



# INDICATORS REPORT

LONG ISLAND  
**INDEX**  
A PROJECT OF THE  
RAUCH FOUNDATION

# LONG ISLAND INDEX

## Working Together in New Ways for Long Island's Future

The Index is a status report on the Long Island region that aims to engage the larger Long Island community in thinking about the region's future and to be a catalyst for corrective action.

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Report by *Regional Plan Association*



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Names in **bold** are members who have been on the Advisory Committee since our inception in 2003.

Names marked with an \*Asterisk have been on our Kitchen Cabinet.

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who provided data and expertise:  
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Richard Fleming  
Pat Foye  
Joe Scaduto

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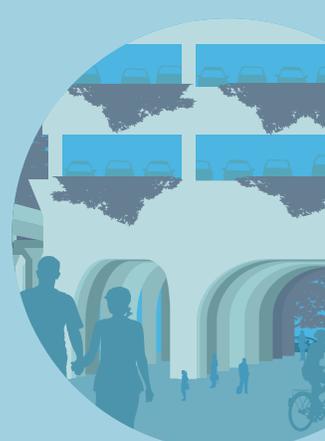
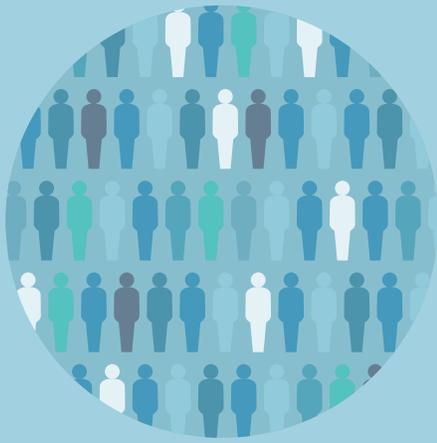
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# Good Information Presented in a Neutral Manner Can Move Policy

**THE LONG ISLAND INDEX** is a project that gathers and publishes data on the Long Island region. Our operating principle is: “Good information presented in a neutral manner can move policy.”

The Index does not advocate specific policies. Instead, our goal is to be a catalyst for action, by engaging the community in thinking about our region and its future.

Specifically, the Index seeks to:

- Measure where we are and show trends over time
- Encourage regional thinking
- Compare our situation with other similar regions
- Increase awareness of issues and an understanding of their interrelatedness
- Inspire Long Islanders to work together in new ways to achieve shared goals

The governing board of the Long Island Index is the Advisory Committee, composed of leaders from Long Island’s business, labor, academic and nonprofit sectors.

The Rauch Foundation acts as the convener of the Advisory Committee and the financial underwriter of the project. Initially funded for a three year period, the Foundation continued to fund the project. This is our fifteenth year.

## WHAT ARE INDICATORS?

Indicators are facts that help show how a region is doing, the way the unemployment rate helps show the health of the economy. Measuring these kinds of data helps communities:

- Identify existing conditions
- Measure progress toward goals
- Mobilize action to improve the region

## HOW TO USE THE INDEX

Each Long Island Index is centered on the following components:

1. We define 12 **goals** to measure the region. The goals span six major areas of investigation: economy, our communities, health, education, our environment, and governance.
2. There is a section at the beginning of each goal that lays out our **key findings**.
3. This is followed with our **indicators**, specific measures of how we are doing.
4. In addition to measuring how we are doing, we look at our **change historically**—where possible, over a ten year period.
5. We also **compare** ourselves to our neighboring suburban neighbors to see what we can learn from their experiences.

We have added two new features in this edition—a series of short essays called “Lessons Learned” written by our Advisory Committee members and other colleagues of the Index. These essays highlight some of the key take-aways about our indicator findings. We have also added a series of essays at the end of the book, again written by our Advisory Committee members, that reflect on some of the bigger challenges that continue to face the region and that are in need of creative solutions in order to ensure our future growth.

NANCY RAUCH DOUZINAS

# The Challenge for Long Island

In 2003 a regional index seemed like a good idea for Long Island. It would report on how the region is doing, compare it to other suburban areas, and measure progress. The resulting Long Island Index emerged because a representative group of Long Island business, political, and civic leaders endorsed the idea, and the Rauch Foundation was willing to take a chance on funding this high-risk project.

Knowing is not enough, We must apply.  
Willing is not enough, We must do.

-JOHANN WOLFGANG VON GOETHE

In the 15 years since then, the Index has done all of that and, in the process, played a vital role in setting Long Island on a course of thinking and acting regionally. It has provided a formula that we must continue to follow if we are to maximize Long Island's extraordinary potential for economic growth and prosperity for all. That formula has four components: provide objective data that illuminates Long Island in a broader context; focus on regional assets and the potential for leveraging them; generate new models of working together; and realize progress through concerted advocacy and public engagement.

