

**LONG ISLAND**

**FALL 2021**

# **ROAD WARRIORS**

A publication of the Long Island Contractors' Association

## **Coming Home**

Read the unusual set of circumstances that led Richard Browne to the project that helped bring the Islanders back home.

Story begins on page 18

**Inside:**



**Islanders in the Community**  
See page 11

**Richard Browne**  
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LICA Headquarters:  
48 S. Service Road  
Suite 401  
Melville, NY 11747  
Phone: 631.231.5422  
Fax: 631.231.4291  
[www.licanys.org](http://www.licanys.org)

# BUILDING BELMONT



As a child, your neighborhood is your identity and your street marks your social life. So, for me, the name "Belmont" holds special importance; it is the name of the street where I grew up, and so, it is inexorably linked to who I am. As I got older, "Belmont" signified horses, the allure of the racetrack and the excitement of the sport.

Today, Belmont is the anchor that holds Long Island to its storied past and the bridge to its illustrious future.

And it all started with one man: August Belmont, Sr., a financier, diplomat, politician, chair of the Democratic National Committee, horse breeder, racehorse owner, and – most notably – namesake of the Belmont Stakes, the third leg of the heralded Triple Crown.

His son, August Belmont, Jr., followed in his footsteps with similar business acumen and a love for sports and entertainment, especially horse racing. In addition to financing the construction of the original New York City subway system and heading the Interborough Rapid Transit Company (IRT) for many years, the younger Belmont served on boards for multiple construction, financial and transportation companies, including the Long Island Rail Road. He also bought the land and built the Belmont Racetrack in Elmont. In honor of his father, he named the new sports facility after him.

I no longer live on Belmont Street, but the playgrounds, fields and paddleboats of nearby Belmont Lake State Park

are where I sometimes entertain my grandchildren. This park was established in 1926 on land formerly known as "Nursery Stud Farm," part of August Belmont, Sr.'s thoroughbred horse farm. So, I wonder if that famous local name will resonate with my grandkids the same way it did with me as a child. Will they subconsciously connect sports and entertainment with the Belmont name? For them, the connection to "Belmont" may be even stronger than it was for me.



Growing up, neighborhood kids played stick hockey on my street, probably like youngsters on any of the 23 other streets similarly named "Belmont" (or any street for that matter). We pretended to be star hockey players like Phil Esposito, Gordie Howe, Bobby Orr, or Brad Park. Very soon, I suspect, the Belmont name will inspire dreams of today's youth, as a result of the amazing new venue being built on its grounds and the players who will soon call it home.

Thanks to the bold leadership of many public officials and developers, as well as several LICA contractors and their labor trade partners, Belmont is now adding professional hockey and other thrilling entertainment opportunities to its horse racing draw. This edition of *Long Island Road Warriors* shares the excitement of welcoming UBS Arena to the legendary Belmont portfolio—and welcoming the NY Islanders' home. We hope you enjoy our cover story, highlighting one of the gentleman who spearheaded this project, Richard Browne. Although he does not share a Belmont surname, nor does he live on a street of the same name, Richard indeed, knows a thing or two about the grounds of the raceway park that bears the Belmont name.

Someday, we may recall seeing a youngster, emulating their favorite Islander while playing a game of pick-up hockey on Belmont Street (or at Belmont Lake State Park), who ends up skating professionally on the ice of UBS Arena. At that time, we'll be sure to give credit to Richard Browne and, of course, the Belmont Family.

Sincerely,

  
 Marc Herbst, Executive Director  
 Long Island Contractors' Association



Photos: (above) Portrait of August Belmont, Jr. 1904; (top right) August Belmont, Jr. at Belmont Park, 1915.



Renderings Courtesy of UBS Arena (Press Kit)

### **MADE FOR MUSIC. BUILT FOR HOCKEY.**

UBS Arena will soon be New York’s newest premier entertainment and sports venue and the future home of the New York Islanders. Located at Belmont Park in Elmont, this state-of-the-art facility will open in November 2021 and host more than 150 major events annually. The arena and surrounding development are expected to create 10,000 construction jobs and 3,000 permanent jobs, generating approximately \$25 billion in economic activity over the term of the lease.

UBS Arena also intends to be carbon neutral for operations by 2024 and is on track to be LEED Certified. Mass transit and car-pooling will also be highly encouraged and UBS Arena is making it easy to do either, with a dedicated rideshare drop-off/pickup area, an MTA bus stop and multiple LIRR stations available to access the campus, including the new Elmont LIRR station currently under construction. All on site campus shuttles from parking lots will be electric.

