

DRAFT
Long Island Sustainability Plan
Goals and Objectives

June 2007

Goals provide general direction for the highest aspiration of a region. Objectives are statements that provide further direction for achieving an aspect of a goal.

1. Quality of Life

Data: Long Island is the largest island adjoining the continental United States, extending approximately 118 miles east-northeast from the mouth of the Hudson River. It is separated from the mainland on the north by the Long Island Sound and bounded by the Atlantic Ocean on the south and east. Twenty miles at its widest point, Long Island is composed of low plateaus on the north, longitudinal ridges of glacial moraine through the central parts of the island, and sloping plains to the south. Peconic and Gardiner's Bays separate the eastern end of the island into two peninsular forks. The boroughs of Brooklyn and Queens are part of Long Island's geography but not part of its governance. For the purposes of this plan, Long Island consists of the 1,198 total square miles in Nassau and Suffolk Counties.

Today Long Island has a population of 2.8 million people, accounting for 20 percent of New York State's population. In fact, Long Island has a total population greater than that of 19 states and, if it were a city, it would rank as the 4th largest in the nation. Long Island remains predominantly white, but the percentage of whites has dropped as the population of African-Americans, Hispanics, and Asians has risen. Hispanics and African-Americans together now account for approximately 20 percent of the island's population.

Long Island remains one of the most affluent highly populated suburbs in the world, with better than average social indicators ranging from education levels, incomes, and employment to cultural amenities, natural resources, and tourism.

Issues

Nassau and Suffolk counties face challenges associated with many aging "inner-ring" suburban regions. These challenges primarily include sustaining economic prosperity and livability and affordability in an era approaching full build out, social inequity, pockets of poverty, multiple layers of government, environmental degradation, strained transportation infrastructure, high electricity and gas utility rates, aged and inadequate wastewater collection and treatment systems, high taxes, an aging population, and changing demographics.

Goal 1.

The primary goal of Nassau and Suffolk Counties' policies and priorities is to achieve an outstanding quality of life, including.

- a. Economic prosperity, social equity, and expanding opportunity;
- b. Access to high quality education, public services, and facilities;

- c. A balance between access to convenient multi-modal transportation and residential, commercial and industrial growth; and
- d. A pleasing physical and cultural environment in which to live and work.

2. Affordable Housing

Data:

There are an estimated 998,330 housing units in the Nassau-Suffolk region. Roughly 83 percent of total units are single-family units, at 830,365, while 162,563, or 16.3 percent are multi-unit buildings.

Approximately 85 percent of occupied housing units on Long Island are owner-occupied. This ranks Nassau-Suffolk second in the nation in terms of homeownership.

Issues

The median price of single-family homes has increased by more than double between 1999 and 2005, going from \$220,000 to \$466,000 in Nassau County and \$160,000 to \$390,000 in Suffolk County.

The standard rule of thumb is that home buyers should be able to buy a house that is approximately three times their annual income. In Nassau the ratio of median home price to median family income in 2005 was 5.1 and in Suffolk it was 4.7.

In the Nassau-Suffolk region there exist roughly 13,000 physically deficient housing units that are also income constrained. An estimated 9,000 individuals between the ages of 15 and 34 are living with parents at home or with other family or friends but would likely choose to live on their own if economic conditions allowed. At a minimum, an estimated 24,000 affordable housing units will be needed in the future. Together, it is estimated that at least 46,000 units of affordable housing will be needed in the Nassau-Suffolk region.

Goal 2.

Opportunities should be available to all who live or work in Nassau-Suffolk to purchase or rent safe, decent, housing within their means. Affordable housing should be located as close as possible to employment opportunities and transportation infrastructure, without adversely affecting quality of life standards. It should be a vital element in high density and mixed-use development projects, should be encouraged in revitalization areas, and encouraged through more flexible zoning wherever possible.

3. Energy

Data: The Long Island Power Authority delivers electricity to nearly 1.1 million customers on Long Island. In 2002, LIPA's retail sales were 18,815,722 Mega Watt Hours (MWH), of which approximately 51 percent were to commercial and industrial customers, 47 percent to residential customers and the remaining 2 percent going to railroad and other public authorities.

LIPA reports it currently has a 6,100 megawatt daily capacity. In early August of 2006 LIPA recorded several days of record power usage of approximately 5,700 megawatts, leaving a cushion of about 400 megawatts, or 7 percent of capacity. In total, if all of the planned electrical power projects come on line as planned, an estimated additional 1,100

megawatts per day will be available to Long Island, for a total daily electric capacity of 7,200 megawatts by the end of 2008.

