

THOMAS R. SUOZZI
COUNTY EXECUTIVE



OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE
ONE WEST STREET
MINEOLA, NEW YORK 11501-4895
(516) 571-3131

November 25, 2002

Dear Friend:

In this document, you will find my draft Economic Development Plan for Nassau County – the nation’s first suburban county.

In order for the County to accomplish its goals and succeed in its initiatives, we must effectively communicate our ideas and receive input from Nassau’s local community leaders. As such, the County administration will welcome suggestions from:

- Town Supervisors Richard V. Guardino, Jr. (Hempstead), May Newburger (North Hempstead), and John Venditto (Oyster Bay);
- The Nassau County Legislature;
- Mayors and other public officials;
- Community groups and Chambers of Commerce;
- University leaders; and
- Business executives.

These contributions will be invaluable as we seek to define the future of Nassau County. I, as well as members of my administration, will host a series of Town Meetings throughout the County to discuss these ideas and to elicit a consensus for a Community Vision for our County. I look forward to your comments and support.

Very truly yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Thomas R. Suozzi". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Thomas R. Suozzi
County Executive

I. Introduction

As the first suburban county in the United States, Nassau County faces development challenges now that will be faced by other “post-suburban” counties in the years to come. In 1947, William Levitt built “Levittown,” an affordable housing development for returning World War II veterans in the heart of Nassau County. This row/modular construction was the first of its kind. Prior to the construction of the Levitt homes, Nassau County was a predominately rural area with small hamlets and cities that were supported by the economic behemoth that is New York City.

Nassau County is rich with history. Some of our country’s greatest industrial legends, who made their fortunes just after the turn of the century, called Nassau County their home. Tycoons including J.P. Morgan, William Vanderbilt, F.W. Woolworth and Daniel Guggenheim built their lavish mansions along Nassau County’s North Shore, later to be called “the Gold Coast.” At the turn of the Century, President Theodore Roosevelt chose Oyster Bay, also on the North Shore, as the site for his summer White House at Sagamore Hill.

Today, Nassau County is its own economic engine, providing revenues to support a government serving 1.3 million people. Nassau County is larger than 16 states, and Nassau and Suffolk Counties together would be the sixth largest metropolitan center if they were one city.

Nassau County is one of the best places to live in the world. With rising property values and a highly educated workforce, Nassau County is consistently ranked one of the top ten places to live in the United States, and has the lowest crime rate of any community of more than one million people in the U.S. The benefits of living in Nassau County are many: great public schools and top-notch colleges and universities, beautiful South Shore beaches and North Shore waterfronts, a short ride to New York City, and some of the best hospitals and medical centers in the country.

Our Benefits

1. Rising property values
2. Low crime rate
3. Beaches, waterfronts and a multitude of parks and recreational facilities
4. 8 four-year Colleges and Universities
5. A well-educated, highly skilled workforce
6. Among the best public schools in the nation

Our County-Wide Challenge

As a result of being the first suburban county, Nassau will face a number of challenges over the next decade. Nassau County is predominately home to migrants from New York City, a municipal giant that had little or no opportunities for home rule and self-control. They did not

wish to see overwhelming numbers of people in Nassau's commercial or residential districts. Rather, the desire was for local control and suburban serenity, and so the County grew without a true plan for sustainable growth.

The result of a lack of a planning is a conglomeration of local governing entities that have little rational relationship to one another. This has led to non-sustainable downtown districts, insufficient density for today's high-tech and high-skilled workforce, local zoning that encourages suburban sprawl and restrictive communities, significant numbers of environmentally targeted properties and a drain on our limited open space. Within the County's three towns and two cities are 64 villages, over 70 hamlets, 56 school districts, 52 library districts, 71 fire districts, about 50 zip codes and multiple districts for water, sewer, street lighting, sanitation, and other services. Yet, virtually none of the municipal and special district lines coincide. The result is that community identity suffers.

