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## **Work Finally Begins; Ground is broken on business park at Gabreski Airport**

***By Carol Moran***

Workers broke ground late last month at Francis S. Gabreski Airport in Westhampton, marking the start of the first phase of construction of the long-anticipated Hampton Business District. Developers Mitchell and Gregg Rechler, the cousins behind the project, said the completed complex will eventually consist of nine buildings that will host a range of business and medical offices, as well as a restaurant, and be anchored by a 145-room, three-story hotel.

Construction crews are busy grading the southern end of the property that runs along the east side of Old Riverhead Road, just north of the airport's main entrance, Mitchell Rechler said, and the hope is to begin work on the first structure—a 60,000-square-foot industrial building—in March. Construction on that structure is expected to take about nine months.

That will be followed by the addition of two “state-of-the-art” office and medical buildings, which will measure 60,000 square feet total. The later phases of construction could take several years to complete.

“We really feel there is pent-up demand in the market for high-quality buildings, which really don't exist on the East End and in a business park,” Mr. Rechler said on Tuesday. “We're excited. We think it's going to be hugely successful.”

Mr. Rechler said he did not know how much the first phase of construction would cost, and didn't immediately respond to emails seeking the projected total cost of the entire project. In 2007, Southampton Town approved the roughly 50-acre site at Gabreski Airport as a Planned Development District, designed to bring in commercial development that will benefit the region. Two years later, the Rechlers signed a 40-year lease with Suffolk County, which owns the airport, for the land that mostly runs along the east side off Old Riverhead Road. In 2012, they opened a sales office located north of the airport's main entrance.

County officials said they anticipate the development will generate as much as \$38 million in new revenue for the county, through the collection of rent and property taxes.

“This is exciting for us,” Southampton Town Supervisor Anna Throne-Holst said on Wednesday. “The economic potential here of that PDD, which was the intention behind it, is starting to realize itself.”

Mr. Rechler said his company, Rechler Equity Partners, which owns and operates more than seven million square feet of commercial space across Long Island, began marketing the Hampton Business District project last year. He said they are in talks with various companies interested in leasing the industrial building. He also said there has been a “tremendous” amount of interest in the office and medical buildings. “We foresee getting leases signed over the next several months,” he said.

Mr. Rechler added that they are focused on giving Long Island businesses the opportunity to expand out east and tap into the Hamptons’ economy, and said they have managed to secure “fantastic” benefits for potential lessees in the form of state and county tax abatements and incentives.

“We think it’s a great opportunity for business owners and for the East End,” he said. Available space in the nine buildings will range from 1,333 square feet to 100,000 square feet, the company said, and will have space for other amenities, such as a day care center, a bank and possibly a fitness center. The buildings are designed for sustainability and will include green technology.