### **Construction Fun Facts By-the-Numbers:**

- 700,000 square feet
- 9,700 tons of steel
- Over 40 trades represented
- Over 70 subcontractors utilized
- 12,000 light fixtures
- 750,000 bricks
- Over 100 miles of data & technology cabling
- 93 different types of wall and floor tile
- 43 different paint colors
- Enough electric, heat and cooling capacity to serve 3,000 homes
- 55,000 lineal feet of copper embedded in the event floor to create the floor ice



For more about UBS Arena including Live Cam, ticket information and event updates, visit: [ubsarena.com](https://ubsarena.com)



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## DIME: A TRUSTED PARTNER FOR LONG ISLAND BUSINESSES

Earlier this year, Dime Community Bank expanded its presence on Long Island through its merger with BNB Bank. Today, Dime has over \$12.7 billion in assets and 60 branches from Montauk to Manhattan. With over 150 years of experience serving Long Island businesses, Dime stands out as a trusted partner.

### Commercial Lending products and services to help LI businesses rebuild and grow

Dime provides an array of commercial term loans, commercial lines of credit, construction loans, commercial mortgages, and multifamily and mixed-use property loans. The bank also offers flexible plans and personalized options to help each business with its unique needs. For instance, Dime features a full suite of treasury management products and services so businesses can manage cash flow.

Most of all, Dime utilizes a relationship-based approach to commercial lending and business banking that ensures each business receives the right products and services. “When a business comes to Dime looking for a loan, our commercial lenders meet with the prospective customers at their business,” noted Conrad Gunther, Senior Executive Vice President and Chief Lending Officer. “We spend time touring the business, talking with the owner and learning about how the business works,” Gunther explained. For Dime, the focus is about getting to know the customer.

Dime’s commercial lending team consists of highly experienced professionals who know the markets, understand the needs of businesses, and have local access to make decisions quickly. “We work very closely with business owners to make sure that the products and services they get are custom to their specific needs,” Gunther added.

### Standing with LI businesses during the pandemic

When the COVID-19 pandemic began impacting our local economy, Dime reached out to Long Island businesses, customers and non-customers, to help facilitate the Paycheck Protection Program (PPP). Throughout 2020 and 2021, Dime served as a leading community bank provider of PPP loans for New York City/Long Island area businesses.

“Our employees worked tirelessly to ensure our clients received funds to navigate COVID-19 and demonstrated our commitment to operating a highly responsive customer-focused platform,” stated Kevin M. O’Connor, Chief Executive Officer of Dime Community Bank.

### Proud Official Banking Partner of the New York Islanders and UBS Arena at Belmont Park

Dime is the official retail and commercial bank of the New York Islanders and the UBS Arena at Belmont Park, the New York metropolitan area’s new live entertainment and sports venue. For Dime, the partnership with UBS Arena establishes a high-profile presence at a location central to its expanded branch network.



## Belmont shows us what's possible on Long Island, but let's not stop there

by New York State Senator Anna M. Kaplan, 7th Senate District

This November, a gleaming new arena will finally open its doors in Nassau County, and the Islanders will finally come home where they belong. It's been a long journey that has at times shown us the worst consequences of NIMBYism and obstructionism by short-sighted public officials, but in the end has come full circle to demonstrate just what's possible when all levels of government work together with the private sector and the communities they serve to do something truly transformational to support our community, our residents, and our way of life here on Long Island.

The journey to Belmont began with "The Lighthouse at Long Island," a visionary project that is remembered today as a testament to what happens when elected officials lose sight of the value of development as a driver of economic activity and job creation, and instead make capricious decisions that drive investment out of our community. For many, the opportunity to redevelop Belmont Park was seen as a second chance to do the right thing, and when I was elected to the New York State Senate representing the site of the project, I got to work to ensure we didn't make the same mistakes.

By developing genuine partnerships between the community, the developers, and multiple levels of government, we were able to overcome differences throughout the project, and ultimately advance a final

product that everyone can be proud of. Thanks to those efforts, Nassau County will have a world-class arena, 3,000 permanent jobs, 10,000 construction jobs, \$25 billion in economic activity, a brand new LIRR train station, brand new community parks, and boundless opportunity for local jobseekers.

Importantly, it also sends a message that we can still do big things on Long Island when we're smart, and when we work together.

Let's take the lessons we've learned at Belmont, engaging communities for smart development, and let's keep going. We should fully embrace President Biden's agenda to Build Back Better as we recover from the COVID-19 pandemic, and address key areas of need on Long Island, like affordable housing, roads, mass transit, and green energy infrastructure.

I was proud to fight for record-breaking resources in our State Budget this year that will help us accomplish many of these goals. Taken together with relief funding provided by our federal representatives, we have a real opportunity to rebuild our region and ensure that our communities will continue to thrive for generations to come. Let's meet this unprecedented moment and show that the success of Belmont isn't an exception to the rule, but the new way forward for Long Island.





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## ISLANDERS In the Community:

Since its establishment in 1972, the New York Islanders organization has made a continuous impact in the local community through extensive efforts on and off the ice.

From its early days, members from the Islanders' 'dynasty' and four-time Stanley Cup championship squads would designate time to give back and get involved with the tight-knit Long Island community.

In the years since, it's become a tradition for players of the organization to participate in various annual events around the Island and New York Metro area and some players have been inspired to create philanthropic foundations of their own.

