

# MASSACHUSETTS-SUFFOLK COMPREHENSIVE DEVELOPMENT PLAN

## SUMMARY

**MASSACHUSETTS-SUFFOLK REGIONAL PLANNING BOARD**

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Vice-Chairman: [Name]

Members: [List of names]

**SUFFOLK COUNTY**

Chairman: [Name]

Vice-Chairman: [Name]

Members: [List of names]

**CONSULTANTS**

[List of consultant names]



## INTRODUCTION

This is the first of a series of reports that will be prepared by the Regional Planning Board. It is intended to provide a general overview of the regional development plan and to identify the major issues and opportunities that will be faced in the future. The plan is based on a study of the regional economy, population, and land use patterns, and on a review of the existing regional planning documents. The plan is intended to provide a framework for the development of more detailed plans for individual counties and for the region as a whole.

## GOALS

- The direction of the pattern of development and the rate of growth.
- The provision of adequate housing and jobs linked by a balanced transportation system.
- The elimination of deterioration and obsolescence.
- The preservation of open space and the natural environment.

## PROJECTIONS

**PEOPLE AND HOMES**

Approximately 2.6 million people live in Nassau and Suffolk Counties today. It is projected that the population will reach at least 3.3 million by 1985. Most of the growth will occur in Suffolk, where the population will exceed that of Nassau.

**JOB**

The number of jobs on the island must keep pace with its population. Today, there are over 700,000 jobs in the two counties; by 1985 there will be more than two-thirds again as many jobs. Many of these new jobs will require new construction. It is estimated that Nassau County needs 1,800 acres of land for new manufacturing establishments, 2,300 acres for wholesaling, and 750 acres for eleven million square feet of new office floor space. Suffolk needs 1,500 acres for manufacturing, 1,500 acres for wholesaling, and 500 acres for eight million square feet of office floor space.

**PARKS AND OPEN SPACE**

Land is also needed for recreation and for conservation. Open space must be acquired in anticipation of needs. The open space acquired now is all that is likely to be available to serve the population in 1985. The addition of 125,000 or more acres by 1985 will be needed to meet the needs of the population.

**TRANSPORTATION**

Long Island's residents contend with a transportation system characterized by bottlenecks and accidents on the highways, delays and cancellations on the railroad, and infrequent and inaccessible buses. The traffic exceeds the available capacity on 260 miles of state and county roads. This means it's stop-and-go every rush hour. Mass traffic will mean virtual paralysis. An additional 177 miles of state and county roads, many now operating at design capacity. Although traffic usually flows at acceptable levels, any growth in traffic will create increasingly frequent standstills.

rehabilitated and used for housing families of low and moderate income. There is every indication that the State will provide this housing should the municipalities fail to act.

Buses are not yet an answer. Service is slow and infrequent, routes are uncoordinated, and bus stops often inconvenient. Buses attract few riders and the bus companies, privately-owned, cannot afford to extend routes or greatly improve service without public subsidy.

The Long Island Railroad is only available for westward travel. It is used primarily by commuters — six of every seven riders are workers bound for Manhattan. Even so, the railroad carries only 60 percent of all Manhattan-bound commuters.

Automobile ownership is increasing rapidly, as is the number of trips per person. If present trends continue, the total traffic in the two counties will be more than half again the present level by 1985. The volume of westward traffic at the Nassau-Suffolk line will increase by one-third. At the Nassau-Suffolk line, the 1982 westward traffic will equal today's traffic at the Nassau-Queens line.

Two steps must be taken if this trend towards increasing use of the automobile is to be changed. First, the establishment of a highly efficient, frequent, and convenient mass transportation system consisting of coordinated rail and bus services, second, the grouping of all new land uses near transportation centers, at densities greater than those permitted on the island today. To attract riders, mass transportation must offer a better alternative than the car. If a person must sit in his car, he will use it for the entire trip. Therefore, new housing and jobs must be located along mass transportation corridors so that substantial numbers of people can utilize mass transit and thus save the need for additional roads.

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Airport facilities will also need expansion. The use of aircraft will more than double by 1985, producing an additional one million take-offs and landings yearly.

## PRIORITIES

There are less than 15,000 acres of vacant land in all of Nassau County. This is only six to seven percent of the land area and is insufficient to satisfy all of the projected needs. The land use priorities below are based on a determination as to which of Nassau County's needs must be met within the county, either on vacant land or through redeveloping under-utilized land, and which of those needs can be allowed to spill over into nearby areas of Suffolk County.

