

# Future vision

## Island Eye breaks ground on new Westbury surgery center

By DAVID WINZELBERG

After a long search for just the right site, Island Eye Surgicenter has broken ground on a new 26,600-square-foot ambulatory surgery center in Westbury.

Island Eye signed a ground lease for the nearly 3-acre parcel at 1500 Jericho Turnpike that had been occupied by a series of restaurants, including Howard Johnson's, Red Coach Grill, El Torito's, Papa Razzi and Diletto's, which closed in 2014. The firm is now building an \$8 million complex on the site that will feature six operating rooms – doubling the capacity of Island Eye's current facility on Glen Cove Road in Carle Place – and creating one of the region's largest ambulatory surgery centers.

The last time Island Eye expanded was in 2003, adding a second story to its Carle Place center, stretching it to 9,300 square feet. Now being offered for sale, the surgery center's current facility has just three operating rooms and was designed to handle about 8,000 cases a year. With nearly 14,000 cases in 2015, Island Eye was bursting at the seams.

"We were outgrowing this facility," said Robert Nelson, Island Eye's executive director. "It's woefully inadequate in terms of space."

So Nelson engaged United Realty's Bill Yorio to find a suitable property for the center's expansion, one that was within a four-mile radius of its existing building.

Some four years later, Yorio was able to secure a 15-year ground lease – extendable to a total of 35 years – for the Westbury site from property owner Empire Jericho Realty.

"They have an extraordinary parking requirement," said Yorio, who is not only Island Eye's real estate broker, but also a client.

"I was very nearsighted with 20-200 vision and wore glasses for 40 years," Yorio said. "I had corrective surgery with premium lenses installed a few years ago. It's a life changer."

Island Eye employs about 60 people and plans to add 20 more to its expanded facility within the next three years, Nelson said. There are 40 doctors who perform operations there.

The firm's new Westbury surgery center



Photo by Bob Giglione

From left: Bill Yorio of United Realty, Island Eye's Robert Nelson and Robert Knox of Talisen Construction.

is being financed by First National Bank of Long Island, built by Manhattan-based Talisen Construction and designed by Richard T. Hardaway Architect of Wellesley, Mass.

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Hardaway has designed more than 100 ambulatory surgery centers across the country, including the South Shore Surgery Center in Islip, and headed up the renovation of the Melville Surgery Center. He said ambulatory surgery centers have become a mainstay in patient treatment, with more surgery now performed each

year in outpatient centers than in hospitals.

"The Island Eye Surgicenter in Westbury was designed to complement the historic character of the village," Hardaway said. "Although not a small building, sloping roofs, dormers and a covered entrance were combined with stone, shake siding and shingle roofing to give the building a residential feel and appearance. The design incorporates a wide variety of measures for energy efficiency, including a super-insulated building shell, ultra-efficient HVAC systems, low-energy lighting and a large array of solar electrical panels on the roof."

Nelson, who participated in the groundbreaking ceremony at the Westbury site on Wednesday, said Island Eye's new facility will feature the latest in surgical technology and enable its doctors to serve many more patients.

"We are committed to being an important part of healthcare delivery on Long Island for many years to come," he said.

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