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## Ted Weiss Launches Melville Executive Forum To Stop Exodus Of Young

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Developer Ted Weiss has launched an organization called the Melville Executive Forum to try to stem the tide of young adults leaving Long Island by offering new business internships and adding zip to the social scene.

"I'm a real estate farmer, and this is sowing the seeds," Weiss said. Convincing young professionals that Long Island is "a great place to do business" could be a round about way of keeping his buildings full of tenants, he said.

Weiss, who kicked off the forum at a reception last week at his Melville Corporate Center II, said he formed his group because other public and private organizations didn't seem to be making much progress in preventing smart young adults from fleeing the Island.

"Long Island leaders have famously warned of a 'brain drain' as students move off the Island to pursue their careers," said Weiss. "There are economic issues such as housing costs that we need to resolve to retain these young people, but in our Melville community, we can be immediately effective by partnering with educators and inviting young people to work."

Weiss said he has laid the groundwork for a relationship with Adelphi University by meeting with Bob Scott, the school's president. He hopes to establish an eight-week paid summer internship for 12-15 college students, placing them in participating Long Island companies. They would earn three college credits.

Weiss said he hoped the experience and connections gained would influence them to remain on Long Island after graduation. Businesses that host the interns would have the chance to cultivate future employees, he said.

So far no businesses have signed on, but eight, including Independence Bank and State Bank of Long Island, have expressed interest in the program.

On the social front, Weiss said the forum would promote the Melville area as "downtown Long Island," a destination that can compete with Manhattan.

"Monday through Thursday where do you go after work?" said Weiss.

To begin offering city-style social life, Weiss said he open the common areas of his three office facilities in Melville for use by young professional network organizations to socialize during the week.

Mitch Pally, vice chair for legislative affairs at the Long Island Association, applauded Weiss' concept but questioned whether the addition of another pro-business agency would help stem 'brain drain.' It might just lead to greater fragmentation of an already scattered effort to deal with the problem, he said.

"It would be better to work through existing organizations, whether it's Action Long Island, the Route 110 Redevelopment Corp. or the Long Island Association," Pally said. "Whatever his ideas on how the issues could be solved should be shared."

Pally said the main cause of 'brain drain' is the lack of affordable housing. He said Weiss should join in lobbying the state Assembly to pass legislation to require municipalities to require housing developments of more than five units have affordable housing units.