

NEWS FROM **Long Island Business NEWS**

Where Business Gets Down to Business

T. Weiss Realty Consults With Long Island Power Authority About How To Reduce Energy Use

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Published: September 2, 2005*

Like most developers, T. Weiss Realty seeks design advice when considering a new building. But while consultants typically carry a price tag, the Melville-based commercial real estate firm receives expert advice at no charge when it asks the Long Island Power Authority for ideas about energy efficiency.

The company recently worked with LIPA on ways to reduce energy use at two of its newest buildings, at 330 and 324 S. Service Road in Melville.

The interiors are lit using light fixtures with reflective panels that increase illumination, and the company also installed energy- efficient heating and air conditioning systems. LIPA also provided advice on setting up the buildings' computerized energy management systems, which are controlled through remote means.

Sensors in common areas automatically activate lighting when work space is occupied. At 324 S. Service Rd., a reflective sunshade system around the top of the building will be installed to reduce heat from direct sunlight and cut the air conditioning bill.

We've been working with LIPA on our last four Melville projects, said Ted Weiss, president of the business that bears his name. Weiss and his staff work closely with LIPA's energy-audit team and engineers who make recommendations.

The development company is taking advantage of the program at a time when electric costs are rising, which may prove an incentive for other businesses to work with LIPA to cut back energy use.

As a public authority, LIPA is charged with managing Long Island's electricity, and seeking to reduce demand on the electric grid by helping companies cut energy consumption. Joe Rocco, assistant program director for the LIPA commercial construction program, estimates the majority of real estate developers operating on the Island turn to LIPA for advice.

As of April, LIPA completed 1,743 energy-efficiency projects and provided rebates of more than \$12 million in the last five years. LIPA typically works on several dozen projects at a time, offering incentives for products ranging from rooftop air conditioners to energy efficient lights.

As the price of energy has risen, LIPA officials had anticipated consumers would look for ways to cut back on energy use. So far, however, that trend is not evident.

You would hope so," Rocco said. But as the price of gasoline goes up, that doesn't mean people are driving less. They accept it as a cost of doing business. There's a subset of people spurred by that trigger.

Energy audits are provided as cost-effective solutions for the everyday business, Rocco said.

All companies great and small

Companies of all sizes can, and do, tap LIPA for advice. One bank took advantage of LIPA's commercial construction program and obtained rebates to install energy-management controllers at 37 of its branch offices on Long Island.

It's everything from a mom and pop deli who's putting in a set of lights to the largest commercial developers, hospitals, municipalities, school districts, government, towns, Rocco said.

LIPA's rebate incentives run from as little as \$25 for one light fixture to as much as \$300,000 on a project, though the typical rebate incentive amounts to somewhere between \$500 to \$1,000.

A \$300,000 incentive is for a complex building, piece of equipment, or control scheme that will save a lot of energy, Rocco said. It's related to the amount of capital.

School districts routinely turn to LIPA for advice, obtaining rebates for energy-efficient lighting as well as air conditioning in offices, libraries and auditoriums.

Cutting costs

While savings on energy costs vary, LIPA said companies may save as much as 20 percent compared to a similar building that has not gone through the program. You can save as much as 30 percent if you get more aggressive, said Rocco.

The most obvious way to save energy is to install energy-efficient lights, replacing old bulbs with more efficient ones. Ted Weiss said the company has reduced the actual number of bulbs in use, even though it still receives the same amount of light. The cost to provide that light has been cut by two-thirds.

Occupancy sensors that turn off lights when people leave a room are another popular, energy-saving measure. Such sensors often are used in rest rooms, Rocco said.

When you leave, the light goes off. When you open a door, the light goes on, so lights don't burn 24/7, Rocco added.

Companies also are beginning to use sensors that dim lights when natural light fills a room.

T. Weiss Realty uses energy efficient motors for elevators and for heating and air conditioning units that cost more upfront, but our payback comes back in a short time through energy efficiency." Weiss said.

Incentive to action

While LIPA offers rebates for equipment to encourage energy efficiency, it has eliminated some incentives when the related technology catches on. Until the late 1990s, LIPA offered rebates for two-to-four-watt LED exit signs, which replaced 40-watt incandescent signs. However, since LED signs cost only \$50 more than conventional signs, and had a payback period of two years for savings, LIPA axed the rebates.

We dropped those, because everybody understood the economics, and they became commonplace, Rocco said. The goal of the program is market transformation. The goal is to get people to use technologies that are not widespread. Once they do that, we back off and they continue on their own merits.

Even the technologies that are more expensive in the short-term can be attractive with a rebate. An energy-efficient air conditioning unit may carry a 20 percent premium over a standard unit, with payback after about three to five years, Rocco said. But incentives can bring that down to two years or less.