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[SPECIAL REPORT]
WRAPS MAIN NEWS

High Taxes Gridlock Lost Jobs

WORRIES THEN. WORRIES TODAY.

THE FUTURE *of* Long Island



OUR BIGGEST CHALLENGES. FIRST IN A SERIES

THE FUTURE 
of **Long Island**



Long Island could be a paradise or Long Island could be hell.



Talk about the future of Long Island at newsday.com/yourideas



That observation opened a Newsday series three decades ago titled "Long Island at the Crossroads." How far have we come since then, and what challenges lie ahead?

BY JENNIFER SMITH | jennifer.smith@newsday.com

Soaring property taxes. Lack of affordable housing. Balkanized and expensive layers of government.

Sound familiar?

Those concerns date back more than 30 years to a 1978 Newsday report — "Long Island at the Crossroads" — that explored the region's greatest challenges and offered strategies to avoid what the authors called "the path of decay recently trodden by New York City."

Since that time, some predictions of the 13-day series have

come to pass, while others failed to materialize. The defense jobs that propelled many Long Islanders into the middle class indeed disappeared. While local schools remain some of the best in the country, issues that bedeviled the region three decades ago persist — sprawl, job losses and the high cost of living.

The region now finds itself at another crossroads, with new challenges ahead.

See **FUTURE** on 4

DID IT HAPPEN?

 Yes |
  Some |
  Little |
  None

For Newsday's "Long Island at the Crossroads" series in 1978, experts and residents offered solutions to some of Long Island's biggest challenges. Here's a look at them and how they worked out.

Government



1978 idea

2010 reality

Eliminate layers

Cut unnecessary layers and waste among the Island's 666 government entities and special districts



300-plus districts

Long Island still has more than 300 special taxing districts for garbage, water and other services in addition to other levels of village, town and county governments.

U.S. court district

Create a separate federal judiciary district for Long Island.



A courthouse

The region still shares a district with New York City but now has a federal courthouse in Central Islip, left.

Regional agencies

Consider a regional government or agencies to handle Islandwide problems such as economic development, jobs creation or pollution control.



Exception, not rule

Few examples exist beyond the Suffolk County Water Authority, and the Pine Barrens Commission, which makes decisions on development in more than 100,000 acres of woods above aquifers that supply the region's drinking water.

Education



Merge functions

Save money by consolidating some school district functions among Long Island's more than 130 districts.



Limited savings

There are 124 public school districts now. The regional BOCES districts share a number of functions; other districts have combined some purchasing, but the overall savings are small.

High-tech centers

Develop high-tech complexes for research and jobs at Stony Brook University, Brookhaven National Laboratory and Cold Spring Harbor Laboratory.



More jobs

Local incubators include Stony Brook University's Long Island High Technology Incubator and the Broad Hollow Bioscience Park at Farmingdale State College, where anchor tenant OSI Pharmaceuticals left last year. An Advanced Energy Research & Technology Center is being built at Stony Brook. High-tech manufacturing jobs on Long Island
1980: 36,000
2007: 52,000

Taxes



Cut property taxes

Reduce property taxes, possibly by exempting a portion of house assessments or imposing a legal limit on government tax increases.



Burden still high

Long Island remains more reliant on property taxes for revenue than the rest of the state, according to the Long Island Index published by the Rauch Institute. Property-tax relief efforts like the state's STAR program have done little to reduce the local burden because taxes here are so high.

PHOTO BY DAVID PORRESS

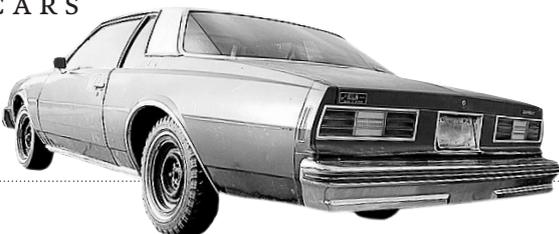
ISTOCK PHOTO

THE FUTURE *of* Long Island

CARS

Then

The Chevy Impala/Caprice was the nation's top selling car, keeping Chevrolet on top as it had been for 20 years.



