

# Nautical Mile hotel

Developer plans \$43M, 100-room Freeport building

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Almost a decade has passed since Superstorm Sandy wrecked The Schooner, a popular seafood restaurant on Freeport's Nautical Mile. Now a hotel with a ballroom, rooftop bar and restaurant will rise on Schooner's old site along the waterfront strip.

NBD Holding LLC, a development group, plans to build a 100-room Hilton Garden Inn, which will include a 125-person ballroom and a small business center, said Arma Development Consultants CEO Nicholas Strachovsky, a consultant on the project. The \$43.58 million project will give the Nautical Mile its first hotel and an attached but independently run restaurant.

The 90,000-square-foot development at 417-447 Woodcleft Ave. is not the first hotel project announced during the pandemic.

Eight hotels are in the pipeline on Long Island, including: a Residence Inn in the final planning stages in Jericho and two venues under construction — a Hampton Inn Suites near Farmingdale Republic Airport and a Hampton in Huntington, according to STR, a hospitality data and analytics company.

Fifty-four hotels operate within 10 miles of the Freeport



The hotel will sit on the site of a former restaurant in Freeport and feature a public promenade.

site, according to a cost-benefit analysis prepared for the Hempstead Industrial Development Agency. The analysis estimates that 20% of the new hotel's guests will be visitors who otherwise would stay outside the Town of Hempstead.

When the Hilton Garden Inn opens in mid-2024, it will be the only hotel on the Nautical Mile. The location amid more than a dozen bustling restaurants and bars, seafood markets and gift shops will appeal to visitors, Strachovsky said.

"You're going to see a lot of tourism out of this, but it can accommodate any type of use. That's what you really need these days," Strachovsky said.

The Hilton Garden Inn will be a "terrific asset" to the area, said Kristen Jarnagin Reynolds, president and CEO of the regional tourism promotion group, Discover Long Island.

For every \$100 visitors pay for hotels, they spend, on average, \$212 in the surrounding community, she said.

"The Nautical Mile, in and of itself, has never really had a place to stay," Reynolds said. "It's wonderful and will open it up to a whole new audience."

The Village of Freeport has signed off on the plans and is working with the developer to create a pedestrian promenade out of the last 200 feet of Woodcleft Avenue, Strachovsky said. That part of the street now leads to a turnaround near a defunct fueling station for boats.

The first floor of the hotel will be raised about 15 feet above the ground to avoid flooding, which means passersby will see glimpses of the waterfront, according to Strachovsky. The rooftop restaurant-bar will provide

more expansive views of the canal, he said. And the hotel will use design features that are common in the area, such as overhangs on balconies, Strachovsky said.

"[This will] give it the feel of Long Island and not just a square box placed on the waterfront," he said.

The IDA granted preliminary approval of up to \$8.26 million in tax benefits for the hotel over 20 years, according to the cost-benefit analysis. The IDA believes the project will create at least 35 full-time jobs.

The agency will not consider formally authorizing the benefits until a public hearing is held.

"If granted final approval, [this project] has the potential to revitalize a part of Nautical Mile that needs a shot in the arm," IDA CEO Fred Parola said.

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