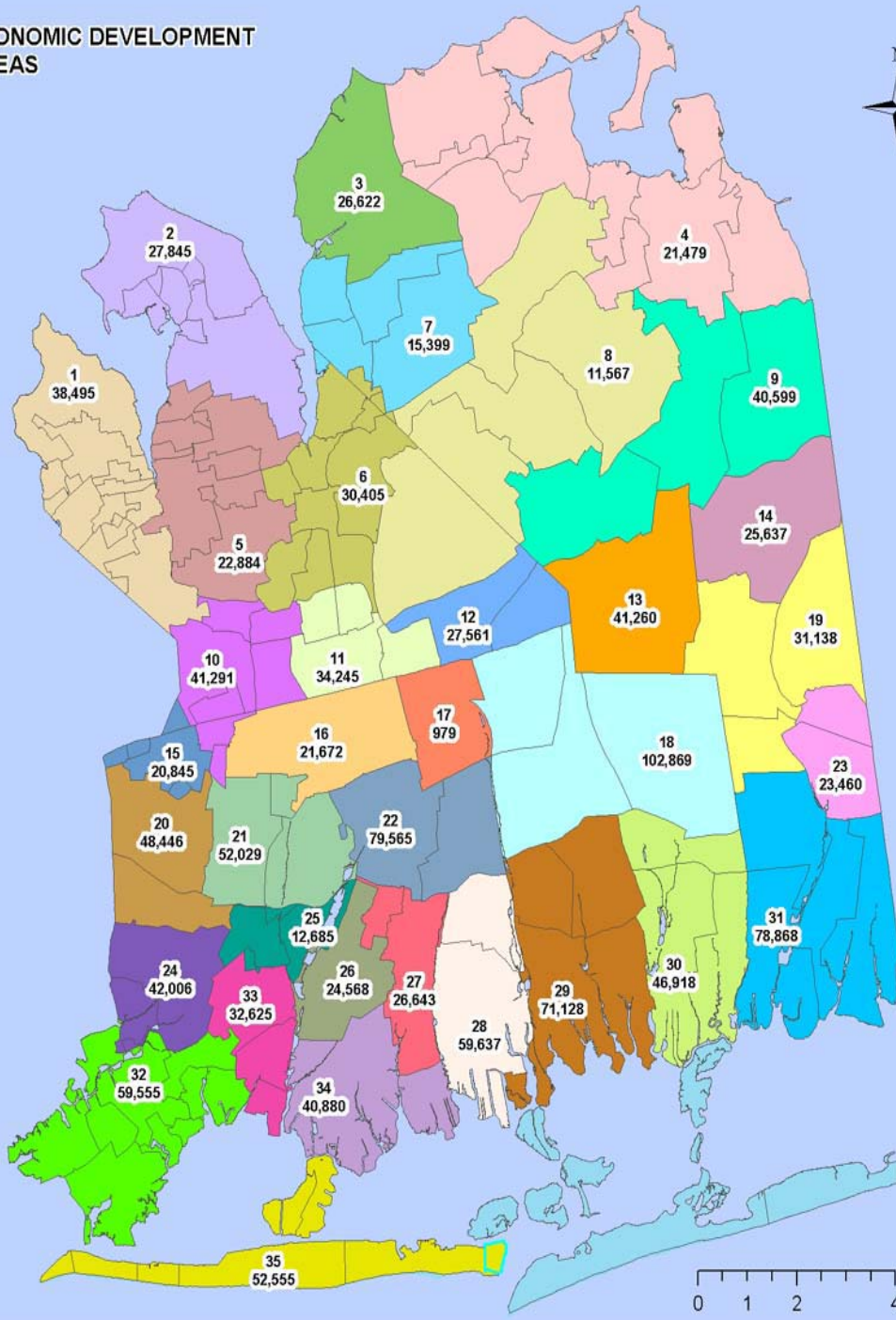
- Our Challenges**
1. Overdeveloped Commercial Strips
 2. Decline of our Downtowns
 3. Traffic Congestion and Lack of Mass-Transit
 4. Older Industrial Sites
 5. High Cost of Living
 6. Pockets of Poverty

Comprehensive Planning: A Possible Solution

In order to restore a sense of community pride and to base the County planning efforts around "traditional communities," Nassau County Executive Thomas Suozzi has proposed that the County be thought of as comprising 35 Economic Development areas (see maps). Central to each area is one or more downtown business district. By looking at the County this way, strategic planning will not be encumbered by municipal boundaries. Rather, planning will be focused around areas residents currently identify as their community (see appendix for detailed explanation).

- Solutions for the Next 50 Years**
1. Revitalize our Downtowns
 2. Attract and Retain High-Tech/High-Skilled Industries
 3. Clean, Recycle and Redevelop Brownfield's
 4. Facilitate the Creation of New Workforce and Senior Housing Units
 5. Preserve Open Spaces
 6. Promote Sports, Entertainment and Tourism

**ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT
AREAS**



0 1 2 4 Miles

Step 1: Restructure County Government

In an effort to create greater efficiencies and improve service delivery to businesses and County residents, the County Executive has restructured a variety of government offices that historically performed economic development functions, but rarely worked together. In creating a new Department of Economic Development (DED), the administration has integrated the Industrial Development Agency (IDA), the Office of Housing and Intergovernmental Affairs (OHIA), the Planning Department, and two newly created agencies: the Economic Development Resource Center (EDRC) and the Sports, Entertainment and Tourism Commission (SET). Once located in several buildings scattered throughout Nassau County, these offices now work side-by-side under one roof, and are overseen by the Deputy County Executive for Economic Development. By working synergistically and leveraging their vast resources, these offices that make up the DED are better positioned to meet their common mission -- to promote sustainable economic development, expand the County's tax base and improve the economic and environmental quality of life for Nassau County residents and its business community.