In 2005, the bi-county region consumed 4.7 billion gallons of petroleum product annually, 2.53 billion gallons of gasoline and 2.17 billion gallons of distillate product. This volume of petroleum product is delivered to Long Island in a variety of transportation modes: 1) via tanker at Northville (Conoco-Phillips) and the Northport Power Station, 2) via barge to Port Jefferson, Riverhead, Oyster Bay, Glenwood Landing, and Oceanside, 3) via interstate pipeline from New Jersey to Inwood, 4) via truck transport to some 30 inland oil terminals.

Issues

According to the Energy Information Administration, LIPA charges the third highest residential electric rates of any major utility in the continental United States. In addition the existing on Island electrical power generation facilities are reportedly significant sources of air contamination.

Systematic stress to the delivery of petroleum product to Long Island occurs due to: 1) general economics of wholesale terminal operations, 2) the influence of the New York Mercantile Exchange on prices, 3) The “just-in-time” refining and inventory practices of the major oil companies, 4) the environmental, insurance, and other regulatory compliance costs of maintaining terminals, 5) the need to add additional storage capacity to handle alternate fuels such as ethanol, bio-fuels, and ultra-low sulphur diesel, 6) the impact of large-volume interruptible natural gas users entering the petroleum market when their gas supplies are curtailed.

Goal 3.

The region should promote energy efficiency, energy conservation, clean green energy, including renewable sources and adequate supply within the public, commercial, residential, and industrial sectors.

4. Transportation

Data: Demand on the regional transportation system is a function of population, motor vehicle registration, and economic growth. In 1970 there were 583 miles of state highway in the Nassau-Suffolk region, 756 miles of county highway, and 8,220 miles of town, city, and village roads. By 2001 the state had 1,338 miles, the counties 932 miles, and the towns, cities, and villages had 9,776 miles. Rail ridership was at approximately 97 million trips in 2005 while bus ridership was approximately 38 million trips. In 2004 there were 2,154,359 motor vehicles registered on Long Island, 1,938,495 passenger vehicles and 105,236 commercial vehicles. Between 2000 and 2005 Long Island added 21,000 more households that owned 3 or more motor vehicles, while the number of households owning 1 vehicle or less declined. Almost 25 percent of all households on Long Island own 3 or more vehicles, and another 44 percent own two. About 5 percent of all households do not own a car.

Based on this information and a projected increase in the region of approximately 72,000 households by 2030, it is estimated that approximately 180,000 new vehicles will be registered on Long Island by 2030.

Issues

The original Nassau-Suffolk Comprehensive Plan called for the creation of “corridors, clusters, and centers,” which separated residential use from commercial centers and transportation routes. This worked out well when much of Long Island was a community in which half or more of all workers commuted to New York City. But Long Island is no longer a “bedroom” community and there is a mismatch between concentrations of housing and the region’s major employment centers. There is also a lack of viable public transportation routes from employment to housing centers. With the exception of Hicksville, none of Long Island’s employment centers is located in close proximity to a major train station or population center.

Goal 4.

Encourage the development of accessible transportation systems designed, through advanced planning and technology, to move people and goods efficiently while minimizing environmental impact and community disruption. Regional and local efforts to achieve a balanced transportation system through the development of rapid rail, commuter rail, expanded bus service, and better, more high-tech roadways should be the keystone policy for future planning and facilities. Development in growth areas should be transit oriented and include walkable sidewalks and trails should be developed as alternate transportation routes from housing leading to mass transit, high density areas, public facilities and employment areas.

5. Economic Development and Employment Opportunities

Data:

In 2006, the total private sector GDP for Long Island was about \$117 billion, up from about \$113 billion in 2005. Overall, Long Island’s economy has grown by 44 percent from 1996 to 2006 (43 percent if the public sector is included.). The trend has been consistent at just over 4 percent per year. Consistent growth in GDP on Long Island indicates an expanding economy. Overall employment growth continues at a modest pace (14 percent between 1996 and 2006 compared to 13 percent for the nation) and productivity continues to rise on Long Island as it does for the U.S. as a whole (value added rose 26 percent on Long Island, compared to 23 percent nationally.) Value added per employee on Long Island was 16 percent higher than that for the U.S. economy as a whole (\$111,173 versus \$95,528).

Issues

Low income jobs are growing more rapidly than high income jobs in the region, exacerbating income inequality and causing a mismatch between skills and jobs. While Long Island remains an affluent region, average pay per employee on Long Island increased 14 percent from 1996 to 2006 compared to the U.S., in which it rose 20 percent. Between 2000 and 2006, inflation adjusted average pay per employee only rose 2 percent. The gap between managerial and nonmanagerial salaries increased 29 percent

during this period. The number of households at both the low-end and the high-end of the income continuum are growing while the middle is shrinking. Long Island received less than 1 percent of federal Research and Development dollars between 1998 and 2002. Long Island accounts for only around 1 percent of total venture capital investment since 2002.

