RAUCH FOUNDATION

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Regional Plan Association NJ CT NY

LONG ISLAND PROFILE

A Summary of Demographic, Economic + Environmental Trends

APRIL 2003

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INTRODUCTION

The 2.8 million inhabitants of Nassau and Suffolk counties share much more than a unique piece of geography. We all benefit from a rich history, a diverse society and a dynamic economy. We also face a number of common challenges—congested highways, high housing costs, increasing demands on our schools and threats to water quality and the environment.

Recognizing our shared traits is critical to forming a consensus on goals and actions for the Island. However, this recognition should not keep us from addressing the differences in circumstance and need that make our challenges far more complex. We are a geographically diverse region with rural, suburban and urban communities that often see little in common with each other. We have a complex governance structure that includes two counties, two cities, 13 towns and 94 villages. There are also 127 school districts, each with the power to tax and spend, plus dozens of "special districts" which tax and spend for localized needs such as street lights, fire protection and libraries. Increasingly, we are becoming more racially and ethnically diverse, with economic and cultural differences that defy easy classification. And while we are an affluent region, there is a large and growing gap between rich and poor.

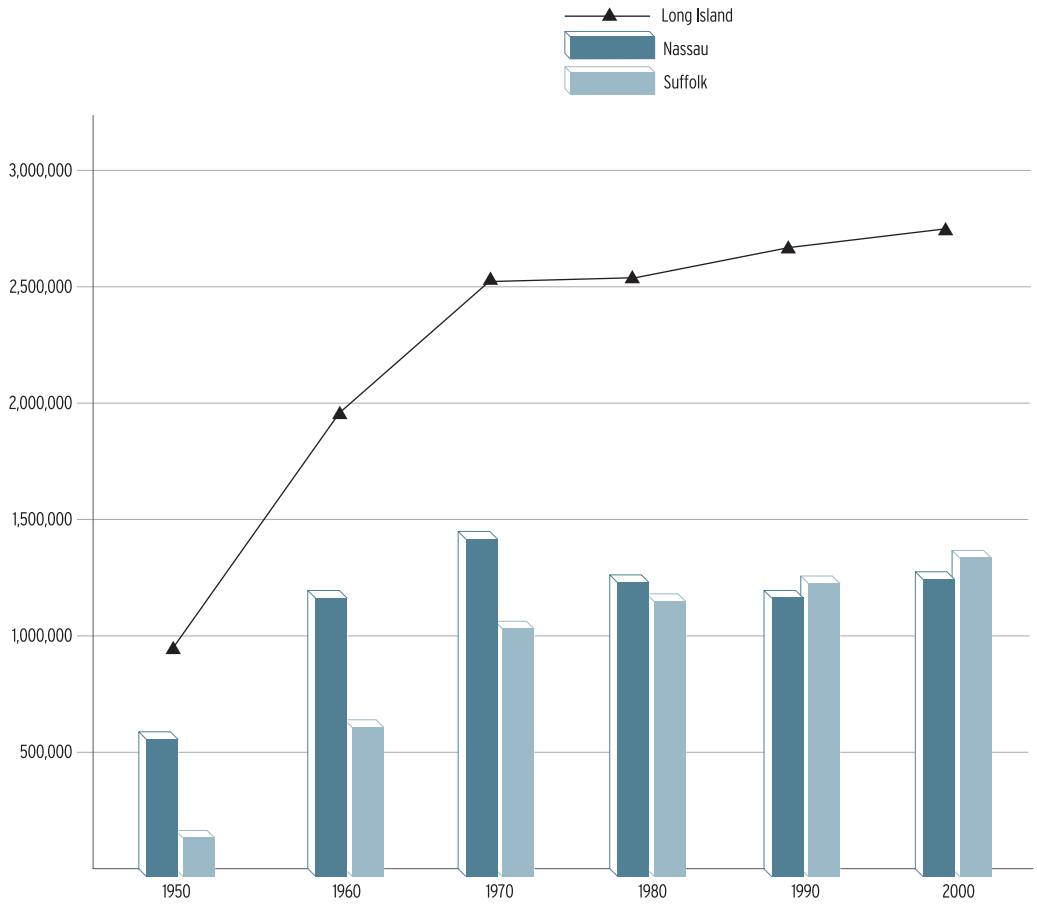
This profile was funded by the Rauch Foundation to provide a platform of basic facts about Long Island to help guide discussions about its future. It draws heavily from existing research and reports from the Long Island Association, the Long Island Regional Planning Board, the Long Island Housing Partnership, the Suffolk County Planning Department, Regional Plan Association and others. While the profile cannot substitute for the more in-depth analysis from these organizations, it can provide a common point of reference.