Step 2: Communication Strategies

For the new administration to accomplish its objectives and initiatives, an overall communication strategy must be developed and implemented. This communication strategy will allow the County's economic development offices to have a complete understanding of the various issues facing each specific community, and will ensure and facilitate open lines of communication between the County, local government, and community stakeholders.

The County's administration rejects the notion of a "one size fits all" communication strategy. Rather, a customized, functional communication strategy will be developed for each individual geographic area identified by the administration. Implementation of the overall strategy, as well as site-specific communication strategies for each region, will incorporate knowledge of various community organizations and government structures, their particular strengths, and challenges facing all stakeholders within a project area.

Communication Partnerships

1. Towns of Hempstead, North Hempstead and Oyster Bay
2. The Village Officials Association
3. Business & University Leaders
4. Community and Opinion Leaders

II. Overview of Various Initiatives

1. High-Tech/High-Skilled Industry

The economic welfare of the County and its residents is connected to the business and employment activity in Nassau County, as well as to income earned elsewhere by resident commuters.

The overall level of employment in the County has been fairly consistent over the past decade and is expected to move slightly upward. Employment and economic activity in business and personal services is growing, especially in health and technology. In contrast, the defense and aerospace manufacturing industries, which were the mainstay of industry in Nassau and Suffolk Counties, have been drastically reduced.

Nassau County benefits from the income-generating capabilities of its educated and skilled workforce, employment base, quality-of-life, and access to the tremendous business and personal purchasing power in the New York Metropolitan Region.

Attracting High-Tech/High-Skilled Industries to Nassau County through the facilitation of business clusters is vital to the overall success of the County due to the positive effects brought about by industrial growth, such as new and improved employment opportunities, community services and housing accommodations. These business clusters have been identified as: (1) Biotechnology; (2) Software and technology development; (3) High-skilled professionals and service providers; (4) Banking and finance; (5) Healthcare; and (6) Entertainment industries.

Our Existing Assets

1. Highly educated workforce
2. Proximity to Manhattan
3. Part of the New York Media Market
4. Home to Life Sciences and Bio-Technology Research
5. Leading Healthcare Providers

Proposed Business Clusters

1. Biotechnology
2. Software and Technology
3. High-Skilled Professionals
4. Banking and Finance
5. Healthcare
6. Entertainment

2. Downtown Revitalization

The revitalization of Nassau County's downtowns is vital for attracting new business and increasing revenues to the County. It is in the vibrant downtown where community pride and civic activism are cultivated. Communities, and ultimately Nassau County, are defined by the

productivity of downtowns – as places to meet neighbors, shop, dine, relax and utilize public buildings and enjoy municipal parks. By revitalizing Nassau County’s downtowns in ways that are consistent with Smart Growth principles and sustainable development, and in harmony with our natural environment, direct and indirect ripple effects will effectuate more housing opportunities, greater job creation, enhanced educational resources, and more readily develop a true sense of community identity.

- Keys to Revitalization**
1. Community Visioning
 2. Partnerships for Infrastructure Improvements
 3. Assemble Properties for New Business Attraction
 4. Model Graphical-Based Zoning Codes to Encourage Sustainable Development

The overall goal of the Downtown Revitalization Plan is to establish a physically and economically improved downtown for each Economic Development area in Nassau County.

3. Brownfield’s Redevelopment

Brownfield’s are real property, the expansion, redevelopment, or reuse of which may be complicated by the presence or potential presence of a hazardous substance, pollutant, or contaminant. Once thriving areas of economic activity, today Brownfield’s lie abandoned and often contaminated from past uses. Sitting unused or under-utilized, Brownfield’s impede Nassau County’s economic development. Nevertheless, Brownfield’s are a great community asset and can be catalysts for community revitalization across the County.