Goal 5.

Nassau-Suffolk should maintain its prosperous economic climate and varied employment opportunities by continuing to develop and pursue a broad range of actions, including public/private partnerships and educational augmentation, designed to enhance its long-term competitive position in regional, national, and international economic development. At the same time, the region should enhance those systems that support employability of the population for its economic betterment. Particular attention should be given to small and minority-owned businesses and changes in tax, regulatory and education policies, including a new emphasis on practical skills training, in order to restore the attraction of the region to those who want to start a small business or maintain a middle-class family.

6. Public Services

Data:

There are 901 local government entities on Long Island. Total spending of all governments on Long Island was approximately \$18 billion in 2005. Almost one half of total spending was by Long Island's 127 school districts, just under one-third was by counties. Long Island faces a continuing challenge of affordability.

Issues

Long Islanders directly bear three-quarters of the cost of local government, 59 percent of which comes from the property tax. Long Island's property taxes are 2.5 times the national average, comparable to its peer suburban regions.

Goal 6.

One of the primary factors behind the surging cost of living on Long Island remains high regulatory and tax regimes, which greatly limit the production of housing and job opportunities, particularly for middle-income and low-income families. Nassau and Suffolk Counties should be committed to providing a high level and quality of public services to the community, within its financial limitations. This includes health, welfare, economic growth, safety, and education.

7. Health Care

Data

Since 1996 the percentages of low birth weight babies in Nassau and Suffolk Counties have averaged consistently less than New York State percentages. From 1996 to 2000 there has been an overall decline in the number of deaths due to heart disease on Long Island. Nassau and Suffolk counties rank in the middle – 5th and 6th – in the Child Well-Being Index in 2000 among the 10 counties of the New York, New Jersey, Connecticut region. The percentage of adolescent births on Long Island has remained steady at about 1 percent since 2000. Ten years ago, 43 percent of all hospital care admissions were

covered by commercial insurance or HMO policies, and 37.7 percent were covered by Medicare. Today, these numbers are practically reversed and only 39 percent of all hospital care admissions were covered by commercial insurance or HMO policies, and 43 percent were covered by Medicare. Other methods of payment remained virtually unchanged.

Issues

Long Island's percentages of low birth weight babies are rising and beginning to approach statewide averages. Nassau County's mortality rate from heart disease has remained consistently higher than the statewide rates (though Suffolk's remains consistently lower). The rate of hospital discharges with Ambulatory Care Sensitive conditions on Long Island has increased by almost 21 percent between 1997 and 2005. A persistently high rate of ACS discharges has been observed in several Nassau/Suffolk communities, potentially indicating a lack of access to primary care by residents in these communities.

Goal 7.

All Nassau-Suffolk residents should have access to the full range of health care services and facilities as well as information on personal health and fitness, so that they may sustain a secure, productive and healthy lifestyle.

8. Groundwater

Data: The single unifying environmental element in all comprehensive planning work carried out over the past three decades on Long Island is groundwater. Nassau and Suffolk Counties are isolated from any external source of water importation. The sole source of our drinking water is our groundwater aquifers. Rain falls, a portion of it permeates the ground to be absorbed in plant root systems that provide shelter and food for animal life. Plant life contributes to air chemistry and moisture transpires through its foliage. Water vapor from plants, combined with the general evaporation of surface waters, both fresh and saline, contributes to the formation of new rain clouds. A significant portion of surface and underground water finds its way to the marine waters of Long Island Sound and to the various bays, providing a mixing of saline ocean waters with fresh water and enabling a healthy shellfish population to thrive, and fostering the growth of marsh grasses that serve as spawning habitats for fish and shellfish.

Issues

Human activities can, and have, changed the relationship between the components of this cycle. Development in areas without sewers and land use patterns have resulted in impacts to groundwater quality. Construction and paving remove permeable ground, thereby reducing recharge areas. Over pumping of potable water in near shore areas can accelerate salt water intrusion. Construction of sewer treatment plants and the discharge of sewage effluent water into the ocean or the Sound can reduce the quantity that could have been recharged, changing the level of the groundwater table and the *safe yield* – how much water can be withdrawn before negative effects occur.

