

SHUPROTIM BHAUMIK

Moving a Region Forward

Long Island's transformation from farmland to vibrant suburb started in the early 20th century and gained momentum after World War II, as our troops returned home and started families. In contrast to the dense, closely-packed, apartment buildings of New York City, from which many residents had moved, Long Island symbolized freedom—the ability to comfortably raise a family in a single detached home within commuting distance of the city and with easy access on leafy parkways to beaches for weekend outings. Nationally, Levittown became an iconic symbol of idyllic, affordable, suburban living.

In recent decades, the decline in good quality jobs, combined with increasing housing costs and property taxes, has led to a brain-drain of young working-age adults. According to the Long Island Index, the Island's share of young adults (ages 25-34) dipped by 12 percent between 2000

Memo to zoning boards, town boards, village councils, planning commissions:

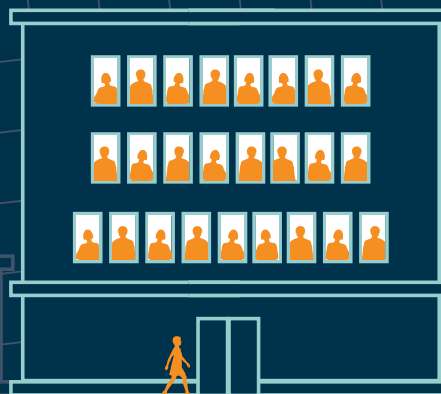
This is what Long Islanders are asking for:

Today 18% live in an apartment, condo or townhouse:



TODAY

In just five years 26% want to live in an apartment, condo, or townhouse:



5 YEARS FROM NOW

Will they find it on Long Island?

Source: 2017 Long Island Index survey

and 2010, even as their numbers grew in NYC and the US as a whole. Young educated workers, as well as empty-nesters, now wish to live in walkable transit-friendly communities that have great restaurants, distinctive shopping, and unique cultural attractions.

Not only is the urban experience becoming more in demand but residents are growing increasingly intolerant of sitting in traffic. And ongoing transit investments will make public transit an increasingly attractive option. The Third Track and Double Track, for instance, will both increase capacity and improve reliability. East Side Access will provide commuters a one-seat ride to Midtown East. Proposed new north-south transit options like the Nicolls Road BRT from Stony Brook University, with connections to the Ronkonkoma Hub and MacArthur Airport, will provide much-needed inter-regional mobility.

To complement these transit investments, a handful of towns and villages on Long Island are re-imagining the notion of suburbia in and around LIRR stations and downtowns with flexible zoning that encourages density, walkability, and a mix of uses. Communities such as Mineola, Farmingdale, Wyandanch, and Valley Stream have shown the way in creating a new suburbia that is anchored by public transit.

But more needs to be done. Throughout the New York metropolitan area, many municipalities are well on their way towards a future where fewer residents and workers rely on automobiles. Those communities are experiencing the clear benefits of transit in creating economic activity and attracting new residents and employers.

Long Island's communities have a lot of catching up to do. Change is difficult, and increasing density brings fears of "becoming Queens." But change can be designed to be both distinctive and attractive. And without bold moves, Long Island will stagnate, falling behind the rest of the region.

Transportation is changing before our eyes: soon driverless vehicles will be an integral part of our daily lives. Big ideas—such as a true north-south transit network, bicycle highways, and ambitious transit-oriented downtown developments—are key to keeping the region competitive, resilient, vibrant, and still distinctly Long Island.

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