

# The Continuing Story of Community Revitalization in New Cassel, New York

## Spring 2009–Spring 2011: Report Two



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## **Acknowledgments**

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April Brown Lake and Sidhartha Nathan (Town of North Hempstead) and Rick Wertheim (United Way of Long Island) provided many of the pictures featured in this report. April Brown Lake (Town of North Hempstead), Kennetha Pettus (Unified New Cassel Community Revitalization Corporation), and Dermot Kelly and Joseph Santamaria (Town of North Hempstead Community Development Agency) provided detailed information about development projects. Annabelle Day provided proofreading services.

As principal investigator, I am responsible for the findings and conclusions contained in this study.

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I want express my thanks to Mary Ann Allison for the opportunity to participate in this research and for her ongoing support and encouragement, to Eric Allison for his guidance and advice, and to my family for their support and love.

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## **Executive Summary**

A year after the completion of key pieces of a long-awaited revitalization of New Cassel, including new apartments, street improvements, and shopping, a continuing Hofstra University study has found that many residents are noticing a big difference.

Covering the two years from spring 2009 to spring 2011, this document reports the progress against targets set in the 2003 New Cassel Community Vision Plan and the Town of North Hempstead Community Development Association Urban Renewal Plan. It also records newly emerging goals and activities—a sign of health in a rapidly changing environment.

In the last two years, three new small businesses—an athletic shoe store, a hair salon, and a family dental practice—have celebrated grand openings. A pharmacy, Caribbean restaurant, and grocery store are nearing opening dates as well, with others to follow. Collectively, they will provide the types of goods and services the community requested during a major participatory planning event that took place in 2002.

Surveys conducted for this study show that many of the people living in the 200 newly completed affordable apartments have come from New Cassel and surrounding communities. Affordable rent was the most important reason most people chose these new buildings.

Projected to cost more than \$20 million, a new 60,000-square-foot community center is currently under construction, with completion forecast for spring 2012. The center will offer two NBA-sized basketball courts, an Internet café and computer training center, dance and TV studios, lounges for youth and seniors, a fitness center, conference rooms, and a multipurpose social gathering space.

Unified New Cassel Community Revitalization Corporation (UNCCRC) continued to represent the community in this renewal process and expanded its activities to include local training programs, a farmers' market, and real estate development.

Those committed to New Cassel faced three major obstacles in the last several years: an economic recession, charges of substantive corruption directly related to the revitalization process, and significant changes among the government teams supporting this work.

When new residents were asked what would make New Cassel even stronger, more local retail (63%), more local jobs (62%), and more government funding (53%) topped the list.

## Introduction

The purpose of this continuing research is to contribute to the understanding of what maintains or, when necessary, revitalizes communities, and of the ways in which groups of people—whether in government, community organizations, business, or neighborhoods—can address complex problems in a sustainable way.

Community revitalization is rare, complex, and never finished. It is important that we celebrate New Cassel's initial successes and continuing progress. At the same time, it is also vital to study the process carefully so that other communities may benefit from understanding New Cassel's positive and negative experiences. Case studies of this type are most useful when they continue over decades. Revitalization takes a long time, and the best of plans are disrupted by many events, including, for example, swings in the economy; changes in government, laws, and funding; and new residents with different ideas. Longitudinal studies such as this one can track the revitalization effort as it adapts to changing circumstances.

The first report, released in December 2008 and available online at [http://www.hofstra.edu/Academics/CSS/ncss\\_newcassel.html](http://www.hofstra.edu/Academics/CSS/ncss_newcassel.html), provides a record of the situation at the beginning of this renewal effort, which began in the late '90s, and the progress that had taken place through 2008. It briefly describes New Cassel's history, outlines the organizations that were important in the revitalization program, provides a narrative describing the renewal process, summarizes the positive lessons learned and the outstanding challenges at the time, and, as Sustainable Long Island requested, includes some recommendations. Progress was tracked against a matrix of goals created during the 2002 community participatory planning charrette.

This report continues the documentation of the progress on the targets set in the 2003 New Cassel Vision Plan and the Town of North Hempstead Community Development Association Urban Renewal Plan. It also documents newly emerging goals and activities—a sign of health in a rapidly changing environment. In addition to including information from a wide variety of interviews, it features the results of a survey of residents who have recently moved into three of the new residential and mixed-use buildings, conducted as a part of this phase of the research.

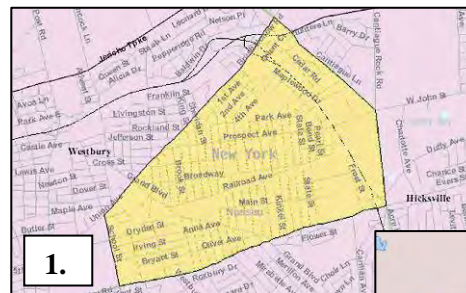
We at the National Center for Suburban Studies at Hofstra University® hope to continue this series of reports in the years to come, illuminating the ups and downs of the renewal. Fifteen

years from now, it will be important to look at how well the buildings and streets are maintained and the longer-term success of residents and the community as a whole.

Before beginning, it is important to recognize that while many feel a sensitive redevelopment of downtown New Cassel is an appropriate goal, a blanket characterization of New Cassel as requiring revitalization would miss the genuine pleasure many residents have taken in their homes and neighbors for decades, as well as the existing strengths of the community and its history of resident involvement and activism.

## A Short Introduction to Community Revitalization in New Cassel

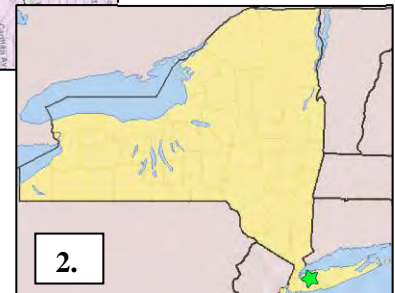
One of Long Island's oldest African American villages, New Cassel was first settled as a farming community by former slaves who had been freed in the mid-1700s by Quakers. This 1.5-square-mile unincorporated hamlet is located in the Town of North Hempstead, in Nassau County, New York. Historically a predominantly African American community, New Cassel became home to an increasing number of Latino and Haitian residents in the latter half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.



1. New Cassel, New York
2. New Cassel situated in New York State

Courtesy:

1. U.S. Census (2000)
2. Wikipedia Commons



At the turn of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, New Cassel lacked both affordable housing and a downtown center, and suffered from environmental contamination, overcrowded and illegal housing, and community despair and discord. Residents, government officials, and nonprofit leaders cite a number of complex factors that may have interacted to generate a need for revitalization, including:

- The Town of North Hempstead's conscious or unconscious designation of New Cassel as a marginal area, which it therefore neglected during much of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.
- The effects of race, gender, and class segregation and discrimination in housing, education, employment, and access to resources.

- The lack of a regional development plan that adequately responded to the changing and diverse needs of all Long Islanders.

In the late 1990s, Reverend Patrick Duggan, then executive director of Sustainable Long Island, and Bishop (then Reverend) Lionel Harvey, chairman and CEO of the local community group, the Unified New Cassel Community Revitalization Corporation (UNCCRC), formed a coalition to advocate for renewal. Despite some initial resistance arising from decades of broken promises for earlier revitalization programs, the community mobilized.

In 2002, after four years of community outreach, education, and organization, more than 800 community residents and stakeholders participated in a facilitated community planning process, developing a comprehensive Vision Plan that described their hopes for New Cassel. Appendix A presents the New Cassel

Vision Implementation Matrix, which summarized the major elements of that plan. Formally adopted by the Town of North Hempstead in 2003, this plan has helped a committed multilevel government partnership raise more than \$120 million in public and private funding and continues to guide the ongoing renewal work.

By 2008, at the time of the first report, in spite of many challenges, there was considerable progress. Many New Cassel residents felt their community was both cleaner and safer than it had been in the 1980s and 1990s. Residents noted with delight the construction of seven new buildings in downtown New Cassel. As they entered 2009, community members were looking forward to more affordable housing and a new park; a bank, full-service grocery store, and pharmacy (among other new and expanded businesses); and a new community center. To support the safe, attractive, and “walkable” downtown center called for in the Vision Plan, a streetscaping program was scheduled for 2010. Some elements of the rebirth—such as the summer youth programs and community participation in planning processes—were not as visible as buildings, but were equally important to the community’s health.



More than 800 people participate in the Community Vision Charrette, July 2002  
Source: Sustainable Long Island

Despite the prior failures and complex, constantly changing challenges, New Cassel shows us that participatory community planning backed by governmental support can be effective. In addition to documenting the results, the first report focused on what lay behind the successes and the remaining challenges. Among the keys to the initial success are:

- A formal community-based participative process, resulting in a plan that was formally adopted by the Town of North Hempstead (hereafter, Town or TNH).
- A powerful government partnership at all levels of jurisdiction working to fund and support the renewal.
- Businesses, primarily real estate developers in the early stages, who were willing to invest in the community.

Appendix B provides more information about the key factors behind the successes as well as a summary of the continuing problems facing the community and those working on its behalf identified in the first round of research.

## **A Statistical Picture of New Cassel: Information From the U.S. Census**

Tables 1–6<sup>1</sup> compare the most recent Census statistics available for New Cassel—a combination of survey information gathered from 2005 to 2009<sup>2</sup>—with the same statistics for the Town of North Hempstead, Nassau County, New York state, and the United States during the same time period. On the following page, Tables 7–12<sup>3</sup> show the percentage change in each category between the 2000 Census used in the first report and the newly released 2005–2009 information.

As of the combined 2005–2009 Census, New Cassel’s reported population was 11,880 persons, a decrease of 11% since 2000. While there was a slight increase in the number owner-occupied housing units, the number of rental units decreased by almost a third. The new units being developed as part of the revitalization, primarily rentals, were not yet ready. As they are completed and occupied, the population is likely to increase again.

The reported changes in racial and ethnic characteristics of the population corroborate anecdotal observations by community members, who report an increase in Hispanic residents. Those self-reporting as Hispanic increased by 15% and now comprise 47% of the community.

Those describing themselves as Caucasian decreased by 50% (to 16% of the population) and those identifying themselves as Black/African American decreased slightly (8%) to 43% of the population, while “all other,” including mixed race, almost doubled (94%) to 41%.

Financial experts advise that 30% of income is a reasonable amount to spend for housing. While more than a third of Long Island residents spend more than 35% of their income on housing,<sup>4</sup> more than half (59%) of New Cassel residents report that they pay more than 35% of their income in rent. This burden strains household resources (as is reflected in the results of the resident surveys discussed later in this report) and makes the community as a whole more fragile. The census figures indicate that New Cassel homeowners face similar problems. Specialists suggest that home purchase costs should be no more than 2.5 times household income, while the median house value in New Cassel is 5.6 times the median household income.

In tandem with increasing housing prices elsewhere in the county, the median house value increased to \$384,700, an increase of 132% through 2009. However, housing prices on Long Island in general declined between 2007 and 2010.<sup>5</sup> It is likely that New Cassel prices peaked above \$384,700 and then declined between 2007 and 2009, but there is no data available at present to confirm this supposition.

Median household income rose 24% to \$68,813. While this is higher than the national median—because the cost of living in Nassau County is much higher than in most other places in the United States<sup>6</sup>—this does not translate to a higher standard of living.

