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Robert C. Lieber

By **VIVIAN MARINO**

Mr. Lieber, 59, is an executive managing director of the Island Capital Group, a merchant real estate bank, and the new chairman of the Urban Land Institute of New York, a nonprofit urban-planning research group.

Before joining Island Capital in 2010, Mr. Lieber served as the deputy mayor for economic development in the Bloomberg administration.

Interview conducted and condensed by

VIVIAN MARINO

Q. *Tell me a little about Island Capital and your role there.*

A. We are in the commercial mortgage loan, real estate investment and management business, and the affiliate group, C-III Partners, is one of the largest special servicers in the commercial mortgage-backed securities business. The special servicer is the one that is charged with resolving nonperforming loans.

I'm a member of the investment committee, and I'm responsible for our marketing, external relationships and capital raising activities.

Q. *How much do you expect to lend in 2013?*

A. We'll do close to \$500 million this year of origination. Last year we did about half of that.

It's kind of the smaller market — the owners of income-producing property — not the \$100 million loans with names that you recognize. The average loan size is about \$10 million.

Q. *What percentage of your business is in the New York area?*

A. Little. Most of our business, in fact, is not in the New York area.

Q. *You're very much focused on New York as chairman of the local Urban L
Have you set any goals since taking the helm this summer?*



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A. One of the things that I wanted to do was get more participation from our global or national members of U.L.I. who are here in New York, and get them more involved in the district council activities here.

I want to continue to focus and channel our efforts to a clear set of initiatives that address local land-use policies. The other part of U.L.I., which is so critical, is what I would call the networking side. One of the particular goals that I have for the U.L.I. in the next three years is to increase the interaction and relevance of the experienced to the young leaders' group.

Q. *One of the main roles of the Urban Land Institute is to address land use. There seems to be a growing shortage of buildable land, and what's available has skyrocketed in price.*

A. You phrase that like you think it's a negative. I don't view it as a negative at all. I think it is a testimony to New York's standing and stature internationally as being a desirable place for people to live, to visit and raise their families. We could go back to 1978 to see the other side of the coin.

Having said that, it does highlight one of the critical areas that needs to be addressed, and I think that's going to be part of the incoming mayor's focus and it certainly was a part of Mayor Bloomberg's focus. And that's how do we create more affordable housing.

Q. *What other areas need attention?*

A. The competitiveness of New York relies on a couple of things. Our power grid here is very, very fragile, and there hasn't been a lot of investment made in that infrastructure in some time. And this is not an issue tied uniquely and solely to New York City. This is a regional issue.

Another one is transportation. We've added a million and a half people in the last 20 years and forecasts are for another million and a half to two million. Where are we going to put all these people? How are they going to be able to get around? So having the necessary improvements to mass transit is critical.

Also, what are we doing with our waterfront? We have over 600 miles of waterfront in and around New York City in different states of repair or disrepair.

Q. *Have you reached out to Bill de Blasio and his administration yet?*

A. We have indirectly. One of the co-chairs of the transition team committee is a U.L.I. member who I've known for some time.

Q. *What are your thoughts about the mayor-elect?*

A. I think that time will tell. I know him a little bit. He's very smart, very persuasive. I think he's got a clear view of what he wants to try to accomplish.

Q. *Are you still in contact with your old boss, Michael Bloomberg?*

A. Yeah. When I came to work for the mayor, my expectation was that it would be a two-year experience. That was before there was a third term. I stayed a little over three and a half years.