



Cameron of LI Regional Planning Council speaks at LIBDC meeting

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Shown (from left) are: William Mannix, executive director, Town of Islip Economic Development; John Cameron, Jr, managing partner, Cameron Engineering & Associates; Angie Carpenter, supervisor, Town of Islip; John Cochrane, Jr. councilman, Town of Islip; John Walser, deputy executive director, Town of Islip Economic Development; and Mitch Pally, CEO, Long Island Builders Institute and co-chair and LIBDC

East Islip, NY Identifying taxes and a lack of affordable housing as the biggest challenges facing Long Island, John Cameron Jr., P.E., chairman of the Long Island Regional Planning Council, told the Feb. 4th meeting of the Long Island Business Development Council (LIBDC) that if officials fail to smartly address and prioritize the issues, the region's future viability and sustainability are at risk.

The meeting was sponsored by the Town of Islip Industrial Development Agency.

"Long island, we can all agree, is a pretty good place to live work play, to raise a family. All that said, it's a tough place for a lot of people to afford to live here. For all that makes Long island great, it has its challenges," Cameron, who also is the founder and managing partner of Woodbury-based Cameron Engineering & Associates LLP, told more than 100 guests attending the gathering at The Irish Coffee Pub. LIBDC is a group of government and private-sector economic development professionals.

Cameron said that the planning council, which is devoted to the well being and economic development of Long Island, 10 years ago issued a 25-year sustainability plan that identified high taxes and the lack of rental housing as "the two major impeditors to Long Island's future viability and sustainability."

He noted that only 20% of the region's housing stock is rental housing, about half that of other suburban New York City communities. The result, he said, is higher-priced rental housing because demand outstrips supply

The planning agency executive said another chief complaint of residents is traffic and noted that

while the region has a well-designed network of highways, their capacity hasn't been increased significantly since their initial construction, when the region's population was a fraction of what it is today. He also said the current Long Island Railroad Third Track project is the LIRR's first significant expansion since commuters got to rail stations by horse and buggy more than 150 years ago, a time when the Island's population was about 50,000.

Other challenge that need to be addressed, he said, include a safe, clean and adequate drinking water supply; a healthy natural environment; and a resiliency to withstand the inevitability of future major storms. such as Super storm Sandy, or even worse

He said Long Islanders need to be concerned with changing energy supplies to renewable modes, disposal of solid waste and recyclables, the shift to Internet-based commerce and the growing influx of non-English-speaking immigrants.

"If we do not continue to grow our economy, our chances at effectively addressing all these other critical challenges will be severely diminished," Cameron said, noting that creation of good-paying jobs as well as affordable housing for young workers and empty-nesters are essential to economic growth in the region.

He said attaining growth requires, "Capitalizing on our transportation assets as well as our environmental infrastructure, namely sanitary sewers. Without sewers there can be no density. Without density, considering the cost of land, taxes and services on Long Island, there can be no affordability."

Cameron added that it essential to develop around LIRR transit hubs in order to not overwork the region's roadways and to fully engage the qualified, emerging educated workforce by providing housing that will enable young people to stay on Long Island.

Noting that many downtown, waterfront and other major projects are in various stages of development he predicted, "Developments that will be the most successful here on Long Island will be the ones which most fully capitalize on our assets and meet the challenges they will face head on. It is in our collective interest that we hope for success for all the meritorious projects and the ones which fail to be smartly developed will meet a less glorious fate."

Islip supervisor Angie Carpenter, who also spoke at the meeting, who revealed that William Mannix, executive director of the town IDA, will be retiring in a few months after 29 years on the job. "His work really is legendary. Not many people can get that said about them," Carpenter said. "Bill Mannix has done an incredible job in the field of economic development."

Carpenter said, "We have had unprecedented growth in the town of Islip. In the last four years, we closed 55 projects, representing \$400 million in private investment with about 5,300 jobs either created or retained. That's really remarkable in that short span of time."

She said some of the town's downtown areas "Have made an incredible resurgence." Bay Shore

has been the poster child, she said, noting that Bay Shore was at its worst 25 years ago when she first got involved in government. Now, with the Bay Shore YMCA anchoring one end of the downtown and, Southside Hospital, which has seen a \$500 million investment, has made a real difference in downtown Bay Shore. Carpenter said a 30,000 s/f office building in Bay Shore was fully leased before a shovel was out into the ground. “We do have opportunities for redevelopment. You just have to know the spots.”

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