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Post-Sandy strategy for LI regional panel

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Photo credit: Craig Ruttle | Debris covers Wisconsin Street in Long Beach as the clean up continues in the hard-hit beach city in the wake of superstorm Sandy. (Nov. 24, 2012)

A state panel of business executives, union leaders and academics pledged Tuesday to identify building projects that will protect Long Island from future natural disasters.

Meeting 36 days after superstorm Sandy ravaged parts of Nassau and Suffolk counties, the Long Island Regional Economic Development Council discussed improvements to electricity distribution, public housing, communications, sewage treatment and dunes for seaside communities.

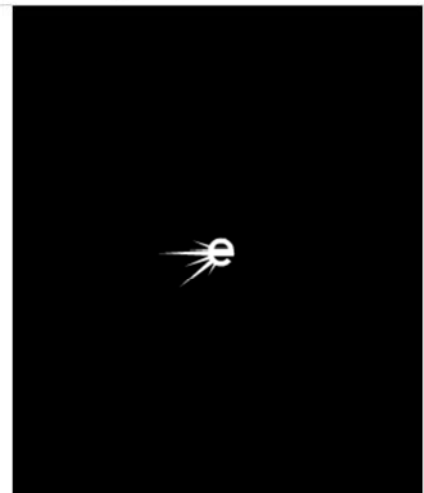
"It's incumbent on Long Island to speak with one voice about what are the best ways to prevent this from happening again," council co-vice chairman Stuart Rabinowitz said, referring to Sandy's wrath on places such as Lindenhurst, Babylon village, Long Beach and Riverhead.

"The regional council is nonpartisan and can look at the long run," said Rabinowitz, president of Hofstra University.

Council members unanimously agreed it would serve as a clearinghouse for projects seeking money from New York State. The council already plays the same role for economic development proposals; last year it secured \$101.6 million for about 70 business expansions.

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The local council, along with nine others across the state, was appointed by Gov. Andrew M. Cuomo to devise a five-year strategy to create jobs. Each council recommends developments to Cuomo for aid.

Kevin Law, co-vice chairman and president of the Long Island Association business group, said a plan was needed to rebuild sewage treatment plants and the electric grid so that they can better withstand another storm.

He and Rabinowitz directed the council's 50-member infrastructure working group to collaborate with others on recommendations for post-Sandy repairs.

One project, Smart Grid 3, that received \$5 million in state funding last year, is tackling some of the issues raised by the Oct. 29 storm, according to Samuel Aronson, director of Brookhaven National Laboratory.

He said Smart Grid researchers, at the lab and at [Stony Brook University](#), are examining ways to "harden" electricity distribution and to make it easier for utility companies to prevent cascading blackouts.

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