Long Island's Development since 1640

Long Island 1st Settled in Southold and Southampton	1640	1927	Charles Lindbergh - 'cradle of aviation'
Suffolk chartered - 1 of 10 original counties in NYS	1683	1930s	Robert Moses builds parks and parkways
Battle of Long Island with Nathan Hale	1776	1941 to 1945	World War II; Aviation industry at its peak
Lighthouse at Montauk Pt. - 1st coastal beacon in NY	1796	1947	Levittown (17,400 homes in 3 years)
Whaling and fishing forge ties to New England	Early 1800s	1950s	Building peak in Nassau; Roosevelt Field Mall
Long Island Rail Road begins operations	1834	1958	Construction of the Long Island Expressway
Quaker farmers assist the Underground Railroad in the Civil War	1860s	1960s	Building peak in Western Suffolk; Walt Whitman Mall
West to East railroad brings goods and people	Late 1800s	1970s	SUNY Stony Brook university and hospital
Nassau County breaks away from Queens	1899	1980s	Hi-tech industry - Computer Associates, Symbol, Olympus
Still mostly railroad villages and isolated rural farming area	1900	1994	Grumman merges with Northrop after long decline
Vanderbilt Long Island motor parkway	1908	1990s	East End booms in response to Wall Street boom

POPULATION

CHART 1: TOTAL POPULATION, 1950-2000

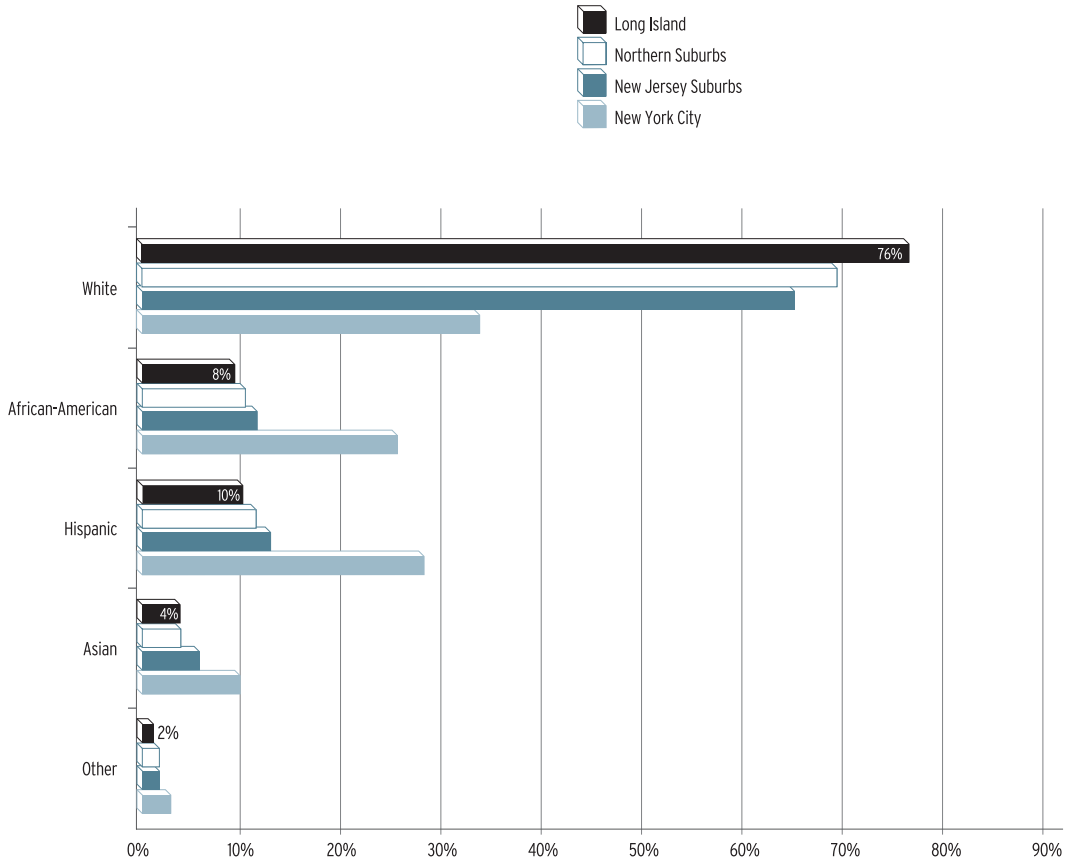


Source: U.S. Census of Population

Long Island is no small piece of America. The U.S. Census counted 2,753,913 of us in Nassau and Suffolk counties. There are more of us than the residents of 19 states… more than Kansas, Nebraska, Maine, Hawaii or Rhode Island, for example. We are home to 14% of New York State's population and have two of the most populous counties anywhere. Suffolk County alone is the 22nd largest county in the United States, and Nassau is not far behind at 26th.[1] Long Island is also a significant arm of the tri-state metropolitan body that surrounds and includes New York City, connected by jobs, culture, communications and entertainment. Nassau's population grew most rapidly in the 1950s and peaked in 1970. After declining during the 1970s and 1980s, modest growth resumed in the 1990s. Suffolk, on the other hand, grew rapidly through 1980, and has continued to grow at a slightly faster rate than Nassau in the 1980s and 1990s.