Suffolk County, with 41 percent of its land vacant, has sufficient land to satisfy its own needs, absorb some of Nassau's, and still preserve the open character of the eastern towns — but only if development is carefully planned and controlled.

Land for parks and conservation has been accorded the first priority in both counties. It is essential to acquire in anticipation of need — acre graded, paved, and built upon, open land is lost forever. Excess acreage can always be released later, but a lack of open land cannot be replaced. Nassau County, with a projected 1985 shortage of 15,000 acres of vacant land. Therefore, wherever there is a choice of use involving land areas large enough and suitable for recreation, they should be so used. Existing open space, even when privately owned, should be carefully preserved. In both

counties, sufficient recreation land should be provided in new communities through the clustering of development.

This priority will be easy to overlook since, unfortunately, the most valuable recreation land is frequently the best for many uses as well. Conservation land appears to try out for "improvement" and hard-revenue-producing facilities to attract revenue-producing facilities.

Land for apartments has been accorded the second priority in Nassau County. In fact, no residential land should be reserved to industrial, commercial, or office use unless it appears beyond a doubt that the land is unsuitable for parks or open space, or for development of multi-family units. Not all multi-family construction should take place on vacant land. Many of the new apartments should be located in the older business districts of both counties, where rebuilding at increased densities would stimulate revitalization and encourage the greater use of mass transit.

If these priorities are followed, parks, conservation, and multi-family housing will preempt Nassau County's vacant land. To provide the open space and apartments needed in Nassau County will require great determination, resistance to more attractive tax assets, and a willingness to permit greater apartment densities than most Nassau County communities have accepted in the past.

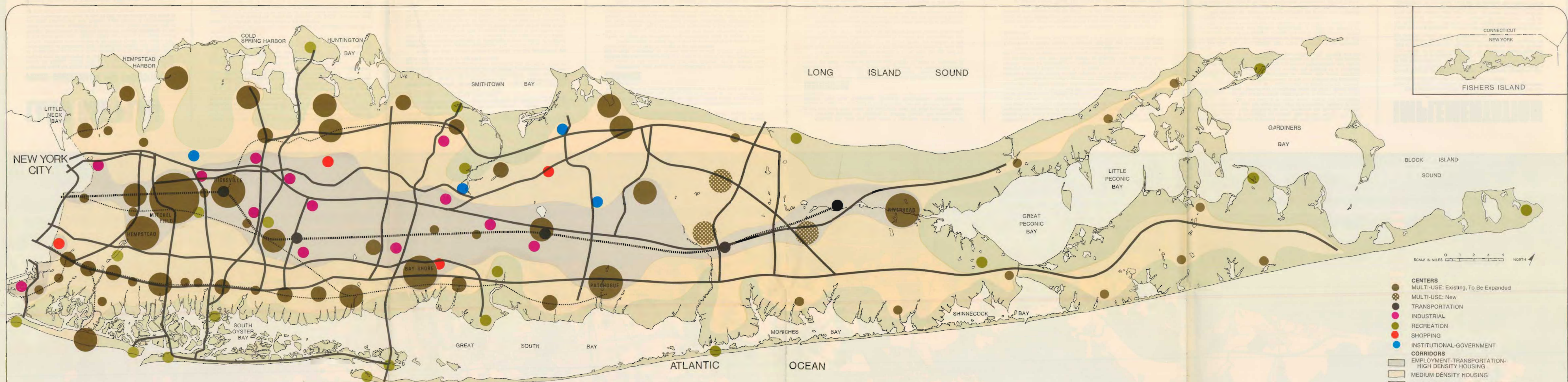
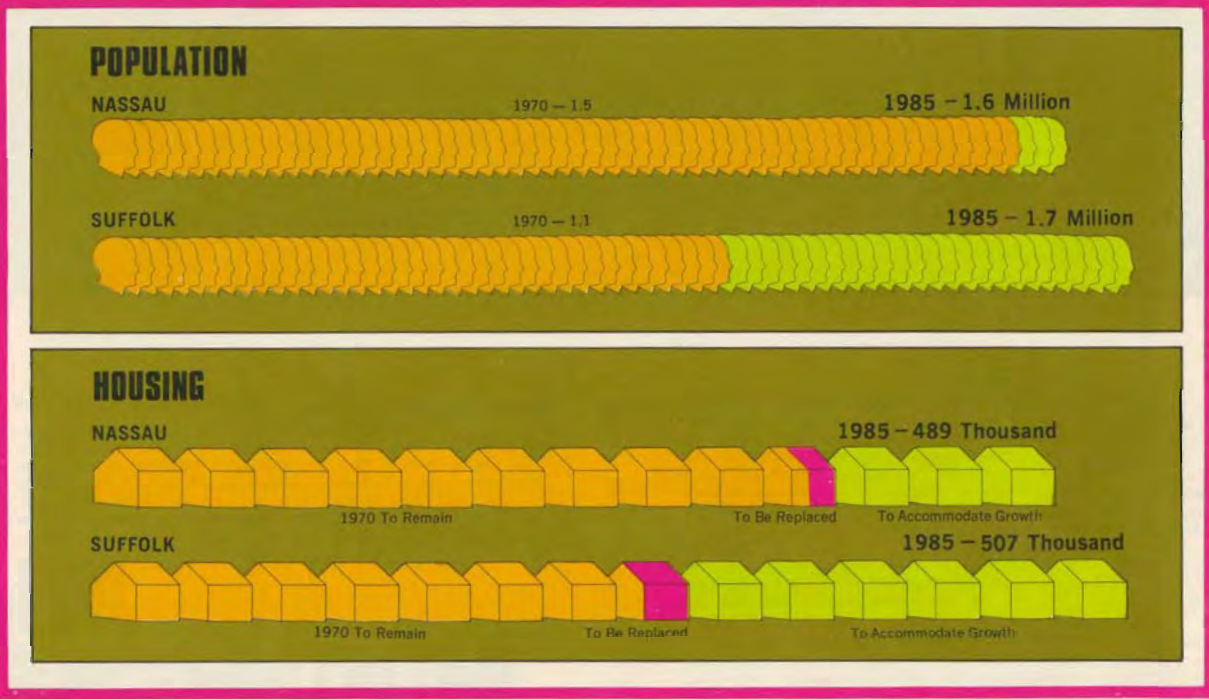
Beyond these two highest priorities in Nassau County, it will be necessary, as well as desirable, to locate new commercial and office space as possible in the existing central business districts. This course is dictated by the shortage of land and the need