<b>2005-2009</b>					
<b>Tables 1 - 6. Census Statistics for New Cassel, the Town of North Hempstead, Nassau County, New York State and the United States</b>					
<b>Table 1. Comparisons of Population and Income</b>					
<b>Population and Income</b>	<b>New Cassel</b>	<b>TwN N Hempstead</b>	<b>Nassau County</b>	<b>New York State</b>	<b>United States</b>
Total population	11,880	226,633	1,354,141	19,423,896	301,461,533
Average household size	4.31	2.92	3.05	2.64	2.60
Average family size	4.77	3.44	3.55	3.31	3.19
Median household income	\$68,813	\$100,317	\$92,450	\$55,233	\$51,425
Median family income	\$69,397	\$170,152	\$106,412	\$67,040	\$62,363
Per capita income	\$21,638	\$51,056	\$40,515	\$30,634	\$27,041
Families below poverty level	12.7%	3.1%	3.2%	10.5%	9.9%
Individuals below poverty level	33.4%	13.7%	16.8%	23.7%	24.5%
<b>Table 2. Comparisons of Racial Composition</b>					
<b>Self-identified Single Race</b>	<b>New Cassel</b>	<b>TwN N Hempstead</b>	<b>Nassau County</b>	<b>New York State</b>	<b>United States</b>
Black or African American	43.4%	5.7%	10.8%	15.6%	12.4%
Caucasian	15.7%	74.1%	75.6%	67.1%	74.5%
All other (including mixed race)	40.9%	20.3%	13.7%	17.2%	13.1%
<b>Table 3. Comparisons of Ethnic Composition</b>					
<b>Self-identified Ethnicity</b>	<b>New Cassel</b>	<b>TwN N Hempstead</b>	<b>Nassau County</b>	<b>New York State</b>	<b>United States</b>
Hispanic or Latino (of any race)	47.3%	10.8%	12.2%	16.3%	15.1%
Not Hispanic or Latino	52.7%	89.2%	87.8%	83.7%	84.9%
<b>Table 4. Comparisons of Housing and Rent Expense</b>					
<b>Median Housing Costs</b>	<b>New Cassel</b>	<b>TwN N Hempstead</b>	<b>Nassau County</b>	<b>New York State</b>	<b>United States</b>
Median house value	\$384,700	\$659,200	\$490,300	\$300,600	\$185,400
Median rent	\$1,385	\$1,468	\$1,374	\$945	\$817
<b>Table 5. Comparisons of Rent as a Percentage of Household Income</b>					
<b>Gross Rent as a Percentage of Household Income 2005 - 2009</b>	<b>New Cassel</b>	<b>TwN N Hempstead</b>	<b>Nassau County</b>	<b>New York State</b>	<b>United States</b>
Less than 20%	16.2%	23.7%	22.5%	16.2%	25.4%
20 to 29%	19.2%	20.0%	22.3%	22.9%	24.6%
30 to 34%	6.0%	9.1%	9.5%	8.8%	9.1%
35% or more	58.6%	47.2%	45.7%	42.0%	41.0%
Not computed	6.0%	9.6%	7.4%	5.7%	8.2%
<b>Table 6. Comparisons of Occupation Type</b>					
<b>Occupation Type</b>	<b>New Cassel</b>	<b>TwN N Hempstead</b>	<b>Nassau County</b>	<b>New York State</b>	<b>United States</b>
Management, professional, and related occupations	15.8%	48.9%	42.5%	37.7%	34.8%
Service occupations	23.7%	11.6%	15.0%	18.8%	16.9%
Sales and office occupations	22.4%	27.9%	28.3%	25.6%	25.6%
Farming, fishing, and forestry occupations	0.0%	0.0%	0.1%	0.3%	0.7%
Construction, extraction, and maintenance occupations	11.1%	5.4%	6.9%	7.7%	9.5%
Production, transportation, and material moving occupations	27.0%	6.1%	7.2%	9.9%	12.5%
<b>Source: U.S. Census (2005-2009). Some columns do not total 100% due to the rounding process.</b>					

<b>PERCENT CHANGE: 2005-2009 Compared with 2000</b>					
<b>Tables 7-12. Census Statistics for New Cassel, the Town of North Hempstead, Nassau County, New York State and the United States</b>					
<b>Table 7. Comparisons of Population and Income</b>					
Population and Income	New Cassel	TwN N Hempstead	Nassau County	New York State	United States
Total population	-10.7%	1.8%	1.5%	2.4%	7.1%
Average household size	-3.4%	2.8%	4.1%	1.1%	0.4%
Average family size	8.4%	5.2%	6.3%	2.8%	1.6%
Median household income	24.1%	23.8%	28.3%	27.3%	22.5%
Median family income	26.1%	80.7%	31.0%	29.7%	24.6%
Per capita income	38.1%	22.7%	26.0%	30.9%	25.3%
Families below poverty level	21.0%	0.0%	-8.6%	14.1%	7.6%
Individuals below poverty level	125.7%	185.4%	223.1%	91.1%	97.6%
<b>Table 8. Comparisons of Racial Composition</b>					
Self-identified Single Race	New Cassel	TwN N Hempstead	Nassau County	New York State	United States
Black or African American	-8.2%	-10.9%	6.9%	-1.9%	0.8%
Caucasian	-50.3%	-6.2%	-4.7%	-1.2%	-0.8%
All other (including mixed race)	93.8%	39.0%	29.2%	6.8%	4.8%
<b>Table 9. Comparisons of Ethnic Composition</b>					
Self-identified Ethnicity	New Cassel	TwN N Hempstead	Nassau County	New York State	United States
Hispanic or Latino (of any race)	15.1%	10.2%	22.0%	7.9%	20.8%
Not Hispanic or Latino	-10.5%	-1.1%	-2.4%	-1.4%	-3.0%
<b>Table 10. Comparisons of Housing and Rent Expense</b>					
Median Housing Costs	New Cassel	TwN N Hempstead	Nassau County	New York State	United States
Median house value	132.3%	86.2%	103.2%	102.2%	55.0%
Median rent	6.9%	35.2%	42.5%	40.6%	35.7%
<b>Table 11. Comparisons of Rent as a Percentage of Household Income</b>					
Gross Rent as a Percentage of Household Income	New Cassel	TwN N Hempstead	Nassau County	New York State	United States
Less than 20%	-4.1%	-27.7%	-25.5%	-49.2%	-21.6%
20 to 29%	-0.5%	-1.0%	-0.9%	8.0%	6.0%
30 to 34%	15.4%	35.8%	30.1%	23.9%	24.7%
35% or more	11.4%	47.5%	43.7%	25.7%	39.0%
Not computed	0.0%	15.7%	-9.8%	-9.5%	9.3%
<b>Table 12. Comparisons of Occupation Type</b>					
Occupation Type	New Cassel	TwN N Hempstead	Nassau County	New York State	United States
Management, professional, and related occupations	-8.1%	1.7%	3.7%	2.7%	3.6%
Service occupations	-15.7%	1.8%	9.5%	13.3%	13.4%
Sales and office occupations	-3.0%	-1.8%	-6.9%	-5.5%	-4.1%
Farming, fishing, and forestry occupations	-100.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Construction, extraction, and maintenance occupations	56.3%	1.9%	-1.4%	1.3%	1.1%
Production, transportation, and material moving occupations	11.1%	-10.3%	-7.7%	-15.4%	-14.4%
<b>Source: U.S. Census (2000, 2005-2009). Some columns do not total 100% due to the rounding process.</b>					

## An Overview of the New Progress

In the two and on-half years since the first report was published, there has been substantive progress. For the first time, it is possible to see residents in many of the new buildings going about their daily lives and shoppers stopping in at some of the new businesses. The promised streetscaping is almost finished, and construction on the new community center is proceeding.

The residential units in three of the new buildings on Prospect Avenue—701 Prospect (Site A in the urban renewal plan), 735 Prospect (Site B), and 822 Prospect (Site C)—and one Apex building at 512–514 Union Avenue (Site F, Apex II) are fully occupied. Another affordable housing building, Apex I, also on Union Avenue, was already in use in 2008.

Three new small businesses—an athletic shoe store, a hair salon, and a family dental practice—have celebrated grand openings. A pharmacy, Caribbean restaurant, and grocery store are nearing opening dates as well, with others to



New Cassel's new athletic shoe store,  
Worthy NYC: 8821 Prospect Avenue  
Courtesy: Town of North Hempstead

follow. Collectively, they will be providing the types of goods and services the community requested more than a decade ago. Joseph Santamaria, assistant director, Town of North Hempstead Community Development Agency, also notes that the shoe store, a Nike dealership, brings “big brands” to the community. He adds that “this helps to connect New Cassel to the global economy.”<sup>7</sup>

The UNCCRC continues to support the urban renewal plan by, for example, supervising affordable housing lotteries and recruiting businesses for the rebuilt downtown. Growing into its own, UNCCRC has diversified its board of directors, purchased five houses to generate income and, as part of the Neighborhood Stabilization Program, is developing New Cassel's intellectual capital by offering a variety of on-the-job and formal training programs for young people and seminars for business owners.

As they have for centuries, informal community asset building and leadership development continue. As just one example, TNH Councilwoman Viviana Russell, who is new to government service, described the time she and her husband, Gary Russell, met Mildred Little, an experienced and highly respected community activist, a few years ago.

She really pulled on our coattails. She said, “You are a new family in the community. You’re young, and we really need young people to get involved in the community.” She asked us to come to meetings, and we did. That was the start of us getting more involved.

Reflecting shared values and long-term commitment on the part of many people, this progress took place despite an economic recession, additional revelations of government corruption, and changes in elected officials. As Bishop Lionel Harvey, who has been a leader in this process since the beginning, said, “It’s been a long, long, long journey.”<sup>8</sup>

The fact that New Cassel was featured in one of the “If you are thinking of living in...” articles<sup>9</sup> in *The New York Times* in November 2010 indicates that the downtown revitalization is gaining recognition outside the immediate vicinity.

## **The Major Challenges in 2009 and 2010**

When asked about the barriers to community revitalization, Jon Kaiman, Supervisor of the Town of North Hempstead, said, “The first great inhibitor is the near impossibility of a project like this. Because it takes you into the unknown, it is difficult to get everyone at the table to agree to take this journey together.” He continued: “Another great challenge is to be able to overcome the obstacles that fall along the path.”<sup>10</sup> In addition to the everyday problems associated with community development, those committed to New Cassel faced three major obstacles in the last several years: an economic recession, charges of substantive corruption directly related to the revitalization process, and significant changes among the government teams supporting this work.

## **The Recession and Continuing Economic Distress**

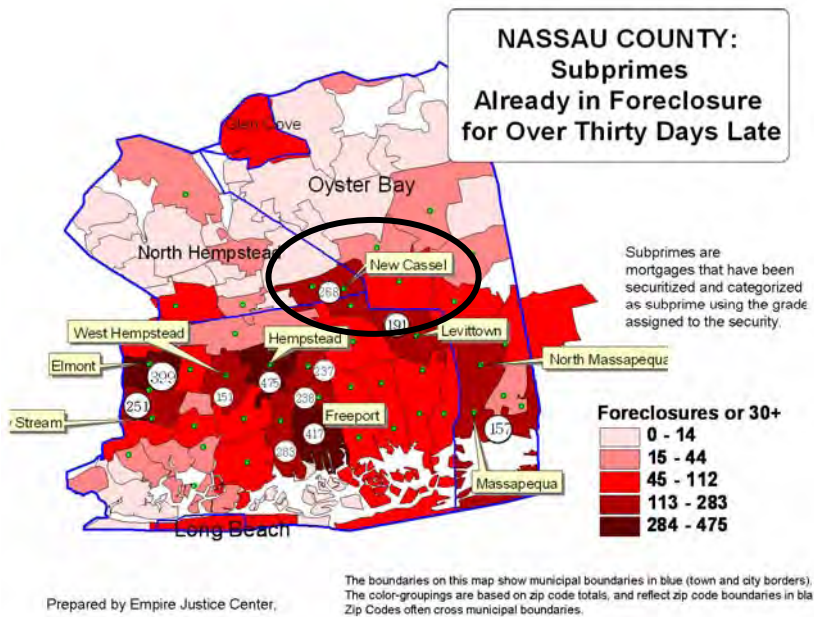
The 2007 to 2009 economic recession in the United States—officially December 2007 to June 2009 according to the National Bureau of Economic Research<sup>11</sup>—hurt both the New Cassel revitalization process and the community as a whole.

The TNH Planning Department coordinates federal, state, county, and local funding for the renewal program.<sup>12</sup> The recession made an already-complex funding situation even more difficult and slowed development. TNH Councilwoman Viviana Russell pointed out that when “the New York State budget was not passed on time, monies were held up[.]”<sup>13</sup>

On a smaller, but equally critical scale, Robert Weinburg, the property manager for Sood & Associates Family Dental Center, describes how the recession affected this small medical practice opening at 701 Prospect Avenue:

The banks essentially cut everyone off and took funding away from small businesses: there were no small business loans, no equity loans. It was a nightmare. So...we had to reach into our own pockets to make this dream a reality. It was a tough ride.<sup>14</sup>

Difficult economic times are hardest on the less fortunate. Some New Cassel residents weathered this storm with comparative ease. Others, however, had more difficulty. For example,



Courtesy: Empire Justice Center

in 2008 the Empire Justice Center<sup>15</sup> highlighted New Cassel as having one of the highest numbers of mortgage foreclosures and overdue mortgage payments rates on Long Island. Foreclosures destabilize and demoralize communities. And displaced homeowners strain rental markets.

