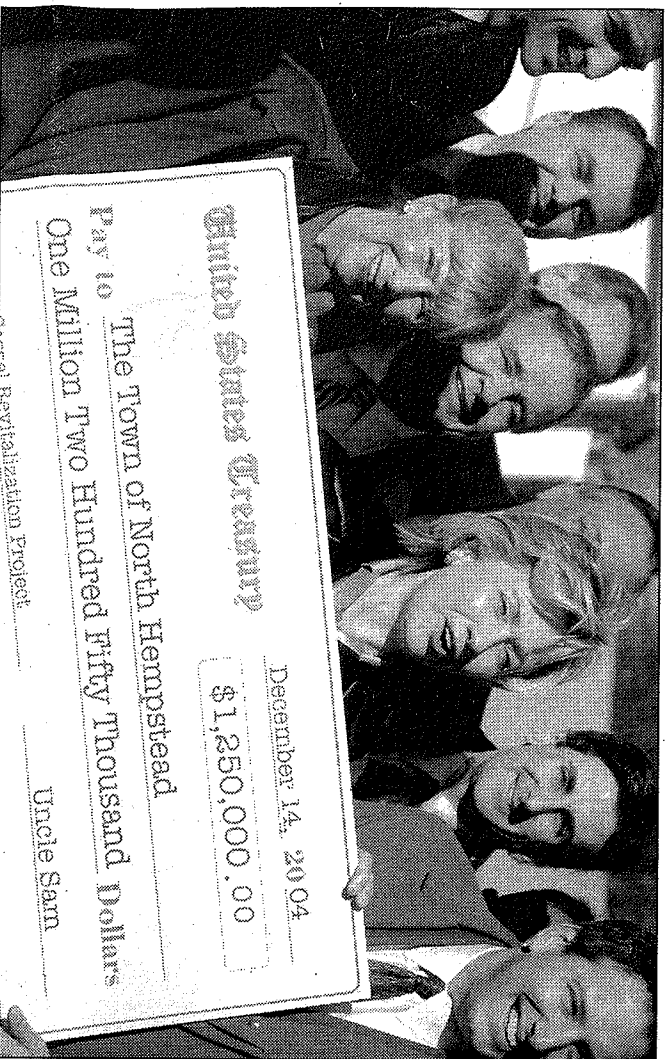


# New Cassel's new look



PHOTOS BY WILLE ANDERSON DAILY NEWS

Smiles, frowns tell it all as (l. to r.) Rep. Carolyn McCarthy, Sen. Hillary Clinton and North Hempstead Town Supervisor Jon Kaiman start \$58 million project and (below) protesters blast plan.



THE ECONOMICALLY DISTRESSED hamlet of New Cassel is about to get a \$58 million shot in the arm to develop Prospect Ave., its main thoroughfare.

BY LAURA WILLIAMS  
DAILY NEWS STAFF WRITER

Eight mixed-use buildings — to contain shops and residences — are set for construction along several blocks of the dilapidated stretch.

But just as Sen. Hillary Clinton (D-N.Y.) and several local pols shivered and hoisted their shovels yesterday to break ground on an empty lot — the future site of a 24-unit residential building — a small group of protesters nearby blasted the plan.

On another empty lot, the former home of St. Luke's Pentecostal Church, the protesters said the Town of North Hempstead improperly snatched the land by claiming eminent domain.

"They took our property," St. Luke's Pastor Fred Jenkins said. "The parishioners are very distressed by what happened."

But town officials said it had been a "blight" for years.

"There was a church on that property that had been decaying and unused," said Jon Kaiman, supervisor of the Town of North Hempstead, which includes New Cassel. "We couldn't just let it sit there forever. We really needed to move and make some decisions and we did."

After the groundbreaking, the politicians, community leaders and others filled First Baptist Church a few blocks away, where the redevelopment movement began four years ago.

"It's a really wonderful example of a faith-based initiative," Clinton said from the pulpit. "It started with the faith of

this community." Clinton, along with Rep. Carolyn McCarthy (D-Minneapolis), secured \$1.25 million in federal aid for the \$58 million project, which will be paid for by public and private investment.

Along with street-level shops, the 263,500-square-foot development will include 238 condos or rental apartments going for \$872 to \$1,324 a month.

Construction on the first building was set to start yesterday, Kaiman said, and half the buildings should be completed by late next year. It is expected that the remaining four buildings will be ready for residents within three years.

"This is really an emotional day for me," said Nassau Legislator Roger Corbin (D-New Cassel), whose district includes the redevelopment site. "In 1957, my parents moved us here, and Prospect Ave. was a dirt road."

County Executive Tom Suozzi said the new and improved Prospect Ave. will better reflect the hamlet's residents.

"When you drive down Prospect Ave., you would have no idea that a block behind [the street] are solid, middle-class homes and families," Suozzi said.

Prospect Ave. is lined with vacant lots and a few crumbling homes and shops. About one in 10 New Cassel residents is officially poor.

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