[1] These and many of the other comparative statistics in this report are from a paper on *Demographic, Economic and Development Trends: Nassau-Suffolk*, New York, by the Suffolk County Planning Department, February 2002.

CHART 2: SHARE OF POPULATION BY RACE AND ETHNICITY, 2000



Source: U.S. Census of Population

Recent and projected population increases are largely the result of immigration and the growth of racial and ethnic minorities. The rapid expansion of the Hispanic and Asian population is a central demographic dynamic on Long Island. Along with African-Americans and other minorities, the non-white population now accounts for 24% of our total population, up from approximately 16% in 1990. This growth is consistent with patterns throughout the tri-state metropolitan area, as immigrant communities have taken hold in suburban as well as urban areas. However, whites still comprise 76% of the population, a higher share than in any other part of the tri-state region. In the next decade, the white population on Long Island is projected to decline by an additional 78,000 while the non-white population grows by 162,000. [2]

Nassau-Suffolk Population by Race + Ethnicity, 1990 - 2000

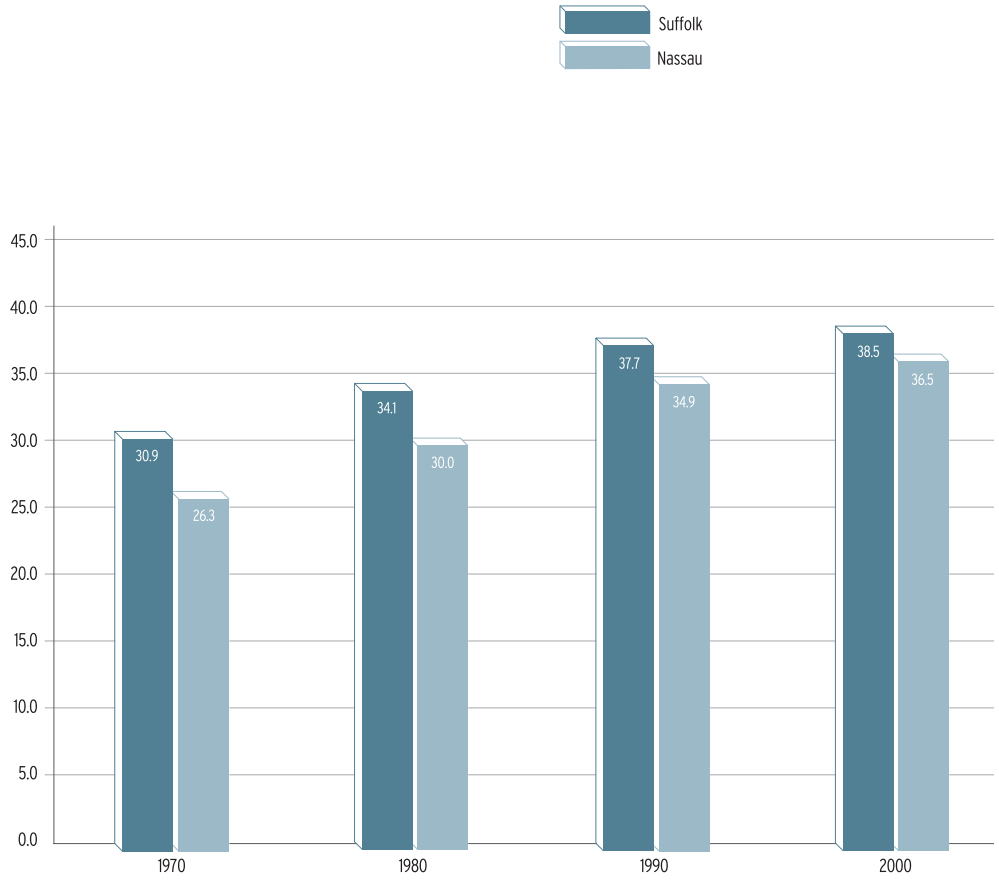
	1990	2000	Change	Change
White	2,201,350	2,105,352	-95,998	-4.4%
African - American	184,494	223,122	38,628	20.9%
Hispanic	157,118	282,693	125,575	79.9%
Asian	60,082	97,631	37,549	62.5%
Other	6,168	45,115	38,947	631.4%
Total	2,609,212	2,753,913	144,701	5.5%

Source: U.S. Census of Population

Note: Because of the changes in how the U.S. Census categorized race and ethnic groups, percentages from 1990 are not completely comparable to those of 2000. The growth in Hispanics, in particular, is likely to be understated because more were likely to list themselves as "Other".

[2] Forecast by the New York Metropolitan Transportation Council

CHART 3: MEDIAN AGE FOR NASSAU-SUFFOLK, 1950-2000



Source: U.S. Census of Population

Our population is aging along with the rest of the United States. Our median age has been rising for decades. Now, with the aging of the Baby Boom generation, more Long Islanders are entering their late 40s and 50s. And with longer life expectancies, our elderly population is also expanding. Nassau has a somewhat older profile than Suffolk, but the gap is narrowing. Eastern Suffolk in particular is attracting many retirees and can expect substantial growth in the number of senior citizens.