The most popular car for the last eight years, just surpassed this month by the Honda Accord, was the Toyota Camry.

Now

FUTURE from 2

After years of relative prosperity, the recession has thrown Long Island's high costs and high taxes into stark relief as residents and local governments alike struggle to balance budgets and rein in spending. Some see hope in the Lighthouse project and other big proposals whose mix of housing and commercial space could chart a new direction for suburban growth — if the projects get built. Others caution that Long Island may fall behind unless the region pulls together to develop new industries and create jobs.

"We're really trapped by our history," said Pearl Kamer, chief economist for the Long Island Association, the area's largest business group. "The problems we haven't addressed over two or three decades have really come back to haunt us this recession."

Kamer was once an economist for the Long Island Regional Planning Board, which contributed data and expertise to the "Crossroads" series.

Influx of newcomers

The "Crossroads" series was published at what now seems a distant point in time, when the Bee Gees ruled the pop charts, Long Island clambers made a decent living and people still used rotary dial phones.

Global economic shifts and an influx of newcomers have transformed Long Island since 1978, when 92 percent of the population was white, and Grumman was the region's biggest private employer. Public schools now teach students whose native languages include Farsi, Korean and Haitian Creole.

Suffolk County's population has grown by 17 percent as homes and office parks sprouted up on former farm fields. Long Islanders work in industries that barely existed back then: computer programming, biomedical research and telecommunications. Many more labor in a vast empire of low-paying retail and service jobs.

Residents in search of a little culture now have more local options — concerts by the Long Island Philharmonic, plays at Northport's Engeman Theater and exhibitions at galleries and museums from Nassau to the East End. Tourism

PART 1 OF A SERIES

We need your help as we explore the future of Long Island

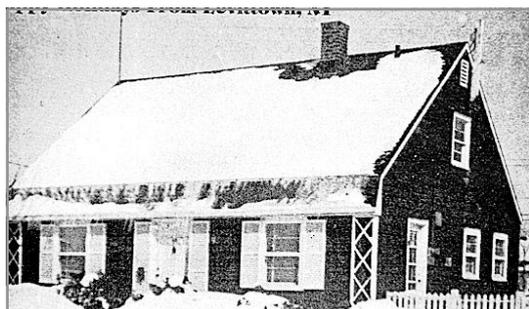
Throughout the year, with your help, Newsday will explore critical challenges facing Long Island and identify solutions as seen by experts — and by you.

COMING NEXT MONTH TRANSPORTATION

- Should a tunnel be built under Long Island Sound?
- How can traffic congestion be relieved?
- What should the LIRR's role be?
- What's the one single thing Long Island must do to improve how we get around?
- What other areas should we explore? And what solutions make the most sense?

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LEVITTOWN



Then

Cape homes, like this one on Old Oak Lane, sprung up in '40s and '50s.



Now

The same Old Oak Lane home shows how such houses were expanded and modified.

Average residential property tax bill

Nassau		Suffolk	
1978	\$2,523*	1978	\$1,782
Adjusted for Inflation		Adjusted for Inflation	
1978	\$8,756	1978	\$6,184
2009	\$10,001**	2009	\$8,390

*Estimated by the Long Island Regional Planning Council
**Does not include Glen Cove, Long Beach or village portion of tax

Rental housing

Excludes rented single-family homes

	1980	2008
Nassau-Suffolk	57,800	66,501
Nassau	n/a*	29,562
Suffolk	n/a*	36,939

*Not available

Voter registration 1978

Nassau		Suffolk	
Democratic	231,993	Democratic	152,555
Republican	315,284	Republican	241,440
Conservative	11,416	Conservative	15,775

Voter registration 2009

Nassau		Suffolk	
Democratic	353,214	Democratic	317,199
Republican	337,921	Republican	329,989
Conservative	9,420	Conservative	21,402
Independence	26,980	Independence	36,475

draws visitors from the city and beyond out east, to a glammed-up, built-up Hamptons and the North Fork's string of wineries.

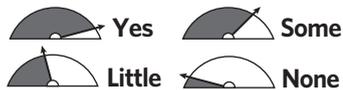
Despite those changes, many of the core suburban values that shaped the region's development after World War II endure and are embraced by more recent arrivals.

