

**T**he Lighthouse at Long Island, a proposal for perhaps the biggest project ever undertaken by Nassau County, has been the center of much discussion recently. Since the proposal is still in the process of negotiations as to whether or not it will actually be developed, its supporters and critics have been engaged in a heated battle in an attempt to sway county officials either for or against it. But just what is the Lighthouse at Long Island, anyway? And why should we, as the public, care about it?

The Lighthouse is a roughly \$3 billion project envisioned to transform Nassau Veterans Memorial Coliseum, the home of the National Hockey League's (NHL) New York Islanders, and specifically, the neighborhood of Uniondale. First conceived in September 2004, the Lighthouse is much more than simply a new sporting arena. The project is a plan to completely rebuild the surrounding area of the Coliseum from a lackluster stretch of land to a suburbanized social center. There will be a landscaped park, called Celebration Plaza, which is estimated to be bigger than Manhattan's Bryant Park; over 2,000 housing opportunities created by a mix of lofts, condominiums and townhouses; a five-star hotel with luxury accommodations; and a sports complex which will house not only a health club and other community facilities, such as basketball courts but also a minor league baseball field and accommodations for local youth teams and clubs. Over 50,000 temporary jobs would be created by the Lighthouse's construction, and there is anticipation that, once it is up and running, the Lighthouse will create approximately 20,000 permanent jobs and bring in \$70 million in tax revenue annually.

As for the Coliseum, which is one of the oldest hockey arenas in the NHL next to Madison Square Garden and Pittsburgh's Mellon Arena, it will be completely transformed into a state-of-the-art accommodation for sporting and entertainment events alike. In direct contrast to the cramped, technologically-deficient arena that is there today, the plan proposes more, wider concourses, new restrooms, bigger seats, premier concessions and a higher seating capacity. As it stands now, the Coliseum seats approximately 16,000. The new facility would be able to seat 17,500 patrons for hockey games, 18,500 patrons for basketball games and 20,000 patrons for concerts.

Approval of the Lighthouse Project would also allow the New York Islanders to remain on Long Island. Owner Charles Wang, who is also the founder of the Lighthouse Project, has expressed his unhappiness with the Coliseum and its insufficient accommodations for his team and its fans as well as his dissatisfaction with Nassau County for not doing anything about it. Kansas City, where the Islanders are set to play an exhibition game in September, has a brand new arena that is yearning for a professional hockey team to become its tenant. Wang has, for all intents and purposes, threatened to move his team once their contractual obligation with Nassau is fulfilled if he does not get what he wants, namely, the Lighthouse Project's approval. It is an issue that has county officials, team officials and Islanders fans at war with each other.

For the most up-to-date information on the Lighthouse on Long Island Project or to read more about it, visit the official website at <http://www.lighthouseli.com>

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