The Islanders' efforts include friendly surprise visits at local hospitals and shopping for toys around the holidays to recognizing military members and their families at every home game and even adapting the needs of the community, as last year's team donated over 3,000 N95 masks to medical facilities in the New York-area in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The Islanders community initiatives have been bolstered by late owner Charles B. Wang, who created the Islanders Children's Foundation (ICF) in the summer of 2003, with the goals of providing opportunities via health, education and youth hockey development, to children in the local community.

Under the Islanders current majority ownership group of Scott Malkin and Jon Ledecky, those philanthropic efforts have continued to make ICF a staple in the team's community efforts. Since its inception, the ICF has raised more than \$15 million dollars to help those in the community.

*Since 1972, the New York Islanders organization has impacted the local community with its various efforts*

In the classroom, the Islanders understand the importance of educational development in youth and have supported that through programs like the School Assembly Program, Future Goals Hockey Scholar, STEM Education Program and Honor Code.

With their School Assembly Program they bring the game of hockey to local schools throughout Long Island and the New York metropolitan area. They offer assemblies that teach students the importance of teamwork, staying healthy, hard work and making smart decisions.

In addition to their School Assembly Program, the Islanders utilize the Honor Code Program, in partnership with Everfi, to provide a no-cost digital course that targets grades 8-10 and takes a practical approach to bullying prevention, empowering students and teaching leadership skills and ways to create a positive school environment.

The Islanders also offer a Floorball program to more than 100 elementary, middle and high schools throughout the NY Metro area to introduce the game of floorball to their physical education classes via a four-week floorball unit. Schools received Islanders-branded hockey equipment along with a curriculum for teachers to follow to ensure a smooth implementation of the program. In addition to Floorball, the Islanders offer a Street Hockey program, where the year-round program brings the dry-land variation of ice hockey.

With amateur hockey, the Islanders' involvement is spearheaded by the league-wide Learn to Play initiative, the Future Islanders program provides boys and girls ages 5-8 with an introduction to the sport of hockey, and serves as a transition program for first-time players interested in playing in a house league.



For more information or ways to get involved with all of the Islanders' complete community efforts please visit:  
<https://www.nhl.com/islanders/community/community-relations>



Photo Credit: NY Islanders (Dennis Dasilva)

# Charting A New Course

by Desmond M. Ryan, Government Relations Consultant

**"Real change, enduring change, happens one step at a time."**

— Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg

Today, in the Empire State, we have made history by having our first female governor. A year ago, if you had asked someone, anywhere in New York, "Who is Kathy Hochul?" the overwhelming response would have been, "who?" As Lieutenant Governor she has ascended to this position with the resignation of her predecessor, but has worked non-stop representing the prior administration from Plattsburgh to Montauk.

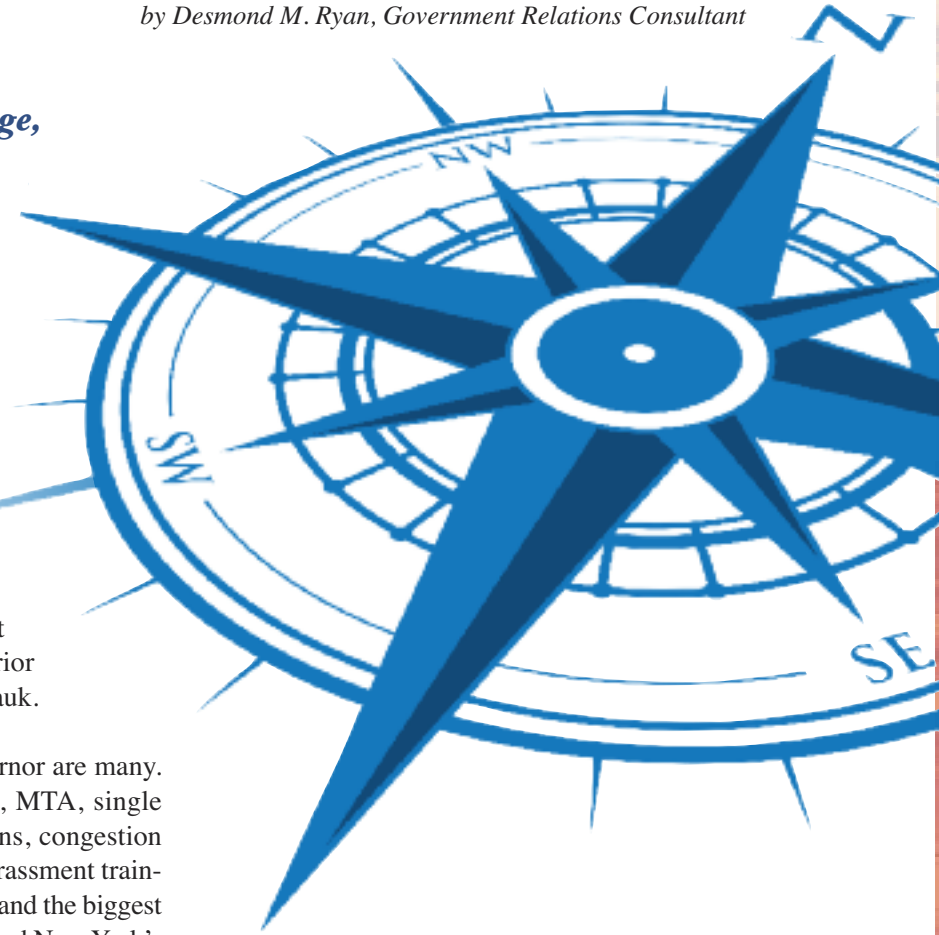
However, the issues facing the new governor are many. COVID/mandatory masks and vaccines, MTA, single payer healthcare, moratorium on evictions, congestion pricing, cannabis management, sexual harassment training, sports betting, immigration, fracking, and the biggest of all – increase in taxes for corporations and New York's 1%. To those of us on Long Island, aid to education continues to be the number one priority. Potholes have turned state highways into lunar landscapes, while escalating energy rates and offshore wind turbines will have an impact on the future of the Long Island Power Authority and the region's economy. On the environmental side, water quality, sewers, open-space preservation and climate change continue to be areas of great concern. For Hochul, the list upstate is never-ending.