With roughly 300 square miles (one-third of the land area of Suffolk) and a population of 1.4 million, Nassau county has almost triple the population density as Suffolk and is at near carrying capacity for water, which is estimated to be around 1.5 million residents. By contrast Suffolk County is estimated to have a safe yield for around 3.5 million residents.

Goal 8.

The amounts and distribution of population density and land uses on Long Island should be consistent with environmental constraints inherent in the need to preserve natural resources – specifically, groundwater and surface waters - and to meet or exceed federal, state, and local standards for water quality, ambient air quality and other environmental standards. Water quality – both potable and marine – is the key to Long Island’s future. Planning for the orderly growth of Long Island’s communities and the management of their wastes, particularly wastewater, is the linchpin that will determine the quality of life in the future.

9. Open Space/Farmland

Data:

From 1977 to 2006, the state, Nassau and Suffolk counties, and the towns preserved 55,745 acres (all but a few hundred of them in Suffolk), for \$1.27 billion. In addition to these public purchases of interests in land, actions such as the Long Island Pine Barrens Protection Act have provided for the preservation of over 100,000 acres.

Issues

Land preservation is important on Long Island for both environmental and economic reasons. Preserved lands protect the Island’s drinking water, provides critical habitat for wildlife, ensures the viability of the Island’s farming industry and maintains the strength of the tourist industry. In 2006, about 100 environmental groups, led by The Nature Conservancy, put together a "Long Island's Last Stand" campaign, to preserve 25,000 acres of open space and 10,000 acres of farmland in 10 years out of the roughly 70,000 acres which remain uncommitted to preservation or development, and to restore and maintain land now in the public domain,.

At the current rate, averaging 2,274 acres a year over the past seven, the report estimates the region will save 20,000 acres by 2015, or 15,000 acres short of the goal.

Goal 9.

Nassau and Suffolk Counties should support the conservation of appropriate land areas in a natural state to preserve, protect and enhance stream valleys, meadows, woodlands, wetlands, farmland, and plant and animal life. Some small areas of open space should also be preserved in already congested and developed areas for passive neighborhood uses, visual relief, scenic value, and screening and buffering purposes.

10. Emergency Preparedness

Data:

Security and emergency operations on Long Island remain fragmented among the many municipalities and districts with emergency response capability. This risk of hazardous incidents is high. Tens of thousands of Long Islanders live in vulnerable coastal areas, where a major hurricane could trigger devastating storm surges. Even inland, a category 2 or 3 storm would cause miles of wind damage, potentially requiring billions of dollars in repairs and leaving many homes uninhabitable for weeks or months. The likelihood of terrorist attacks in the region is higher in a post 9/11 world

Issues

An informed citizenry is the best defense against natural hazards, accidents, and terrorist attacks. Nassau and Suffolk counties should be committed to educating the public about how best to prepare in the event of emergencies, including extreme weather events, flooding, infrastructure disasters, terrorist attacks or other natural or manmade catastrophes. Coordination by and among agencies and levels of government, in emergency preparedness remains a challenge.

Goals 10.

A comprehensive emergency management plan should be developed with all involved agencies, municipalities and districts in order to manage man-made, technological and natural hazards that affect the lives and property of citizens of Long Island. Utilizing an all-hazards emergency planning approach, the plan should provide a framework to ensure that the region will be prepared to respond and recover from declared and non-declared emergencies.

11. Social Equity

Data:

Long Island is becoming increasingly diverse. In terms of race Long Island remains predominantly white, but the percentage of whites has dropped in both counties between 2000 and 2007. Both counties saw increases in the African-American, Latino, and Asian populations. The level of isolation of African American residents living solely in African American communities has remained virtually unchanged since the 1960s. The isolation of Latinos has jumped from 14.2 percent in 1990 to 21.4 percent in 2000, to even higher today. Long Island continues to be one of the most racially segregated regions in the nation. Predominantly African-American and Latino school districts perform more poorly than predominantly white districts, and predominantly minority areas continue struggle on social indicators that include quality health care, job opportunities, physical infrastructure, crime, and environmental health.

Issues

All residents deserve an equal chance to reach their greatest potential, to live in safe neighborhoods, to go to good public schools, and to take advantage of job and housing opportunities. The future of Long Island very much rests in its ability to draw residents from the growing numbers of African-Americans, Latinos, and Asians, as well as persons from all over the globe who migrate to this region and who are expected to soon constitute at least half and perhaps a majority of the work force. Without policies that make Long Island accessible and desirable, the region risks continued racial segregation

and income stratification, pockets of severe poverty and crime, and economic stagnation and decline.

Goals 11.

Promote policies and programs to address institutional and structural racism and achieve racial equity in public school education, housing, emergency services, law enforcement, and healthcare.