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Long Island ROAD WARRIORS

A PUBLICATION OF THE LONG ISLAND CONTRACTORS' ASSOCIATION

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Long Island ROAD WARRIORS is the official magazine of the Long Island Contractors' Association, Inc. (LICA). LICA represents the interests of the region's premier heavy construction general contractors, subcontractors, suppliers and industry supporters. Focused primarily in the transportation infrastructure construction industry such as highways, bridges, rail, sewers and other public works, LICA's member companies play a significant role within Long Island's Nassau and Suffolk Counties. The economic impact of the industry contributes \$4 billion to the area's local gross regional product. © LICA 2025 Long Island ROAD WARRIORS is copyrighted but portions may be reprinted with permission of LICA.



LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

Welcome to the Winter edition of *Road Warriors!*

The cold front of January brings with it the beginning of the New York State legislative session, starting with the State of the State address and the proposal of the governor's executive budget. Projects in the pipeline wait to see if they will get the funding to be greenlit as we head into the Spring letting season.

Our cover feature is the indomitable **Terri Elkowitz** of VHB Engineering, whose unmatched environmental planning expertise has tentacles in nearly every major construction and development project on Long Island in the last 40 years. Terri speaks of how she dedicated herself to learning the SEQR process, thus making her an indispensable resource on Long Island. Terri is knowledgeable, a great communicator and a leader in a field that is not an easy one in which to make your mark.

**” Thank
you for
the work you do
to keep Long
Island running.**

In the rest of this issue, we hear from **Representative Nick LaLota**, NY-1, about his vision for infrastructure investment on Eastern Long Island; **John Cameron**, Chairman of the Long island Regional Planning Council, who offers analysis of needed infrastructure development (and has some thoughts on the proposed Nassau/Suffolk Metropolitan Planning Organization); **Jose Dominguez**, CEO of the Long Island chapter of the American Red Cross, who, in light of the wildfire disasters in California, talks about fire safety here, photo feature spread of the inaugural **FOREWomen Long Island** event that brought together women in infrastructure from across the island, and finally LICA's own **Marc Herbst** questions the state of Long Island planning.

If you have any suggestions (or praise!), drop me a line at jfranchi@licanys.org.

As always, we thank you for the work you do to keep Long Island running. We look forward to a productive season and urge everyone to stay safe out there.

Thank you,

Jaime

Jaime



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THE DRIVER'S SEAT

By Marc Herbst



Planning and Execution

Where are the visionaries in government looking out for Long Island's future?

Like it or not, Long Island is what it is today because past giants had the vision—and the resolve—to get things done. No one can deny the influence (and controversy) of power broker Robert Moses, whose imprint is all over our region's parks, parkways, and roads. Master Planner Lee Koppelman, the legendary past chair of the Long Island Regional Planning Board, safeguarded our environmental resources for generations to come. Visionaries like them are rare in government today. Instead, the most forward-thinking leaders are found in the private sector. Thankfully, we can still look to people like Terri Elkowitz and John Cameron, whose leadership is highlighted in this Long Island Road Warriors edition. Their energy and creativity are commendable—but they can't do it alone. Real progress requires reinvigorating planning within our government institutions.

Koppelman's tenure as Long Island's planning czar began in the 1960s and spanned over three decades. During that time, Nassau and Suffolk Counties prided themselves on robust planning departments staffed with professionals brimming with creativity and ambition. Their enthusiasm for the future yielded regional master plans and strategic tools that prepared us for growth and sustainability. But those departments—and the forward-thinking spirit that fueled them—have been systematically dismantled. Today, Nassau County's once-proud planning department has been relegated to a single desk tucked away in the Department of Public Works. In Suffolk, of the 100 or so positions budgeted for both planning and economic development functions, nearly a third remain vacant. The message is clear: planning is not a priority. However, there are glimmers of grit, innovation and accomplishment with the historic passage of the water quality act that will create largest investment of wastewater infrastructure in a generation, the transformation of a federal superfund site into productive reuse, and the full scale expansion of services and record ridership increases in Suffolk County transit services.