According to the Hofstra National Suburban Survey,<sup>16</sup> while some sectors of the U.S. economy may have entered recovery in the summer of 2010, residents of the suburbs across the United States continued to suffer heavily from unemployment, precarious finances (living paycheck to paycheck), and foreclosures. As is clear from Tables 1 and 7, the community has long been a pocket of relatively high poverty rates and

low incomes when compared to the surrounding county, and the percentage of poor families rose toward the end of the decade. This suggests that New Cassel's families struggled more than most, as the recession likely added further stress to household finances. With a cost of living in Nassau County that is just under one and one-half times the national average<sup>17</sup> and almost 14% of the families and a third of the individuals in New Cassel living below the poverty line, New Cassel residents struggled even more than most. Foreclosures and problems with rent payments continue. In our survey of New Cassel residents living in new buildings, many were worried about increasing rent, saying, for example: "I found it [rent] is NOT affordable for the working class."

Recovery will be slow. In mid-2009, the Nassau County Office of Legislative Budget Review labeled the outlook for 2009<sup>18</sup> as grim and forecast that employment in Nassau County will not again reach its 2008 level until 2014.<sup>19</sup>

A lack of trusted financial planning service providers and financial counselors also hinders the community. The National Bureau of Economic Research has published a study that indicates that the increase in household leveraging of finances and credit card borrowing in 2006 is a "powerful statistical predictor...of the overall consumer default, house price, unemployment, residential investment, and durable consumption patterns during the [2007–2009] recession."<sup>20</sup> Further, research conducted by the Urban Institute<sup>21</sup> on the effects of the National Foreclosure Mitigation Counseling Program shows that effective counseling can help homeowners and cure (and sustain the cure of) foreclosures. Homeowners are 1.7 times more likely to save their homes with the assistance of a housing counselor.<sup>22</sup>

### **Corruption and Concern About Community Leadership**

In the first New Cassel report, improprieties on the part of government officials was listed as one of the challenges facing the revitalization. For example, in 2007 Andrew Acierno, the first of five defendants charged in connection with a 16-month probe into allegations of corruption within the Town of North Hempstead's Building Department,<sup>23</sup> pled guilty to six felony charges.<sup>24</sup> And in midsummer 2008 the former commissioner of the TNH Building Department, David Wasserman, pled guilty to multiple felony and other charges and was sentenced to a year in jail.<sup>25</sup>

Unfortunately, additional government corruption is reported to have penetrated into the

heart of the revitalization effort. On May 6, 2009, Roger Corbin, a Nassau County Democratic legislator, surrendered to federal agents on charges of evading income taxes on more than \$200,000 he had received from a developer working in New Cassel.<sup>26</sup>

Then in July, 2010 Nassau County District Attorney Kathleen Rice<sup>27</sup> announced that a three-year investigation into New Cassel redevelopment led to the indictment and arrest of two former Nassau County legislators (Patrick Williams and Roger Corbin), one former Town of North Hempstead official (David Wasserman), and the then director of the TNH Community Development Agency (Neville Mullings). The District Attorney's office alleges that, among other things, the contract for development of revitalization sites B, C, and D was awarded to Ranjan Batheja of Stoneridge Homes as a result of bribes rather than merit. At the end of 2007, Stoneridge defaulted on its construction loans, and construction at the sites came to a halt. Ownership of sites B and C passed to First Sterling Financial, and construction was eventually completed in 2010. The Town of North Hempstead CDA is still negotiating ownership and the development of site D. These cases have not yet come to trial or otherwise been settled, and, thus, the accused are presumed innocent unless proven guilty.

For the last four years, the news of government corruption and continuing charges of misbehavior have weighed down the revitalization process, creating ripples throughout the community. The whole process lost momentum just as the United States was entering an economic recession, increasing the severity of the consequences.

Concern over the Nassau County District Attorney's continuing investigation made the already cumbersome process of obtaining the requisite building permits even slower. Sandra Acosta, owner of A&C Development Partners and the developer of Site H, described the situation this way:

I got the "okay, we have to look at your plans 35 times before we say yes, because now we don't want to be indicted...." All of a sudden, things came to a halt because people were afraid to make a decision because [District Attorney] Kathleen Rice was coming down so hard.<sup>28</sup>

Small business owner Leslie Davis had planned to move into her new hair salon at 701 Prospect Avenue (Site A) on April 1, 2010, but was not able to move in until December 11<sup>th</sup>. She comments that the Town of North Hempstead is "very strict on the compliance...and maybe that's good,"<sup>29</sup> but many of the code and inspection requirements were unexpected. She adds that she "was very stressed and upset.... *Just think about me as a business owner not being in*

*business for eight months!”*<sup>30</sup> Davis notes gratefully that the Bluestone Organization, the developer for Site A, was very helpful during this time, as was Bishop Lionel Harvey. She remembers Harvey saying, “Keep your eye on the prize; you know it is coming.”<sup>31</sup> Robert Weinburg, manager of the Family Dental Center, also mentioned the “toll [it] took on us financially because it took so long to get everything approved.”<sup>32</sup>

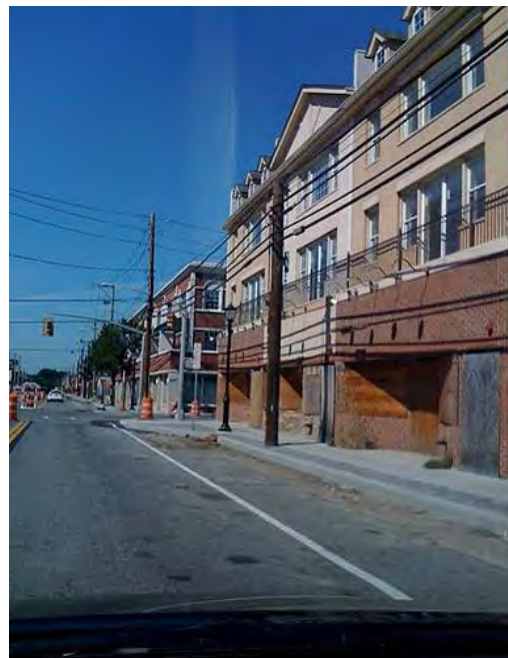
The delayed completion of the new buildings created difficulties for the small businesses that had planned to move into them. Worthy NYC had planned to open an athletic shoe store in the new building at 839 Prospect Avenue (Site D), but since Stoneridge Homes went into receivership the building was not ready. Instead, Worthy NYC opened its shoe store at 821 Prospect Avenue (Site H developed by A&C Development Partners) in July 2010.

As building began, the community became more hopeful, only—when the news of corruption spread—to go back again to feeling betrayed and angry. Boarded-up and empty retail and residential sites were (and some still are) a daily reminder of what many see as yet another in a long line of betrayals. Developer Acosta put it this way:

I think what made the community hostile was Stoneridge. Stoneridge made the community start to worry. And that’s a big problem because all along they were very excited and happy. But then everyone starts to be indicted and arrested. Seeing people who you thought you knew and trusted being arrested can really hurt.<sup>33</sup>

Charlene Thompson, who worked in the Nassau County Office of Housing and Intergovernmental Affairs at the time she was interviewed in November 2010, spoke of her own concerns:

I came to government because of my love of public service, and the things that I have been able to do are wonderful. But when you see people who abuse [people’s] trust...it’s very disheartening. When people you’ve grown up trusting and admiring end up disappointing you for their own personal greed...there’s really no way to recoup....<sup>34</sup>



Empty retail and residential sites on Prospect Avenue, September 2010  
Courtesy: Catherine Stutts

With distrust of officials high, leadership is an issue in many minority communities, including New Cassel. A number of residents and community organizers were especially pained at the number of Black officials among those indicted. Some had looked up to Roger Corbin and Neville Mullings as role models for community service. People were openly worried about role models for young people and specifically asked that we include a question about recognized and potential community leaders in the survey of residents in new buildings that was being prepared. (Survey results are shown later in this report.)

### **Changes in Key Players**

Among the key success factors identified in the first report were the powerful government partnerships that drew together officials in effective collaboration. The indictments have necessitated a change of players and a loss of experienced and established working relationships.

In addition, political party control may have also shifted the context for revitalization. In the early stages of this process, the key officials in the Town of North Hempstead, the Town CDA, Nassau County, New York state, and the U.S. government were members of the same political party (the Democratic Party). It is unclear whether this political alignment was a significant factor in this collaboration, but it is clear that there was an effective network supporting New Cassel. In the November 2010 election, there was a shift in power,<sup>35</sup> and a Republican administration headed by Edward Mangano took office in Nassau County. As is often the case with political transitions, this has resulted in reorganization and displacement of many of those with long-standing knowledge of and commitment to New Cassel. Especially important to New Cassel was the transition in the Office of Economic Development. As a result, some critical processes have slowed, and the community and some of those in the organizations who work to support it are now concerned.<sup>36</sup>

Because community revitalization is a long and complex process, it always takes place in changing environments. (For more information, please see the section on *wicked problems* in the first report.) Communities wishing to insulate themselves from problems arising from the loss of key leaders may wish to consult the growing body of research<sup>37</sup> documenting the characteristics of flexible networks,<sup>38</sup> which are capable of achieving results during periods of major change. These networks often consist of committed people in a variety of roles that change periodically.

Rather than trying to freeze things in place, those committed to community health can consciously work to develop networks that support both agility and stability. If the network *as a whole* (not just the individuals in the network) learns, then individual changes are less problematic.

## **Success Stories**

New businesses and residents in the new buildings and local community development programs sponsored by UNCCRC are among the more visible and important successes. Here are some of their stories.

### **New Businesses**

The 2002 Vision Plan called for new businesses along Prospect Avenue, including a grocery store, pharmacy, bank, and day care center. Today, nine years later, Prospect Avenue has three new businesses—a hair salon, a dental center, and an athletic shoe store—open and operating.

At 701 Prospect Avenue, the Bluestone Organization has developed 20,400 square feet of commercial space, of which approximately 4,000 square feet is already in use or leased. In addition to the hair salon and the dental office, Bluestone has leased space to the owners of a Caribbean restaurant named Paradise Cove. The restaurant space is in development.

Bluestone has had difficulty leasing the commercial space to food, medical, or day care providers because the property is zoned retail and does not permit those uses “by right” (those uses not consistent with the uses designated in the zoning code). Thus, any business of this type must get a variance or conditional use permit from the TNH Board of Zoning and Appeals, which, of course, requires additional time and expense. Acting Executive Director of the CDA Dermot Kelly has therefore recommended Bluestone draft a master plan with the aid of a zoning attorney, traffic consultant, and architect in order to propose a mix of tenants that would both be appropriate for the space and serve the community. With an approved master plan, Bluestone is likely to be able to lease commercial space more readily.

At 821 Prospect Avenue, the A&C Development Corporation has sold two 5,910-square-foot condominiums: one to Henry Cunningham and one to Worthy NYC. Interested since the

2002 Visioning charrette, Henry Cunningham, working with Sandra Acosta early on in the renewal process, plans to bring a pharmacy to the revitalized community. Worthy NYC, an authorized Nike dealer, has, as discussed above, opened an athletic shoe store. Worthy chose New Cassel because Nike is interested in covering this market. A bank is planned for the site, but negotiations are still underway.

Short profiles of two of the new businesses follow.



Nu-Cassel Pharmacy preparing to open, 821 Prospect Avenue  
Courtesy: Town of North Hempstead

### ***Studio “L” 516, 701 Prospect Avenue***

Leslie Davis had been operating a hair salon on Post Avenue for 13 years at the time TNH Councilwoman Vivian Russell, Bishop Lionel Harvey, and Kennetha Pettus (executive director of UNCCRC) approached her about relocating her hair salon to New Cassel. Davis, a native of New Cassel at a time when it was known as Westbury, was initially concerned about leaving her established clientele but, once she decided to make the move, she invited them to “participate in the move” by continuing as clients in the new location. “It [community building] was something that we had to do as a group; it needed to be a collective effort.”

Davis was scheduled to open Studio “L” 516, a salon that specializes in Puerto Rican and African American hair, on April 1, 2010, but delays in the permit process pushed back the grand opening to December 11, 2010. The eight-month delay was, she recalls, “something that, in the beginning, I felt was a deterrent. But in the end, I thought, ‘if they are really sticklers about things they are doing and standing firm on their beliefs...then maybe this is the best place for me.’”

