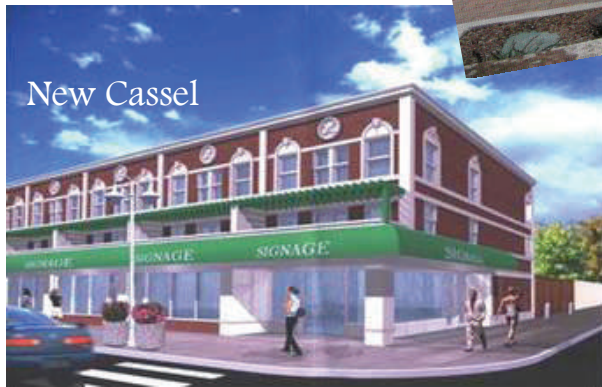
East Rockaway



Village of Mineola

Cool

Oyster Bay Hamlet



New Cassel

Downtowns

Using CBDG Funds continued from Page 1

nities have also taken advantage of the Program to undertake streetscape improvement projects that include the installation of brick pavers, decorative street lighting, strategically placed benches and trash receptacles. Taking a walk down Jericho Turnpike in Mineola and New Hyde Park will provide visual evidence of how a downtown can be enlivened through such efforts.

The appearance of local businesses serving the downtown can also be enhanced using the block grant program. Under the Program, commercial façade improvement is limited to the exterior of the building. Many main street shopping areas have seen a dressing up of their storefronts compliments of a 50/50 matching program whereby the business owners

contribute to the physical upgrade of their properties with a matching grant of CDBG funds. Funds can also be provided as loans or even grants in extreme cases. The OHIA has recently created a list of qualified architects that can assist in getting such programs going in local downtowns.

Lastly, CDBG funds can be used to finance economic development loans directly to businesses either locating to or expanding in a local downtown. A well-developed program can be used to attract the right mix of stores to keep a downtown alive.

For advice on how to best use the CDBG Program in your community, please contact your local CD representative at OHIA.

The Vision for a New Suburbia Investing in Our Future

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We're on the Web:

www.nassaucountyny.gov/agencies/OHIA/index.html

Nassau County Visioning

Continued from Page 2

County and the Town of Hempstead is targeting Hempstead Turnpike from the Queens border to the Franklin Square border. Three education workshops, a charrette weekend and a community presentation were carried out with the hopes of creating a community-supported plan to implement future improvement projects.

Glen Cove's Community Vision Project is targeting areas adjacent to the downtown. These include: linking communities surrounding the Cedar Swamp area; exploring transit development by the Glen St. train station; improving public transit connections and usage; and creating workforce/affordable housing by the train station. The other community visioning initiatives are in the planning stages and will be highlighted in future issues.