

**What Every Long Islander Should Know:
“Business Plan for Long Island”**

By Nancy Rauch Douzinas

I have seen the future of economic growth. And it doesn't look much like Long Island.

I just got back from a trip to San Diego. I wanted to see up-close how they managed to morph from a Navy town staggering from post-cold war defense cuts to one of the world's hottest high-tech economies. Fifth in the world in attracting venture capital. Eighth in per capita patent generation. I was hoping their experience would have lessons for revitalizing Long Island's economy.

It does.

First, they wisely centered their strategy not on joining the chase to attract big, existing companies, but in fostering local start-ups. This is the Silicon Valley model. The world's premier high-tech powerhouse grew mainly from folks coming out from Stanford University and setting up shop nearby.

This largely spontaneous development San Diego set out to replicate by design. First, they built the University of California at San Diego (UCSD), founded only in 1965, into one of the top research universities in the country. Next they set up organizational structures to help turn cutting edge science into new businesses.

They realized that it takes much more than a great idea to start and maintain a business. It takes venture capital, legal expertise, marketing, and on and on. So twenty years ago the University, local businesses, and the city government joined to create “UCSD Connect.” It links entrepreneurs, university researchers, and business service professionals to give new and growing businesses the resources they need to prosper.

Assisting over 1,000 businesses, “Connect” has helped boost San Diego into the world's 36th largest economy: right after Portugal and before Venezuela! So successful is the program that it has traveled the globe. Today “Connects” are in place across the United States and Canada and around the world, from Scotland and Denmark to Israel and Jordan to Korea and Australia.

Meanwhile on Long Island, how many people have ever heard of such a thing? That's how far behind we are.

Yet our region has the resources to match just about any other. Long Island colleges and universities are outstanding, and our K-12 education blows San Diego's away (Silicon Valley's, too).

In particular, our world-class research centers, Stony Brook, Cold Spring Harbor Laboratory, and Brookhaven Laboratory, have incalculable potential to spawn high-tech business. In fact, between them and our outstanding healthcare institutions, Long Island ought to be one of the leading players in the red hot field of biotech.

The reason we are not—the key piece we lack—is the coordinated effort to turn science into startups.

The proposed Stony Brook-Cold Spring Harbor-Brookhaven collaboration is essential and must move speedily ahead. But while advancing science, this will not automatically promote economic development. For that we need an organization or network, like a "Connect," specifically designed to midwife successful businesses built on the latest advances.

That will mean bringing people together who are used to working alone. That, in turn, will require a level of leadership that sadly our region has yet to see.

Nancy Rauch Douzinas is president of the Rauch Foundation, a Long Island-based family foundation.