Davis has signed a 10-year lease with the Bluestone Organization. She currently employs two hairdressers (neither is a



Studio “L” Opening: Leslie Davis, Studio “L” owner;  
Hon. Robert Troiano, Nassau County legislator  
Courtesy: Town of North Hempstead

New Cassel resident) and offers apprenticeships to students at Westbury Tech [the Joseph M. Barry Career and Technical Educational Center]. Davis aims to bring a level of respectability and professionalism to her new project. She wants to set a tone and standard that will be inspirational to her community; she “really wants to make a difference and help my community.”

### ***Dr. Sachin Sood & Associates Family Dentistry, 701 Prospect Avenue***

A lifelong Westbury resident, Robert Weinburg is the site manager for Dr. Sachin Sood & Associates Family Dentistry, which opened in May 2010. When the site was cleared at 701 Prospect Avenue in preparation for the new construction, Weinburg felt that the new building would be the perfect location for a dental office. After meeting with Legislator Robert Troiano, who supported his vision, he embarked on a three-year journey to open the office.

Weinburg described the activity along Prospect Avenue as a project “where money was being well spent for revitalization in a neighborhood that has otherwise seen hard times.”<sup>39</sup> He partnered with Sachin Sood, DDS, to open a dental office committed to educating the community, advocating preventative care, and creating “an anxiety free environment.”<sup>40</sup>

The 1,500-square-foot “Park Avenue [style] office is filled with natural light 75% of the day.”<sup>41</sup> Sood & Associates Family Dentistry provides free consultations, accepts Medicaid, and offers sliding-scale fees to those without any insurance. Weinburg hopes that will encourage residents to come in for early intervention, preventive care, and regular maintenance.

The dental practice employs two full-time dental hygienists and one part-time hygienist, all of whom are local residents. Weinburg also works with BOCES<sup>42</sup> (the Board of Cooperative Educational Services of Nassau County) to help students in the dental assistant program complete their residency requirements. This neighborhood participation is exactly the kind of



Family Dental Office Opening: Robert Weinburg, office manager; Hon. Robert Troiano, Nassau County Legislator; Sachin Sood, DDS; Vikas Arora, DDS  
Courtesy: Town of North Hempstead

community asset called for by the New Cassel community in the 2002 Visioning Plan.

## **Residents in New Buildings**

We conducted surveys of the new residents in order to document the characteristics of the people moving into the new buildings and to understand how they feel about their new apartments, the New Cassel community, and the revitalization. Early in 2011, surveys were delivered to the occupant mailboxes in the first three buildings with their first complement of occupants: 701 Prospect Avenue and Apex I and II. Most of the new residents are pleased with the new rental apartments and see positive changes in New Cassel, although the cost of living continues to be a concern for many. The key survey findings are reported in this section. Full survey results are available on The National Center for Suburban Studies at Hofstra University® website: <http://www.hofstra.edu/Academics/CSS/index.html>.

Residents at 735 and 822 Prospect Avenue will be surveyed for the next report. To complete our understanding of how the larger community assesses the revitalization, we also plan to conduct a survey of New Cassel homeowners after most of the retail space is occupied and the community center has been open for at least a year.

### ***701 Prospect Avenue***

701 Prospect Avenue has 56 rental apartments plus one apartment for the building superintendent. Opened in 2009, the rental units are designated as affordable housing and are located above ground-floor retail space. This building is the first affordable housing development in Nassau County developed by the Bluestone Organization, which has extensive experience with affordable housing in New York City.



701 Prospect Avenue  
Courtesy: The Bluestone Organization



701 Prospect Avenue  
Courtesy: Catherine Stutts

## ***Apex I and II***

The Apex I and II buildings also offer affordable housing. Both buildings are owned by the Kimmel Housing Development Foundation (formerly the Anna and Philip Kimmel Foundation) and reflect a crusade for better housing choices by the chairman of the foundation board, Howard Kimmel. Apex I opened in 2003, has 38 units (five of which are shared units) for senior citizens 55 years or older, and includes common rooms for parties and other activities. Apex II opened in 2009, with 35 next-generation workforce units. Two of the units are shared apartments with three tenants; some apartments include features for individuals who are physically challenged. There are no commercial spaces in these buildings.



Anna and Philip Kimmel Foundation Apex II, 512 Union Avenue  
Courtesy: Catherine Stutts



Garden next to Anna and Philip Kimmel Foundation Apex I, 514 Union Avenue  
Courtesy: Catherine Stutts

Fifty-two percent of the residents of 701 Prospect Avenue responded to the survey (27 of the 53 distributed surveys were returned). Forty-five percent of the Apex I and II residents returned completed surveys (33 of the 73 distributed surveys). While this high rate of response<sup>43</sup> indicates active interest on the part of New Cassel residents, there are not enough responses to ensure that the results represent all residents in a statistically accurate manner. Thus these results should be considered directional.

The surveys were essentially the same for the three buildings. For 701 Prospect Avenue, when asking about the community, we used the name *New Cassel*. For Apex I and II, the community was designated as *New Cassel and Westbury*.

### ***Who Is Living in the New Apartments?***

#### *Where did they come from?*

Most of the residents moved to these new buildings from nearby communities. Thirty-

eight percent said they moved from an address in Westbury. Note that New Cassel is served by the Westbury Post Office, and locations in the hamlet of New Cassel use a Westbury mailing address. Sixty-eight percent (including those from Westbury) came from Nassau County. Five people moved from Queens County in New York City. There was more diversity in originating location for those living in Apex I and II (including one person from New Orleans, LA) than for 701 Prospect Avenue. At least one person was living in a shelter before making this move.

#### *Why did they come?*

Affordable rent was, by a large margin, a key reason people chose these new buildings, with 82% of respondents indicating its importance. At 32%, connection to the community was the next most selected motivation. Twenty-seven percent of those responding indicated that proximity to work was also a significant consideration. Thirty-seven percent of those responding from 701 Prospect Avenue receive financial assistance for paying rent from the government (where Housing Choice Vouchers [HCV] are accepted), while only 9% of those living in Apex I and II report receiving similar support (where HCVs are not accepted) . Both groups meet the income restrictions for living in HUD-designated affordable housing.

#### *Employment and Income*

Seventy-four percent of those responding from 701 Prospect Avenue report being employed. Of those who reported income figures, the highest was more than \$60,000 and the lowest was \$27,000. The average was just below \$40,000. For those who are employed, the average distance to work is 14.5 miles, with the shortest commute being less than a mile and the longest being 45 miles.

Many Apex I and II residents are retired, and one respondent reported a disability that prevented employment. Of those who are employed and who reported their annual incomes, most made between \$13,000 and \$30,000, with the highest paid person reporting an annual income of \$50,000. For those who are employed, the average distance to work is 12.3 miles, with the shortest commute being less than a mile and the longest being 25 miles.

#### *Transportation*

While most of those responding have cars, some do not. Eleven percent of those responding who live at 701 Prospect Avenue do not own a car. As might be expected with senior

citizen housing, more people (23%) report not owning a car in the Apex buildings. For comparison purposes, approximately 21% of renters and 4% of homeowners in Nassau County do not own cars.

Those who have cars report using them almost every day. Some statistics do not total 100% due to rounding.

As with most Long Island residents, use of public transportation is low:

	Never			Very Often		NA
<b>701 Prospect Ave.:</b> I use public transportation...	33%	15%	30%	4%	11%	7%
<b>Apex I &amp; II:</b> I use public transportation...	21%	21%	27%	6%	15%	9%

*Internet Access*

Seventy-eight percent of those responding from 701 Prospect Avenue have access to the Internet at home, while only 39% of those living in the Apex buildings report being digitally connected. This confirms that the Internet access planned for seniors—and others—at the new community center is very important and suggests that an Internet access station in the community rooms at Apex would be valuable. In addition, we recommend that the TNH consider extending its Project Independence, which provides free taxi service to medical care and shopping for senior citizens, to include service to the new community center.

*Demographic Statistics: 701 Prospect Avenue*

Most respondents were in their 30s and 40s; the youngest respondent was 29 years old and the oldest was 78. Eighty-five percent were female, while 11% were male (4% no answer). Eighty-five percent indicated that they were African American/Black, and one person selected mixed race. Three people chose not to answer this question. This is a higher percentage of African American/Black than New Cassel as a whole (43%) or the surrounding areas in Town of North Hempstead (5.7%) and Nassau County (10.8%). It is interesting that, while 47% of the New Cassel community reports being Hispanic or Latino in the census, no survey respondents from 701 Prospect Avenue self-identified as Hispanic or Latino.

*Demographic Statistics: Apex I and II*

As is to be expected for this specialized housing, most respondents were between 55 and 90 years old; the youngest was 30 years old (one of four respondents under 60), and the oldest

was 94. Fifty-five percent were female, and 42% were male (3% didn't answer). Fifty-two percent indicated that they were African American/Black, 27% that they were Caucasian/White, and 9% that they were Hispanic. Two people selected mixed race, and one person each reported being Asian, West Indian, or "Native" [sic]. Multiple choices were permitted, and one person chose not to answer this question. While this is a more racially diverse population than at 701 Prospect, the percentage of Hispanics is still lower than the surrounding area.

Please remember that, due to the small population being studied, these survey results, while providing direction, may not represent the full population.

### ***What Do They Think?***

Some constituents and government leaders make a distinction between New Cassel and Westbury, while others feel that this is an artificial and unhelpful distinction. For example, Studio "L" 516 owner Leslie Davis<sup>44</sup> spoke about growing up in the area: "...by the way, New Cassel was Westbury. We did not have separatism. It was always just Westbury. We went to the youth center. We went to the park...it was a community." Although Apex I and II were included in the Town CDA map of the urban renewal project, these buildings are more often described as being in Westbury. The survey, therefore, asked 701 Prospect Avenue residents about *New Cassel* and Apex I and II residents about *New Cassel/Westbury*.

### *Changes in the Community*

In response to the question *What changes have you seen in New Cassel (or New Cassel/Westbury) since you moved to or grew up in the community?* many described new buildings, the streetscaping, removal of old trees, and cleaner streets. Others mentioned the presence of affordable housing and "apartments as an option instead of houses." Several documented changes in demographics, a "tremendous" decrease in drug availability on Prospect Avenue, and "less 'street' activity (i.e., drugs, loitering, etc.)." Overall, there was a feeling that "the community is getting better but still needs work." For example, residents remarked that:

- "I've seen a nicer design in New Cassel. We are going in the right direction."
- "New property changes, stores, lights, curbside improvements, gardening, cleanliness"
- "Renovation of Prospect is loving [sic], new apartment buildings, small businesses, etc."

While only four people residing at 701 Prospect Avenue did not see any changes, almost a third of those living in the Apex buildings did not see any changes. The Apex buildings are several blocks from the physical center of the revitalization effort.

### *Recommendations and Challenges for Community Health*

When asked what would make New Cassel/Westbury a stronger and better community, more local retail (63%), more local jobs (62%), and more government funding (53%) topped the list.

When asked if they saw any problems or changes likely to hurt the community, only a third of those responding had anything to report. People most often highlighted drug, gang, and loitering problems, saying, for example: “These communities are only half-day communities; no one goes out at night.” Several made reference to increasing rents (“If rent keeps increasing every year, I will have to move.”). In the same vein, others discussed the high cost of living, the lack of housing for those “living under the poverty level,” and landlords who will not rent to those receiving government aid.

### *Community Leaders*

When asked about people they considered leaders in New Cassel, two-thirds of the respondents indicated that they couldn’t think of any. The remaining one-third named the following people (many were listed more than once):

- Rodney A. Caines, Westbury Board of Education
- Vivian Green (listed multiple times, unable to identify role)
- Bishop Lionel Harvey, First Baptist Cathedral of Westbury, Chairman of the Board, UNCCRC
- Howard Kimmel, Chairman of the Kimmel Housing Development Foundation
- Philip Kimmel, Anna and Philip Foundation named in his honor
- Pastor Leroy Mitchell, New Life Christian Rehabilitation Center
- Hon. Viviana Russell, Town of North Hempstead Councilwoman
- Dr. Marjorie E. Toran, Assistant Superintendent for Special Education and Special Services for the Westbury, NY, School District
- Hon. Robert Trioano, Nassau County Legislator
- Pastor Stanley Williams, Grace Temple, Church of God in Christ

The following groups were also listed:

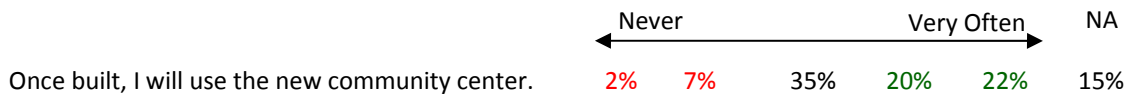
- Town of North Hempstead.
- UNCCRC.
- Church leaders who organize means of feeding and clothing low- or no-income residents.

