NOMINATION FORM

NOMINATOR INFORMATION
Your name and title: Regina G. Feeney, Commissioner, Village of Freeport Landmark Preservation Commission
Organization or affiliation if applicable:
501(c)(3)? YES/NO
Email: rfeeney@freeportlibrary.info
Phone Number: 516-379-3274
Fax Number:
Website (if applicable):
Mailing Address: c/o Freeport Memorial Library, 144 West Merrick Road, Freeport, NY 11520

PROPERTY INFORMATION
Current Name of Property: Meadow Brook Bank Building
Other names (historic or popular): First National Bank; Meadow Brook National of Freeport, LI; Meadow Brook National Bank of National Bank; National Bank of North America; National Westminster Bank USA; Plaza West
Address: 70 West Merrick Road, Freeport, NY 11520
Date of Original Construction: 1929
Type (Check one that best applies):
- e Archaeological Site
- e Dwelling
- e Cultural Landscape
- e Garden/Park
- Other:

Historic Designation (check all that apply):
- e National Historic Landmark
- e National Register
- e New York State Registere Local Landmark Designation
- e Other? (Explain)

Municipality with jurisdiction over property: Village of Freeport

OWNER INFORMATION
If not an individual, is this an institution, organization, or municipality?
Owner Contact name: Community Development Agency, Norman Wells, Executive Director
Email Address: nwells@Freeportny.gov
Phone Number: 516-377-2203
Fax Number: 516-377-2394
Mailing Address: 46 North Ocean Avenue, Freeport, NY 11520
LONG ISLAND’S LIST OF ENDANGERED SITES: 2011

NOMINATION FORM

Is the owner of the property aware of this nomination? YES
Does the owner of the property support this nomination? YES
Who is financially responsible for the upkeep of this resource? Community Development Agency

Who has legal control and/or authority to approve projects related to the site?
Village of Freeport
Community Development Agency

NARRATIVE QUESTIONS

Please complete the following questions to the best of your ability. You may use additional pages as needed. To download a Microsoft word version of this form, please visit our website: www.splia.org.

1. Describe the property’s historic significance and its importance to the community.

The Meadow Brook National Bank building is located at 70 West Sunrise Highway in the center of the Village of Freeport, adjacent to the tracks of the LIRR. It was the second bank founded in Freeport. Constructed in 1929 as the First National Bank and Trust Company, it was the tallest building on Long Island east of Jamaica. During World War II, an observation tower was constructed on the roof of the building for enemy plane spotting. The bank was also authorized to receive and honor all ration checks. For decades it served as a depository for Village funds.

The bank also influenced Village infrastructure. The construction of such a large building was an impetus for the Village to expand the Freeport Electric Department.

In late 1940, the Federal Communication Commission authorized the Doctors Telephone Exchange to create a radiophone system in Freeport. This system allowed doctors, lawyers, taxi companies and other business to install a two-way radio system in cars for the purpose of emergency communication. The antennas for this system were placed on the roof of the bank building. The height of the building allowed the radiophone system to have a radius of 10 miles. According to one source, this was the first radiophone system in the United States.

In the 1940s, First National Bank and Trust Company began to merge with other Long Island financial institutions. By 1950, it was the second largest bank on Long Island. Mergers continued into the late 1960s. Between 1949 and 1968, it merged with 19 other banks. Between 1951 and 1961 its deposits and total assets increased 14-fold.

The building was designed and built by noted architects, the Hoggson Brothers. Several of their bank buildings are on the National Register of Historic Places, including:

- Citizen’s Trust Company (aka Sycamore Building), Sycamore, IL – National Historic Landmark since 1983.

In the 1991, the freestanding four-sided clock that is located near the bank’s entrance was locally landmarked and restored.

In 1994, local veteran groups proposed designating the bank’s front tower as a MIA/POW memorial. That same year the Freeport Landmarks Preservation Commission tried to get the Village to designate the building as a landmark. The Village Board refused to vote on landmark status.

Meadow Brook National Bank sponsored local little league teams and amateur photography contests. In the 1950s, the bank provided free income tax assistance.

In 2004, the Village wanted to create a new “streetscape” for Sunrise Highway, incorporating the bank building. Plaza West was to include 235 one- and two-bedroom, market-rate housing units, some of them duplexes that the architects said will have views of the Atlantic Ocean and Manhattan; a glass-enclosed, rooftop pool and health club;
23,000 square feet of retail space; underground parking; and a refurbished six-story, former Meadowbrook Bank building providing new offices. The cast-stone and stucco-covered complex was to include a new station plaza that is designed to provide a pedestrian focus for the project and surrounding area. The Village partnered with Time Equities Inc. to create Plaza West.