The biggest challenge facing the new Hochul administration is the 2022-2023 budget. She must present her budget to the legislature by the third week of January and prove to New Yorkers that it is not only balanced, but that it will be delivered on time.

Both the senate and the assembly have made it very clear that they want greater control over the process. State coffers are now reaching pre-pandemic levels and New York is awash in federal dollars. It is the intention of the legislature to not only say how much is appropriated but also when and where it will be authorized, hence impacting the power of the second floor. This is not something new.

For Governor Hochul, this will be similar to a high wire act over Niagara Falls. She will need all of the skill of a flying Wallenda to get from the assembly side of the falls to the senate side and there can be no margin for error. In her negotiations with legislative leadership, the governor must be firm but not overbearing. Unlike her predecessor, who ruled with an iron fist, Hochul will need a velvet glove approach in these important negotiations. With New York now controlled by one party, and gerrymandering taking effect in 2022, both the speaker and the senate majority leader know that the budget debate is a delicate issue. Hochul is not Cuomo and they must do everything in their power to avoid intraparty warfare, which is why they have to project to the voters of the state that they can govern and are united before the 2022 elections.

Governor Hochul has made it very clear that she intends to actively seek her party's nomination next November, and she must do everything to avoid a financially draining primary and solidify her base if she is to succeed. Her ability to effectively balance the needs of upstate, the five boroughs and Long Island will be crucial to her electoral success in 2022. And for Governor Hochul, change is on the horizon.



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# Reauthorization of Article 15-A of the Executive Law and Its Ramifications

by Joseph Molloy, CPA, tax partner and a key member of Anchin's Construction Industry Group

On July 15, 2021, then New York Governor Andrew Cuomo reauthorized Article 15-A of the Executive Law which was originally signed into law in July of 1988. The intent of the legislation was and remains to help promote greater employment and business opportunities for minority and women-owned enterprises (i.e., MWBEs). Through the law, goals have been set for MWBEs' participation in construction projects. In this latest reauthorization of 15-A, a goal of 30% of the budget comprised of MWBE participation for each year of a state project grant has been established. This goal applies to construction projects involving grant applications for over \$25,000. This goal was determined based on a study conducted in 2016 to assess disparities in contract awards. For both contractors and MWBEs, it is important to understand the nine sections of Article 15-A in order to facilitate compliance and support the intention of the law.

## Defining the Terms

Section 310 of Article 15-A defines what constitutes an MWBE under New York State's definition. It is a business that is at least 51% owned and controlled by minority members and/or women. That ownership and control need to be "real, substantial, and continuing" to qualify. Minority members are those individuals, whether U.S. citizens or permanent resident aliens, who can demonstrate that they are a member of one of the following groups:

- Black individuals with origins in any of the Black African racial groups
- Hispanic individuals of Mexican, Puerto Rican, Dominican, Cuban, Central or South American origin
- Descendants of Indian or Hispanic origin (regardless of race)
- Native Americans and Alaska native individuals with origins from any of North America's original people
- Asian and Pacific Islanders with origins from any Far Eastern country, South East Asia, the Indian subcontinent, or the Pacific Islands.

Also defined in this section is the term "contractor." This law defines a contractor as an individual, business enterprise (i.e., sole proprietorship, partnership, corporation, not-for-profit corporation) or any other party to a state contract or a bidder associated with a state contract award or a proposed party to a state contract.

## A Key Role and Resource

Under Section 311, there is an explanation of the State's Division of Minority and Women's Business Development and its role in administering, coordinating, and implementing a statewide program to help MWBEs secure state government contracting opportunities. Its primary goal is to make sure MWBEs gain their fair share of contracts. To support the intent of Article 15-A, the Division is charged with conducting educational programs, providing technical assistance to applicants, filing violation complaints, and keeping the Governor and Legislature informed on all progress through annual reporting. Additionally, Section 311-a establishes an office of an MWBE statewide advocate within the State's Department of Economic Development.

