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Starting in January 2011, and through the Spring 2011 semester, I interned at a not-for-profit organization called “Vision Long Island”, located in Northport, Long Island, NY. This organization works with members of Long Island communities to promote Smart Growth development and initiatives. It is a small organization, comprised of 9 full-time employees and a few interns, depending on the time of year. I was the only college intern for the January and Spring semesters, and as a result, I had various duties throughout my time at the organization. Most often, I was put in charge of writing newsletter articles for their weekly newsletter, which is distributed electronically as well as in paper form to nearly 3,000 subscribers around Long Island and New York City. Articles that are featured in the newsletter cover various topics pertaining to Smart Growth development, downtown revitalizations currently taking place within towns on Long Island, and future Smart Growth projects for Long Island communities which are currently being planned. Earlier in the spring semester, I helped conduct research for an on-going Hicksville downtown revitalization project by compiling U.S. Census and L.I. Index data about the town of Hicksville, NY. This was one of the more significant projects that the organization has been partaking in during my time as an intern. Towards the end of the spring semester, the focus of the organization’s efforts turned to organizing the 10th Annual Smart Growth Awards. This is an award ceremony which Vision Long Island organizes each year to honor local businesses and community leaders who have undertaken efforts to promote Smart Growth projects in the area. I was put in charge of telephoning local community leaders, local politicians, in addition to US congressmen and women, to invite these individuals to the event. I

also helped write a few pieces about Smart Growth Award winners from previous years, which will be featured in a presentation at the event itself on June 17.

I feel that my experience as an intern at Vision Long Island has given me several new realizations. When working in any organization, but especially one that deals with community outreach and planning, consistent organization and clear communication are two of the most important skills to possess. These two skills are important in order to ensure that members of any organization are able to cooperate with each other, execute plans efficiently, and make staff meetings go smoothly. My co-workers at Vision Long Island and the coursework I did pertaining to my internship there throughout the semester (i.e. my blog) introduced me to the world of urban planning, Smart Growth, and sustainable development. Making phone calls to members of the community about the Smart Growth Awards, and also making calls about meetings regarding the Hicksville downtown revitalization plans, was a new experience for me. While it was not face-to-face contact, I had the opportunity to interact with a large number of strangers and a wide range of personalities. This was a good lesson in effective, concise communication, persuasion, and at times, patience. I imagine that my phone calls were very similar to those made by political campaigners. Writing articles gave me the opportunity to employ my writing skills for community outreach, and to an extent, gave me journalism experience. My internship at Vision Long Island has overall been very good practice in professional communication and writing, and provided me with a great introduction to the world of urban planning.