to revitalize these older centers to decrease dependence on the automobile. New office space should be strictly limited to the projected needs. If the construction of large office parks continues at the current rate, Nassau County will soon have a surplus of office space. The four areas proposed for Mitchell Field and Massena Field alone amount to over six million square feet; the additional five million square feet available within existing central business districts. The greatest practice of building office structures on scattered parcels violates the land use priorities established for Nassau County.

Industry to site a large land-user. Much of the new industry that will employ Nassau residents must locate in Suffolk County where many accessible sites, along major highways and the railroad, are available to meet the needs of both counties.

Because Suffolk County has more than enough land to accommodate both its projected 1985 needs and the spill-over from Nassau County, it is not necessary to establish priorities for the preservation of open land. Suffolk County must, however, avoid over-zoning for revenue-producing land uses.

Both counties therefore require a rational plan that relates the amount of land zoned for mass industry, apartment, commercial, and office uses to the amount of land needed for such purposes. Such a plan will show locations for the various uses that will encourage proper densities and community design, enable the creation of a mass transportation network that places less emphasis on roads, and conserve the island's natural resources. To this course, the Plan addresses itself.



## Centers & Corridors

## CORRIDORS CLUSTERS AND CENTERS

Three concepts — corridors, clusters, and centers — are the essence of the Plan. These concepts are the guidelines against which individual projects should be judged. In deciding on the merits of a specific proposal, each community should fully evaluate the project in light of the goals, the three concepts, and the locational criteria derived from them.

Not every new development will conform fully to the corridors, clusters, and centers concepts. In fact, even if starting today, these concepts were rigorously and absolutely followed, they would not substantially change the appearance of the western third of the island over the next fifteen years, except in the heart of some of the larger centers. Nassau County and the western portion of Suffolk are already almost fully developed. About half of the new housing in Nassau will be single-family homes on scattered lots. This is fitting will merely accentuate the present development pattern, but, over time, the concepts of this Plan, if followed, will encourage the necessary growth while respecting the needs of the people and their environment, and will encourage the use of mass transit by placing greater densities of housing, jobs, and shopping within walking distance of mass transit facilities.

### CORRIDORS

Consider the geography of Nassau and Suffolk Counties — long, narrow, attached at one end to one of the world's major cities, surrounded everywhere else by water. Clearly, the most valuable recreation lands are at the waterfront, the best location for housing is adjacent to the recreation areas. Equally clearly, the most logical location for industry and other employment is along the center spine of the island, close to its major transportation facilities. In this location, equidistant from both the north and the south shores, jobs will be most accessible to residents, yet the inevitable harmful effects of industry — noise, traffic — will be minimized.