As the Baby Boom generation continues to age, we can expect large increases in retirees and older workers. Forecasts of the New York Metropolitan Transportation Council predict a 45% increase in the over 65 population during the next two decades, and a 76% increase in those 55-64. The preschool and school-aged population is projected to decline.

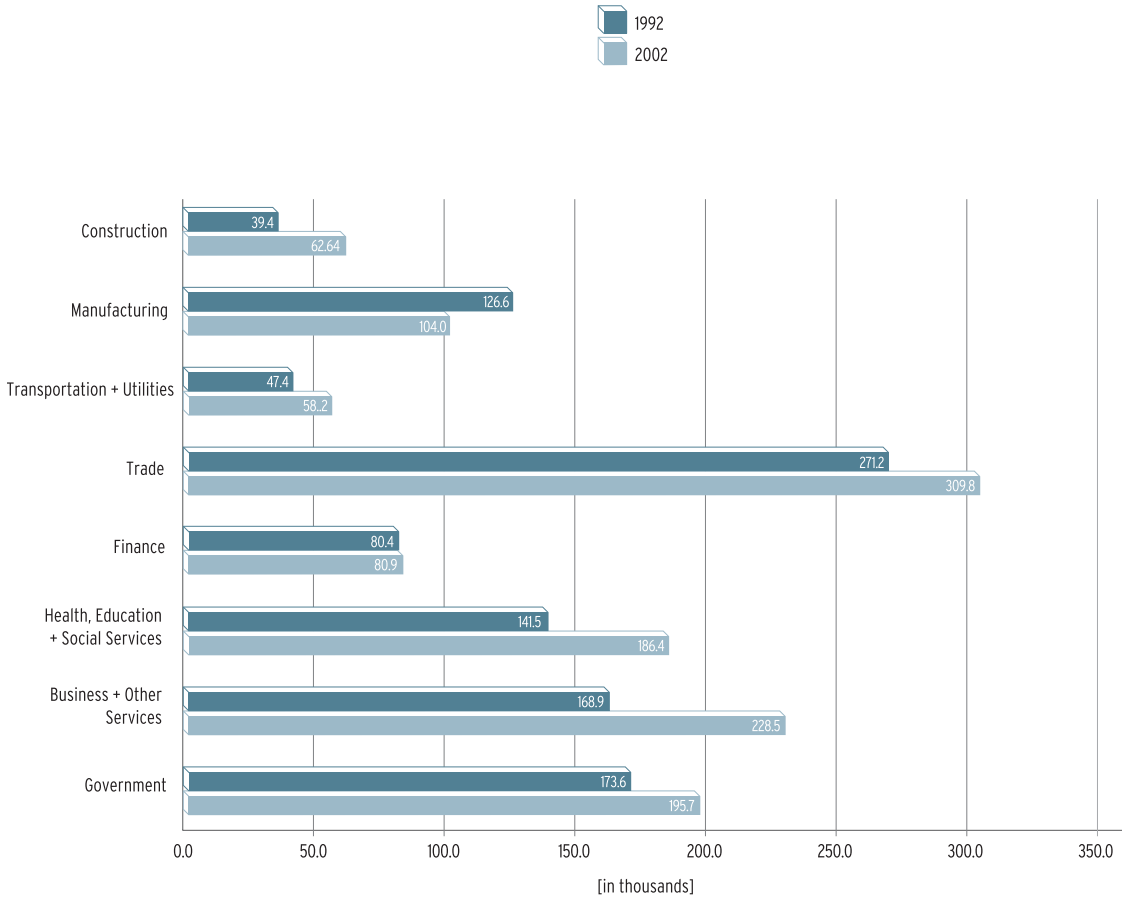
Nassau-Suffolk Change in Population by Age 2000 - 2020

	Number Change	Percent Change
Preschool (< 5 years)	-4,700	-3%
School - Aged (5 - 24 years)	-68,400	-10%
Labor Force	125,600	8%
Young (25-34 years)	15,600	5%
Prime (35-54 years)	-93,300	-11%
Mature (55-64 years)	203,300	78%
Seniors (> 65 years)	162,500	45%

Source: U.S. Forecast by Urbanomics for the New York Metropolitan Transportation Council

ECONOMY

CHART 4: INDUSTRY EMPLOYMENT IN NASSAU-SUFFOLK, 1992-2002



Source: New York State Department of Labor

Our economy is one of the largest regional economies in the United States, and one of the fastest growing in the New York metropolitan area. With a Gross Domestic Product of over $100 billion, Nassau-Suffolk ranks as one of the top 20 regional economies in the nation. It has a larger economy than nearly half of U.S. states, and it produces about as much in goods and services as countries such as Israel, Ireland and Venezuela. Long Island has also been one of the fastest growing parts of the larger New York metropolitan area economy for most of the postwar period.

While Long Island's economy remains closely tied to New York City's, a growing proportion of Long Island's workforce works within Nassau and Suffolk. The economies of the city and the island are intertwined in many ways, from common labor pools to overlapping business networks. Over a quarter-million Long Islanders commute to New York City every day, but 77% of the Island's labor force works on the Island.