At the town and village level, planning offices are understaffed and overburdened. Layers of red tape and regulatory overreach

stifle creativity and long-term visioning. Builders and developers will tell you: today's planning culture is defined by delays and denials, with officials more likely to say "no" than to ask "how?"

Even transportation planners—tasked with shaping the future of our mobility—are trapped by bureaucracy and funding shortfalls. Ambitious, transformative projects that once defined Long Island's growth are no longer pursued. Instead, we wait. If you hit a pothole on the Northern State Parkway between Wantagh Parkway and Route 135, don't worry—that stretch is expected to be repaved sometime between 2032 and 2033. If another catastrophic hurricane strikes before 2031, too bad—the Loop Parkway Bridge, a designated coastal evacuation route, won't be replaced before then.

To be clear, routine maintenance—pavement markings, sign replacements, signal upgrades, graffiti removal—is important. But why does the state Department of Transportation's project list for Nassau and Suffolk focus almost exclusively on these small-scale fixes? Where are the bold, visionary initiatives that once defined our region?

The needs are glaringly obvious:

- Widen the Sagtikos Parkway.
- Reconstruct the Meadowbrook Parkway/Southern State Parkway interchange.
- Complete the Route 347 reconstruction.
- Fund and start the Oakdale Merge fix.
- Electrify the LIRR Port Jefferson line and the Main Line to Yaphank.
- Designate the former Lawrence Aviation property for future railroad operations.

Long Island deserves more than just wish lists and deferred projects. We need to see the work of Terri Elkowitz and other private-sector visionaries come to fruition. We need to listen to John Cameron and the Long Island Regional Planning Council before their recommendations become just another echo in the wind.

We need planning. And we need execution.





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with
JOHN CAMERON

By Jaime Franchi



JOHN CAMERON

Long Island is a complex interworking of municipalities, natural resources, thriving businesses and countless communities that house our three million residents. After World War II, masses migrated to Long Island's newly formed suburbs where highway systems and local roads, bridges and

innovative infrastructure were needed to accommodate the city-dwellers who decided to call Long Island home. Robert Moses famously designed the roadway systems that connect us to our beaches and parkland. The rest of our development sprung up out of need, opportunity and happenstance. For a region of our stature, thoughtful, well-researched planning is critical to help bring Long Island into her next generation. Road Warriors talks to John D. Cameron, Chairman of the Long Island Regional Planning Council, about the infrastructure needs—past and future—that will do the work of bridging today's LI with tomorrow's world.

1 What is the mission of the LIRPC?

The Long Island Regional Planning Council (LIRPC) is established to build productive linkages between communities, provide focus on issues best handled on a broad geographic scale and foster the development of regional comprehensive planning.

In furtherance of these goals, the LIRPC shall conduct research, surveys and studies which address regional needs, issues and opportunities. It serves as a forum for discourse and debate and focuses on Long Island's economy, equity, tax and governance, environment and infrastructure. The LIRPC uses its inherent powers to effectuate positive change and implement the Region's long range planning goals and strategies.

2 How important are public works/infrastructure projects to the continued development of Long Island?

Public works and infrastructure projects are essential to Long Island's sustainability. From modernizing our transportation and energy networks to upgrading water and wastewater systems, infrastructure investments are critical to accommodating population growth, creating economic development and affordable housing, addressing climate change impacts, and maintaining the competitiveness of Long Island as a hub for innovation and tourism. Well-maintained and future-ready infrastructure is the backbone of a prosperous Long Island.

3 What are the most important infrastructure/construction projects the LIRPC has supported in the last decade? What do you propose in the next 10 years?