The data is the foundation. It shows us where we stand, how we compare to our competitors, and whether we are making headway or not. Interactive maps make the data readily available to the public for their own use. And public opinion surveys have added another layer of illumination, revealing most importantly that Long Islanders are more willing to embrace change than many political leaders would have once thought possible.

Our regional assets are what give us such enormous potential. They include world-class research institutions, a public transit system with over 100 rail stations, a renowned quality of life, and extraordinary natural beauty, among many other outstanding attributes.

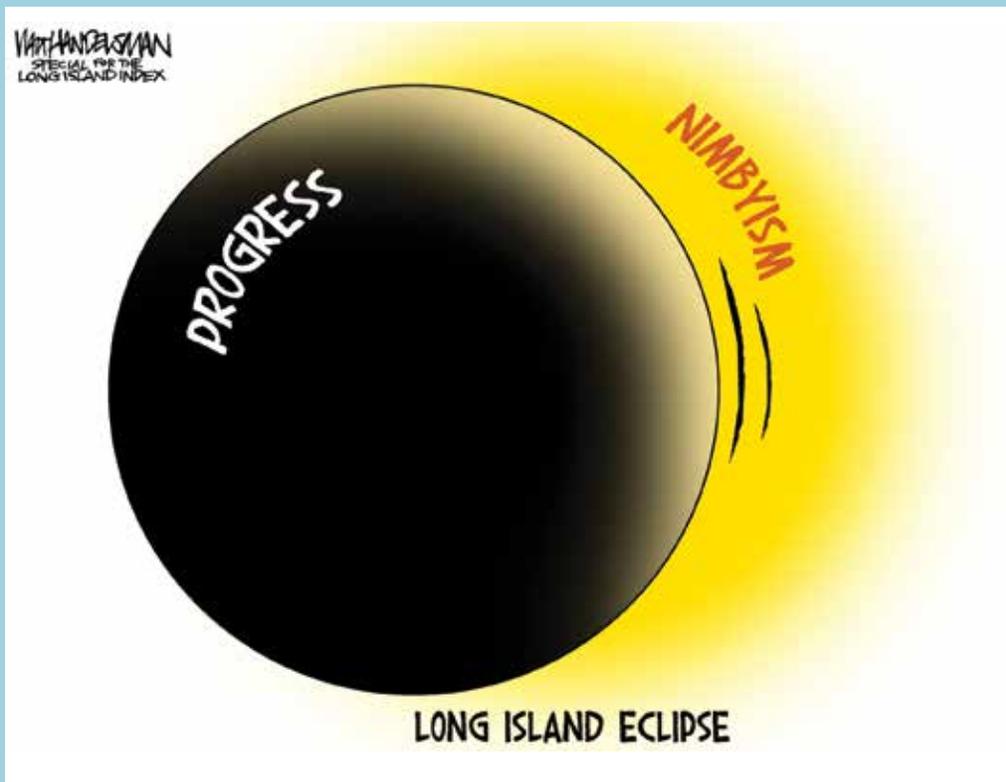
Developing new ways of working together to leverage those assets is essential, because as the Index has long noted, Long Island has 665 government entities providing essential

services. That fact is emphasized in several of the essays in this report, because it provides a major obstacle to our competitiveness. We compete economically as a region, yet the decisions that affect our ability to compete are made locally and spread across those hundreds of jurisdictions.

From the outset, the Index encouraged and stimulated Long Island leaders from different sectors to work together in new ways. The Index's Advisory Committee has been a model of collaboration, increasing interaction among the region's influencers and communities in both formal and informal ways.

That spirit of collaboration, combined with the data and assets available, has led to other prominent models of collaboration and partnership. The Enegeia Partnership, created and managed by Molloy College, for instance, is dedicated to educating young Long Island leaders from all sectors, and the Index is used as the core of its curriculum. The Right Track for Long Island Coalition was created to champion the LIRR's Third Track, based on the Index's research on the importance of relieving the bottleneck on the 9.8-mile stretch of the Main Line between Floral Park and Hicksville. The MTA's recent approval of the Third Track, with the strong leadership of Governor Andrew Cuomo and the relentless action of the Coalition, proved that even the seemingly impossible can be achieved when we work together in new and compelling ways.

The challenge now is to implement this proven approach more broadly: drawing on objective data and regional assets to find new ways to work together to realize great progress. In a blog post for the Long Island Index, the late acclaimed journalist John Kominicki wrote of Long Island, "That this mammoth collection of excellence has not coalesced into one of the greatest innovation economies of all time remains a mystery." That's the extraordinary potential that Long Island possesses, but to achieve it we must make progress on many issues.