Key **Long Island** Business Sectors, 2001

Business Sector	Employment	Average Annual Wage
Defense - Related	26,015	$50,972
Technology - Intensive	66,155	$54,483
Tourism - Related	121,732	$21,473
Not - For - Profit	128,894	$31,097

Source: Long Island Association Annual Business Fact Book, 2002 - 2003

Long Island's Largest Employers

Non-Governmental Jobs	Type of Business	Employees
North Shore-Long Island Jewish Health System	Hospital/medical consortium	30,000
Diocese of Rockville Centre	Religious institution	17,500
SUNY at Stony Brook	State University	14,000
JPMorganChase & Co.	Financial Services	6,800
Cablevision Systems	Entertainment + Telecommunications	6,567
Waldbaum's	Supermarket Chain	6,400
Winthorp South Nassau University Health System	Hospital/medical consortium	5,700
Verizon Communications	Telecommunication Services	5,500
Pathmark Stores	Supermarket Chain	4,800
Keyspan Corporation	Energy Services	4,383
King Kullen Grocery	Supermarket Chain	4,009
Long Island University	Private University	3,909
Macy's East	Department Store	3,500
Home Depot	Home Improvement Store	3,447
Good Samaritan Hospital Medical Center	Hospital	3,400
United Parcel Service	Delivery Service	3,200
Computer Associates International, Inc.	Business Software	3,000
Newsday	Daily Newspaper	3,000
Brookhaven National Laboratory	Research + Development Lab	2,900
Citigroup	Commercial Bank	2,900
Sears Roebuck and Co.	Retailer	2,851
Pilgrim Psychiatric Center	State Hospital	2,828
Nassau Community College	Education	2,770
Kmart	Retail	2,700
Fortunoff	Retail	2,500

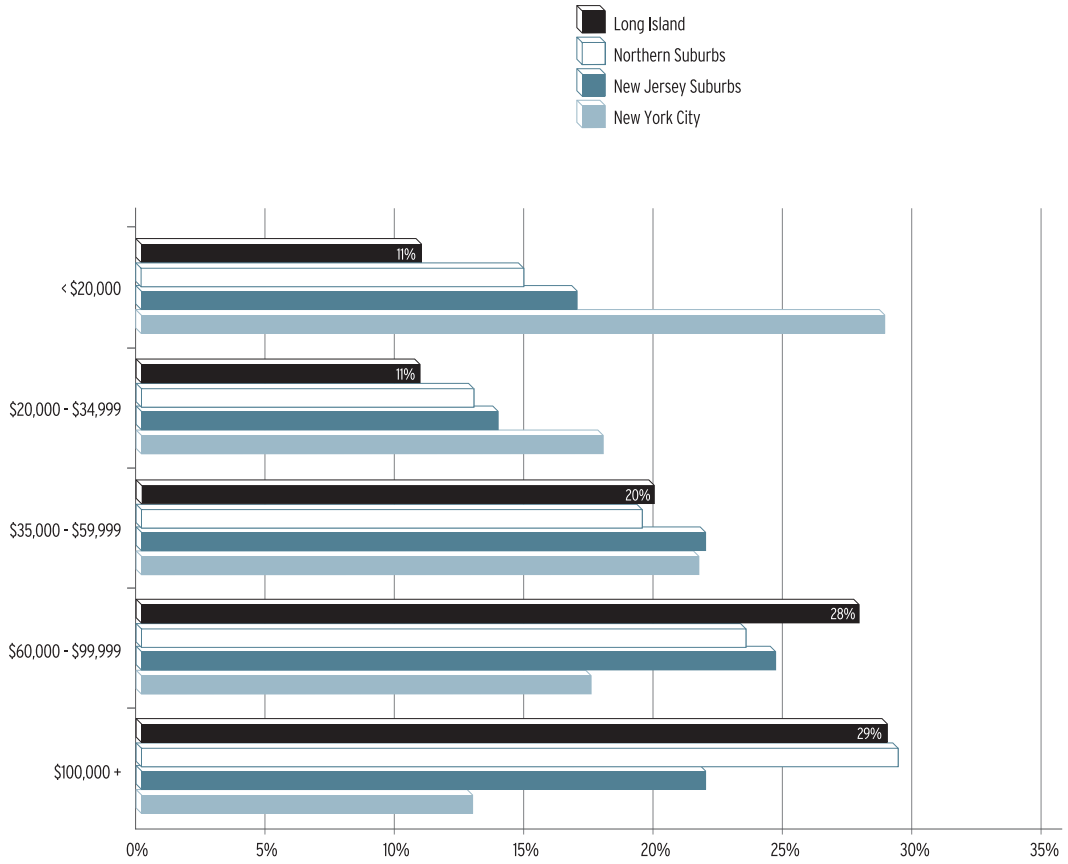
Source: Long Island Business News Book of Lists, 2002