Over the last decade, the LIRPC has been a key advocate for infrastructure projects that address Long Island's most pressing needs, particularly in wastewater management, transit-oriented development, transportation, and nitrogen pollution reduction. Key initiatives include:

- **The Bay Park Conveyance Project:** This groundbreaking project will convey treated wastewater 10.9 miles from the South Shore Water Reclamation Facility (SSWRF), which currently discharges into Reynolds Channel, to the Cedar Creek Water Pollution Control Plant (WPCP) ocean outfall pipe. The ocean outfall discharges approximately three miles offshore in the Atlantic Ocean. This project's significance cannot be overstated, as it is set to divert 75 million gallons per day of treated wastewater, reducing nitrogen loading in Reynolds Channel and the Western Bays by up to 90 percent! The results of the project will spur the ecological recovery of the Western Bays marshlands, which will protect coastal communities from storm surge and sea-level rise. The improved water quality will enhance and expand water-based recreational and commercial opportunities.

- 
- **Long Beach Consolidation Project:** This project will transform the Long Beach Water Pollution Control Plant into a fortified diversion pump station, connecting it via an underwater force main to the South Shore Water Reclamation Facility for improved wastewater treatment.
 - **Long Island Nitrogen Action Plan (LINAP):** The Long Island Nitrogen Action Plan (LINAP) is a comprehensive initiative aimed at reducing nitrogen pollution from wastewater, stormwater, and fertilizers in our surface and groundwater. Nitrogen is the leading cause of water quality deterioration in Long Island's estuaries. Excess nitrogen can cause toxic algal blooms that lead to low oxygen conditions, fish kills, and degraded wetlands and marine habitats. Nitrogen also contaminates the groundwater which is the sole source of Long Island's drinking water. LINAP focuses on how best to reduce nitrogen loading to groundwater and surface water through technical, management, and regulatory/policy actions.
 - **Suffolk County Water Quality Restoration Act:** This landmark legislation establishes a Countywide Wastewater Management District and secures a dedicated funding source to combat nitrogen pollution in surface and groundwater. Funded by a 0.125% sales tax increase, the Act is projected to generate \$3.1 billion over 50 years, supporting sewer expansions, cesspool and septic system upgrades, wastewater reclamation and nitrogen reduction programs. It also extends the 0.25% sales tax supporting the Suffolk County Drinking Water Protection Program through 2060, ensuring long-term financial backing for water quality initiatives.
 - **Suffolk County Coastal Resiliency Initiative (SCCRI) Cesspools to Sewers Program:** With the assistance of federal, state, and town funding SSCRI sewer expansion projects underway will eliminate approximately 5,500 cesspools and septic systems improving water quality, boosting economic development, and protecting against storm surges by strengthening wetlands. This represents the largest expansion of sewer infrastructure in Suffolk County in nearly 50 years.
 - **Transit-Oriented Development (TOD):** Transit-oriented development has become a cornerstone of Long Island's strategy to revitalize communities, reduce suburban sprawl, and attract young professionals and families. Successful TOD projects are transforming downtown areas into walkable, vibrant neighborhoods centered around Long Island Rail Road (LIRR) stations in Patchogue, Farmingdale, Wyandanch, Ronkonkoma and Hicksville. The LIRPC has done economic impact analyses on the revitalization of Patchogue and Farmingdale Villages. The LIRPC has also supported Wyandanch Rising, the Ronkonkoma Hub and Midway Crossing.
 - **The LIRR Expansion Project (Third Track) and East Side Access:** Completed in 2022, the addition of a third track along the LIRR Main Line between Floral Park and Hicksville has been a game-changer for Long Island commuters. The Third Track Project added 9.8 miles of track, increasing capacity and flexibility on one of the busiest rail corridors in the region. It improved reliability and reduced delays by allowing reverse-peak and off-peak service. It enhanced flexibility for scheduling and maintenance, making the LIRR more resilient to

continued on page 10

disruptions. It has provided better service for commuters traveling to and from New York City, as well as those traveling within Long Island. The project also included upgrades to several stations, the elimination of dangerous street-level grade crossings, and the installation of sound walls to minimize community impacts.

