



Vision LI names smart growth champions

by Lisa Morris Josefak

Published: June 30th, 2010

The Crest Hollow Country Club was abuzz last month as Vision Long Island honored 13 winners at its 2010 Smart Growth Awards ceremony. The room stirred with 600 civic, development and government leaders as they came to recognize visionaries on the cutting edge of land use. Yet the crowd fell under complete silence once the program began.

"You could hear a pin drop," said Eric Alexander, executive director of Vision Long Island. "Smart growth is part of doing business. It has a force of its own."

When Vision Long Island began promoting smart-growth projects over a decade ago, the Northport-based not-for-profit faced derision.

"We would hear, 'No one wants mixed usage - this is Long Island, everyone wants a single-family home and three cars,'" Alexander said. "We were told no developer would propose a mixed-use project, new town center or downtown infill. To date, there are over 100 of these projects planned, approved or built on Long Island."

"This year's winners represent an in-depth pool of smart-growth leaders and projects that allows Vision Long Island to raise the bar higher and higher," Alexander noted.

Here are the 2010 Smart Growth Award winners and their categories:

- Tim Bishop, Regional Leadership
- David Glass, Walkability
- Village of Babylon, Sense of Place
- The C in Freeport, Compact Design
- Kate Browning, Open Space Preservation & Environment
- Ed Romaine, Open Space Preservation & Environment
- Glen Cove Waterfront Redevelopment by RXR Glen Isle Partners, Creating a Mix of Uses
- Sergio Argueta of S.T.R.O.N.G. Youth Inc., Stakeholder Participation
- Affordable Housing Development by Roosevelt Development Group and Long Island Housing Partnership, Green Building
- Huntington Township Business Council for their Buy Locally Campaign, Revitalizing & Strengthening Communities
- Eastern Property Investor Consultants & Suffolk County for the Summer Wind Square Project, Range of Housing Types
- Concern Riverhead by Concern for Independent Living, Range of Housing Types
- New York State Department of Transportation for their Green Route 347 plan, Transportation.

David Berg, member of Vision Long Island's board of directors, hailed this year's winners for their efforts.

"They initiated something that is working so we can be optimistic about the future," said Berg, who is also director of the Long Island Section of American Planning Association and senior environmental planner at Cameron Engineering & Associates, in Woodbury.

"Glen Cove Waterfront Development's award represents a validation of years of hard work and a demonstration of what a true public/private partnership can accomplish," said Brandon Palanker, director of marketing and public affairs for RXR Glen Isle Partners.

"Our work is not done," said Palanker, who is a Glen Cove resident. "This is a great step in the right direction. It is great that people recognize smart growth. We need to continue to have these comprehensive approaches to revitalize our downtowns and communities."

Ralph Fasano, executive director of Concern Long Island, was proud to be recognized for the 50-unit Single-Site Supportive Housing program on Main Street in Riverhead. The four-story building, an old hotel and now on the National Register of Historic Places, was rehabilitated into a low-income housing unit.

"We are not just proud to be able to help people who may not be able to afford (higher rents) but are proud to have revitalized a dilapidated building in the downtown area," Fasano said.

"We are happy to be part of Riverhead's Downtown Revitalization," he said. "This project will bring in more employees and residents to eat and shop along Main Street," he said.

Launched in 1997 to promote more livable, economically sustainable and environmentally responsible growth on Long Island, Vision Long Island spent years building its foundation before its smart-growth movement ignited. Since the Smart Growth Awards began in 2002, Alexander has witnessed growing trends in sustainable projects and the route it takes to get these projects complete.

Alexander noted an increase in residential developments being built within downtowns. "There has also been an increase in the attentiveness to walkability and traffic calming," he said.

Vision Long Island has also seen more support from the development community, which at one time Alexander said would convey the message: "We draw in business, so leave us alone."

"We have also seen more support from civic associations," he said. "They now come in with proactive plans as opposed to just fighting us on everything."

The environmental community has also focused more efforts on sewer initiatives; municipalities have changed codes to allow more density and more development in downtowns; and those on federal and state levels are now investing more in downtown areas and are changing regulations to allow these projects to fly.

There are many groups that work alongside Vision Long Island to promote the smart-growth movement. They include Long Island Federation of Labor, Sustainable Institute at Molloy College, AARP, Long Island Business Council, [Tri-State Transportation Campaign](#); Citizens Campaign for the Environment; and many local chambers of commerce and civic associations.

"When Vision Long Island started, there was just a handful of planners," Alexander said. "Today, the smart-growth movement has grown to include folks of all stripes and ages."

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