Following a steep downturn in the early 1990s, a new economy has emerged driven largely by technology, business and health services, global trade and tourism. The old economy built around the defense and aerospace industry was dealt a double blow with the ending of the Cold War and a national recession in the early 1990s. However, the workforce and entrepreneurial talent that remained, along with the growing need for financial and business services throughout the New York metro area, helped the economy to reinvent itself around businesses such as computer services, biotechnology, consulting, and other technology and business service functions. As reported in the Long Island Association's 2002-2003 Business Fact Book, Department of Defense contracts to Long Island firms declined from $3.9 billion in 1990 to $1.0 billion in 2001. However, the value of exports produced on Long Island grew by 67%, to $4.7 billion, between 1993 and 1999, primarily on the strength of technology industries such as electronics, instruments and pharmaceuticals. Continued growth in health care, education, social services, tourism and consumer services also contributed strongly to Long Island's changing economic profile.[3]

On the whole, we are far more affluent than the average American and have the highest incomes in the New York region. In 2000, 29% of Long Island households had annual incomes greater than $100,000, compared with 12% of all Americans. In the New York metropolitan area, only the northern suburbs (Westchester, Fairfield, Rockland and Putnam counties) had a slightly higher share earning over $100,000. However, only 11% of Nassau and Suffolk households had incomes of less than $20,000, substantially less than any other part of the region. Long Island also had the highest share earning between $60,000 and $100,000.

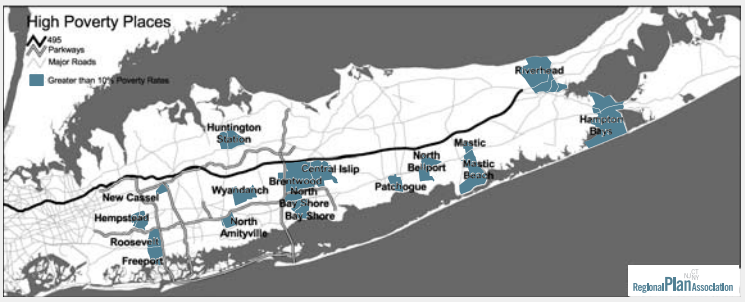
[3] *The Long Island Association Annual Business Fact Book*, prepared by Dr. Pearl M. Kamer, LIA Chief Economist, and co-sponsored by Adelphi University and the Long Island Power Authority, pp. 20-27.

CHART 5: SHARE OF HOUSEHOLDS BY ANNUAL INCOME, 1999



Source: U.S. Census of Population

In spite of this affluence, we include many low-income families and individuals. About 154,000 of us live below the federal poverty line. At 5.6%, this is low by national standards. However, the federal poverty level for a family of three is only $13,738. Particularly, in a high-cost area like Long Island, that means that many more people living above the poverty line ought to be considered low-income. In addition, as shown in the map below, there are many "pockets of poverty" that have concentrated numbers of low-income households.



ENVIRONMENT

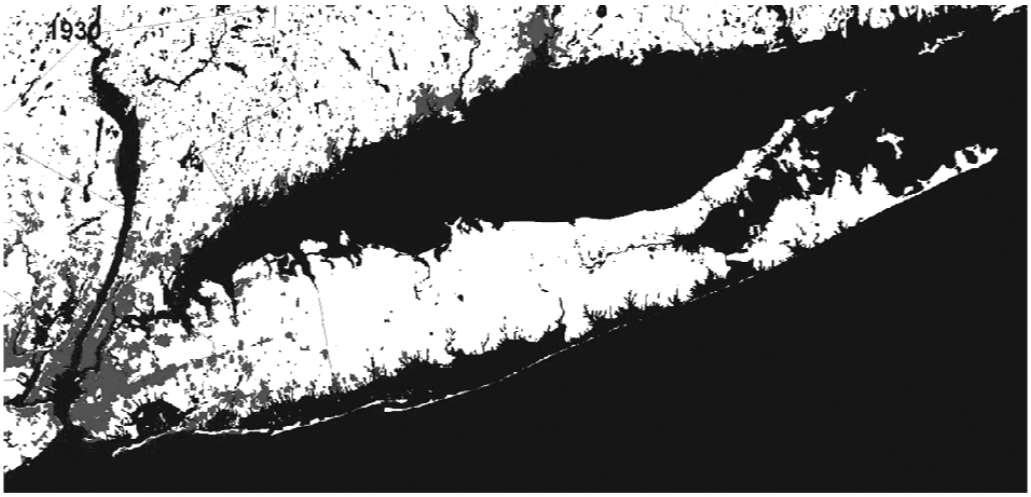
Following several decades of growth, Long Island is now almost completely developed. With homes, buildings and pavement covering most of the Island as far as central Suffolk, the edge of rural, undeveloped land is not found until one reaches the William Floyd Parkway, some 60 miles from Manhattan. Only the East End remains largely undeveloped, and that area is now under severe pressure for development. One analysis by the Committee for the East End Community Preservation Fund put the amount of undeveloped land in the five eastern towns at 90,000 acres—one tenth of the combined area of Nassau and Suffolk counties. There is still some vacant land in western Suffolk, but this is rapidly disappearing. Existing measures to preserve existing open space include the East End Community Preservation Fund, which uses a real estate transfer tax to fund open space protection, and two additional programs in Suffolk County for farmland preservation and open space acquisition.