Opened in early 2023, East Side Access is one of the most significant infrastructure projects in the LIRR's history. It provides direct LIRR service to Grand Central Madison, a brand-new terminal beneath Grand Central Terminal in Manhattan. It has cut commuting times by up to 40 minutes per day for Long Islanders traveling to Manhattan's East Side and reduced congestion at Penn Station, redistributing passenger flow and enhancing the commuter experience. It has boosted property economic development potential for communities with LIRR access.

Together, the Third Track Project and East Side Access represent a transformative period for the LIRR, solidifying its role as the backbone of Long Island's transportation network and enhancing regional competitiveness.

- **Belmont Park Project:** A redevelopment project at Belmont Park is slated for completion by fall 2026. This historic upgrade will modernize the racetrack, enabling year-round racing, improved customer experiences, and the return of major events like the Belmont Stakes. Redevelopment is a vital investment for Long Island, creating thousands of jobs and preserving Belmont's legacy as a premier sports venue. The newly redeveloped Belmont

Park will serve as an internationally recognized destination for sports, entertainment, retail and hospitality, while strengthening the local economy and boosting tourism.

Looking forward, the next 10 years should prioritize:

- Repairing Long Island's aging roads and decrepit bridges.
- Electrifying the Long Island Rail Road: Expanding electrification along diesel-only branches (e.g., Port Jefferson, Oyster Bay, and Montauk lines) will improve service reliability, reduce greenhouse gas emissions, and enhance connectivity for more Long Islanders.
- Wastewater Management: Continuing to upgrade wastewater treatment plants to incorporate advanced nitrogen-removal technology. Expand sewer infrastructure to areas still reliant on outdated cesspools and septic systems, particularly in Suffolk County. Expand access to Innovative Alternative Onsite Wastewater Systems in areas where sewerage is not an option.
- Expanding Transit-Oriented Development (TOD): Creating additional TOD projects across Long Island will provide more economic development, affordable housing options, reduce suburban sprawl, and encourage sustainable growth.
- Flood Mitigation and Climate Resilience: Integrating climate adaptation measures into infrastructure projects to ensure resilience against rising sea levels, storm surge and extreme weather events.

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- **Affordability:** Addressing high property taxes and the lack of affordable housing is critical for the region's economic stability and long-term growth. High property taxes place a significant financial strain on residents, particularly young families, first-time homebuyers, and retirees. At the same time, the shortage of affordable housing limits opportunities for young professionals and essential workers to establish themselves, leading to a talent drain that impacts local businesses and services. Prioritizing tax reform and affordable housing solutions will create a more balanced, inclusive, and sustainable community that supports economic development and improves quality of life for all residents. To support the demand for housing, Long Island's supply must be significantly increased if we are to be sustainable for the future.

4 How would Long Island benefit from its own MPO?

Having its own Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) would give Long Island greater autonomy in determining transportation priorities, funding allocation, and strategic planning. Currently, Long Island shares an MPO with New York City, which dilutes our region's unique needs and challenges. A dedicated Long Island MPO would ensure a more focused approach to addressing our transportation infrastructure. Additionally, it could streamline federal funding opportunities and allow for more community-centered decision-making. The present funding formula is highly inequitable in providing Long Island its fair share of transportation funding.

5 What are the major challenges to the future of Long Island's development?

Long Island faces several significant challenges, including:

- **High property taxes:** The high cost of living is driving younger generations and businesses away, threatening economic growth and workforce sustainability.
- **Lack of affordable housing:** The lack of affordable housing on Long Island poses a significant challenge, directly limiting opportunities for young people and fueling the region's ongoing housing crisis.
- **Aging Infrastructure:** Much of Long Island's infrastructure is outdated and in need of significant investment to meet modern demands.
- **Climate Change:** Rising sea levels, increased storm intensity, and flooding pose existential threats to coastal communities.
- **Resistance to change:** Long Islanders treasure the quality of life they have and are resistant to anything they perceive as threatening to that quality. We must remember that change is inevitable; whether we decide to control that change or have it happen is up to us. The decision is ours to make.