Life on Long Island remains centered around schools, home ownership and the increasingly congested roads. Towns, not counties, still hold the power over local zoning and development. Community attitudes that equate rentals with urbanization and crime are only starting to soften, even as planners urge mixed-use developments to revive faded downtowns.

"Keep Nassau Suburban" was the slogan on a Republican Party leaflet from the 1970s and '80s, said Hugh A. Wilson, a professor of political science at Adelphi University. "Housing, local control, education. These values are held dearly in the face of all comers," said Wilson, who

See **FUTURE** on 6

DID IT HAPPEN?



Transportation



GOOGLE EARTH PHOTO

1978 idea

Expand MacArthur
Expand service to make Islip-MacArthur the primary local airport. At the time commercial traffic there was mainly 12- or 20-seat commuter planes, with a handful of jetliners. Then, 250,000 passengers flew out of the airport each year.

2010 reality

Use has soared
Long Island MacArthur Airport offers service on Southwest Airlines and US Airways. The airport now sees 30 jetliner departures per day. Last year, 1.95 million passengers flew out of MacArthur.

Shift to rail freight
Ease truck traffic burden by developing "piggyback" rail freight service. At that time, 106,600 vehicles traveled on the Long Island Expressway on an average day.

Going nowhere
Rail-to-truck facilities have been proposed, but generally resisted by host communities. In 2009, 170,000 vehicles used the LIE on an average day.

Cross-Sound bridge
Remove transportation "dead end" with bridge across the Sound. Earlier proposal backed span north of Seaford-Oyster Bay Expressway, left.

No connections
Bridge idea failed to take hold, and a later proposal for a tunnel to Westchester has not yet gained traction.

Energy/environment



NEWSDAY PHOTO, 1978

Solar, nuclear plants
Produce energy with solar panels (as LI home at left did in '78), waste-to-energy facilities and safe nuclear plants. In 1980, average LILCO bill was \$49.06, either \$128.76 to \$142.56 adjusted for inflation.

Solar starting
Solar is established on a small scale with bigger projects in the works; Covanta and the Town of Islip want to expand their incinerators. But nuclear power has been out of the picture since the Shoreham plant was shut in the 1980s. In 2010, average monthly LIPA bill is \$156.86.

Save the clams
Preserve groundwater supply by recycling water; use heated water from power plant cooling systems for aquaculture of clams. Hard-clam harvest, 1976: more than 700,000 bushels.

Harvest plummets
Many small sewage treatment plants discharge effluent to groundwater; hot water aquaculture plan not in vogue. 2007 clam harvest: about 9,000 bushels (overharvesting, water pollution blamed for decline).

Housing



NEWSDAY PHOTO / THOMAS A. FERRARA

Legalize rentals
Legalize some illegal rentals to provide affordable housing for the young and seniors.

Illegal units persist
Most Long Island towns have legalized some form of accessory apartments, but illegal units still persist.

Build more units
Build more rental units and midrise apartments in downtown areas. Number of renter-occupied housing units in 1980: 166,906, or about 20 percent of all occupied housing.

Ownership pushed
Some have been built and more are planned. Rental units in 2008: 156,781, or 17 percent of all occupied housing. Rentals may have dropped because of the government-led push for home ownership, especially in the past 15 years, said Seth Forman, chief planner with the Long Island Regional Planning Council.

THE FUTURE of Long Island



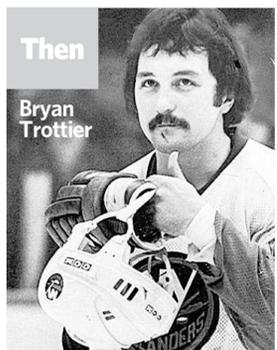
WE STILL LOVE THE MOVIES

Today, fitness clubs, multiplexes, paintball and laser tag, organized sports and computer and video games rule. Roller rinks, which once numbered more than a dozen on the Island, are down to two, and drive-ins are gone. Gone

too: kiddie amusement parks like Nunley's in Baldwin and the Jolly Rogers in Plainedge, replaced by chain stores and developments, as were the farmers markets in Bethpage/Hicksville and Bay Shore, and the auto and harness racing tracks — from