Selected Physical Characteristics of **Nassau-Suffolk**

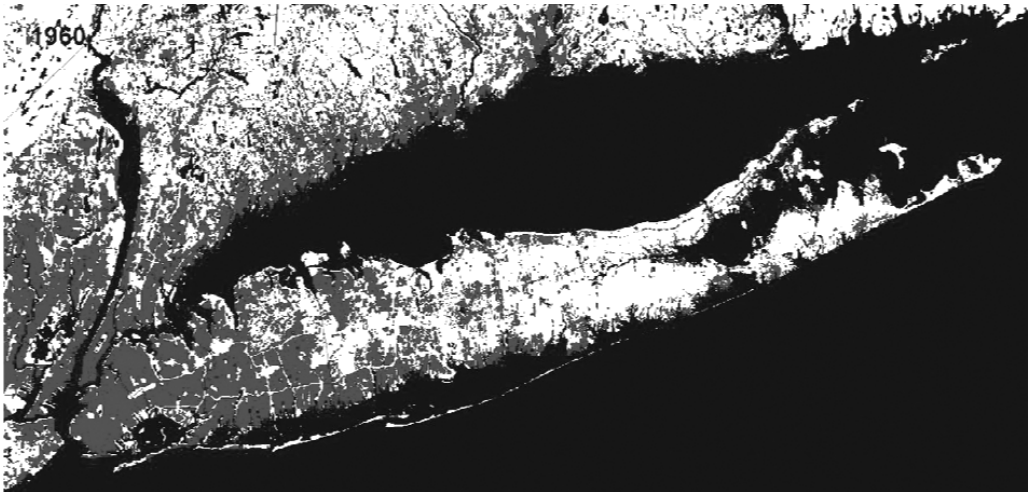
- 1,198 square miles from Nassau/Queens border to Montauk Point
- 1,180 miles of shoreline
- 139 square miles of public open space that includes 14 state parks, 26 county parks and 37 preserves
- Entertainment and sporting venues that include the Nassau Coliseum, Jones Beach, Belmont Park, the Westbury Music Fair, 100 museums and 46 golf clubs
- Highway network that includes three main East-West arteries (Long Island Expressway, Northern State Parkway, Southern State Parkway)
- Transit network including the Long Island Railroad (nation's largest commuter rail system), 2 county bus systems and ferries to New York City, Connecticut and outer islands
- Unique ecological system that includes rich soil for agriculture, a massive fresh water aquifer, and diverse wildlife, flora and fauna

