

li top commercial newsmakers

John Coffey, Managing director, real estate lending



John Coffey
Managing director, real estate lending - Long Island
Commerce Bank

1) Please discuss your charitable/organizational involvements.

I am an active member of, and have served on the board of directors, the L.I. Housing Partnership and Long Island Builders Institute. I am also a member of the board of directors and past board chair of the Arthritis Foundation.

2) What is the most notable transaction or project in which you have been recently involved?

I am presently involved with the discussion of and the search for solutions to the lack of affordable housing in the L.I. market. I have been involved with the L.I. Housing Partnership's chairman's symposium on "Suburban Evolution - Finding Solutions."

3) Please discuss your professional background.

In November 2004, I joined Commerce Bank as managing director of real estate lending for the L.I. market. I am responsible for developing customized real estate lending solutions for the bank's residential and commercial real estate customers on Long Island. I have spent 36 years in the banking industry, most recently at New York Community Bank, last serving as a senior vice president.

4) What is one criterion that sets your company/firm apart from your competitors?

We continue to make a substantial investment in both facilities and manpower in the region, because it has concluded the area has tremendous potential. We take an interest in supporting initiatives like the L.I. Housing Partnership and Vision Long Island. Our approach to both deposit gathering and lending, with its focus on service and the delivery of individualized financial solutions to its customers, is unique in the financial services industry.

5) Do you see your industry in a more or less favorable position six months from now?

With the economy on an upswing, economic activity should continue to be strong. Long Island, as a mature, stable and wealthy market should show strength. Banks as the financial intermediaries of the economy should benefit from that upswing. The housing segment will continue to find itself in a state of supply being unable to meet the demand, so prices should be firm. A rising interest rate environment, which has already begun in reaction to recent federal reserve discount rate raises, could have some negative impact upon housing, as potential buyers/renters are shut out from the market due to rising debt costs.

George Tsunis, Senior advisor



George Tsunis
Senior advisor
Sperry Van Ness

1) Please discuss your charitable/organizational involvements.

Over the years, I have coordinated events and/or donated funds to the following groups: Carol Baldwin Breast Cancer Fund, Dowling College, Leukemia of L.I., and the Alzheimer's Association.

2) What is the most notable transaction or project in which you have been recently involved?

The build-to-suit development and long-term lease signing of a 165,000 s/f office building for the Social Services and Health Department. It is leased to the county of Suffolk.

3) Please discuss your professional background.

I currently serve as a senior advisor for Sperry Van Ness, specializing in retail and office/industrial properties in the L.I./New York City area. In 1991, I formed George Tsunis Real Estate, Inc., one of L.I.'s leading real estate firms. Previously, I was employed with Damianos Realty, a company that specializes in office, medical and retail properties. Throughout my 20 years in the commercial real estate industry, I have secured 5,000 sales and leasing transactions totaling over \$1 billion.

4) What is one criterion that sets your company/firm apart from your competitors?

Sperry Van Ness is the only national brokerage firm that proactively co-operates with outside brokers. We aggressively market all listings not only to investors and internal company advisors nationwide, but also to outside brokerage firms and independent brokers.

5) Do you see your industry in a more or less favorable position six months from now?

I see nothing but growth in the future of this industry. Whether I look to six months from now or six years, the demands of L.I. commercial real estate from local and national investors will continue to drive the industry in a favorable position.

Joseph Willen, President



Joseph Willen
President
Advantage Title Agency, Inc.

1) Please discuss your charitable/organizational involvements.

Advantage Title has demonstrated a steadfast commitment to supporting a broad range of charitable, environmental, and community organizations, including the Nature Conservancy, Family Service League, Children's Medical Fund, Big Brothers/Big Sisters and Habitat for Humanity. I am also a coach for three community youth soccer teams.

2) What is the most notable transaction or project in which you have been recently involved?

Advantage Title recently handled a \$70 million transaction involving seven affordable housing apartment buildings in the Bronx, which will benefit many residents in the area. My company also recently handled multiple transactions totaling \$25 million for the expansion of a leading geriatric facility on L.I., and the recent \$43 million refinance of a premier hotel in Manhattan.

3) Please discuss your professional background.

I began selling title insurance in 1985. Two years later, with a vision to build the best servicing title company in the industry, I founded Advantage Title. Advantage Title is recognized as an industry leader, with two affiliated companies, Mortgage Advantage and Advantage Settlement, which offer integrated real estate services for our clients.

4) What is one criterion that sets your company/firm apart from your competitors?

I expect that the industry will continue to be solid, with interest rates remaining low while the market stays strong for the third and fourth quarters of 2005. We anticipate that Advantage will continue to gain market share as we sustain our investment in our sales organization and marketing initiatives.

5) Do you see your industry in a more or less favorable position six months from now?

Because of NAI LI's complete scope of service, we are uniquely positioned to assist our clients/customers with property management. NAI LI protects your property investment the "old fashioned way," by being there and by maintaining a constant presence on the site that ensures potential problems can be anticipated and prevented before they arise. Our depth of experience and competency enable us to meet the needs and requirements of the market with confidence. We are secure in the knowledge that our industry will remain strong going forward.

Michael Zere, Executive vice president



Michael Zere
Executive vice president
Zere Real Estate Services, Inc.

1) Please discuss your charitable/organizational involvements.

I am a member of the Islip Economic Development Committee, CIBS, Commercial Industrial Broker Society, March of Dimes Real Estate Board, Dante Foundation of Nassau County, St. Thomas Aquinas Sons of Italy.

2) What is the most notable transaction or project in which you have been recently involved?

I have completed over 100 leasing office/industrial deals in the past year in both Nassau and Suffolk Counties totaling over 450,000 s/f.

3) Please discuss your professional background.

I am a fifteen year veteran in the industry specializing in office/industrial properties. As a seasoned outdoorsman/bow and gun hunter and single digit handicap golfer, I use my competitive edge, drive and focus as the foundation of my success.

4) What is one criterion that sets your company/firm apart from your competitors?

2005 marks Zere Real Estate Services 25th anniversary. Personal hands on dedicated service sets our office apart from the large corporate red tape offices that often drag deals on and stifle transaction. Ongoing referrals are our backbone.

5) Do you see your industry in a more or less favorable position six months from now?

The third quarter market is full steam ahead. Going into the fourth quarter there will not be enough product to appease the appetite of our customer base.

Do you know of a colleague who should be considered for a future edition of Long Island Commercial Newsmakers? If so please contact Bill Hutton, Long Island Real Estate Journal publisher at (800) 654-4993 x250 or email bhutton@rejournal.com.