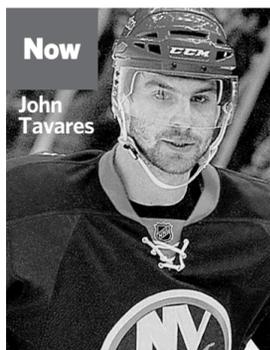
the Freeport Municipal Speedway to Roosevelt Raceway. But Jones Beach and Adventureland still draw the crowds, and while old and lamented Long Island franchises like Hardee's and Jack-in-the-Box are no more, fast food is never hard to find.

WHEN THE CUP CAME TO LI



Then
Bryan Trottier

In 1978-79, the Islanders' record was 51-15-14, and with star Bryan Trottier, were a season away from a four-year reign as Stanley Cup champs. The 2008-09 Islanders were 26-47-9 and dead last. They then signed the NHL No. 1 draft pick, John Tavares. In 1978, the Nets, by then in the NBA, were playing their first season off Long Island as the New Jersey Nets. They had traded away their best player, Roosevelt-born Julius "Dr. J" Erving, and founded.



Now
John Tavares

FUTURE from 4

headed the school's Institute for Suburban Studies in the late 1970s.

Paying for public services

To Wilson and others, high taxes and other seemingly eternal Long Island troubles are rooted in the same things that make suburban life so attractive. Good schools cost money. So do the services provided by multiple layers of government — for example, the local sanitation district whose trucks roll into residents' driveways to pick up the garbage. While Long Islanders have long complained about their tax bills, efforts over the years to save money by consolidating the region's 124 school districts or combining municipal services have typically generated tepid or hostile responses.

Long Island property taxes rose 20 percent above the rate of inflation between 1998 and 2007, compared with 6 percent elsewhere in New York, according to the Long Island Index, an annual report on Long Island trends published by the Rauch Foundation.

School taxes have outpaced overall economic growth, and high-paying jobs are leaving Long Island, said Michael White, executive director of the Long Island Regional Planning Council. He and others also worry that the high cost of housing and lack of rentals will continue to drive young people elsewhere — as they have for decades — taking the future tax base with them.

Many observers say schools need to cut costs. But they also argue that new sources of revenue must be found if expensive schools and tiers of local government are to continue.

Kamer, for one, suggests expanding the tax base by building large-scale projects that blend high-density housing and commercial components. For example, the Lighthouse project at Nassau Coliseum, or Brentwood's Heartland proposal.

The "Crossroads" series called for legalizing accessory apartments and building thousands more to retain young people and seniors. Today, rentals make up 17 percent of occupied housing units, compared to 20 percent in 1980, according to

the U.S. Census Bureau.

But in the past decade, things seem to be turning around a bit. Senior housing has been built for empty-nesters. Some higher-end town houses and rentals have gone up too, like the Avalon developments in Glen Cove and Coram.

Affordable housing has been a harder sell, said Lee Koppelman, director of the Center for Regional Policy Studies at Stony Brook University. "No community is willing to support housing for the poor. That's the harsh reality," said Koppelman, the former head of the Long Island Regional Planning Board.

Others are more hopeful. Chris Jones of the Regional Plan Association points to affordable housing in Patchogue Village, plans for multifamily housing in Mineola, and a proposal to redevelop downtown Wyandanch.

Going solo on development

Like housing, economic development on Long Island still happens village by village and town by town. This, despite repeated tries at a more united approach to attract and retain businesses such as Canon — which is moving to Melville — and OSI Pharmaceuticals, which announced last year it would leave Route 110 for greener pastures in Westchester.

High-tech incubators and research centers have helped connect Stony Brook University, Brookhaven National Laboratory and Cold Spring Harbor Laboratory with local businesses and entrepreneurs. But observers say Long Island needs to play up those strengths to outsiders who may be put off by the area's high costs. "In the 21st century economy, we've got to be able to compete as a region in the way that Silicon Valley does," said Richard Guardino, Hofstra University's vice president of business development and a former Hempstead Town supervisor.

