

New Uniondale Marriott owner plans \$25M renovation

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The Long Island Marriott Hotel and Conference Center in Uniondale on Wednesday, Aug. 27, 2014. Photo Credit: Steve Pfost

The new owner of the Long Island Marriott Hotel and Conference Center in Uniondale and a developer plan to spend about \$25 million to renovate the hotel, according to Nassau County Industrial Development Agency documents.

Affiliates of Starwood Capital Group, a private investment group and hotel owner, and Witkoff Group, a New York developer, are requesting IDA assistance on the planned renovation project. The Marriott -- the Island's largest hotel -- was

previously owned by Charles Wang, the New York Islanders owner and founder of CA Technologies.

Wang, who bought the hotel in 2005, had been approved for a 10-year property tax abatement set to expire in 2016 by the Town of Hempstead's Industrial Development Agency for a renovation project started in 2006. The hotel was valued as high as \$152 million in 2010, according to Bloomberg data. It was bought this year by Starwood for between \$66 million and \$69 million, said Fred Parola, executive director of the Town of Hempstead IDA.

Starwood owns 650 hotels globally, including such brands as Sheraton and W Hotels. Witkoff, a private real estate developer and owner, is working on two hotel projects in Manhattan, including the Marriott Edition Hotel in Times Square.

According to an application obtained by Newsday under the State's Freedom of Information Law, Starwood and Witkoff have asked the county's IDA for a sales tax exemption of as much as \$1.2 million on the purchase of construction materials, equipment and other items needed to make improvements to the property; a payment in lieu of taxes agreement for 20 years; and a break on property taxes in an amount still to be determined.

Following a Wednesday public hearing on the application, Nassau County IDA Executive Director Joseph J. Kearney said the applicant's decision to seek aid from the county made sense given Nassau's involvement with the neighboring Nassau Coliseum redevelopment.

"This acquisition of the hotel is part and parcel of the overall development of the Coliseum/hub property, which will be spearheaded by the county of Nassau with the participation of the Nassau County Industrial Development Agency," Kearney said.

"We have an opportunity now with the folks that have at least indicated a commitment at this point, subject to what occurs here, to put huge sums of money into the development of this hotel," he said.

Kearney said he hopes the IDA will be able to make a decision on the request before year's end.