

Long Island Business NEWS



1025 OLD COUNTRY ROAD: Ongoing redevelopment assisted by the Nassau County IDA.

Connecting the dots

By: David Winzelberg July 6, 2016 0

Once home to a shuttered car dealership, a Westbury site is being transformed into a modern office complex sporting a unique amenity.

The 3.35-acre property at 1025 Old Country Road was formerly occupied by a Nissan showroom and service center and was first redeveloped into a 165,395-square-foot office building 12 years ago. But since then, the project has gone through a few starts and stops.

In 2009, the building's Manhattan-based owner, AM Property Holding Corp., defaulted on its commercial mortgage-backed securities loan, which was sent to a special servicer. The loan was resolved with a \$37 million loss last year after AM Property Chairman Jeff Wasserman negotiated a workout with the lender and was able to refinance.

"It was a battle," Wasserman told LIBN.

However, Wasserman was able to right the ship. And after spending about \$15 million on the initial conversion from car dealership to office building, AM Property is again in the midst of a major renovation, which includes upgrades to its mechanical systems, new elevators, improvements to the lobby and common areas, new landscaping and parking. The building also features a 4,000-square-foot atrium event space that is primed as a showcase of classic cars. The building owner is also purchasing a site

across the street that's been occupied by car repair shops to build a new parking area to serve office tenants.

To help the \$20 million project, AM Property was approved this week for economic assistance from the Nassau County Industrial Development Agency in the form of property tax, sales tax and mortgage tax breaks.

The property's most unique feature is its communication capabilities as a co-location portal, offering a direct connection via underground cables, which allows global telecommunication providers to exchange information. The building provides cooling, power, bandwidth and physical security to accommodate large data servers.

"This has the potential for changing the entire Westbury and New Cassel business area," Wasserman said. "This is a new world."

While the building is still largely vacant, its exclusive leasing broker, Windsor Commercial Real Estate, has been marketing the Westbury space to technology companies, financial firms and other tenants that rely on speed and reliability of data. Space is being offered at between \$21 and \$23 a square foot.

"We are excited about the repositioning and about the ongoing renovations to attract a wide variety of tenants," said Michael Ventre, a principal of Windsor, which has its offices in the building. "Our goal is to re-introduce this property to the market as a prime location for businesses to be headquartered."

In a deal signed this week, the building will be home to Long Island's latest Launchpad for emerging startups. The 8,000-square-foot Westbury space will be the Island's seventh Launchpad location, joining those already established in Great Neck, Hicksville, Mineola, Old Westbury, Huntington and Stony Brook. Michael Watt, who will serve as community manager for the new Launchpad, said the building was selected because of its advanced connectivity.

"That's very important, especially for technology entrepreneurs," Watt said, "and they are a key to Long Island's future."