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Political Perspectives

Building a Stronger Future: My Vision for Long Island's Infrastructure and Small Businesses



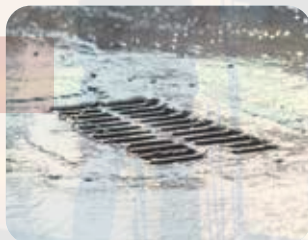
Nick LaLota

As we embark on the 119th Congress, I am eager to share my goals and visions for Long Island's growth. Representing New York's First Congressional District, I am fully committed to ensuring our builders, engineers, and contractors have the tools, regulations and resources they need to thrive.

Serving on the House Appropriations Committee, I am uniquely positioned to advocate for Long Island. I have secured over \$150 million in funding for vital projects such as Suffolk County's sewer, stormwater, and shoreline enhancements. My focus is on combating the challenges of our aging infrastructure, ensuring that we are prepared not just for today's needs but for future growth and resilience.

In my role as Chairman of the House Small Business Subcommittee on Contracting and Infrastructure, I've championed initiatives like the Plain Language in Contracting Act, now part of the Fiscal Year 2025 NDAA. This legislation simplifies federal contracts, allowing our small businesses to compete more effectively across the nation, fostering a more accessible and equitable business environment.

A top priority for me this Congress is advocating to raise the State and Local Tax (SALT) deduction cap. The current cap disproportionately burdens Long Islanders, and raising it would provide significant relief, enhancing affordability and economic vitality in our region. This change is critical not just for easing the tax burden but also for sustaining our community's overall economic health.



With a new Administration in place, we have a renewed opportunity to cut through unnecessary red tape that restrains the growth of our small businesses. I am committed to pursuing smart deregulation to boost our economy, empowering local businesses to innovate and expand. This approach will create more jobs and enhance life for everyone in our district. Collaborating across the aisle and with industry leaders, we will adopt best practices that further strengthen our crucial construction industry.

As your advocate in Congress, I am dedicated to paving the way toward a brighter, more prosperous future for Long Island. I look forward to partnering with you as we build a stronger community together. Let's get to work.



Congressman Nick LaLota is a Naval Academy Graduate, 11-year Navy Veteran and attorney in his second term representing the First Congressional District of New York.





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BRACE FOR ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT



Terri Elkowitz

Nearly every major project or development proposed or completed on Long Island over the past forty years contains the fingerprints of Terri Elkowitz. As senior principal at VHB, Elkowitz is charged with developing strategies to address issues that need to be evaluated during an environmental impact study—and then crafting the creative solutions into presentations that can be understood by everyone

from civil engineers to a mob pit of protesters chanting “NIMBY” at municipal board meetings. This requires a comprehensive understanding of so many elements that go into major developments, like the proposed Sands Integrated Resort or the Ronkonkoma Hub. These projects require in-depth knowledge of disciplines including, but not limited to: traffic and transportation, water supply, sewage, soil, ecology, land use, zoning, community character, air quality, noise, aesthetics, public health.

Take the Sands project, for example, which was the most extensive traffic study that VHB has ever done for a proposed development on Long Island. Coupled with the other elements that go into a project of this stature, Elkowitz’ job was to lead her team in taking all that technical information and putting it into an environmental impact statement. In this case, the statement was 15 volumes and more than 29,000 pages, completed in a form that was readable by not only the public officials and the other public employees who are responsible for making recommendations and ultimate decisions, but also for the public who come with their own concerns and questions.

SEQR and Ye Shall Find

Elkowitz was able to develop this expertise by working to become one of the foremost experts in the SEQR process.

The State Environmental Quality Review Act, which requires that all local, regional, and state government agencies examine the environmental impacts and balance them with the social and economic considerations for a certain project, or action, during their discretionary review, was adopted by the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation in the late 1970s but only heavily implemented in the early ‘80s.