*The 2002 Visioning Charrette and Plan*

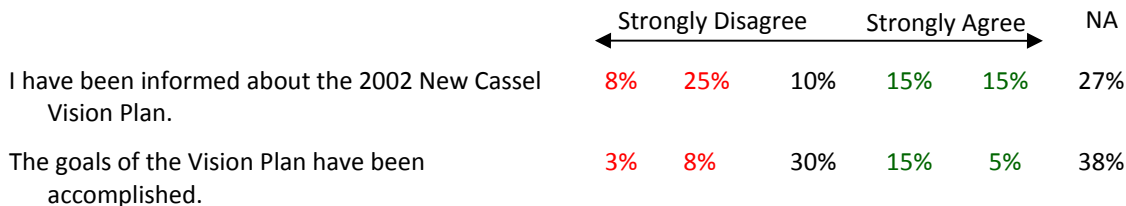
Unlike the assessments made a decade ago during the planning process, most of those surveyed think that New Cassel is now a walkable community.



And even though 48% of those living at 701 Prospect and 67% of those in an Apex building did not know of the new community center before completing the survey, most plan to make use of it when it is ready.



Only two respondents at 701 Prospect Avenue and one person in an Apex building participated in the 2002 Visioning charrette. Keeping a changing community informed is a difficult task. Including those who chose the “not applicable” option, more than half of the new residents reported that they had not been informed about the Vision Plan. As the plan has not yet been fully implemented, it is no surprise that most do not feel the plan’s goals have been accomplished.



*Living in the Community*

Fifty-two percent of those responding report having family living nearby in New

Cassel/Westbury, and 73% say they have friends in the community. Most report participating from time to time in community activities, most often in events that are church and school related. Other events frequently mentioned are those that take place in parks, the National Night Out (against crime), and the New Cassel Christmas tree lighting.

Ninety percent of those responding indicated that they do not do any volunteer work in the community. Those who do volunteer reported contributing to church activities (two people listed St. Brigid Parish), working in a soup kitchen, working with the Police Activity League, supporting rehabilitation, and tutoring children.

*Living in the New Buildings: 701 Prospect Avenue*

Most respondents (48%) report two people living in the unit, with 26% indicating three occupants, and 22% living alone. One apartment has four occupants.

The new residents like the design of their new apartments, and most of them are reasonably satisfied with the care of the building. Once again, “affordable” rent shows up as not really being affordable.

	Strongly Disagree		Strongly Agree			NA
I am satisfied with the COST of my apartment.	48%	7%	11%	33%	--	--
I am satisfied with the DESIGN of my apartment.	7%	11%	15%	44%	22%	--
I am satisfied with the property management’s care of the building.	19%	19%	19%	33%	11%	--

*Living in the New Buildings: Apex I and II*

Most respondents (71%) report two people living in the unit, with 25% indicating two occupants, and 22% living alone. One apartment has three occupants.

The new residents like the design of their new apartments, and most them are satisfied with the care of the building. More than half are satisfied with the cost of their apartment.

	Strongly Disagree		Strongly Agree			NA
I am satisfied with the COST of my apartment.	21%	18%	6%	27%	27%	--
I am satisfied with the DESIGN of my apartment.	9%	9%	3%	24%	48%	6%
I am satisfied with the property management’s care of the building.	6%	3%	21%	12%	58%	--

## UNCCRC Community Programs and Real Estate Projects

UNCCRC's mission is to facilitate community revitalization, sustainable development, and a shared vision in the New Cassel community. The organization continues to support the 2003 Vision Plan implementation. In addition, Executive Director Kennetha Pettus—with the support of Board Chair Bishop Lionel Harvey and the recently diversified UNCCRC board of directors—has expanded the organization's programming substantially.

In response to the concern about leadership in the community, on December 7, 2010, UNCCRC held its first Annual Board of Directors' Leadership Award Dinner, honoring a number of those who had supported the revitalization effort:

- Bishop Lionel Harvey, President/CEO, UNCCRC; Senior Pastor of the First Baptist Church of Westbury
- Reverend Michael Peynado, Vice President, UNCCRC; Pastor of the Westbury DCC of God
- Reverend Stephen Samuel, Westbury Gospel Tabernacle
- Reverend William A. Watson, Jr., St. John's Baptist Church of Westbury and Freewill Baptist Church of Freeport
- Reverend Duval Denis, Eben-Exer Baptist Church of Westbury
- Pastor James LaMar, Bethany Seventh Day Adventist Church of Westbury
- Reverend Lancelot Waldron, Westbury Community Church
- Dr. Faroque Khan, Islamic Center of Long Island
- Captain Joseph Lubin, Westbury Corps, Salvation Army
- Pastor Wilbert Dorilus, All Saints Church of Westbury
- Pastor Paul Blaise, Beer-Scherba Church of Westbury

And to support both the new and existing New Cassel businesses, UNCCRC hosted a *Show Me the Money* seminar in May for local small businesses, sponsored by Citibank, Long Island Development Corporation, the Small Business Administration, and the Town CDA. Participants liked the session and felt that it gave them new entrepreneurial skills.

As a part of the federal Neighborhood Stabilization Program, UNCCRC has gone into the real estate business. It has purchased five residential properties for rehabilitation or demolition and new construction. The organization is using HUD (U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development) Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funding—intended to enhance

and maintain the viability of urban communities and to benefit low and moderate income persons<sup>45</sup>—to purchase properties that are vacant due to FHA [Federal Housing Administration] mortgage foreclosures.



37 Maplewood Drive, January 2011  
 Courtesy: Fusion Architecture for United Way of Long Island



28 Arlington Street, January 2011  
 Courtesy: Fusion Architecture for United Way of Long Island

CDBG funds are administered by Nassau County. The Nassau County OHIA (Office of Housing and Intergovernmental Affairs; currently being reorganized)<sup>46,47,48,49</sup> holds regular meetings and conference calls with its Neighborhood Stabilization Program development partners such as UNCCRC. OHIA-contracted rehabilitation inspectors monitor development.

Pettus<sup>50</sup> describes the goals of this real estate venture as making money to support UNCCRC activities, improving the quality of New Cassel homes, and providing jobs and training for local youth. To meet these goals, UNCCRC has partnered with Habitat for Humanity (one site) and United Way of Long Island’s YouthBuild Program (two sites). The organization is managing two sites without partners.

***UNCCRC Development Sites***

Location and Plans	Site Status as of March 15, 2011
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ <u>Location</u>: <b>272 Brook Street</b></li> <li>▪ <u>Purchase</u>: UNCCRC purchased on December 2, 2009, using \$124,019 in NSP funds.</li> <li>▪ <u>Partnership</u>: UNCCRC is developing this property.</li> <li>▪ <u>Development plans</u>: In 2010, UNCCRC, in partnership with Nassau County Office of Housing and Intergovernmental Affairs (OHIA), issued an RPF to contractors for rehabilitation of this house.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ <u>Status</u>:                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– K.C. Remodeling, Inc. selected as rehabilitation contractor.</li> <li>– Permits acquired and construction will begin as weather permits.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

Location and Plans	Site Status as of March 15, 2011
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ <u>Location</u>: <b>221 Hooper Street</b></li> <li>▪ <u>Purchase</u>: UNCCRC purchased on January 21, 2011, using \$112,314 in NSP funds.</li> <li>▪ <u>Partnership</u>: UNCCRC is developing this property.</li> <li>▪ <u>Development plans</u>: In 2010, UNCCRC, in partnership with Nassau County Office of Housing and Intergovernmental Affairs (OHIA), issued an RPF to contractors for rehabilitation of this house.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ <u>Status</u>: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- K.C. Remodeling, Inc. selected as rehabilitation contractor.</li> <li>- Permits acquired and construction will begin as weather permits.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

***Partnership With Habitat for Humanity Site***

Habitat for Humanity is a nonprofit, ecumenical Christian housing program in which volunteers contribute money and work together with residents to build “simple, decent, and affordable”<sup>51</sup> housing. In Nassau County, Habitat for Humanity spends between \$140,000 and \$170,000 per home. This includes the purchase of the land.<sup>52</sup>

Although Habitat for Humanity is a Christian organization, all volunteers are welcome. Homebuyers<sup>53</sup> with annual incomes of approximately \$38,000–\$48,000 are chosen without regard to race, religion, or ethnic group. Buyers are required to contribute 300 hours of “sweat equity” labor on their (or another) home and to attend a 10-hour financial workshop. They receive a no-down-payment, interest-free mortgage.

Location and Plans	Site Status as of March 15, 2011
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ <u>Location</u>: <b>898 Brush Hollow Road</b></li> <li>▪ <u>Purchase</u>: UNCCRC purchased on July 8, 2009, using \$91,796 in NSP funds.</li> <li>▪ <u>Partnership</u>: UNCCRC has partnered with Habitat for Humanity.</li> <li>▪ <u>Development plans</u>: Demolish existing house and build a single-family home.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ <u>Status</u>: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Old structure demolished June 2010.</li> <li>- Awaiting good weather to pour the foundation.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

***Partnership With the United Way of Long Island YouthBuild Program Site***

UNCCRC has also partnered with United Way of Long Island to use the YouthBuild program<sup>54</sup> for the construction of two houses in New Cassel. This program will give several

unemployed young people (ages 18 to 24) from low-income families in Nassau County<sup>55</sup> the chance to work toward a General Equivalency Diploma (GED) while learning job skills and contributing to the community. During the nine-month program, youth also receive leadership development, counseling, and job-placement assistance.

In addition, YouthBuild has a sustainability focus. Rick Wertheim,<sup>56</sup> senior vice president of green initiatives for United Way of Long Island, describes the approach:

As far as United Way is concerned, building “green” is about building safe, sustainable, and durable homes with a very heavy emphasis on energy efficiency.

There are many different green rating protocols. The main protocol for us to make affordable housing more affordable is by lowering the operating expenses....We are focusing on something now called “energy poverty.” People coming to United Way for services were finding that their energy expenses were so great that they had to choose between turning the heat on or taking their medications or eating.

We cut [homeowner] operating expenses by at least 40% compared to what their neighbors are spending.

A longtime partner of United Way, the U.S. Green Building Council on Long Island managed the LEED certification process for United Way on both properties without charge using a grant from NYSERDA (the New York State Energy Research and Development Authority).



YouthBuild Long Island brochure cover  
 Courtesy: United Way of Long Island.

Location and Plans	Site Status as of March 15, 2011
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ <u>Location</u>: <b>37 Maplewood Drive</b></li> <li>▪ <u>Purchase</u>: UNCCRC purchased on November 9, 2009, using \$58,230 in NSP funds.</li> <li>▪ <u>Partnership</u>: UNCCRC has partnered with the United Way of Long Island YouthBuild Program.</li> <li>▪ <u>Development plans</u>: Demolish existing house and build a single-family home. Green renovations are anticipated to save residents 40% of previous operating costs.</li> <li>▪ <u>Purchaser qualification</u>: Income no higher than 50% of the AMI (area median income).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ <u>Status</u>:                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– April 12, 2011 is the scheduled kick-off date for the rehabilitation construction.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

Location and Plans	Site Status as of March 15, 2011
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ <u>Location</u>: <b>28 Arlington Street</b></li> <li>▪ <u>Purchase</u>: UNCCRC purchased on December 18, 2009, using \$61,700 in NSP funds.</li> <li>▪ <u>Partnership</u>: UNCCRC has partnered with the United Way of Long Island YouthBuild Program.</li> <li>▪ <u>Development plans</u>: Demolish existing house and build a single-family home. Green renovations are anticipated to save residents 40% of previous operating costs.</li> <li>▪ <u>Purchaser qualification</u>: Income no higher than 50% of the AMI.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ <u>Status</u>: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– April 12, 2011 is the scheduled kick-off date for the rehabilitation construction.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

***Community Youth-Run New Cassel Farmers’ Market***

A new youth-run farmers’ market is planned for 2011. Pettus<sup>57</sup> has obtained the New York State Department of Agriculture permit, joined the Long Island Farm Bureau where she lined up the farmers who will be participating in New Cassel’s market, obtained the requisite insurance, selected Traci Caines as the Market Manager, and is seeking the funds from local businesses to purchase the requisite equipment. Charles Vigliotti, President of Long Island Compost Corporation, has donated the transportation for bringing the produce from Eastern Long Island.