Important Dates for the First National Bank and Trust Company

- 1911 – original two-story First National Bank constructed
- 1929 - current six-story building constructed
- 1942 – merged with Citizens National Bank
- 1949 – merged with First National Bank of Merrick (name changed to Meadow Brook National Bank)
- 1950 -merged with West Hempstead National Bank (it became the second largest bank on Long Island)
- 1952- merged with the People’s Bank in Hicksville.
- 1954 - merged with the Bank of Hicksville.
- 1955 – merged with six separate banks
- 1957 – Meadow Brook National Bank of Freeport, L.I. became Meadow Brook National Bank of Nassau County and the headquarters were moved to West Hempstead
- 1959 – the bank employed 958 people
- 1960s –C.I.T. the world’s largest independent finance company acquired 95% of the banks stock
- 1965 – 66 branches on Long Island and New York City
- 1968 – name changed to National Bank of North America
- 1979 – acquired by National Westminster Bank USA
- 1991 - the Freeport Community Development Agency purchased the bank building for $690,000 for the purpose of urban renewal
- 1991 – 4-sided free-standing clock at the building’s entrance was locally landmarked
- 2004 – Village partners with Time Equities Inc. to create Plaza West
- 2012 – Lawsuit is settled with TEI

2. Provide a brief history of the property including major construction dates.

In 1911, the original two-story First National Bank was constructed on Sunrise Highway and South Grove Street. In 1929, a new bank, known as the First National Bank and Trust Company was opened just east of the first building. The Art Deco, flatiron-style bank featured six stories with a two-story base. The building was approximately 17,277 square feet including a basement. The base was granite and topped by two stories of limestone and brick, with limestone trim above. Mayan reliefs are on the façade of the building. The lobby was finished in Caen stone marble and bronze, replete with an elevator, cigar stand, mail chute and staircase. The building was considered a prototypical art deco structure. The Chamber of Commerce, with specifications set by the War Department, painted “Freeport” on the roof of the building with an arrow pointing to the general direction of the flying fields of Mineola.

3. Identify the property’s current use, physical condition, and rate of deterioration.

The building has been empty since the early 1980s. In 1991, Anson Environmental conducted an environmental assessment of the bank building. They found asbestos on some of the pipes, lead in some of the paint and located an underground oil tank.

4. Explain how the property is threatened (i.e. abandonment, insensitive development plans, loss of integrity, environmental factors, etc.). How urgent is this threat?
The building has been empty for approximately 20 years. During this time many of the windows have been broken and some of the facade has become loose. The Village’s effort to board up the windows, place scaffolding, and fencing on and around the building, has created a public eyesore. The possibility of asbestos is problematic.

5. Describe recent efforts to save the property as well as any obstacles encountered. Who is involved and what resources, financial or otherwise have been directed towards this effort?

In 1994, the Freeport Landmarks Preservation Commission recommended that the building be landmarked. However, the Village Board would not take action. Though many in the community express their desire to have the building preserved, only a few members of the Freeport Historical Society and the Landmarks Preservation Commission have taken any action. In 2012, a presentation at the Freeport Memorial Library on the topic of “Lost Freeport” was given with a major emphasis on the bank building. Over 100 people attended this lecture. Most in the audience assumed the building was landmarked and were surprised to find out that the building is in jeopardy.

6. Explain how this property can be saved. Has a long-term plan for preservation been developed?

There has been no long-term plan for preservation of this building. A redevelopment plan for the bank and surrounding property in the mid-1990s resulted in a lawsuit. This lawsuit was settled in the summer of 2012. Some of the challenges to preservation include, finding an appropriate tenant; removing asbestos and lead paint, and repairs to the roof and façade.

7. Identify individuals or organizations that can be counted on to help in the property’s preservation:

Freeport Landmarks Preservation Commission
Freeport Historical Society

8. Are there any groups (i.e. organizations, business interests, municipalities) opposed to preserving this property?

Opposition to preservation may come from the Village’s current administration who has stated that the building is beyond repair and must be taken down.

Nominator’s Signature: ___________________________ Date: ________________

DEADLINE
Postmark deadline for completed nominations is November 15, 2010.
Packages should include a signed nomination form, images, and any additional documentation. Please see last page for mailing address and nomination guidelines.
GUIDELINES

PURPOSE
Serving as a spotlight, the Society for the Preservation of Long Island Antiquities’ list of endangered properties is intended to raise awareness, enthusiasm, and support for the protection and reuse of important historic resources. In bringing greater attention to the value and needs of these properties, the Society aims to bolster the efforts of local groups and assist in developing strategies to alleviate identified threats.

CRITERIA
The nominated property must be significant, providing a greater understanding and appreciation for Long Island’s cultural heritage through historical associations and/or accomplishments in design and construction. Eligible properties can include individual buildings, landscapes, structures, and any grouping thereof. They need not be designated local landmarks or listed on the State and National Registers so long as significance can be demonstrated.

The continued existence and/or integrity of the property must be seriously threatened. In addition to planned demolition, threats can include a pattern of neglect or exposure that will inevitably lead to loss; the planned introduction of harmful factors, such as development, that will substantially diminish context or setting; and continued inappropriate maintenance that results in the loss of material integrity.

Ideally, there should be an organized local group, or the potential to form an organized group, to advocate directly for the protection of the nominated property.

REQUIRED MATERIALS
- The completed nomination form, signed by the nominator.
- Up to 10 images that clearly show the property. These should be in a high-quality digital format (300dpi). Please make sure to include the property’s setting, condition, and where applicable, interior and historic views. All images must be labeled with captions, credits, and a date. For reproduction purposes, it is the responsibility of the nominator to ensure provided images are free of copyright restrictions.
- A labeled site map identifying the nominated property.
- Any additional documentation that would help to explain the nominated property or challenges to its preservation.

MAILING INFORMATION
Submit one completed nomination package via regular mail to:

Alexandra Parsons Wolfe
Society for the Preservation of Long Island Antiquities
161 Main Street
P.O. Box 148
Cold Spring Harbor, NY 11724

A Microsoft Word version of the nomination form can be downloaded from our website at www.splia.org. Inquiries can be made to Alexandra Parsons Wolfe at 631-692-4664 or awolfe@splia.org. Regrettably, nomination materials cannot be returned.