We are still suffering a brain drain, for example, as a shocking number of young Long Islanders plan to leave the area due to a lack of affordable housing. Segregation in schools and housing must be eliminated. Economic opportunities in biotech and related fields must be enhanced. And we still have those 665 government entities.

Yet we now have both extraordinary potential and a proven formula. In the months ahead, the research role of the Long Island Index will be continued by *Newsday* and its new research arm. It will provide the objective data that is so essential to understanding where we stand as a region and where we need to go.

But the challenge of working together in new ways and realizing progress falls to all of us. That's the greatest challenge facing the region, and we are all part of the solution.

We need to embrace new alliances, as we have with the Right Track for Long Island Coalition, recognizing that they may have even more potential than we imagine. We need to create new regional entities, as *Newsday* and

the Rauch Foundation are doing. We need to explore innovative forms of regional leadership, as Bruce Stillman urges in his essay, and creative ways for municipalities to share services, as Dave Kapell urges in his. And we need to be bold, as we have been with the Third Track. These are exciting opportunities with great promise, and they are just a few examples, but that promise can only be realized if we are open to it, if we are willing to do things differently, if we are prepared to take some well-informed risks.

The Rauch Foundation will continue to support and advocate the formula proven by the Long Island Index. But it's time to move to a new stage in Long Island's advancement—one where Long Island consistently and innovatively thinks and acts like a region; one where we leverage our remarkable assets and engage in new forms of collaboration; one where we inspire the change that surveys show Long Islanders embrace. With that approach, we can maximize the region's remarkable potential and turn it into a great innovation economy.

*Dr. Douzinas is President of the Rauch Foundation and Publisher of the Long Island Index.*

# LONG ISLAND SINCE THE TURN OF THE MILLENNIUM

Long Island in 2018 looks much as it did a generation ago. Its attractive neighborhoods of single-family homes were built mostly during Long Island's growth spurt from the 1940s to the 1970s. The island's beaches remain among the most beautiful on the East Coast. The network of highways was largely completed in the 1970s, and the rail lines decades earlier.

Yet the demographics, economy and outlook for Nassau and Suffolk are far different. The population is far more diverse. Health care has replaced manufacturing as the dominant industry. Growth has

slowed to a crawl. Upward mobility is no longer a given.

There is no clear turning point in Long Island's transition from growing postwar suburb to the mature suburban region that it is today. Many changes have been underway for decades, from shrinking open space to a growing immigrant population to the loss of its defense-based manufacturing economy. But the transformation has been unmistakable in the first 18 years of the 21st century. While most of this is the accumulation of long-term trends, a number of seminal events

crystalized these changes, and help define both the promise and problems that lie ahead.

The September 11, 2001 terrorist bombing of the World Trade Center changed the nation's relationship to the rest of the world. It was also a watershed moment for the New York region that illuminated Long Island's ties to New York City. Nearly 500 residents of Nassau and Suffolk died in the attack. Long Island workers and companies were part of the rebuilding efforts, and benefited from the recovery that ensued.

The bursting of the national housing bubble in 2007, and the deep financial crisis that followed, exposed weaknesses in Long Island's economy. While real estate prices had skyrocketed, incomes for the average household had stagnated. Long Island's slow recovery from the recession was in sharp contrast to the rapid economic expansion in New York City and other big cities. This reversal from the half century when Long Island's economy continually outpaced the city demonstrated the need to rethink how a suburban economy can thrive in a world where the pendulum was swinging back to urban centers.

In 2012, Superstorm Sandy brought home the realities of climate change. No longer something theoretical in the distant future, the storm exposed the vulnerabilities of an island defined by its coastline. Coastal communities and the recreation and maritime industries were left to prepare for an uncertain future without a roadmap or resources.

Technology had been reshaping Long Island along with the national economy, but the announcements in 2017 by Tesla, Ford and Uber/Volvo that they would soon begin mass production of driverless cars marked a turning point for a region that is defined by its relationship with the automobile. While the pace and impact of the transformation are unknown, the implications for Long Island's economy and way of life could be profound. Will it usher in a new age of suburban prosperity and mobility and free up acres of parking for more productive uses, or will it simply be an added convenience for those who can afford it and continue the trend toward job concentration in cities?

However the future unfolds, it is important to recognize that Long Island has already begun to adapt. Community by community, a growing number of places are starting to invigorate their downtowns with multifamily housing, commercial development and attractive public spaces. Major investments in the Long Island Rail Road will soon improve transit options. A new generation is bringing fresh perspectives, an ease with technological change and greater comfort with diversity.

So far, these changes on the ground have been slow to keep pace with the extent of the economic, social and environmental changes already underway. As shown in the following set of indicators, maintaining Long Island's high quality of life, and extending its benefits to more of its residents, will require accelerated responses and innovative approaches.