When everything is added up, Long Island may well be in the same predicament as described by Peter Goldmark Sr., the late electronics pioneer who discussed suburbia's growing pains in the original "Crossroads" series.

"Long Island could be a paradise or Long Island could be hell. And it's all going to be decided in the next 25 years."

DID IT HAPPEN?



Quality of life

1978 idea

Emergency services
Encourage development of sophisticated emergency medical services and private health care maintenance organizations.



2010 reality

3 trauma centers
Three Island hospital emergency units now are certified as regional trauma centers, offering a more sophisticated level of care. That designation was not used here in 1978. The centers are at Stony Brook University Medical Center, North Shore University Hospital, and Nassau University Medical Center. Most hospitals are now part of larger systems.

Improve parks

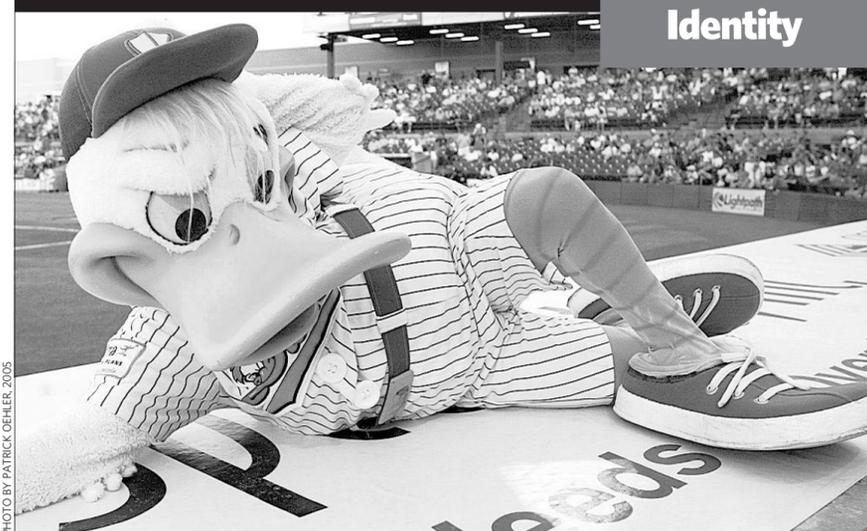
Preserve and improve parks, beaches and other natural or recreational assets. Acres of open space preserved in Nassau and Suffolk as of 1978: 1,450 (all in Suffolk)



Funding fluctuates

The amount of parkland has increased, but money to maintain these areas waxes and wanes with the economy. Acres of open space preserved as of 2008: about 60,000.

Identity



Regional leadership

Form a regional leadership structure with people from government, business, media and the arts.



Still thinking small

Regional groups still largely segmented by focus: business, government, culture, etc.

'Long Island' brand

Develop "Long Island" consciousness by teaching local history in schools, branding "LI" sports teams and institutions, and promoting regional tourism.



Ducks stop here

We have Long Island Ducks baseball to go along with the NHL's Islanders; the Long Island Convention and Visitors Bureau actively promotes the area as a destination.

Culture



Central arts center

Develop a centrally located regional arts center, with performance spaces both large and small.



Various venues

The Staller Center for the Arts at Stony Brook University opened in 1978; others include the John W. Engeman Theater in Northport, left, and Tilles Center in Brookville, home to the Long Island Philharmonic. Museum Row in converted hangars across from Mitchel Field in East Garden City now houses the Long Island Children's Museum, the Cradle of Aviation and the Nassau County Firefighters Museum.