To read the remainder of this article, please visit: [www.anchin.com/news/LIRWarticle](http://www.anchin.com/news/LIRWarticle)



Joseph Molloy, CPA, is a tax partner at Anchin and a key member of the Firm's Architecture & Engineering and Construction Industry Groups. Joseph has 20 years of experience in public accounting and has extensive experience preparing tax returns for a variety of entities, including C-Corps, S-Corps, partnerships, individuals, and trusts.






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**Richard Browne**  
*Managing Partner,  
Sterling Project Development*

*Coming*  
**HOME**



**B**ehind the door of an unassuming doublewide Cassone construction trailer, in a temporary parking lot off Hempstead Turnpike, is a small contingent of busy professionals on laptops and cell phones, working wherever space allows. In a room off the back, is a clock that reads—*Countdown to Opening Day: 92 days, 8 hours, 9 minutes and 53 seconds*—a clear indication that the people inside may be the only group more focused on the Islanders’ 2021 home opener than the faithful fans of the Blue and Orange Army.

Among them today is our cover subject, Richard Browne of Sterling Project Development (SPD), whose organization is mainly responsible for bringing the Islanders back home to Nassau County. Nassau is where the Islanders’ story began and where the team will soon christen an extraordinary new arena to the deafening roar of fans and friends who will remind visitors what ‘home ice advantage’ truly means.

While the saga of the Islanders’ journey to find a new home has been well documented, the twists and turns that brought Richard Browne to SPD—and in turn, SPD to this project—are no less intriguing. His personal backstory, together with a series of unexpected detours and uncanny coincidences, seem to indicate a shared destiny.

## **THE IDENTITY LINE**

First, let’s introduce today’s lineup...

The powerhouse trio that comprises New York Arena Partners JV—the official developers of the \$1.5 billion Belmont Park project—is as impressive as the Islanders’ famous ‘Identity Line.’ Admittedly, their work shirt collars may not be ‘Islanders Blue’, but their combination of talent, experience and determination is no less fierce than that of Cizikas, Martin and Clutterbuck.

Oak View Group (OVG) is a global leader in sports and entertainment, founded in 2015 by two of the most influential people in the sports and entertainment business, CEO Tim Leiweke and Irving Azoff. They are the team behind the cutting-edge Climate Pledge Arena in Seattle—the world’s first ‘net-zero carbon’ arena. According to Browne, OVG brings an unsurpassed level of insight and talent to sports and entertainments venues. Thanks to their knowledge and expertise, UBS Arena will be financially, aesthetically and acoustically attractive to top artists and entertainers, as well as as boisterous hockey fans.

Sterling Project Development (SPD) is a full-service real estate development management and advisory firm, under the direction of managing partner Richard Browne and founding partner, Jeff Wilpon. SPD, formed in 2010, is an affiliate of Sterling Equities—a 50-year-old real estate management company run by the Katz and Wilpon families. (Yes, the same long-time owners of the New York Mets, who maintain a 5% stake in the beloved franchise). Currently, SPD is advising more than 100 clients around the globe on approximately \$26 billion (hard cost) worth of development projects.

The ownership group representing the New York Islanders is led by three college friends: co-owners Jon Leddecky, Dewey Shay and Scott Malkin. Together, they committed to bring the Isles back home to a spectacular new venue that will reflect the latest innovations from around the world. UBS Arena is certain to be the crown jewel of the Belmont Park development which will eventually include a four-star hotel as well as an impressive “internationally flavored” retail complex, already under construction. With the arena slated to host more than 150 major music, entertainment, and sporting events annually, it truly is “*made for music, built for hockey.*”

## **OPPORTUNITY KNOCKS (LITERALLY)**

On the surface, some might assume the powerful partnership behind Belmont Park was nothing more than a typical business collaboration between wealthy industry giants. However, decades before SPD existed or had any involvement with the Islanders, there was a series of seemingly random relationships that brought this trio together, lending further evidence to the existence of destiny. And it all began with a knock.

*“Hi. I’m Jeff. I live next door.  
Do you have any kids I can play with?”*

Browne’s family had been living in the small enclave of Roslyn Harbor on Long Island’s north shore, when his mother answered that knock on the door. There stood a boy, a new neighbor about two years younger than Richard, in search of a playmate. That boy was Jeff Wilpon. At the time, no one could have imagined, nor cared, where that friendship might lead or what opportunities it may bring. It was all about having fun, being kids and building snowmen.

Years prior, Richard’s father had learned to take advantage of his own opportunities (sans knock). Son of a first-generation Greek immigrant, the elder Browne attended Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) for structural engineering and worked in Queens for 25 years building high-rises. He eventually became his own general contractor, working for N.K. Winston Construction Corp. (NKW). Browne’s loyalty and hard work paid off in a big way when NKW purchased two Manhattan office buildings. As compensation for operating, leasing and managing the properties, NKW gave Browne part ownership through a management stake. Richard’s father then parlayed that investment into an impressive real estate portfolio of his own. His most significant acquisition was 40 Rector Street, in downtown Manhattan, which housed a ‘who’s who’ of tenants including The City of New York, Equitable Life, Xerox, and The American Stock Exchange, to name a few.