On the above map, the island is outlined in pale green, indicating shoreline recreation, conservation areas, and low-density residential development. The green border thickness at the eastern

### CLUSTERS

New development should be clustered wherever possible. The concept of clustering is simple: for example, suppose that instead of placing 50 homes on 15,000 square foot lots, they are placed on 10,000 square foot lots — at a savings of 5,000 square feet per parcel. The 250,000 square feet thus saved throughout the development could be used for playgrounds, greenways, and other community open spaces. Both the original housing per-acre price and the annual taxes might be less, yet the value of the house might be greater due to the enhanced quality of its environment. Of course, if the original lot were one acre or larger, clustering to one-quarter acre would save a greater amount of open space without increasing the overall density.

Clustering should apply to entire neighborhoods. Local shopping centers serve only those structures within the neighborhood. Collector streets would delineate neighborhoods while linking them with the community center or downtown.

Clustering also allows for the combining of town-houses and apartments with single-family detached houses while maintaining the overall original permitted density. This is important because apartments will help to ease the critical housing shortage in the two counties and to slow the rapid rise in the cost of housing. Single-family houses in established neighborhoods may become more readily available where newly apartments provide for the changed needs of the present occupants of these homes. Apartments relieve the mounting cost of public services, because the cost of public utilities, fire and police protection, and roads is lower per unit for apartments than for single family dwellings. In addition, new apartments on Long Island are a tax asset to schools as they generally pay more than three times as much in taxes as the cost of educating the children from these units.

The proper use of clustering techniques is one

of the most effective tools for open space preservation at no acquisition cost to the community. Through clustering of adjoining developments and the dedication of contiguous acreage, alert communities can acquire extensive open space systems. Linear parks, which can be created by judicious planning, can be created by judicious planning for waterfront protection, hiking, horseback riding, cycling, passive recreation, preservation of parks of particular scenic beauty or ecological significance. The Smilow-Isle greenbelt is an example of such a linear park.

The centers concept is an extension of the concept of clustering. Centers are accessible concentrations of activity.

The centers depicted on the map above are of two types: the **single use center**, exemplified by an educational institution such as Stone Brook, a government center as at Haverage, or a grouping of industrial establishments such as that along the Long Island Expressway in Plainville; and the **multi-use center** containing a variety of land uses and activities, such as those proposed for Mitchell Field and for the revitalized downtown along the major east-west transportation routes. These multi-use centers can be large or small (those proposed range from a regional center at Mitchell Field to a local center in Southold) but in every instance they include housing and shopping, and in the case of all but the local centers, they also include other activities and facilities — employment, education, transportation, special services and recreation — all placed in an accessible location.

Activity centers can be formed through the revitalization and expansion of an existing nucleus

such as an older central business district or a small business district, or through the creation of an entirely new center as the focus of a planned new community.

Every effort should be made to transform those older central business districts situated near the major transportation routes into activity centers. Many of these business districts have deteriorated because of their inability to compete with the new outlying shopping and office centers. Ease of access and ample parking space have lured customers from the older traffic-choked downtowns to new convenient shopping centers along the major roads. Lower income residents have moved into the aging and decaying housing bordering the business district. The numerous existing investments in railroads and public utilities is underutilized even while roads, water mains, sewers, and power lines are extended to serve new commercial and residential growth in

other areas. Better access to the downtown areas and improved parking, together with a substantial increase in permitted densities, will stimulate private renewal, provide needed housing, and promote economic and social integration.

New activity centers should be planned only in the portions of the island that are presently underdeveloped, and where it is not possible to expand existing small concentrations of neighborhood activity. For example, three centrally new activity centers are proposed for eastern Brookhaven, at Middle Island, Yaphank, and Manville. The central corridor also contains the major employment centers and other traffic generators. To serve this traffic, transportation centers are planned for Haverage, Hicksville, East Farmingdale, Ronkonkoma, Yaphank, and Calverton. At the points where the main line of the railroad crosses major north-south highway

routes, the north and south shore corridors should contain as little industry as possible, and the commercial and office centers within the outer corridors should be smaller than those projected for the central spines.

Activity centers will encourage the use of public mass transportation by providing concentrations of commercial activity, employment, and housing. The central line of the railroad would be improved to provide high speed transportation, provision of such a system would encourage greater density of uses near the railroad stations which would, in turn, reinforce the economic justification for the original creation of the high-speed line. The concentration of a large proportion of the population increase in centers would permit the retention of the open character of the remainder of the island.



