

Hempstead, NY

Mayor James A. Garner



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Central Business District Revitalization New Downtown Hempstead

The Incorporated Village of Hempstead Community Development Agency instituted its downtown revitalization program in 1990. Over the past nine years, the Village's accomplishments have dwarfed, by comparison, any similar program undertaken by other municipalities within Nassau County.

Hempstead is Nassau County's oldest and most populous village. It is located at the geographic center of Nassau and all major county roadways lead to Hempstead. Settled in 1643 and incorporated in 1853, it has historically been the center of commercial activity for the surrounding communities. The post-WWII residential development boom made Hempstead the shopping mecca of Nassau. The advent of the regional mall in the mid-fifties and the closing of nearby Mitchel Air Force Base in 1960 started the village's downtown on an economic decline that lasted more than twenty-five years. Hempstead has used its strengths as the government and transportation hub of Nassau County in order to turn this decline around. The fact that the village's daytime population rises to over 200,000 people and in excess of 13,000 people a day pass through the Long Island Bus Corporation terminal (Nassau's largest), is a factor that has not been lost on prospective major retailers. In addition, both Hempstead Turnpike and Peninsula Boulevard in the village are two of Nassau County's most heavily traveled thoroughfares.

The initial step in the Village's revitalization program was to commission a 10-year Master Plan for Downtown Revitalization using \$200,000 in funds from the New York State Urban Development Corporation (Empire State Development Corp.). Through the use of an aggressive planning approach and innovative use of leveraging options, the major portions of the Master Plan's proposals have been accomplished within a 6-year period.

Some of the highlights of this plan include the completion in 1993 of a new state-of-the-art bus facility for Long Island Bus Corporation. Over \$7 million in Federal Transportation funds were used in this project. The former bus terminal at 100 Main

Street was rehabilitated using over \$6 million in HUD CDBG and 108 Loan funding.

An entire block of blighted buildings on Main Street were eliminated in 1996 with the demolition of the derelict buildings and the construction of a 266 space off-peak commuter parking facility to accommodate the LIRR, existing downtown businesses and the nearby Nassau County District Court. \$2.5 million in MTA funds, along with \$2 million in New York State Department of Transportation funding and \$825,000 in CDBG funds brought this much-needed improvement to fruition.

A seventy-five year old dilapidated movie theater was razed in 1996 and replaced with 112 units of affordable rental housing for seniors. The five-story building located at 137 Main Street also contains a national chain day care center and professional suites on the ground floor. This project was accomplished using \$1.4 million in HUD HOME funds, \$6 million in New York State Tax Credits and \$1 million in CDBG monies.

Over a dozen buildings along Main Street and throughout the downtown area were rehabilitated using HUD CDBG funds coupled with a substantial investment by the property owners. The bulk of these "rehab" involved the adaptive reuse of buildings and not just storefront makeovers. Two of the buildings, at 80 Main Street and 82 Main Street, were restored on the exterior to their historic appearance. Eighty Main Street was built in 1910 as the Nassau Garage, a Packard-Oakland automobile dealership. \$400,000 of the owner's money and \$200,000 in CDBG funds converted this building into a thriving mini-mall with law offices on the second floor. Eighty two Main Street was a former auto painting concern on three floors, built in 1926, that was converted to office and retail space using \$200,000 in owner investment and \$200,000 in CDBG funds.

Other Main Street projects include the adaptive reuse of the former Kresge's Department Store as the Nassau County Parking Violations Bureau. Included in that project is an ethnic restaurant and second floor law offices. Investment by the owner was \$200,000

"The small business owner is the backbone of our local economy. As a former business owner, I know, first-hand, how important it is to provide support for small, minority-owned business firms. Here in Hempstead, we have made a special effort to ensure that these small businesses continue to succeed by providing financial assistance through our award-winning Community Development Agency's Revitalization Program."

Program has been running 10 years

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and the Community Development Agency added \$140,000 in CDBG funds.

One of the Village's more prominent achievements was the opening this year of the new Hempstead Village Commons shopping center. Situated on the site of the former Times Square Stores department store, this project was initiated in 1996 when the County and the Village took the 8.5 acre parcel with building in a tax foreclosure procedure. The Community Development Agency expended \$1.2 million in CDBG funds to have the 250,000 square foot building demolished. The vacant site made it more attractive to potential developers. The site was sold the following year to a Nassau County retail developer who paid enough for the property to allow both the Village and the County to recoup their back taxes, and to pay the CDA for the cost of the demolition. Construction on the 100,000 square foot retail center began in May of 1998 and was completed in April 1999. \$300,000 in Empire State Development Corporation funds went toward site remediation efforts and traffic signal installation. The center includes Staples office supply store, Rite-Aid Drugs, Hollywood Video, and Pep Boys Auto Parts store. A McDonald's restaurant was completed this past year on the site.

Projects underway include a 20-acre retail center on the site of the former Abraham & Strauss Department Store that includes a Home Depot, a Stop-n-Shop supermarket and Old Navy/Gap clothing store. This \$60 million project will redevelop a sizeable portion of the downtown commercial area and assist significantly in expanding the village's tax base. Another major project underway is the construction of a \$22 million dollar MTA/LIRR Terminal to replace the aged existing station. This project includes rehabilitation of the commuter parking facility adjacent to the station as well as new platforms and a passenger overpass to facilitate access from the far end of the platforms to the parking area. Over 1,000 commuters use the existing station daily. A new and attractive facility will certainly help to increase ridership and bring people to the "New Downtown Hempstead".