Naturally, one would have expected Richard to join his father in the real estate business immediately after college, but like the Islanders, Richard took some interesting detours before he made his way back home.

*Story continued on next page*

## D-TOUR

Despite an inexplicable early childhood affinity for a baseball team from Baltimore, Richard and his family became fans of the hometown Islanders hockey team. While Richard mastered classical piano at home, he put his athletic abilities to use at Roslyn High School, playing baseball and tennis. His talent on-court was good enough to earn him a Division 1 (D1) scholarship to the University of Wisconsin, where he would play until his graduation. In 1982, Richard took his degree in journalism and headed off to chase the dream of every athlete.

*The story conjures up memories of Herb Brooks' famous locker room speech to the 1980 USA Olympic Hockey Team...*

He spent the next two years playing tennis on the pro circuit and achieved an impressive world ranking of #500. But, as most athletes discover, the odds of enjoying a lucrative life as a sports professional are slim. Endorsements and hefty prize packages are reserved primarily for players in the Top 10, especially in the United States. Richard quickly realized that prize money from ITF Futures and ATP Challenger tournaments (think tennis' minor leagues) wasn't nearly enough to break even after travel expenses, coaching costs, and equipment. So, when a friend called Richard to suggest he join him in Chicago, where they could both make good money selling insurance, Richard called 'game, set and match' on his tennis career.

## ROOKIE OF THE YEAR

While selling insurance, Richard took note of Chicago's comparatively inexpensive real estate market. Like an Islanders' legend sensing a breakaway opportunity, Richard's instincts led him to purchase a few small condominium units, which he personally renovated, leased and managed. Then, with encouragement from his father, he went on to buy several more condominiums, successfully managing a total of 16 by the time he was 25.

It was apparent that Richard had inherited his dad's DNA and he returned to New York in 1986 to join his father's business. Before retiring, Mr. Browne provided his son with a wealth of knowledge about commercial real estate ownership, management and construction, from the ground up. With a hands-on approach, Richard learned about all aspects of the business, from design and engineering to construction, sales, leasing, financing, operations, and negotiations. Along the way, he also became a Certified Mediator.

Richard was named managing general partner of 40 Rector Street in 1989. Through the mid-90s he continued to grow the family real estate and construction businesses by working as a project manager and consultant for third-party clients throughout New York. In 2001, Richard sold 40 Rector Street to an outside investor.

## “THIS IS YOUR TIME”

After the sale, Richard continued to consult on various projects. And in 2005, he received a call from his former neighbor and childhood friend, Jeff Wilpon. That call would change Richard's professional trajectory once again and give him the opportunity of a lifetime.



Photo: UBS Arena under construction. Renderings (right) UBS Arena rink and exterior view.

For two decades, Richard and the Wilpon family had remained close while each focused on their own endeavors, growing and building their respective family businesses. However, when the New York Mets needed a new stadium, the Wilpon's needed a trusted advisor to serve as Owner's Representative and oversee construction of the new \$800 million stadium. Jeff made the call and offered Richard the position.

The story conjures up memories of Herb Brooks' famous locker room speech to the 1980 USA Olympic hockey team: *"Great moments are born from great opportunity... You were meant to be here... this is your time."*



Friendship runs deep—Richard had built an impressive career of his own—but as Richard admits, this opportunity was immense. Before Citi Field, the largest single project he had managed was a 'mere' \$50 million. Still humbled by the gesture, Richard claims he spent the next five years trying to prove himself worthy of the Wilpon's trust to deliver the dream of a stunning new stadium. To borrow Richard's quote, the pair went from *"building snowmen to building stadiums."*

Had that project ended poorly, it could have cost the Wilpon's millions and cost Richard a lifelong friendship. But the Wilpon's faith in his abilities was rewarded. Under Browne's watchful eye, Citi Field—now widely regarded as one of the finest sports venues in the country—was not only delivered on time, but \$40 million under budget. A feat rarely achieved in today's times.

## DESTINIES & DYNASTIES

Following the successful collaboration on Citi Field, Richard and Sterling Equities chose to continue their business relationship and, in 2010, formed the alliance of Sterling Project Development. It was 2016 when SPD received a call from the Islanders' Scott Malkin. Scott was seeking assistance in finding a permanent new home for the Islanders. However, no introductions were necessary. Through another unusual twist of fate, Scott Malkin and Jeff Wilpon already had a shared history that began before either one had ownership of a local sports team.

The two men had met years before at HINES Development, where a young Jeff Wilpon was poised to take over the desk of departing employee, Scott Malkin. These familiar friends would now team up with Richard, to bring the Islanders back home, while fostering dreams of future dynasties for both New York franchises.

