

# Engineering growth; creating jobs

Ground broken for new Sunrise Center building

By JEFFREY BESSEN

**GREAT RIVER**— Seeking to ensure that Islip Town provides high-end professional jobs to sustain residential living, town officials partnered with Garden City-based Metropolitan Realty Associates (MRA) to construct the 300 building of the Sunrise Business Center.

A groundbreaking ceremony for the two-story, 136,971-square foot new structure occurred last Friday outside an old building that once housed Northrop-Grumman and has stood vacant since 1995, according to MRA President Joseph Farkas.

It is one of three buildings in the business center currently overseen by Farkas and his partners, Ronen Katz and Adam Schwartz. Located on the south service road of Sunrise Highway, the complex has begun to attract some high-profile tenants, Farkas said.

"Aetna Healthcare, Citizens Bank, Hearst Business Media, Lessings Food Services—not small names on Long Island," Farkas said. "This is a tremendous, tremendous opportunity to create a community within a project."

For Farkas and the town, the name of the game is tenants and jobs. Bill Mannix, director of Islip's Economic Development Division, said there was an interest in the site for a retail center such as Tanger Outlets, big box retailers, or a multiplex movie theater. Though those entities do create jobs



Metropolitan Realty Associates (MRA) is set to build a new 300 building at the Sunrise Business Center on the south service road of Sunrise Highway in Great River. From left are: Islip Economic Director Bill Mannix, Councilman Gene Parrington, Supervisor Phil Nolan, MRA President Joseph Farkas, Councilmen Christopher Bodkin and Steve Flotteron, and Adam Schwartz. Behind Parrington is Ronen Katz. IS/Bessen

and generate property taxes, those jobs do not sustain careers and maintain a growing population on Long

Island and in the town, Mannix noted. "The South Shore does not have many high-end professional office

spaces. Those tend to be up by the

See **SUNRISE CENTER** on page 8

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**SUNRISE CENTER** from page 5

Expressway corridor and Route 110," said Mannix, whose division has aided

retaining and adding more than 30,000 jobs and establishing more than 5 million square feet in commercial space in the past three decades. "This will be a

Class A office complex."

Based on the prospectus, the building is slated to have a flexible tenant floor plan for 10,000-square foot spaces and up to 95,000-square foot offices. The structure is expected to feature a modern facade, a common lobby and direct site access, tenant-controlled heating, a ventilation and air conditioning (HVAC) package, high ceilings and raised, and "exceptional data center possibilities."

This project is being aided by the benefits of being in the New York State Empire Zone, established to spark economic growth through multiple tax incentives created to attract new businesses to the state and enable existing businesses to expand and produce more jobs. In addition, instead of paying property taxes, payments in lieu of taxes (the PILOT program), which are significantly less expensive, will be paid to the town.

"Ninety-nine percent of the credit goes to [Joel]," said Islip Town Supervisor Phil Nolan. "He is a guy with rare vision, strength and focus. The names of his clients spoke volumes."

Contributions by Mannix also did not go unnoticed by Nolan, who noted Mannix's 30-year career in town government and said he is the one that

"finds people like Joe Farkas and puts together the deals and incentives and makes it happen."

What is happening at the Sunrise Center is more life than has been seen in nearly 13 years. "I am very glad this happened," said Councilman Steve Flotteron, who also noted that a vacant building will be replaced by good jobs.

The recently reestablished East Islip Community Chamber of Commerce is also a strong supporter of this project, said Mike Visgauss, the organization's president.

Expected to be completed within the next eight months, building architect Sal Ferrara, president of East Meadow-based Combined Resources, said that though the structure is not a "green" building, aspects of recycling are anticipated, such as reusing the steel and concrete in the existing structure, while sending out other items to be recycled for other purposes elsewhere.

In addition, Ferrara noted that a high-end HVAC system is slated to be installed and is expected to save money over the long haul. "A public/private partnership is the engine of growth and a formula for success," Farkas said. ■