In addition to bringing fresh food to a community historically underserved by food sellers, this program helps local high school students learn<sup>58</sup> important elements of finance, nutrition, hygiene, customer service, and distribution, and gives them work experience. It also connects the community with others. Similar markets have already been established in North Bellport and Roosevelt. In these communities, 65% of all transactions came from EBT (Electronic Benefits Transfer food stamp debit cards) sales and WIC (Women, Infants, and Children food and nutrition program) and Senior (Senior Farmers Market Nutrition) checks.

Research continues to show that partnerships such as those established with the Long Island Farm Bureau, Habitat for Humanity, and United Way are essential to connecting community leaders with other individuals and organizations that help to sustain community renewal over time.<sup>59</sup>

## Tracking the Progress

As with the first report, in this section we use four methods of tracking progress. The first tracking mechanism is a timeline that provides a high-level overall picture of the revitalization. Next we track the status of the individual elements of the community’s 2002 Vision Plan Implementation Matrix and the additional Vision Priorities as a means of assessing whether the renewal is and will continue to meet the community’s original goals. Finally, we update the progress against the elements of the 2003 TNH CDA Urban Renewal Plan.

### A Summary Timeline

Table 13 (see below) is a timeline that features some of the key events in the revitalization process. The timeline in the first report (repeated here) included events through 2008; key events from 2009 through spring 2011 have been added.

Table 13. Selected Points in the New Cassel Community Revitalization Timeline

<b>Pre-1998</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Lots along Prospect Avenue purchased; Town CDA supports façade improvements</li> <li>▪ Extensive community organizing efforts</li> <li>▪ While campaigning, May Newburger, former TNH supervisor, acknowledges New Cassel had been ignored and promises support</li> </ul>
<b>1998</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ U.S. Department of Justice Weed and Seed designation</li> <li>▪ Sustainable Long Island founded</li> <li>▪ Lobbying efforts begin for New Cassel by the Town of North Hempstead</li> </ul>
<b>1999</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Sustainable Long Island begins to meet with community leaders</li> <li>▪ Rev. Harvey begins at First Baptist Church</li> </ul>
<b>2000</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Sustainable Long Island continues to meet with community leaders, elected officials, and funders</li> <li>▪ Sustainable Long Island invites Dan Burden to tour New Cassel with community leaders</li> <li>▪ Early funding success: Environmental Protection Agency \$200,000 funding for Brownfields determination and repair awarded to the Town</li> </ul>
<b>2001</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ May—Public meeting held at Park Avenue Elementary School with clergy</li> <li>▪ Unified New Cassel Community Revitalization Corporation (UNCCRC) formed</li> <li>▪ First executive director hired for UNCCRC</li> </ul>
<b>2002</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Town commits \$150,000 to hire Sustainable Long Island and UNCCRC for community visioning process</li> <li>▪ Memo of Understanding signed by Town, Town CDA, and UNCCRC</li> <li>▪ Extensive outreach to community</li> <li>▪ UNCCRC holds first Summer Youth Program</li> <li>▪ July—Community Vision Charrette held and Vision Plan prepared</li> <li>▪ UNCCRC block captains hold first Christmas tree lighting</li> </ul>

2003	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ March—Vision Plan presented and adopted by Town</li> <li>▪ July—Urban Renewal boundaries expanded to include Vision Plan area along Prospect Avenue</li> <li>▪ September—Town zoning codes amended for mixed-use buildings in New Cassel</li> <li>▪ October—Request for Proposals (RFPs) issued for sites A, B, C, D, E, F, and G</li> </ul>
2004	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ January—Site H (the Demonstration Project ) awarded to A&amp;C Development</li> <li>▪ March—More sites awarded: A to Bluestone, E to Sheldrake and UNCCRC, F to the Kimmel Foundation</li> <li>▪ April—RFPs reopened for sites B, C, D, and G</li> <li>▪ May—Sites B, C, and D awarded to Stoneridge; Site G to Wheatley Hills Nursery</li> <li>▪ December—Groundbreaking at Site B with dignitaries, including Senator Clinton and Representative McCarthy</li> </ul>
2005	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Groundbreaking on demonstration project (Site H)</li> <li>▪ Town negotiates \$10 million grant from Neptune RTS to (partially) fund community center</li> <li>▪ Youth help design community center in vision charrettes in the Westbury School District</li> </ul>
2006	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ May—Groundbreaking on Site A</li> <li>▪ Nassau County secures New York State Empire Zone Designation for 10 areas including New Cassel</li> </ul>
2007	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Residents comment that the revitalization feels real</li> </ul>
2008	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ New Cassel designated as a New York State Banking Development District</li> <li>▪ Designs completed for Prospect Avenue streetscaping and community center</li> <li>▪ Charges of corruption related to New Cassel are published</li> </ul>
2009	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Streetscaping on Prospect Avenue begins</li> <li>▪ Residents move into Apex II (Site F)</li> <li>▪ UNCCRC goes into the real estate business</li> </ul>
2010	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Residents move into 701 Prospect (Site A), 735 Prospect (Site B), and 822 Prospect (Site C)</li> <li>▪ New businesses (athletic shoe store, family dental office, and hair salon) open on Prospect Avenue</li> <li>▪ Additional charges of corruption related to New Cassel are published</li> </ul>
2011	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Construction on the community center begins</li> <li>▪ UNCCRC hosts job skills and business development programs</li> </ul>

### **Progress on New Cassel Vision Plan Implementation Matrix**

As shown in more detail in Appendix A, the Vision Plan Implementation Matrix included 14 major action items. While some of these items—the traffic engineering study and the streetscaping, for example—are projects that can be considered complete at a point in time, others—such as enforcement and funding—are ongoing. The type of status reported varies accordingly.

## ***1. Enforcement***

Enforcing the law is a continuous process. While some still point to continuing problems with drugs, gangs, and loitering, many feel that the scale of these problems has been reduced. This is also the case for housing code violations. In addition to patrolling and maintaining order, Nassau County Police officers and senior commanders are present and welcomed at community events, as has been the case since the beginning of this renewal program.

The Town of North Hempstead's 311 call service, created in 2005 and gradually extended to all areas in the Town, provides a single number that New Cassel residents and other TNH constituents can use to report problems or ask questions. Requests are tracked until handled, and statistical information on call topics assists the Town in addressing problems that require an increase in enforcement activities.

## ***2. Community Cleanup***

In 2011 many residents and visitors see New Cassel as a cleaner, more attractive community. The new buildings, businesses, and streetscaping encourage pedestrian activity and pride in the community. Some point to the removal of old trees and better lighting as being especially noticeable. New Cassel participates in the TNH's annual Earth Day Program and in Operation Clean Sweep—a monthlong “spring cleaning.” The TNH 311 service also helps to ensure that reported sanitation problems are addressed in a timely way.

Continuing with a strategy that played a major role in fueling the renewal process in 2000, the Town has secured a second round of funding for identifying brownfields and planning for their development. In this Brownfield Opportunity Areas (BOA) program, brownfields are defined as “vacant, abandoned, or underutilized property with actual or *perceived* contamination.”<sup>60</sup> Not all brownfields identified by this program have been damaged in ways that are environmentally dangerous. The Town has hired AKRF,<sup>61</sup> an environmental, planning, and engineering firm, to conduct the assessments, gather community ideas, and make recommendations. Once sites are identified as part of this program, the Town can then apply for demolition and redevelopment funds from a variety of sources, including the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development.

### 3. Funding

New Cassel community revitalization continues to be funded from a variety of sources, including the Brownfield Opportunity Areas (BOA) program discussed in the previous section. TNH Supervisor Jon Kaiman is recognized for his ability to assemble successful cases for state and federal funding of projects in his community. He describes his learning about this critical process:<sup>62</sup>

We just learned you have to ask.

There are not a lot of people who understand where the money comes from. You have to know where the pockets of money are, who is making the decisions, and what the criteria are.

Then you must be persistent. It is important to step up and ask. Find out when it's going to be awarded. Do you need more information? We have just had such a success in this administration that I now assign people to do this full-time.

We maintain relationships with people in Washington...to make sure we get earmarked for federal dollars. We have hired people in Albany to do the same thing. And we have people on staff here who are doing it locally.

It has just become part of my whole way of governing. It is as important as having a highway commissioner and a public works engineer.... My community pays a lot of dollars in taxes and we should benefit....

Two examples of government support at the federal level in the last several years are the \$5 million American Recovery and Reinvestment Act funding,<sup>63</sup> which supported part of the more than \$8 million Prospect Avenue streetscaping and was jointly announced by U.S. Congresswoman Carolyn McCarthy and Kaiman, and the grant of \$892,000 from the U.S. Department of Energy's Energy Efficiency and



The beginning of the streetscape reconstruction, using \$4 million in American Recovery Act and Reinvestment funding. From left to right: Hon. Lee Seeman, Town of North Hempstead councilwoman; Hon. Charles Berman, Town of North Hempstead receiver of taxes; Hon. Robert Trioano, Nassau County legislator; Bishop Lionel Harvey, First Baptist Church of Westbury; Hon. Carolyn McCarthy, U.S. congresswoman; Hon. Jon Kaiman, Town of North Hempstead supervisor; Francis Cashin, P.E., executive vice President, Cashin Associates; Hon. Vivianne Russell, Town of North Hempstead councilwoman; Joseph Knesich, president, J. Anthony Enterprises.

Courtesy: Town of North Hempstead

Conservation Block Grants (EECBG), most of which helped to fund the energy-efficient characteristics of the new community center, jointly announced by U.S. Senator Kirsten Gillibrand and Kaiman.

New York Assemblyman Charles D. Lavine (representing District 13, which includes New Cassel) has proposed a \$250,000 New York state grant, which is working its way through the appropriate committees. Former New York State Senator Craig Johnson has secured a state grant of \$100,000.<sup>64</sup>

The Nassau County Office of Economic Development (currently being reorganized) participates in the funding process for the ongoing U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development grants.

Funding from business sources is not as strong in New Cassel as in many other areas. However, in addition to the \$10 million grant from Neptune RTS discussed in the first report, Kaiman secured a \$1 million grant from Verizon<sup>65</sup> for the community center.

#### ***4. Community Art***

In response to this objective identified during the Vision Charrette, the Town recently began to develop a “lasting community public art program in New Cassel and—among many forms of artistic media—is looking to incorporate functional and decorative two- and three-dimensional public art throughout the community.”<sup>66</sup> This program will take several years to develop. On February 17, 2011, the TNH issued a Request for Qualifications (RFQ) to find qualified artists and/or artistic teams from New Cassel and the New York City metropolitan region who can contribute to this project. The RFQ stresses “importance of placemaking and [of] reflecting the existing identity of an already-present, culturally rich community...”<sup>67</sup>

A New Cassel advisory arts council, Arts Build New Cassel, has been formed to assist with the planning and implementation. Community groups are active as well. In a 2010 interview, Councilwoman Russell<sup>68</sup> speaks with pride of the art showcase—the Artists’ Corner—started by two young Westbury residents, which takes place in their homes. The showcase has grown to include works from middle and high school students as well.

#### ***5. Community Asset Building***

Throughout this document, there are reports of new physical assets, including newly

completed buildings and streetscaping, the new renovation or building of individual houses using the Neighborhood Stabilization Program, and the construction of the new community center. More important than the new buildings themselves are the people and businesses who occupy them. In addition to the goods and services they provide, the new small business owners provide leadership by their entrepreneurial example and their willingness to train young people. The YouthBuild Long Island and the coming youth-run farmers' market will help to develop New Cassel's human capital.

In activities such as the Arts Build New Cassel and participation in the UNCCRC board of directors, there is evidence that residents and business owners are willing to donate their time and energy. Faith-based organizations continue to play a major role not only in the renewal but in the daily lives of residents. As in the earlier report, this community continues to be effective when mobilized. It also continues to show divisions along lines of race, ethnicity, religious affiliation, and citizenship status.

### ***6. Traffic Engineering Study***

This study of neighborhood traffic patterns was completed and used to develop the Prospect Avenue streetscape plan. See number 7, following.

### ***7. Pedestrian Safety***

The streetscape design was intended to increase pedestrian safety. Many residents and business owners feel it has accomplished this goal. Some feel the reduction in driving lanes (from two each way to one each way) has increased the danger from frustrated drivers.