## "PRESSURE IS A PRIVILEGE"

For more than four years, the *"privilege of pressure"* has rested squarely on the shoulders of Browne and his colleagues at SPD. Initially, to identify a suitable new home for the Islanders, then to deliver on the promise of completing a stunning new arena in time to host their 2021 season home opener. Not a task for the faint of heart. But, as Billie Jean King noted, that kind of pressure *"only comes to those who earn it."* Richard Browne, by all accounts, had earned it.

Responsibility for the physical construction of the arena falls to general contractor AECOM Hunt, as well as a myriad of sub-contractors, suppliers and vendors. Hunt, together with experts from Populous (architect) and engineers from ME Engineers and Thornton Tomasetti, were all part of the wildly successful Citi Field project, giving Richard supreme confidence in each of their abilities. But as Casey Stengel once observed, *"Gettin' good players is easy. Gettin' 'em to play together is the hard part."* The task for Richard is no different, except there's a lot more players on the field at Belmont Park.

Very simply put, Richard's role with SPD is to ensure the timely and cost-conscious completion of a LEED-certified, state-of-the-art music, entertainment, and sports arena. With his positive attitude and extensive experience, he keeps a myriad of moving parts working together to achieve the common goal. His team must troubleshoot hundreds of issues that inevitably occur when external realities conflict with internal schedules and attend to thousands of punch list items. Each detail playing a critical role in completing the arena on time or providing the ultimate fan experience.

The challenge grows exponentially more difficult when you add a new LIRR in the mix and attempt to complete the project during a global pandemic on a construction site that sits within yards of a seasonally active thoroughbred racetrack.

## TEAM. WORK.

Of course, everyone realizes the true heavy lifting for this project is being done by the real heroes of this homecoming story—the thousands of men and women of labor. Over 1,000 workers a day, representing more than 70 trades and hundreds of sub-contractors and suppliers, are bringing Belmont Park to life.

LICA is pleased to note that several Belmont subcontractors: Ruttura & Sons, Pratt Brothers Inc., Peter Scalamandre & Sons, and Gateway Industries, are long-time LICA members who are

*Story continued on next page*



proud to play a supporting role on this iconic project. Ruttura & Sons had the honor of officially breaking ground on Belmont Park nearly two years ago, literally clearing the way for the Islanders to come home. They're now working to complete the parking lots, rideshare area and work associated with a large covered walkway that will lead fans from the new Elmont Station to UBS Arena.

*Richard is grateful for all the skilled trades, knowing their dedication has enabled “Countdown to Opening Day” to continue.*

Equipment from other LICA member firms dot the Belmont jobsite as well, including Our Rental Pumps, Scatt Materials, Highway Safety Protection, Sunbelt Rentals, and ABLE Equipment.

We also salute local LICA labor partners: Operating Engineers Local 138 and Local 15, Laborers Local 1298, Teamsters Local 282, Carpenters Local 290, and Metallic Lathers and Reinforcing Iron Workers Local 46, whose members are the backbone of the Belmont project. Other trades, like the experienced electricians of IBEW Local 25 will help light up the night as well as the magnificent glass globes that adorn the top of the arena. Creating a great partnership with labor leaders, like the one Richard enjoys with Matt Aracich, head of The Building and Construction Trades Council of Nassau & Suffolk Counties AFL-CIO, has ensured success.

Richard is grateful for all the skilled trades, knowing their dedication has enabled the “Countdown to Opening Day” to continue. Despite losing 53 construction days due to COVID (and thousands of hours more due to additional health and safety protocols) these men and women continued to press on to make up lost time. The workers’ pride and determination cannot be overstated. Their extra effort (undoubtedly aided by the incentive of the hundreds of die-hard Islander fans who work among them) has earned them the eternal gratitude of every fan, player, owner, developer, and manager.

### **NEW YORK STATE OF MIND**

Browne also paid tribute to several New York State agencies. The level of cooperation and assistance received from various NYS organizations has made this Islanders homecoming possible. The state’s outstanding support prevented Isles’ ownership from seriously considering a move outside of New York—an unthinkable option for everyone involved.

SPD led the search for a permanent Islanders’ home. Potential sites ranged from Ronkonkoma to Willets Point. Ronkonkoma was dismissed due to its distance from the NYC/Metro area. Suggestions to significantly renovate Nassau Coliseum or Barclays Center were also ruled out. Willets Point in Queens, which Sterling Equities had recently acquired, appeared to be the best option with good potential. The one drawback was time. As experienced developers, the partners realized it could take a decade or more to get the necessary approvals and construct a new arena in that New York



Photo: Richard Browne inside UBS Arena as center scoreboard is tested and prepared prior to installation.



Renderings: Aerial view of UBS Arena/Belmont Park. (Below) UBS Arena spotlight club.

City location. And, with Barclays Center (in its current form) designed for basketball rather than for hockey, (recognized by every Islanders fan who ever attended a game there), the wait would be too long.

Once again, destiny seemed to favor the fate of the Islanders. As options grew fewer, Empire State Development (ESD) announced a second round of RFPs to develop the underutilized site at Belmont Park. New York State ESD (who own the property) had previously received and rejected all four proposals from round one, including a plan for a new New York Cosmos soccer stadium. After second-round submissions were received and reviewed, the Islanders' bid for Belmont was chosen.

