



## E. Christopher Murray: LI brownfields are ripe for new development

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One of the most sensible ways of balancing the demand for land for economic development with the quality of life provided by Long Island's open space is to reuse already developed vacant properties. However, many of these properties have environmental contamination and, without the expenditure of funds to remediate the contamination, these properties are unusable.

For the past 10 years, New York State has had a "Brownfield Cleanup Program" to provide developers with financial incentives to clean up polluted properties so they can be put to good use. This program has been widely used in New York City and upstate New York, but Long Island lags woefully behind, even though our region's most precious resource is its land.

As of January, certificates of completion given after a contaminated property has been cleaned up have been issued for 13 properties in Brooklyn, 11 in Queens, 15 in the Bronx and 17 in Westchester. Only five certificates of completion have been issued for all of Long Island, even though Long Island is estimated to have 278 parcels that are eligible for the program.

The Brownfield Cleanup Program had been so popular throughout the state it was straining the state's budget, and, in this year's budget, reforms were implemented. These reforms should only make the program more attractive to Long Island. For example, limits on the eligibility of properties located in New York City were adopted. However, Long Island and the rest of the state are not subject to these restrictions so there should be more resources available for development in our area. In addition, the tax credit portion of the Brownfield Cleanup Program has been extended for 10 years, providing certainty to those who seek to develop polluted sites.

New York has provided an important tool to help Long Island's land use management and planning. It is time that our business leaders and local government officials become proactive in encouraging developers to utilize this program when proposing projects so as to assure that Long Island takes full advantage of this resource.

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