



Little economic hit from Islanders' loss

Originally published: October 24, 2012 8:02 PM

Updated: October 24, 2012 9:12 PM

By CELESTE HADRICK

Financial experts predicted little economic impact from the Islanders moving to Brooklyn as long as the [Nassau Coliseum](#) or a new state-of-the-art replacement arena remains to host concerts and other events.

A consultant hired by County Executive Edward Mangano last year reported that the hockey franchise generated more than \$60 million in local spending in 2010. County Comptroller George Maragos and [Long Island](#) economist Martin Cantor both said Wednesday that Coliseum managers could generate as much -- or more -- by booking other entertainment to replace Islander games.

"As a hockey fan, I'm very disappointed and saddened that the Islanders are leaving," Maragos said. "As comptroller, from an economic point of view, it should have minimal or no impact. When the [National Hockey League](#) had its last lockout in 2004 and 2005, the operator of the facility was able to substitute other entertainment to bring in the same number of people and paid the county its share."

Cantor, who has worked as a consultant for Mangano, said, "Economically, there's more of a loss if we don't replace the Coliseum rather than the Islanders per se."

The Islanders play 41 home games with an average 13,191 fans at each -- the second-lowest in the [NHL](#). "Development of the Hub will far exceed any economic loss from the Islanders," Cantor said.

But Tim Lorito, who runs the CANZaciti Roadhouse restaurant and sports bar on Old Country Road in [Westbury](#), said he will lose more than 20 percent of his business when the Islanders leave. "It's a tragedy that government has let one of its most important assets leave the region," he said in a statement.

Voters last year defeated Mangano's proposal to borrow \$400 million to build a new arena and associated facilities. Mangano said Wednesday he would soon announce a team to redevelop the 77-acre Hub area around the Coliseum.

Legis. Kevan Abrahams (D-[Freeport](#)), the legislature's minority leader, called the Islanders' move "another crippling hit to our local economy." And [Nassau](#) Democratic chairman [Jay Jacobs](#) said it was "a devastating blow to [Nassau](#) County. I don't care if you like hockey or not."

Mangano aide Brian Nevin said in a statement that "Islanders fans will surely never forget the [Nassau](#) Democratic legislators who actively campaigned against . . . Mangano's efforts to build a new sports arena and retain [Long Island](#)'s only major sports team."

But political experts see little impact for elected officials.

"If the Islanders were still winning the [Stanley] Cup, and had as large a following as they had at one time, then this would have a political fallout," said Stanley Klein, an LIU Post political science professor and [Suffolk GOP](#) committeeman. "But nowadays, with people hurting because they're not working and gas prices so high . . . there are more pressing personal needs than the Islanders."

Political strategist Michael Dawidziak, who works mostly for [Republicans](#), said, "People care about the economy and taxes and nothing else. I don't really see any political fallout to it." With Robert Brodsky