

A One-on-One Conversation with Elisabetta T. Coschignano: The Keys to Successful Development Projects

Recently, Michael Sahn had a conversation with partner Elisabetta T. Coschignano about her growing land use practice. Elisabetta Coschignano shared her insights on the keys to success in guiding projects from inception to approval. Here are the highlights of the conversation.

Q. Tell me about several of your recent projects, and where they stand in the approval process?

A. One of my most recent projects, “The Langdon”, is a 201-unit multifamily development located in the heart of the Village of Lynbrook. Our client, Breslin Realty Organization and their partner Fieldsgrade, worked closely with the Village on their proposal to replace the long vacant Mangrove Feather Factory. Through our efforts, we achieved the necessary zoning, land use, and IDA approvals. It is an excellent project with luxury amenities that will re-vitalize the Village’s Downtown. We are also working on an 84-unit project for Sunrise Senior Living in Oceanside which recently received zoning approvals and preliminary IDA approvals; and a 150-unit multifamily project for Mill Creek Residential which received a change in zone and preliminary IDA approval from the Town of Hempstead. Vision Long Island has honored the Mill Creek project with a 2022 Smart Growth Award. This is just a sample of the numerous projects we are working on for our developer clients.

Q. What are the keys to success in guiding these projects?

A. Having a uniquely qualified team of attorneys at the Firm that handle every aspect of a project is important. We collaborate on land acquisition, the IDA, conventional and private equity financing, environmental review and due diligence, SEQRA compliance, corporate entity formation, and zoning and land use approvals. It is truly a team approach which properly coordinates and phases the work to accomplish our clients’ goals.

Q. You mention the IDA. How does the IDA fit in?

A. Obtaining approvals from an Industrial Development Agency is a key factor when developing large projects. We have extensive experience in gaining these

approvals for our clients. A PILOT (payment in lieu of taxes) agreement becomes the financial cornerstone for success. Developers need certainty on the payment of taxes which are a key component in projecting their revenue stream. The PILOT agreement provides that certainty.

Q. Is there any key in the land use process that you can share?

A. Our knowledge of the substantive and procedural laws, along with our insights into the different governmental agencies which have approval oversight, gives our clients a substantial advantage when seeking land use and zoning approvals. We use a positive and comprehensive approach to each application which guides our clients to a successful outcome.

Q. What's your outlook on the year ahead?

A. As you know, we have a rapidly changing environment, which includes the continuing effects of COVID, the inflationary and supply chain issues and the ever-stricter governmental regulations. Our Firm has continuously monitored and met the demands of this environment, and I am confident that we will continue to do so throughout the balance of this year by using our combination of practical and collaborative skills to do so.