- The Challenge is in Navigation**
1. Maze of Funding Sources
 2. County Leads in Property Acquisition and Cleanup
 3. Must Have a Vision for Reuse Prior to Procurement of Property

To help communities and counties, such as Nassau County, address redevelopment of Brownfield’s, the Brownfield’s National Partnership was established in 1997. The National Partnership brings together Federal agencies to address Brownfield’s cleanup and redevelopment in a more coordinated approach. These federal agencies work with community organizations, the private sector, local and state governments and other federal agencies to stimulate reinvestment in communities by restoring Brownfield’s to productive use. Nassau County will continue to work with all affiliated organizations to continue to develop Brownfield sites and promote programs that assist in the cleanup and those that foster development.

4. Facilitation of Workforce and Senior Housing

As Nassau County strives to attract new business and improve residential quality of life, as well as provide opportunities for our elderly, the need for affordable workforce and senior housing becomes even more essential to the immediate and long-term growth of the area. It is our goal to continue to develop new housing opportunities to meet the County's increasing demand.

After a lull in the retail industry in the early 1990's, economic development activities for new retail/commercial uses were completed in a number of

the County's downtown areas. Areas such as Nassau's Hub -- its central business area -- have been transformed into an economic development engine for Nassau County, creating a number of job opportunities for low-skilled positions, benefiting the County's low-income population. The increase in employment opportunities for low-skilled positions has resulted in an increased need for suitable workforce and senior housing opportunities.

The housing supply in Nassau County is largely owner-occupied, typical of suburban counties in the New York metropolitan area. The vacancy rates -- 4.08% for rental housing and 1.08% for owner housing -- suggest that the housing market is tight, even though both the County's population and number of households has declined. The demand for housing is exacerbated by the high cost of housing and available land. The median cost of owner-occupied housing in Nassau almost quadrupled during the 1980's, to a 1990 median of \$209,500. The estimated average of 1999 housing values is \$309,598. In terms of demographics, the County's aging population and trend toward smaller households will continue to translate into a greater need for smaller dwelling units. All of these factors contribute to Nassau County's growing need for improved workforce and senior housing solutions.

Location, Location, Location

1. Housing for Young Professionals and Seniors is a County-wide Challenge
2. Community/Business/Government Partnerships are Key
3. New Housing Focused in Non-impacted Areas
4. Elimination of Pockets of Poverty, Slum and Blight

5. Preserve and Secure Open Space

Like many counties and communities across the nation, Nassau County has placed heightened importance on the creation, securing and procuring of "open space," especially in urban areas. By working with New York State and embracing shared goals of an Open Space Conservation

Plan, Nassau County is optimistic about creating a program that will help accomplish our Open Space goals, including: preserving open coastal and inland spaces; providing high quality outdoor recreation; protecting the County's scenic, historic and cultural resources; protecting the habitat, natural environment and water supply; and minimizing the entrance of new pollutants.

**Alternative Use for Open Spaces:
Proposed innovative methods to
offset the cost of open space
acquisition**

1. Thoroughbred Horse Breeding and Horse farms
2. Traditional Farming
3. Passive Parks

Nassau County is in the process of creating an Open Space Acquisitions Committee that would be endowed with the task of promoting and enhancing permanent Open Space assets within the County. This committee will work closely with other County, State and Federal organizations in pursuit of its goals and objectives.

6. Sports, Entertainment and Tourism

The new Nassau County Sports, Entertainment and Tourism Commission (SET) is charged with marketing the County's facilities as venues for regional, national and international sporting and cultural events. By working with venues and organizations to grow existing events and attract new ones, SET will be able to increase direct and indirect tourism and entertainment revenue for the County and will establish Nassau County as a preeminent sports, entertainment and tourism destination.

SET will also aggressively work to attract endowed funds from individuals and corporations to support the maintenance and preservation of the County's Parks and Recreational facilities. Additionally, SET is working to develop sponsors for the naming of buildings, including the County's Aquatic Center and Mitchel Athletic Field complex.

Nassau County boasts everything from beautiful South Shore beaches, to the Nassau Veterans Memorial Coliseum, to stunning North Shore mansions and ports, and it is the responsibility of SET to ensure that the County leverages these local assets in pursuit of its goal of maximizing the county's sports, entertainment and tourism opportunities.

III. RATIONALE FOR DEVISING 35 ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AREAS

Nassau County is divided into 3 towns, 2 cities, 64 villages and over 70 hamlets. All together there are 137 Census Designated Places. Nassau is further divided into 19 legislative districts, 56 school districts, 71 fire districts, 52 zip codes and multiple special districts for water, sewers, streetlights, parks, etc. The result of this balkanization is that community identity suffers and with it, community pride.

The Economic Development Plan soon to be released will depict the County broken into 35 Economic Development Areas. This is intended to facilitate community-based planning and development efforts and to assist in assessing needs, allocating resources and tracking accomplishments. This “reorganization” is strictly for analysis purposes and does not in any way seek to propose changes in governmental structure or authority.