### ***8. Streetscape Program***

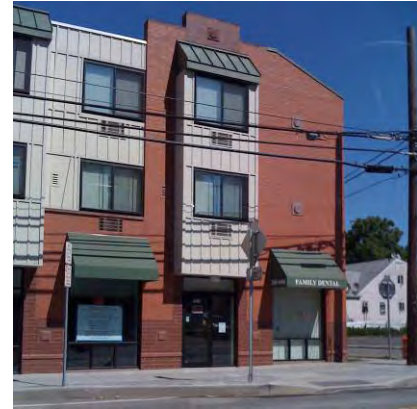
The streetscaping will be complete by the end of the summer (2011). Constituents and visitors are delighted. Many residents report feeling that New Cassel is closer to being the walkable



Streetscaping: New kiosk and lamp post along Prospect Avenue, Spring 2011  
Courtesy: Town of North Hempstead

community planned during the 2002 Visioning charrette and suggest that, when the buildings along Prospect Avenue are fully occupied, they will be more inclined to be among those out on the new sidewalks.

Some are disappointed that the overhead telephone and electrical wires have not yet been removed. It is often difficult for constituents to understand why this is so difficult and expensive. It costs approximately \$600 to \$800 per foot to move the lines, in large part because the utility poles are owned and leased by a variety of utility companies. A project of 1.3 miles requires a significant amount of coordination and negotiation and approximately \$12 million in funding. The TNH Department of Planning & Environmental Protection reports that they “haven’t given up. It’s just that they may need to try a different approach...taking on smaller segments”<sup>69</sup> and seeking additional funding.



Telephone lines along Prospect Avenue, Fall 2010  
Courtesy: Catherine Stutts

### **9. Gateways**

The Gateway to New Cassel triangle park at 701 Prospect Avenue is now a pleasant way to enter the community. Additional gateway sites may emerge from the new Brownfield Opportunity Areas study being conducted by AKRF for the Town.



Public space at the Gateway to New Cassel, 701 Prospect Avenue  
Courtesy: Catherine Stutts

### **10. New Codes and Design Guidelines**

Following the 2002 Visioning Charrette, on September 30, 2003, the Town revised its zoning codes for Prospect Avenue in New Cassel to allow mixed-used buildings. The zoning for commercial activity permits retail stores, but not food, medical, or day care providers, without an exception process.

### ***11. Façade Improvements***

Although the Town CDA has been intermittently active in this area since the 1970s, there has been little recent activity.<sup>70</sup> Councilwoman Russell<sup>71</sup> expects that, with New Cassel’s “new look” and the upcoming focus on the arts, there will be more façade improvements in the next few years.

### ***12. Youth Civic Program***

The Community Vacation Camp<sup>72</sup> continues to take place each summer. In addition, as discussed above, there are two new practical programs for New Cassel youth beginning in 2011: the UNCCRC partnerships with United Way of Long Island to use the YouthBuild program and also with Long Island Farm Bureau for the youth-run farmers’ market.

### ***13. Parks***

Construction of the new pocket park at the corner of Swalm Street and Prospect Avenue Park will begin this year.<sup>73</sup>

### ***14. Community Multi-Use Center***

Projected to cost more than \$20 million, the new 60,000-square-foot community center is currently under construction with completion forecast for spring 2012.

When complete, the community center will offer two NBA-sized basketball courts, an Internet café and computer training center, dance and TV studios, lounges for youth and seniors, a fitness center, conference rooms, and a multipurpose social gathering space.

The RBA Group,<sup>74</sup> an architectural firm, developed the building plan using the LEED Green Building Rating System, and the building is expected to obtain a Platinum rating. The



Community Center land clearing ceremony, 141 Garden Street, October 24, 2009

Courtesy: Town of North Hempstead

energy-efficient design<sup>75</sup> includes the use of photovoltaic energy, a solar wall, greywater for irrigation, geothermal heating and cooling, and native plants on the grounds. This project was named the “Best Public/Private Partnership for Nassau County” by *Long Island Business News* in 2010.



Community Center construction, 141 Garden Street, February 2011  
Courtesy: Town of North Hempstead

The Racanelli Construction Company<sup>76</sup> is the general contractor, and The LiRo Group<sup>77</sup> is construction manager for this eagerly awaited building.

### ***Progress on Additional New Cassel Vision Priorities***

Due in part to the framework of the visioning process, the Implementation Matrix focused primarily on suburban renewal and community safety; yet, the New Cassel community identified four additional priorities: better schools, a movie theater, a day care center, and more local businesses and jobs. There have been developments in some but not all of these four areas.

While there are some new training programs arising in the community, schools and training have not been the focus of the revitalization processes.

Although there is still no movie theater, the new community center has a theater in which films can be shown.

The current retail zoning does not permit day care businesses without a conditional use permit from the Board of Board of Zoning and Appeals. Traffic flow and child safety are two of the concerns. The Bluestone Organization’s master plan for 701 Prospect Avenue now in development may include a provision for day care.

There are new businesses on Prospect Avenue with more to come. Although these businesses do hire a few local residents, there has been no medium- or large-scale increase in local employment. A few local construction workers have worked on several of the development sites. The jobs have been low-skill and short in duration. (Please see the first report for a discussion of local hiring and use of unions on the development projects.)

### Progress on 2003 TNH CDA Urban Renewal Plan Sites

There has been significant progress on many of the TNH CDA urban renewal plan sites since the first report. The map below shows the locations of these sites. Summaries of the updated status and the continuing plans for each site follow.



#### *Site A (Gateway to New Cassel): 701 Prospect Avenue*

The Bluestone Organization is the owner and managed the development; NHE Management Associates, LLC, manages the building.

Progress as of August 15, 2008	Site Status as of March 15, 2011
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ <u>Status</u>: 90% complete. Estimated completion year end 2008. Developing advertisements for housing rentals and business leases. Forecasted businesses included a restaurant, deli, dentist, and beauty supply company.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ <u>Status</u>: Building is complete. 4 years to completion in 2009.</li> <li>▪ <u>Housing</u>: 56 rental units plus 1 unit for supervisor. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– All units rented. Took 8 months to fill units.</li> <li>– Building includes underground parking garage and 4,500 sq. ft. gateway park.</li> <li>– Affordable housing lottery handled by Long Island Housing Partnership .</li> </ul> </li> <li>▪ <u>Commercial</u>: 20,400 sq. ft.; 4,000 sq. ft. has been leased. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Dental office ( 1,500 sq. ft.) opened May 2010.</li> <li>– Hair salon (1,400 sq. ft. ) opened December 2010.</li> <li>– A lease has been signed for a take-out and table-service Caribbean restaurant named Paradise Cove.</li> <li>– With CDA funding, now creating master plan for Town Board of Zoning and Appeal’s approval to assist with zoning, traffic flow, and architectural design to make commercial space more attractive to prospective tenants.</li> <li>– Seeking a branch bank as a tenant.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

**Site B: 735 Prospect Avenue**

The first developer, Stoneridge Homes, Inc., defaulted on financing. First Sterling Financial, Inc. acquired control in 2008 and completed the development. First Sterling Financial retains ownership of the housing condominium, which is managed by the Wave Crest Management Team, Ltd. The commercial condominium units are offered for purchase.

Progress as of August 15, 2008	Site Status as of March 15, 2011
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ <u>Status</u>: Approximately 75% complete. Estimated completion spring 2009. Forecasted businesses were a grocery store and a coffee shop.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ <u>Status</u>: Building is complete. 4 years to completion in 2010.</li> <li>▪ <u>Housing</u>: 24 rental units (1 condominium). <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– All units rented; building superintendent in residence.</li> <li>– Resident qualification: income no higher than 60% of the AMI (area median income, based upon family size).</li> <li>– Monitored by UNCCRC and the CDA; Wavecrest Management conducted the lottery for residents.</li> </ul> </li> <li>▪ <u>Commercial</u>: 2 condo units. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– 1 unit (7,500 sq. ft.) in contract to Tony and Eddie LLC. Will be a supermarket. Pursuing conditional use permit for the sale of food.</li> <li>– The second unit (8,000 sq. ft.) is being marketed.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

**Site C: 822 Prospect Avenue**

The first developer, Stoneridge Homes, Inc., defaulted on financing. First Sterling Financial, Inc. acquired control in 2008 and completed the development. First Sterling Financial retains ownership of the housing condominium, which is managed by the Wave Crest Management Team, Ltd. The commercial condominium units are currently being offered for purchase.

Progress as of August 15, 2008	Site Status as of March 15, 2011
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ <u>Status</u>: Approximately 80% complete. Estimated completion spring 2009. Forecasted businesses were a bank and a convenience store.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ <u>Status</u>: Building is complete. 4 years to completion in 2010.</li> <li>▪ <u>Housing</u>: 26 rental units.               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- All units rented; building superintendent in residence.</li> <li>- Resident qualification: income no higher than 60% of the AMI (area median income, based upon family size).</li> <li>- Monitored by UNCCRC and the CDA; Wavecrest Management conducted the lottery for residents.</li> </ul> </li> <li>▪ <u>Commercial</u>: 1 condo unit.               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- 1 unit (7,500 sq. ft.) in contract to Tony and Eddie LLC. Will be a supermarket.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

**Site D: 839 Prospect Avenue**

The first developer, Stoneridge Homes, Inc., defaulted on financing. The CDA is in negotiations with the Bank of New York Mellon. There are issues concerning the land disposition agreement.

Progress as of August 15, 2008	Site Status as of March 15, 2011
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ <u>Status</u>: Approximately 95% complete. Estimated completion Spring 2009. Forecasted businesses were a cell phone store and an athletic shoe store.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ <u>Status</u>: The subject of financial negotiations.</li> <li>▪ <u>Planned housing and commercial</u>:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- 6 mixed-use row-buildings (3 condominiums, 3 rentals). Owner must occupy business or residential space.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

**Site E: Prospect Avenue at Bond Street**

The Sheldrake Organization and UNCCRC were the original designated developers. Although the original developers remain enthusiastic about this project, they have been unable to

secure sufficient financing. The CDA Board voted to withdraw this designation. A new request for proposals (RFP) was issued on February 11, 2011, with a deadline for proposals of April 21, 2011. The CDA has received a significant number of proposals and will shortly begin the selection process.

Progress as of August 15, 2008	Site Status as of March 15, 2011
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ <u>Status</u>: Construction not started. Estimated completion 2010.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ <u>Status</u>: Original developer designation withdrawn. New RFP issued February 2011. New proposals are being reviewed with a mid-summer decision expected.</li> <li>▪ <u>Originally planned housing</u>:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– 3-story, 36-unit townhouse complex. Each unit with 3 bedrooms and one-car garage.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

***Site F: 512–514 Union Avenue (Apex II)***

The Anna Philip Kimmel Foundation, now the Kimmel Housing Development Foundation, and Douglaston Development are the developers of this series of buildings. Apex I (498 Union Avenue)<sup>78</sup> was completed in 2003. This building, Apex II, has 35 units, five of which are shared units. All tenants must be 55 years of age or older. The third building, Apex III, is in development.

Progress as of August 15, 2008	Site Status as of March 15, 2011
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ <u>Status</u>: Approximately 50% complete. Estimated completion Spring 2009.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ <u>Status</u>: Building is complete. 2 years to completion in 2009.</li> <li>▪ <u>Housing</u>: 35 rental units.               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– All units rented.</li> <li>– 2 of the units are shared apartments with three tenants; some design features for the physically challenged population.</li> <li>– Considered next-generation workforce housing.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

***Site G: 542 Union Avenue***

Wheatley Hills Nursery is the owner and was the developer of this expansion.

Progress as of August 15, 2008	Site Status as of March 15, 2011
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ <u>Status</u>: 100% complete. Expansion of existing nursery and flower shop (business opened in 2001).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ <u>Status</u>: Expansion is complete.</li> </ul>

***Site H (the Demonstration Project): 821 Prospect Avenue***

A&C Development Partners is the owner and developer.

Progress as of August 15, 2008	Site Status as of March 15, 2011
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ <u>Status</u>: Approximately 95% complete. Estimated completion December 2008. Forecasted business was a pharmacy.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ <u>Status</u>: Building is complete. 7 years to completion in 2008 (1 year construction).</li> <li>▪ <u>Housing</u>: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Home ownership units. 7 two-family units; buyer lives in 2,210 sq. ft. and rents out 1,110 sq. ft.</li> <li>– Buyer qualifications: Annual income of not more than \$77,000 for a family of 4.</li> <li>– Three owners in process of getting mortgages. (Banco Popular is underwriting 2 of the mortgages.)</li> </ul> </li> <li>▪ <u>Commercial</u>: 2 condominium units. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Worthy NYC athletic shoe store (5,910 sq. ft., of which 2,490 is in the basement) opened July 2010.</li> <li>– Nu-Cassel Pharmacy (5, 910 sq. ft., of which 2,490 is in the basement) constructing space. Commercial build out is funded by the County Grow Nassau Fund.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

***335 Rose Place, 275 and 276 Shomer Place (Neighborhood Stabilization)***

The TNH CDA will be issuing RFPs for several one-family housing units in the second half of 2011.

