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## **North Hempstead Joins with New Cassel Residents, Civics, and County and State Officials to Bless Site for Proposed Community Center**

*New Cassel, NY*—Joined by North Hempstead Supervisor Jon Kaiman, Town Councilman Robert Troiano as well as representatives from the County and the State, scores of New Cassel residents reacted with excitement recently as the answer to a long-time prayer—the building of a state-of-the-art, multi-purpose community center—made the first step from request to reality.

The ground blessing ceremony on the three-acre site of the new \$24.5 million community center at Garden Street and Broadway in New Cassel follows in the wake of the hamlet's massive, nearly-completed revitalization project.

“This is a unique moment in time,” Supervisor Kaiman told the scores gathered at the site under dark, rainy clouds. “For a decade or more, the Town of North Hempstead, the Town's Community Development Agency and the County have been looking to move this project forward.”

The 50,000 square-foot building—with its two regulation size basketball courts, television studio, recording studio, stage for theatrical productions, research/reading room, Internet cafe, meeting rooms, social hall for events, and exercise facilities—“will symbolize one of the great successes of the town,” Kaiman said.

Plans are in the works to break ground on the proposed center around spring next year.

“This is truly a community project and it is my hope that each and every member of this community will share in its use,” Councilman Troiano said. “We want to make sure the building gets built on consecrated and blessed land,” Troiano added, introducing several religious leaders from the community attending the Saturday, Oct. 24 event.

Praying in Haitian Creole, Salvation Army Capt. Joseph Lubin “asked God to make the project happen.”

Bishop Lionel Harvey, pastor of the First Baptist Cathedral of Westbury and president of the Unified New Cassel Community Revitalization Corp., a principal role player in New Cassel's revitalization, prayed that the center become a “beacon of light. We consecrate this land to you God that everything that is done is done in good order.”

New Cassel's revitalization was launched when Harvey and other religious leaders joined residents in "Seeking a Shared Vision for New Cassel." The brainstorming sessions resulted in a New Cassel Vision Plan later adopted by the Town.

The 1.5 square mile, mostly-Black and Latino hamlet in the southeast corner of North Hempstead is on the tail end of its \$60-million dollar revitalization project.

In addition to three multi-use projects boasting residential units atop retail space that opened in February, four other projects along Prospect Avenue include affordable rentals and condominiums with attached rentals.

Blighted for decades, New Cassel will soon have a supermarket, pharmacy and a bank for the first time in recent memory, thanks to the revitalization, which began under the administration of former North Hempstead Supervisor, May Newburger.

For the community center, five schools in the Westbury School District participated in a one-day visioning effort—a process used to solicit input from residents about plans impacting their communities.

Input was also solicited from the School District's administration, Westbury Library, the Village of Westbury Recreation Dept., and residents.

The center will be paid for, in great part, through \$10 million in funding from Neptune Regional Transmissions System LLC thanks to an agreement Supervisor Kaiman and Councilman Troiano struck with the Connecticut-based firm. The 65-mile long under sea and underground electric transmission cable, which was developed by Neptune, will bring nearly 1.2 million MWh of low cost power to Long Island in the peak summer season.

The high voltage direct current cable runs from Sayreville, New Jersey to a point south of Jones Beach and then to a facility at Duffy Avenue in New Cassel where the electricity is converted for usage on LIPA's system.

Mrs. Julia Reid, whose son, Martin "Bunky" Reid, a park adjacent to the proposed community center is named for, said that outside of the early years after she moved to the hamlet in 1962 she has not witnessed so much electricity as that surrounding New Cassel's turnaround and the prospect of a new community center.

"This is good in that it will become the glue that bonds this community, the glue that helps keep it together," she said.

In addition to Mrs. Reid, Councilman Troiano honored four longtime community residents who he said were avid civic activists responsible for advancing the community. Among those receiving the Medals of Appreciation were Alpine and Alfred Brown, Kenneth and Mildred Little, Fred and Alethia Meeks and Everett and Ruth Reese, to name a few.

New Cassel's widespread make-over also includes plans to completely reconstruct Prospect Avenue, the hamlet's main thoroughfare, making it more pedestrian-friendly and less congested by vehicular traffic.

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Caption: Councilman Robert Troiano (center) and Supervisor Jon Kaiman (left) announce the land clearing for the state-of-the-art New Cassel Community Center.

Caption: Bishop Lionel Harvey blesses the ground for the New Cassel Community Center with Supervisor Jon Kaiman and Councilman Robert Troiano in the background.

Caption: Westbury High School Select Choir sings the National Anthem at the New Cassel Community Center Land Clearing event.

(panoramic) Caption: Supervisor Jon Kaiman and Councilman Robert Troiano mark the Land Clearing of the New Cassel Community Center.