



May 12, 2020

Long Island Townships
Long Island Cities
Long Island Villages

Re: Post COVID-19 Long Island Municipal Modernization Plan

Dear Supervisors, Mayors, Managers & Administrators:

On behalf of the Long Island Builders Institute, the Association for a Better Long Island and the Long Island Association, the leading advocates of the region's economic development community, we write to you regarding the urgent imperative that helps compel the region's governmental institutions to recognize and amend its town application, inspection, permit and approval processes in order to assist in the economic recovery required in a post COVID-19 world.

As Long Island townships and villages acknowledge, the current pandemic is curtailing operations and impacting municipal offices. As the region adjusts to a new post pandemic environment, COVID-19 will challenge government to re-examine their current application, inspection, permit and approval processes. Among the options is the use of technology and other methods to alter prior municipal practices that now prove to be less effective in the wake of social distancing and other protocols. Moving forward, it may no longer be possible for our government agencies to go back to business as usual, with person to person interactions and requirements. It may no longer be feasible for our residents to stand in line or sit in lobbies waiting for a clerk to call them up one by one, or to wait for a personal inspection in a home or building by an inspector who may no longer be willing to enter a structure.

While public health is everyone's first priority, without a functioning economy with economic development projects moving forward the region is placed at existential risk. We propose that it is time for all of us to move on from the system which has been in existence for over half a century and transition to a new era, utilizing the latest technology and public health protocols. Only in this manner can we be more assured that towns and villages could continue to receive much needed tax revenue and fees that could reduce the tax burden to pay for essential services.

With this in mind, the Long Island Builders Institute, the Association for a Better Long Island and the Long Island Association would like to work with you and your team on the

proposed implementation of the “*Post COVID-19 Long Island Municipal Modernization Plan.*” The plan includes recommendations to ensure not only a safer system for all of our residents and businesses but also a more efficient post COVID-19 economic development process:

1. All aspects of the application/permit process could be accessed electronically, including submissions, comments, revisions, approvals and permit documents. This would eliminate the need for any face to face meetings in the process nor require travel to Town or Village Hall for that purpose.
2. All state licensed professionals should be able to self-certify their work to the town so that the town or village is no longer required to certify such submissions. The current technology that exists makes it impossible for a certified professional to submit a building plan that does not meet the New York State Building Code.
3. All inspections should be able to proceed either by third party inspections or by virtual inspections, increasing efficiency as well as prioritizing public health by reducing face to face interactions between municipal employees and the public.
4. As the definition of “public assembly” could be problematic until a COVID-19 vaccine is created, all public meetings and public hearings should be able to proceed virtually so that no unnecessary delay is added to a comprehensive process that continues to engage town residents. Accordingly, towns and villages should move towards virtual meeting & consultations until it is safe for the public to gather again.

The municipal landscape that existed in February is gone and none of us know if it is ever coming back. We believe it is time for all of our Long Island towns and villages to access 21st century technology now being implemented during “lockdown” to meet the new needs of our community during this crisis. We look forward to hearing from you regarding the potential implementation of the “*Post COVID-19 Long Island Municipal Modernization Plan.*” We believe that the plan’s recommendations would make it safer and more efficient for our residents and businesses to interact with towns and villages long respected for efficacy, innovation and integrity.

Thank you for your consideration of our requests.

Sincerely,



Mitch Pally, CEO
Long Island Builders Institute



Kyle Strober, Executive Director
Association for a Better Long Island



Kevin Law, President
Long Island Association