Progress as of August 15, 2008	Site Status as of March 15, 2011
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ <u>Status</u>: Not in development in 2008.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ <u>Status</u>: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– The Town CDA owns these properties.</li> <li>– RFPs for development anticipated in the second half of 2011.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

### *Learning From the Development Process*

In addition to the challenges arising from the poor economy, political corruption, and changing players, construction was slowed by the complexities of the construction approval process. The development process in New Cassel is overseen by the Town of North Hempstead. Once a developer's proposal meets zoning requirements, enforced by the Planning Department, the plans are reviewed by the CDA, Public Works, the Building Department, and a number of Nassau County agencies. Sandra Acosta, owner of A&C Development Partners, speaking about the development of 821 Prospect Avenue, described the Town of North Hempstead's review process as being very different from her experience with affordable housing in New York City, commenting:

I did not expect the multitude of hearings, approvals and the multiple government agencies involvement.... And I don't believe anyone who developed in New Cassel was prepared for it either.<sup>79</sup>

Ira Lichtiger,<sup>80</sup> a partner at The Bluestone Organization (speaking about the development of 701 Prospect Avenue) agreed and noted that there is a clear review processing path for affordable housing in New York City, noting that even with the City's delineated path, there are still issues. "But," he added, "the developer can, at least, anticipate them. The Town was trying to create that path; but there was still a disconnect between the different entities."

This difficulty is so common on Long Island that the Long Island Index commissioned a report<sup>81</sup> from the Regional Plan Association, which put forth 10 recommendations for improvement. While not meeting all of the recommendations, the Town did use a comprehensive plan, updated zoning codes, and supported medium density and affordable housing. Dominic Buffa, senior vice president, First Sterling Financial, Inc., recognized this in a 2010 interview, saying:

...municipalities usually want to bring in commercial tenants before they bring in residents and that doesn't work. The Town is going about this the right way. The Town is bringing people in. Then they are going to let businesses see that there are people for them to sell to.<sup>82</sup>

Despite their frustrations, several developers indicated that they are interested in building

additional developments in New Cassel and nearby communities.

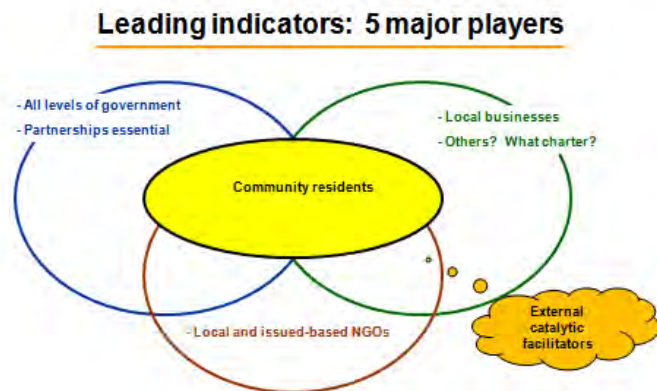
## Concluding Thoughts

Although this was a difficult time for many, and some in the New Cassel community lost hope for a time, there are many successes to celebrate.

Key factors in these successes include an initial participative planning process, which included a broad range of New Cassel constituents; affordable housing property developers and small business owners willing to invest in the community; ongoing support and outreach from local community groups, especially UNCCRC; powerful governmental planning and investment; support from local, regional, and national NGOs; substantive public and private funding; and, most of all, the will of a wide variety of leaders to stay the course over time. Because this renewal project is not finished, and community maintenance never stops being necessary, these elements will continue to be important.

Lessons learned from this and other revitalization projects<sup>83</sup> indicate that one of the leading indicators for the capacity to address social challenges is the robust participation *as partners* of at least three sectors of society working in concert with the community itself (see the diagram repeated from the first report). In addition, external facilitators with special expertise may be effective as periodic catalysts. While New Cassel continues to benefit from all three sectors, additional large-scale investment from the business sector would be very useful.

As the situation in New Cassel continues to evolve, and since many of the residents in the new buildings knew very little about the 2003 Vision Plan, we wonder if, in the next couple of years, a community-wide celebration of successes followed by a new visioning charrette might provide the grounding for another decade of renewal, perhaps with a focus on New Cassel's human capital.



## Appendices

### Appendix A: New Cassel Vision Implementation Matrix

This matrix is taken directly from the original community plan document.

Action Item	Immediate (present to 6 months)	Intermediate (6-24 months)	Long Term
<b>Enforcement</b>	Request increase police patrol and foot officer; increase code enforcement		
<b>Community Cleanup</b>	Community Cleanup Initiative: Volunteer trash pickup and street celebration; public education; street sweeping by County; emphasis on code compliance		
<b>Funding</b>	Identify funding opportunities for all Action Plan items.	Continue funding efforts; Establish a Local Development Corporation (LDC); seek public, private investment	Continue funding efforts; Mixed use buildings constructed and occupied
<b>Community Art</b>	Work with school to develop a youth program to contribute art to public space; Conduct a community art contest to help identify local talent.	Begin display of community art; conduct a craft fair featuring arts and craft produced in the community; utilize local talent to conduct art programs	Continue to nurture the arts within the community
<b>Community Asset Building</b>	Identify people, groups, institutions and other community based assets; determine how these assets can contribute to the revitalization of New Cassel	Identify gaps in programs and services; match community resources to needs; establish a community technical assistance program.	
<b>Traffic Engineering Study</b>	Complete an engineering study to verify feasibility of narrowing Prospect Avenue. Lower posted speed limit.	Re-stripe Prospect Avenue to interim cross section specifications	Reconstruct Prospect Avenue; bury utilities
<b>Pedestrian Safety</b>	Study ways to facilitate pedestrian safety. Establish a program to add missing sidewalks and repair existing pedestrian crossings.	Add high visibility crosswalk markings and pedestrian signal heads as needed.	Add medians and bulbs outs during Prospect Avenue Reconstruction
<b>Streetscape Program</b>	Develop required preliminary plans or obtain permits as necessary. Purchase and distribute trash cans and benches to participating shopkeepers and bus stops. Hang banners.	Install bus shelters; install lighting; purchase and distribute planters	Final phases of streetscape in conjunction with the reconstruction of Prospect Avenue
<b>Gateways</b>	Gateway at Prospect and Brush Hollow	Gateway at Prospect and Bond	
<b>New Codes and Design Guidelines</b>	Adopt codes and standards to support the vision plan	Establish overlay district; adopt codes and standards	
<b>Façade Improvements</b>	Outreach to commercial property owners to provide information about TNH/CDA sponsored programs	Complete facade improvements	
<b>Youth Civic Program</b>		Establish in-school planning and community-building training program for youth	
<b>Parks</b>	Identify existing parks and potential sites; review existing conditions	Develop plans to improve existing parks and identify potential for new parks	Martin "Bunky" Reid park improvements; water-well site
<b>Community Multi-Use Center</b>	Identify potential sites and issues that must be addressed before design and building can begin.	Complete preliminary designs	Community Multi-Use Center

## **Appendix B: Lessons Learned Documented in the First Report**

### *Success Factors*

Because every revitalization situation is different and the situation in New Cassel itself changes over time, no single “cookie-cutter” plan will be effective. Each situation should be carefully considered before assuming these lessons apply. Success factors documented in the first report include:

- Formal community participation fuels energy and optimism as well as government revitalization processes. It also helps to ensure that suburban renewal initiatives actually address community wants and needs.
- Government partnerships can work to the benefit of communities. Partnerships among the Town of North Hempstead, the Town Community Development Agency, Nassau County, New York state, and federal agencies all worked together to benefit New Cassel. Partnerships of this type only work when the officials are strongly motivated.
- A third-party organization with expertise in participatory planning and community asset building, such as Sustainable Long Island, can be useful in bringing together diverse community members and government officials in ways that can sustain long-term development.
- A strong mandate from the community is one of the keys to successful fundraising. Both the New Cassel Vision Plan and the formal legal partnership between the community and the Town of North Hempstead were important.
- As in other areas of the United States, a faith-based approach, involving the participation of multiple religious organizations, can be effective in mobilizing communities even—and perhaps, especially—where there is a history of discrimination and neglect.
- An effective block captain program can serve as an effective communication system and mobilize resident participation.
- Community organizations can take responsibility for achieving goals, not simply representing a community. By sponsoring block captain and summer youth programs, New Cassel’s community group (UNCCRC) has demonstrated its ability to provide services on its own as well as in concert with others.

- The willingness of businesses to invest in communities makes a crucial difference. After discussions with Town of North Hempstead Supervisor Jon Kaiman, Neptune RTS, an electric transmission business newly locating in the industrial area of New Cassel in 2005, committed \$10 million to support the development of the hoped-for community center. While not sufficient to cover the whole project, this contribution provided the foundation for the center.

### *Continuing Challenges*

The first report documented problems such as improprieties exhibited by some government officials; construction and financial problems experienced by property developers; contention over the appropriateness of union labor; racial discord; and disagreements within the community and among the organizations working to support the revitalization. Additional obstacles listed in the first report include:

- Development and revitalization processes are long and slow. It is challenging for both the government and for civic organizations to sustain both funding and community participation.
- Throughout Long Island—and common to many renewal projects around the world—builders, nonprofits, and community stakeholders often complain about the time and costs of bringing a construction project from conception to the start of construction.
- Awarding multiple projects to a single real estate developer in a revitalization project of this size increases the level of risk, especially in economic downturns.
- There are genuine conflicts in the New Cassel community. Political power counts and is uneven in the community. Change always generates opposition, and the struggle to confront and address conflict can be viewed as an important part of the development process.
- Jobs, job training, and union involvement in construction projects are big, complex, and systemic issues.
- The term “affordable housing” has many different meanings. Local government officials and residents are aware that federal definitions do not address the needs of all New Cassel residents.
- Many different skills are required to develop, coordinate, and sustain projects of this type.
- Some individuals were so effective that the process began to depend on them.
- Despite extensive outreach, almost everyone feels left out of some aspect of the process.

A review of other revitalization initiatives indicates that the efforts in New Cassel face obstacles that are not just local in nature: long-standing patterns of privilege and discrimination; onerous government bureaucratic processes; and lack of sufficient funding for affordable housing, public transportation, education, and other elements of suburban revitalization. It is important that local measures are complemented with efforts at the national and global levels.

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<sup>2</sup> According to the U.S. Census Bureau, the combined 2005-2009 statistics are more accurate than the 2009 stand-alone figures.

<sup>3</sup> Census Bureau. (2009). Percentages shown reflect a change in the number reported for numerical counts and a change in the rate reported for percentages.

<sup>4</sup> Long Island Index. (2011). Housing affordability. Retrieved April 20, 2011, from <http://www.longislandindex.org/Housing-Affordability.690.0.html>

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<sup>15</sup> Levine, H. (2008). *The impact of current economic conditions on the real estate market in Nassau County*. Nassau County Legislature. Mineola, NY. Retrieved March, 15, 2011 from <http://www.nassaucountyny.gov/agencies/OLBR/documents/RealEstateMay152008.pdf>

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UNCCRC Block Captain Annual Holiday Tree Lighting 2010, 701 Prospect Avenue. Left to right: Hon. Charles Lavine, New York state assemblyman; Dr. James L. LaMar, pastor, Bethany Seventh Day Adventist Church in Westbury; Inspector Kevin Canavan, 3<sup>rd</sup> Precinct, Nassau County Police; Master James Johnson; Hon. Robert Troiano, Nassau County legislator; Master Simon Johnson; Hon. Viviana Russell, THN councilwoman; Bishop Lionel Harvey, pastor, First Baptist Cathedral of Westbury, and president/CEO of UNCCRC; Leslie Davis, Westbury School Board trustee and owner Studio "L" 516; Charles Berman, TNH receiver of taxes; Lashaun Carr, Nassua County Police officer and Westbury firefighter; Robert Weinberg, project manager of Family Dental Center; Vincent Abbatiello, commissioner of the Westbury Fire District.