SUMMERTIME AND THE LIVING IS EASY HAS LONG been the theme song in Freeport, an incorporated village on the south shore of Long Island.

When the warm weather sets in, residents and businessmen of the community welcome large numbers of summer visitors who are attracted by Freeport's fine pleasure boating facilities, excellent fishing grounds and waterway restaurants.

But around the time that the September song is sung every year, the village of 42,000 people undergoes a noticeable change. As the 5,000 boats that sail from the harbor are berthed and drydocked, many local businesses, like the retail stores on Main Street, feel the difference in their cash registers.

FREEPORT believes now, however, that a big step has been taken to relieve its economic dependence upon summer trade and to increase the local labor market. For, only recently ground was broken for a ten-acre, $2 million industrial park that is expected to add an important measure of diversification to the area.

"It's a kind of an economic breakthrough in the community," says Keith S. McHugh, Commissioner of the New York State Commerce Department and chairman of the Job Development Authority, the agency that helped to advance the Freeport industrial project.

"This industrial park has created an intangible something that has stimulated the entire business district," notes Robert J. Sweeney, Freeport's mayor.

At this point, two manufacturing companies have contracted to build plants at the Freeport industrial park. These plants — and others that are presently pending — will widen the community's industrial and tax base, bring it greater economic stability and make new much-needed manufacturing employment available to the local residents.

THE story of this industrial park in Freeport started about three years ago. In the fall of 1961, a group of local businessmen established the Business and Industrial Committee of Freeport. Its aim was to develop ways and means of bringing new companies to the Freeport area and thereby stimulate the entire economy there. It's a group like so many others around the State and nation, all trying do something for their respective communities.

Shortly thereafter New York created the Job Development Authority. This agency — whose seven-man board includes State officials as well as representatives of both labor and business — was organized following the approval by voters of a constitutional amendment that created a public benefit corporation with $100 million in borrowing power.

Its purpose was to assist the industrial growth of communities by lending funds to local, nonprofit industrial development corporations that would help finance new and expanding industries. These local development corporations, in turn, aid the industrial applicants.

Here's how the Authority operates: it will provide up to 30 per cent of the cost of the land and buildings at low rates of interest for supplementary financing. The remainder must be put up by the company and raised through conventional financing. Thus, the State Job Development Authority takes a second mortgage on the property — with the bank, insurance company, pension fund or other lending agency holding the first mortgage.
Since it was formed in 1962, the Job Development Authority has loaned some $9 million for sixty-eight projects throughout New York. These loans have helped to create 5,000 jobs that probably would not have existed otherwise. And, of course, the indirect benefits of related jobs, higher retail sales and additional bank deposits have been substantial.

Perhaps the most important aspect of the Authority's activities has been the impetus it has given to local communities. For, stimulated by the forward-looking approach taken by the State, businessmen in many areas — both Upstate and in the New York City region — have joined together to sponsor local development corporations.

As Commissioner McHugh notes: "While the State can and does provide real leadership in making the business climate for growth in New York the finest in the nation, solid economic growth begins at the community level."

More than 130 local nonprofit industrial development corporations have been formed throughout New York State. Fifty-two of these already have reached the stage where they are able to borrow "seed" money from the Job Development Authority for new industry or for the expansion of existing plants.

Such a development corporation was created in Freeport in April 1962. Spurred on by nine local businessmen, the Business and Industrial Committee of Freeport incorporated itself as the Freeport Local Development Corporation to take advantage of the benefits offered by the Job Development Authority.

After the development corporation was formed, the Village of Freeport transferred to it a publicly-owned ten-acre tract of filled-in land. Since this tract was being used at the time for a garbage dump, the village had no objections to a transfer which would result not only in adding new companies to its tax rolls but also in beautifying the area.

The civic-minded local men behind the development corporation, whose own business activities ranged over many fields of endeavor, quickly began negotiating with industrial firms. Their aim was to "sell" companies the advantages of Freeport.

"If you don't go to work to find prospects," Commissioner McHugh says, "you don't get the companies and you don't get the employment."
One of Freeport's waterway restaurants is shown here. The village depends greatly on summer boating enthusiasts for much of its income.

The Freeport development group was selective, looking for light industrial manufacturing plants rather than warehouses or trucking operations. As Roy N. Cacciatore, chairman of the development corporation, puts it: "We wanted employers with good credit ratings and a diversified type of industry that was not dependent upon government contracts."

Already in Freeport were companies that manufactured such products as bronze parts, boats, propellers, instruments and plastics. But more industry was needed.

Mr. Cacciatore — who owns Hunter Clothes, a men's apparel shop on Main Street — says: "We were able to break the ice with two plants." He was referring to the first two companies that signed up for the industrial park in June 1964.

These were Fine Art Industries, Inc., a wallpaper manufacturer, and Penthouse Manufacturing Company, a producer of cosmetics. Fine Art received its first mortgage from the Franklin National Bank, while the first mortgagor on the Penthouse property is the Long Island Trust Company.

In both cases, the banks are providing a substantial percentage of the building costs. The local development corporation — with money from the Job Development Authority — is lending about 30 per cent and the individual companies are putting up the remainder.

The long-term second mortgage loan to Fine Art from the Freeport Local Development Corporation
amounts to $120,000. Penthouse’s second mortgage totals $75,000.

AFTER the site had been cleared and improved during the summer, ground was broken for the first building on September 24, 1964 and for the second one soon thereafter. When construction is completed in the spring of 1965, and the owners occupy and take title to the buildings, it will mark the climax of a highly successful, concentrated community drive.

According to present plans, four more plants will be built at the industrial park. Negotiations are well underway now with other companies interested in locating in the Freeport area.

What does all this activity mean to Freeport? The Fine Art and Penthouse plants alone are expected to create 209 new jobs within their first year of operation.

And based on a United States Chamber of Commerce study, the new manufacturing employment at the local factories will produce an additional 136 non-manufacturing jobs in the Freeport community. Also added to the local economy will be a projected $1,483,900 in annual personal income, $691,800 in retail sales per year and $478,600 in new bank deposits.

When all six plants in the industrial park are operating, the advantages that will accrue to the area will be even greater. Officials predict that ultimately there will be at least 500 new jobs and an additional $500,000 in assessed valuation when the six companies there are operating at full potential.

“The industrial park,” says Mayor Sweeney, “is not only going to raise the employment levels in the village and give us more purchasing power but it also will have a significant effect on our tax structure.”

The Freeport industrial park has had an immediate effect on another front; for an adjoining twenty-five acre site owned by the Town of Hempstead is going to be zoned for industry to spark the creation of another such complex.

Mayor Sweeney, a forty-five year old lawyer, summarizes the Freeport industrial park like this:

“This project is a model, an example of what we can accomplish through community cooperation. The notable cooperation of all segments of our population . . . serves as a catalyst for the revitalization of our village.”

AND Commissioner McHugh calls it “an example where a community, working with State agencies, can not only improve its own general business climate but also provide a base for solid economic growth throughout the region.”