The methodology for determining how to designate Economic Development Areas is based on a concept of using existing downtown business districts as the principal planning unit. All of Nassau’s downtowns were identified and the primary areas they serve were determined regardless of municipal boundaries. For example, downtown Great Neck essentially services Saddle Rock, Kensington, Thomaston and six other villages besides what is officially known as “Great Neck.”

Once these were determined, the areas were further refined by considering, but not strictly adhering to, school district, zip code and village boundaries. The governing principal was community identity. What do people think of when asked to identify their community? Adjoining areas that share certain factors were often paired or grouped together: the communities of Port Washington that share the 11050 zip code; the communities around Glen Head that comprise the North Shore School District. The area known as the “Five Towns” arguably has a stronger identity as a single entity than as the individual communities of Lawrence, Hewlett, Woodmere, etc.

Two other important criteria were 1) with rare exceptions, incorporated villages were left intact and 2) we tried never to split Census blocks for the simple reason that most demographic data is only available by Census blocks or tracts, rendering future data compilation difficult if we deviated from those boundaries.

Beyond the Five Towns, the remaining areas in the **TOWN OF HEMPSTEAD** are grouped as follows:

- The Bellmore, Merrick, North Bellmore, and North Merrick hamlets, sometimes known as the “four towns” and sharing a central high school district.
- The Wantagh, North Wantagh and Seaford hamlets. North Wantagh does not have any districts or services of its own, and the boundary between Wantagh and Seaford varies so much from agency to agency that most residents of the Seaford “X” District are also in the Wantagh “Y” District.
- Other logical pairings based on one or both of the above reasons include: Elmont-North Valley Stream, East Meadow-Levittown-Salisbury, Hempstead-Uniondale, Baldwin-South Hempstead, Oceanside-Baldwin Harbor, West Hempstead-Franklin Square, Malverne-Lakeview, Valley Stream-Valley Stream South and the five villages surrounding Floral Park.
- Freeport and Roosevelt were paired because they share a common business corridor along Nassau Road.
- Long Beach, Island Park, Point Lookout and Lido Beach were grouped as a region largely for their common separation from the “mainland” and interdependence.
- The villages of Garden City and Rockville Centre and the hamlet of East Garden City (more commonly known as the “Nassau Hub”) were deemed to be complete economic development regions on their own.

TOWN OF OYSTER BAY:

- The Massapequas: Most or all of the 4 sub-areas share a common school district, fire district or zip code.
- Plainview-Old Bethpage share a common school district.

- Farmingdale-South Farmingdale: Other than a fire district, South Farmingdale has no independent services of its own.
- Bethpage-Plainedge: Other than a school district and a library, Plainedge does not have any services or primary shopping areas of its own.
- Jericho-Syosset-Woodbury: Linked by the Jericho Turnpike corridor. Jericho and Woodbury do not have downtowns of their own. Syosset and Woodbury share school and fire districts. All three share a common water district.
- Bayville-Oyster Bay-East Norwich et. al: Sparsely populated. All share Oyster Bay hamlet as the common downtown although East Norwich and Bayville have minor shopping areas. One common school district (except for Bayville, which is part of Locust Valley S.D.).
- Brookville-Muttontown-Old Westbury: No downtowns. All large estate villages very similar in character.
- Sea Cliff-Glenwood Landing-Glen Head: Common school district and many shared services.
- Hicksville is on its own.

TOWN OF NORTH HEMPSTEAD:

- The Great Neck peninsula: 9 villages and some unincorporated areas more renowned as an entity than on their own. Most services shared. There is a very active Village Officials Association that promotes coordinated actions.
- Port Washington peninsula: 4 villages and a few hamlets. One common zip code and nearly all services (school, water, fire, etc.) shared.
- Manhasset region: 6 villages and a hamlet. Common zip code, school district, fire district.

- Roslyn region: Common services.
- New Hyde Park region: Although badly spliced by school district lines, all areas in the 11040 zip code tend to unite on civic matters.
- Mineola-the Willistons-Carle Place: Although they all have separate services, these are very small geographic areas on their own.
- Westbury-New Cassel: Nearly all services are shared.

Of course, there can be differences of opinion as to how to best divide an entire county. For example, is Franklin Square best paired with Elmont or West Hempstead? Is Baldwin best grouped with Oceanside, Rockville Centre or left on its own? The important thing to remember is that the newly defined regions do not have to have rigid boundaries and can be adjusted at any time to better serve planning and economic development purposes.