“I entered this field when SEQR was at his at its infancy, so I grew with the SEQR process,” Elkowitz told *Road Warriors*. “I worked very hard to become someone who understood that process inside and out, and that has been the expertise that I have brought professionally to all the projects that I have worked on. Environment is very broadly defined--traffic, air, noise, community services, community character, zoning -- so by default, while you’re not an expert in all these things, you certainly have to understand their interrelationship and how they affect projects.”

Elkowitz cut her teeth in this business working on the redevelopment of Roosevelt Raceway, shortly after graduate school studying policy analysis and public management. This project in the heart of Hempstead is a mixed-use project of retail, hospitality, and residential. Elkowitz’ understanding of SEQR was not only instrumental in helping get that project across the finish line, but it drew the attention of the other principals on the job, who encouraged her to step out and start her own firm.



“My job has not been easy,” she said. “I joke with my husband that although we’re married 40 years, we only get credit for 20 because all the years I’ve been out in public hearings and whatever,” she laughs. “But he has been an incredible supporter of everything I’ve ever done.”

Elkowitz began her own environmental planning firm in 1988 and ran it for 21 years on Long Island until the entire firm merged with VHB in 2009. “That allowed me and the people in my firm to actually get a taste of some other disciplines in house and be able to serve our clients even better and more efficiently,” Elkowitz says. “We were no longer just able to provide environmental planning services, we also were able to offer civil engineering and transportation in an integrated way, which has allowed us to grow and effectively provide broad services to our clients.”

The State of the Union(dale)

Elkowitz’ professional path has led her not once, not twice, but three times to Uniondale where a Marriott hotel stands next to the Nassau County Veterans Memorial Coliseum and the hopes and dreams of planners past and present.

“I worked on the expansion of the Marriott Hotel in Uniondale which was done many years ago. I also worked for Charles Wang and the Lighthouse Development Group in the early 2000s when they were proposing the Lighthouse project. We worked for RXR when

they were proposing the hub innovation district at the Coliseum, so I’ve been involved in the Coliseum for a long time,” she said.

The current proposal, the Sands Integrated Resort, includes a casino, hotel, restaurants, and entertainment space. It’s a substantial undertaking that will require New York State to award a downstate casino license to the property, in an atmosphere of fierce competition. In order to win this bid, Sands has pulled out all of the stops to make sure their proposal is as comprehensive and amenable to the community as possible. To do so, they need to ensure that they are thoughtful and responsive to the input of the community (including the business and non-profit communities). Elkowitz’ team has been charged with a major piece of that: the voluminous environmental impact statement.

VHB’s traffic team on Long Island did a comprehensive traffic impact study that includes hundreds of intersections and ramps along the Meadowbrook State Parkway. “We looked at that Parkway from Northern State to Southern State,” she said. “We looked at it seasonally. We looked at it during the holiday period because of the location of Roosevelt Field mall and other shopping areas. We looked at it in the summer because some raised concerns about beach traffic and whether the impacts during the peak beach season would be significant.”

The truth is that even if the state chooses not to award the casino to Sands, the traffic study VHB’s team has put together still stands alone to document needed infrastructure upgrades.

“If one goes back and looks at the traffic impact study that was done for the Lighthouse proposal, you will see that a lot of the issues that we are identifying now with the roadway system existed at the time we did the traffic study for the Lighthouse in the early 2000s,” Elkowitz said. “So yes, there are improvements that need to be made for the travelling public—me being one of them. I’m not a traffic engineer, but I drive during peak hours, so yes there are traffic improvements that absent Lighthouse, absent Sands, absent you name it, need to be addressed.”

Beyond traffic and transportation concerns, the environmental impact statement had to address water supply issues. If the Sands project is completed as proposed, there will be a need for approximately 740,000 gallons of water per day. To answer this need, Sands has outlined a proposal for the construction of a well that will provide more than 1.9 million gallons per day, which will address existing needs in the greater community as well.