Richard expressed immense gratitude to everyone at Empire State Development and a unified alliance of Nassau County elected officials for their continued support and strong commitment to the success of this project. New York Arena Partners is also grateful to members of the New York Racing Association (NYRA), who operate Belmont Racetrack. NYRA's flexibility and ongoing cooperation enabled heavy construction to continue throughout the racing season, despite the arena's close proximity to the racetrack. NYRA also provided NYAP with a license for rights to use other parts of the property for additional arena parking and rideshare services.

The Metropolitan Transit Authority (MTA)/LIRR has also been instrumental. The new Elmont LIRR station (the first new station on Long Island in the last 50 years) is privately funded as part of the Belmont development but responsibility for its construction belongs to the MTA. This station will provide a mass transit component critical to Belmont's success, while better serving the surrounding community and increasing economic opportunities.

Eastbound service will be operational for Isles' opening day 2021, with direct westbound service scheduled for the fall 2022. Once completed, Elmont Station will transport fans and visitors to/from eastern Long Island from both Penn Station and, eventually, Grand Central.

Of course, the financial organization whose name adorns the UBS Arena, has been another important partner. UBS has deep roots in the New York tri-state area and is committed to growing its presence in the United States. As part of their long-term naming rights agreement, UBS has made additional philanthropic commitments to the community which will ensure a successful, long-term relationship.

*Story continued on top of page 25*



## International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers: IBEW Local 25

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Many members are second or third generation craftsman whose forefathers founded Local 25. Other members may be recruits who came into the organization from one of the surrounding communities, or sometimes, they are a newly organized electrician. Regardless of how they got to Local 25, they are all committed to passing down their knowledge to the next generation of electricians.

Despite the many faces, they share one voice. The members of Local 25 pride themselves on being some of the finest craftspeople in the world. They are committed to ongoing training in order to keep their skills razor-sharp and increase knowledge of new, cutting-edge technology.

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To find out more, visit:  
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## COMING HOME

The twists of fate that led Browne to the Islanders, and the Islanders back home, seem too unlikely to be random. Richard's route via renewed friendships and remarkable opportunities was highly unusual. And, despite some detours, the travels of this talented Islanders' team landed them only one game short of a Stanley Cup final. I believe their roads ran parallel, with all signs pointing to a singular shared destiny... to begin a successful new dynasty at home, surrounded by old friends.

As we go to press, the countdown clock indicates there are less than 65 days left before we bust out our favorite Islanders jersey and break into our best 'celly.' Until then, Richard and the team at SPD will continue working at fever pitch to ensure UBS Arena is ready to host a homecoming party like no other.

# # #

*For more about UBS Arena/Belmont Park project see page 5.*

## Q&A Play-by-Play with Richard Browne



Q. What's your favorite arena/ballpark food choice?

**A. Cheeseburger, fries and a beer.**

Q. What musician would you most like to see (or play with) at UBS Arena?

**A. Billy Joel, the essence of Long Island.**

Q. What's your favorite sports memory?

**A. Too many to choose from, but I love any achievement or victory where an athlete has really put it all on the line and is rewarded for leaving it all out on the field or court.**

Q. Would you prefer to watch the Isle's from a front row seat on the glass or the VIP lounge?

**A. 20 rows back, with access to the goodies in the suite of course...**

Q. Do you prefer the Isle's royal blue, dark navy, black or old teal green jersey?

**A. Definitely the royal blue and orange, especially because it's similar and works for both the Mets and the Islanders!**

Q. Any interesting 'insider' stories about the Islanders to share?

**A. No-other than the fact that, back in the day while playing at a local tennis club, I had the chance to hit with some Islanders' players from the championship team, which got me even more interested in hockey.**

Q. What's the most exciting part of a project like this: groundbreaking, actual construction or grand opening?

**A. None of the above. For me it's when the final punch list is complete, the last contract is closed out and the project is officially handed off. Often, that can be a few years after the project is physically completed.**

Q. What are the best pieces of advice you've ever received?

**A. "Do your best every day so when you look back on your life you will know you have given it your all"; and "If you walk around with anger in your heart, it will eat you alive."**

Q. What's your favorite mantra or motto?

**A. "Do right by the project. Work hard. Be honest." It's important to be worthy of the opportunity you've been given.**

Q. What is your proudest achievement?

**A. Being the best father, family member and person I can be.**

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**Andrew Richards**  
Co-Managing Partner  
Long Island Office  
Chair, Construction Law  
arichards@kdvlaw.com



**Erik Ortmann**  
Partner, Vice-Chair,  
Construction Law  
eortmann@kdvlaw.com



**Elizabeth Marchionni**  
Partner  
Construction  
emarchionni@kdvlaw.com



**Andrew Kao**  
Associate  
Construction  
akao@kdvlaw.com



**Adam Perlin**  
Associate  
Construction  
aperlin@kdvlaw.com



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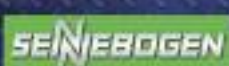


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