Compiled by Mark Harrington, Jennifer Maloney, Carol Polsky, Jennifer Smith and Olivia Winslow

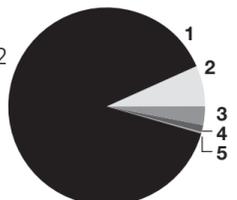
Sources: New York State Department of Transportation; New York State Department of Environmental Conservation; Nassau-Suffolk Hospital Council; 2008 American Community Survey; U.S. Census; Long Island Pine Barrens Society; Town of Islip; Long Island Regional Planning Council

Who we are

Nassau

1980 total population 1,321,582

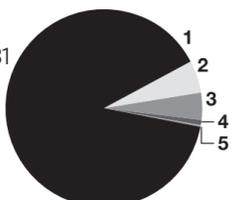
- 1 White 91.42%
- 2 Black 6.83%
- 3 Hispanic 3.32%
- 4 Asian* 1.13%
- 5 Other+ 0.09%



Suffolk

1980 total population 1,284,231

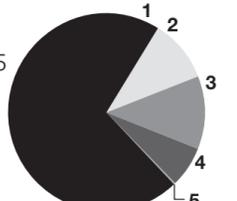
- 1 White 92.45%
- 2 Black 5.6%
- 3 Hispanic 4.59%
- 4 Asian* 0.85%
- 5 Other+ 0.18%



Nassau

2008 total population 1,351,625

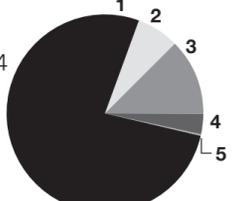
- 1 White 75.6%
- 2 Black 10.9%
- 3 Hispanic 12.8%
- 4 Asian* 7.1%
- 5 Other+ 0.2%



Suffolk

2008 total population 1,512,224

- 1 White 84.3%
- 2 Black 7.5%
- 3 Hispanic 13.7%
- 4 Asian* 3.5%
- 5 Other+ 0.3%



Charts exceed total of 100% because Hispanics, who can be of any race, can show up in more than one category.

THE FUTURE *of* Long Island



Then

Grumman was the Island's biggest single employer, with **17,309** total Long Island employees.

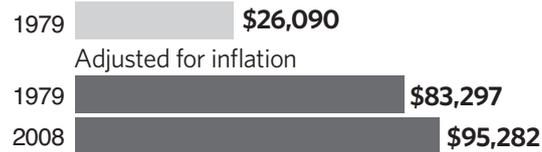


Now

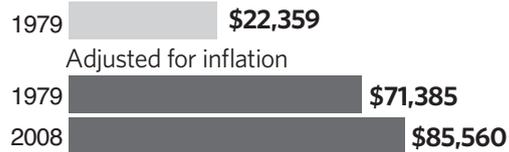
North Shore-Long Island Jewish Health System is the Island's biggest, with **38,000** employees.

Median household income

Nassau

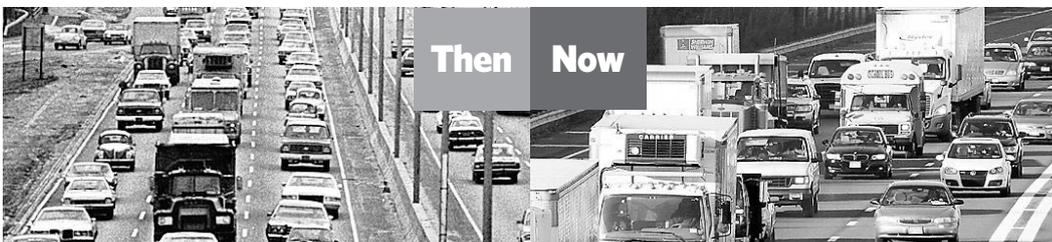


Suffolk



ALL GRAPHICS DATA COMPILED BY OLIVIA WINSLOW. SOURCES: U.S. CENSUS BUREAU: 1980 CENSUS, 2008 AMERICAN COMMUNITY SURVEY; NEW YORK STATE BOARD OF ELECTIONS; LONG ISLAND REGIONAL PLANNING COUNCIL

LOOK FAMILIAR?



VEHICLES PER DAY ON THE LIE
106,600

VEHICLES PER DAY ON THE LIE
170,000

ANNUAL LIRR RIDERSHIP WAS
64.2 million

LIRR RIDERSHIP AS OF 2009
82.9 million

Long Island voices

10 residents talk about the changes they've seen over three decades



WATCH VIDEOS OF LONG ISLANDERS TALKING ABOUT THE ISLAND, THEN AND NOW newsday.com