Sands has consistently heard and responded to the community’s needs in a comprehensive fashion, which is not always the case.

Heart(land) Break

The Ronkonkoma Hub project, also known as Station Yards, spans more than 53 acres surrounding the Ronkonkoma Long Island Railroad Station and consists of approximately 1,450 homes, 360,000 square feet of commercial space, 190,000 square feet of retail and 60,000 square feet of hospitality space. It was a triumph for TriTech and all involved in the arduous process from bid to construction to completion. Elkowitz and VHB came in early in the process to see it through.


The Long Island Rail Road transports 17,000 commuters West toward Penn Station per day, making Station Yards the busiest train station in Suffolk County and the second busiest on Long Island. LIRR riders have the option of the sixty-five-minute express train from Ronkonkoma to Penn Station or East Side Access into Grand Central Station.

“It was very interesting to be a part of that process with the Town and with the developer because it became a true public-private partnership. Through a lot of collaboration and comprehensive SEQR and zoning processes, we were able to assist the Town in completing a thorough environmental review process and identifying required mitigation tied to levels of development impact that has allowed phased development over years to positively transform this area,” Elkowitz said. “It was really an honor to be involved in a project like that.”

But not every project proposal gets completed. The Heartland Town Square project would sit where the Long Island Expressway meets the Sagtikos Parkway. The hard-fought development and design were to be Long Island’s first “smart growth” community. The project included 9,000 housing units, a “lifestyle” center, 3 million square feet of Class A office space and more fused into a planned development designed to live, work and play. Though we have yet to see this development come to fruition, the project and the experience have stayed close to Elkowitz’ heart.

“I’ve worked on a lot of those projects,” Elkowitz says. “Years and years of work and effort and then you don’t see them come to fruition...”

Infrastructure challenges, including a lack of sewers, can stall a project like Heartland that has gotten approval. Even if a municipality and a developer come together and they seriously want to develop an area, there are financial realities. “You know a developer on a project can’t necessarily fund sewers for an entire area,” Elkowitz says. With funding from the recently passed Suffolk County Water Quality Restoration Act, perhaps we will see projects like Heartland Town Square back on the drawing board.

What we can say for sure is that if there is an exciting proposal out there for a project that needs extensive research and development for an environmental impact review, Terri Elkowitz will be close by. 

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Make Long Island Homes Safer, *Together*

By Jose Dominguez, CEO, American Red Cross on Long Island

A working smoke alarm can cut the risk of dying in a home fire in half. That is why, over the past decade, American Red Cross volunteers have **installed more than 232,000 free smoke alarms in nearly 83,000 homes** across the country, including more than **16,300 alarms in 8,855 homes on Long Island.**



responding to fires and installing alarms has reinforced that working smoke alarms truly save lives and that a home fire escape plan further increases the odds of survival. In addition, more than a year after receiving a home safety visit through the campaign, households were more likely to have working alarms that they tested and escape plans that they practiced.

This critical work is made possible with our partners, like you, who have helped us to install free smoke alarms and make households safer across Long Island. Reducing home fire-related deaths and injuries is a complex problem. But, as we've worked with our fire service partners, we've learned that we can save lives by working together as a community. Along with the Home Fire Campaign, these efforts include the work of local fire departments to reduce home fire risks, improvements in fire suppression technologies like sprinklers, better product safety regulations and targeted outreach to vulnerable populations.

Across the country, **every eight minutes**, the Red Cross responds to one of more than 60,000 disasters somewhere in the United States — most often, a home fire. In a typical year, the Red Cross on Long Island responds on average to more than **240 home fires across Nassau and Suffolk counties, helping nearly 1,400 people each year.**

Although they do not receive as much media attention as hurricanes or other natural disasters, home fires are so dangerous that they claim more lives in a typical year than all natural disasters combined. Sadly, throughout the nation, **home fires claim seven lives on average every day**, most often in homes without working smoke alarms — and cause **more than \$7 billion in property damage** every year.

