

Canon's new HQ to be LI's largest green project

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Canon USA is expected to file building plans Tuesday for its new headquarters in Melville, a five-story, 690,000-square-foot facility that would be Long Island's biggest green project.

In the plans, what was once 52 acres of farmland would largely resemble a park, with the buildings taking up a third of the land, two reflecting pools to collect runoff water, walking paths among the trees, plus drought-resistant vegetation and energy-efficient building material.

The main building, to be located on Walt Whitman Road south of the Long Island Expressway, would have a large interior courtyard to maximize natural light in the office building.

Canon is trying to garner at least a silver standard from the U.S. Green Building Council's Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design. Under new Huntington Town rules, a rating of silver and above would lift some code restrictions for developers, including allowing Canon's two parking garages and two additional stories, design elements that free up land to create a park setting.

If built to national green building standards, the Canon project would be the fourth such commercial building on Long Island.

"We wanted a campus-style headquarters," Seymour Liebman, Canon's executive vice president and chief administrative officer, said Monday at the company's Lake Success headquarters. "All people have here is blacktop and parking lot."

Huntington Town Supervisor Frank Petrone said the Canon site shows how green can work for the developers who have been thinking of renovating their properties along Route 110. "We don't want it to turn into White Plains," he said of the built-up Westchester business corridor.

Petrone, Rep. Steve Israel (D-Huntington), Canon officials and other government leaders met Monday afternoon to discuss some of the biggest challenges to the project: traffic and federal and state funding for infrastructure improvements.

Canon said its current 1,000-plus employees in Lake Success will eventually grow to 2,500 at the new site, one of three global headquarters for the company. Canon said it expects the building to be completed by the end of 2010.

The LIE overpass on Walt Whitman Road will have to be widened from one to two lanes each way, Petrone said, while the state Department of Transportation might redesign access to the Canon complex from the South Service Road.

The national green standard was created eight years ago, but it was not until last November that a 130,000-square foot office building in Garden City became the first on Long Island to get a LEED rating.

Long Island officials and developers say green building, despite added costs of up to 25 percent, has been gaining popularity partly because of concern about the environment and to help company brands stand out.

But it's not easy trying to register for a LEED rating.

"There are thousands of people registered, but not many people cross the finish line," said Thomas Chartier, project manager of Garden City-based Albanese Organization, which built Long Island's first LEED offices.

He said getting a LEED standard is still an "afterthought" to many developers: "It's kind of a lower priority than actually finishing the building."

The second local LEED building is Sea Tow Services International in Southold while the other is a commercial building whose owners told the LEED organization they wanted to remain unidentified.

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