

June 6, 2008

Suozzi Vows to Help Nassau Downtowns Become 'Cool'

Nassau County Executive Thomas Suozzi knows cool when he sees it and wants to see more of it in the county's aging downtowns.

Suozzi told about 400 local municipal and business officials at a conference in Rockville Centre yesterday that he plans to make good on a promise he made in his State of the County speech in March to usher in the economic benefits of "cool downtowns."

Downtowns can vary in vibrancy and appeal to residents and visitors, and some of them won't meet his standard of "cool downtowns," Suozzi said, adding that they will be near train stations, with residents living and or working in multistory buildings within walking distance to restaurants and small shops.

"Not all of our downtowns will be cool downtowns. Those that won't be, we will try to help enhance and upgrade," Suozzi told officials from Nassau's towns, villages and cities.

Suozzi is trying to coordinate the many plans for downtown revitalization, but the municipalities and their zoning boards will decide their reality.

Suozzi added three new categories for revitalized downtowns: quaint or historic; potentially cool; and auto-oriented commercial centers.

In the quaint or historic category, Suozzi included Bayville, Roslyn, New Hyde Park and Lawrence. In the potentially cool class, Suozzi put Port Washington, Farmingdale, Syosset and Baldwin.

Auto-oriented communities are Plainview, West Hempstead, Uniondale and Wantagh, he said.

Some have already made it to the pinnacle of cool, Suozzi said, naming Rockville Centre, Garden City, Great Neck Plaza and Long Beach.

Sandra Johnson, chairwoman of the Bellmore Chamber of Commerce, told Suozzi her downtown could use his help because young men from a new community youth center on Bellmore Avenue are harassing passersby and restaurant patrons. Suozzi said he would look into it.

Farmingdale Mayor George Starkie told Suozzi he and his board want to do the "cool downtown" plan and have been working on it for two years, but can't come up with the money for a serious study.

Suozzi said he would look to see if the county can help.

Staff writer Joseph Mallia contributed to this story.

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