Fire experts agree that you may have as little as **two minutes to escape** a burning home before it's too late to get out. Our work

I invite you all to join us to Sound the Alarm and help make Long Island safer in 2025 and beyond. **Visit redcross.org/fire for more information, including a home fire escape plan you can create and practice with your household. You can reach me at jose.dominguez@redcross.org and (646)784-6161.**

SOUND THE ALARM
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- Create an **escape plan.**
- Practice your **2-minute drill.**
- Test your **smoke alarms.**



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Better Business Organization = Better Life

If you're like me, when you think about your business, there are likely a number of items that run through your mind. Should you sign that new lease? Should you buy that additional property? What about the new hire? Am I preparing for retirement? Are my investments structured the right way? How much more can we or should we expand? Could you better manage cash flow? Lower taxes? Is your insurance coverage adequate? How will future profits be? Which direction will interest rates take? Are you trying to live and work smarter, harder or would you rather spend more time with your grandchildren or travel?

Constructing the right business sale, merger or succession plan is not a simple process. Yet in nearly each type of environment, funds are often available for the "A" to "A+" businesses. Those with good credit histories, upward sales trajectories and stable management can expect to receive the best terms. Often there can be competition for such enterprises.

The biggest obstacle in these scenarios is lack of preparation. Whether you're engineering a sale, expansion or acquisition, you must understand payment terms, interest rates, rental agreements, consultant fees, etc. Get your books in good order. It is difficult to make an informed decision on a company with poor records. Be sure taxes and debts are covered. A good credit score demonstrates responsibility and reliability. Are there liens or pending legal action regarding your company? Is your key equipment relatively new or ready for the scrap heap?

While historic performance cannot indicate future success, it can provide perspective. Data showing how you have done compared to the general market can be useful. Numbers however, do not tell your whole story. There are often worthy intangible assets, such as experience, competition, whether you're in a growing market, have stable personnel and whether your product or service is unique.

Nothing Succeeds Like Succession

Although we've each heard the phrase: "do not keep all of your eggs in one basket," many businesses are largely managed by one or two individuals. If you're thinking of passing your business to a family member, consider that about 90% of businesses in the United States are closely held according to the Small Business Administration yet just 25-30% have a succession plan. Consequently, just 30% of these businesses are passed to the second generation and less than 10% reach a third. If you're one of the few firms with a succession plan that has not been updated for some time, it may be wise to reexamine it. While a large company can maintain a "deep bench" of talent, there are steps for smaller firms:

- Acknowledge you need a succession plan.
- Consider a consultant to provide objective advice.
- Discuss the issue with key personnel.
- Make a concrete plan and sensible timeline.

Separate Emotions from Business

Emotions and business do not mix. They are usually not helpful when making business decisions. Your focus should be on reaching sensible, long-term goals by identifying what is important to you.

You may wish to do something else with your life and the sale proceeds may enable you to do so. Your personal or health status, or that of your spouse or partner may have changed.



The **Business-Sale** Checklist

- Organizing and timing of sale
- Assembling your team
- Preparing the business for sale
- Assessing potential buyers
- Evaluating offers, terms
- Managing partner, employee and family issues
- Tax, financial and estate planning
- Transferring and gifting wealth
- Planning your post-sale life

How you answer these questions may help you decide if the time is right to engineer a major business change. Still not sure? Talk with an independent

financial advisor.



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FOREWomen

On January 30, 2025 LICA's Director of Communications and Government Affairs **Jaime Franchi** successfully launched FOREWomen Long Island, LICA's women in infrastructure networking group.

The event featured an outstanding panel of accomplished women, including BNL lab director **JoAnne Hewett**, Suffolk Deputy DPW Commissioner **Leslie Kushner Mitchel**, President of Our Rental Pumps **Samantha Mack**, and Assemblywoman **Jodi Bennett Giglio**, and moderated by the one and only **Helena Williams**.

The turnout was even better than expected and they were so engaged and excited to connect.

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