Source: Regional Plan A

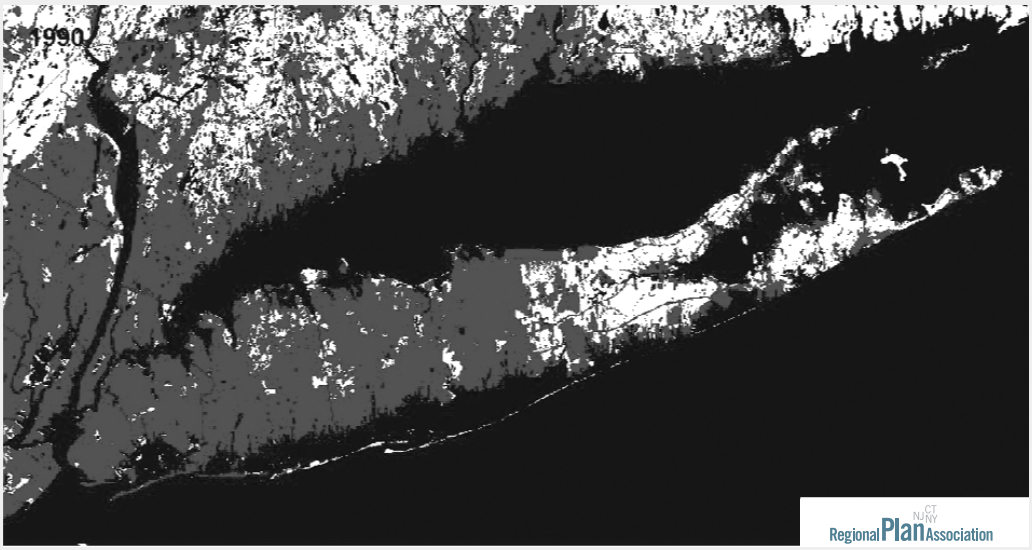
Urbanization 1930



Urbanization 1960



Urbanization 1990



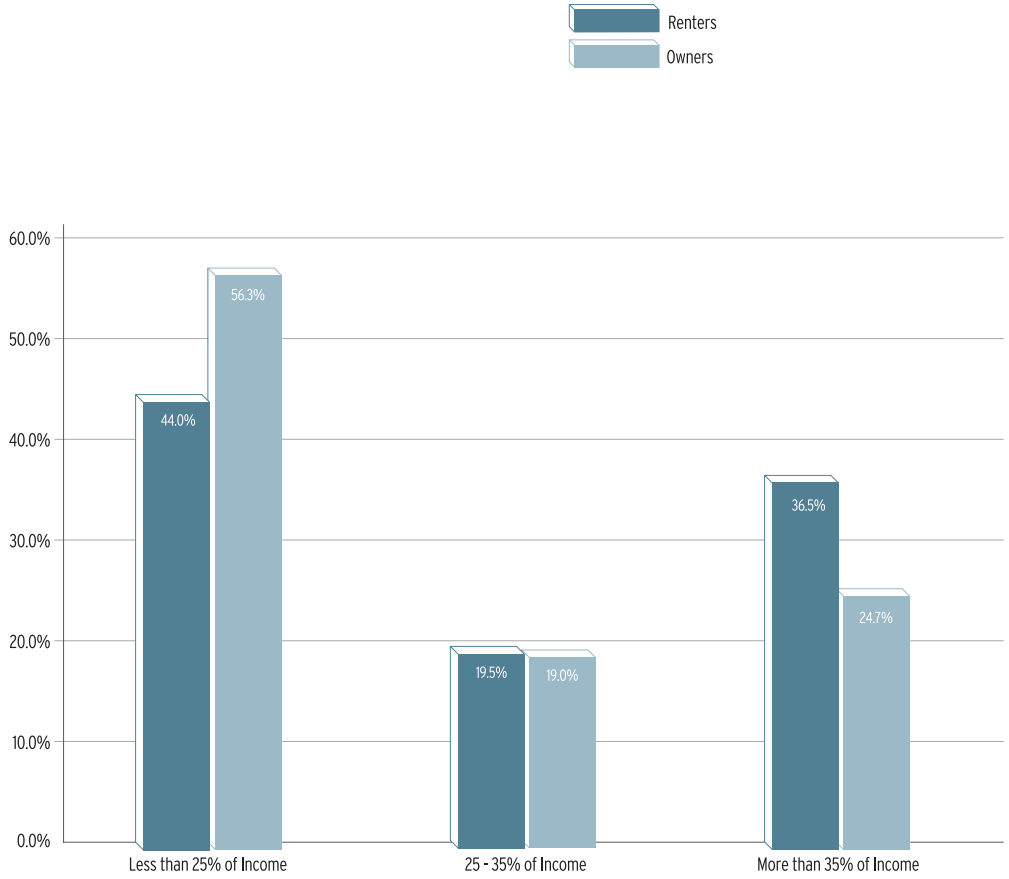
Development and agricultural uses also affect the underground water supply on which we are totally dependent. Nassau and Suffolk are indeed an island isolated from any external source of water. Unlike cities and counties on the mainland that have extensive mountain-fed reservoir systems, we rely on a water supply that is directly beneath us. The purity of this supply is threatened by pollution from a variety of sources, including farms, golf courses and commercial property. For example, over 23,000 acres of agricultural lands were treated with chemical fertilizers and over 15,000 acres were treated with pesticides in 1997. In both cases, Long Island's active vineyards and produce farms used a much higher intensity of these chemicals than in agricultural lands in other parts of downstate New York or northern New Jersey. Previous and existing efforts to protect this vital resource include the 1992 Long Island Groundwater Protection Area Plan issued by the Long Island Regional Planning Board, which called for the protection of 207,000 acres of special groundwater areas; and the Pine Barrens Protection Act, which now protects the largest of these groundwater areas in the Central Pine Barrens.

Our 1,180 miles of shoreline is a rare asset that benefits our economy, ecology and quality of life. This extensive waterfront provides access to the scenic views and recreation that make Long Island an attractive place to live and vacation. These coastal areas are also the habitat for much of the island's fish and plant life.

Related to all of these issues is a uniform, sprawling density pattern that characterizes most of Long Island. With few exceptions, our apartments, businesses and shopping centers are not clustered, and large areas of the island are laid out in similar sized lots ranging from 60 X 100 feet in much of Nassau County to 1-3 acre lots on the North Shore of both counties. These patterns consume more land and encourage more auto dependence than more clustered, higher density development. Houses on one-acre lots consume ten times as much land per housing unit as townhouses or garden apartments, for example. Our remaining open spaces, our groundwater reserves and our shorelines are all impacted by a continuation of this historic pattern.

HOUSING

CHART 6: SHARE OF LONG ISLAND HOUSEHOLDS BY PERCENT OF INCOME SPENT ON HOUSING, 1999



Source: U.S. Census of Population

Our housing prices are nearly twice as high as the national average, but comparable to other suburban counties in the New York metropolitan area. Compared to the national median home value of $120,000 in 2000, the average house on Long Island was worth $213,000. Nassau's median of $242,000 was substantially higher than Suffolk's at $185,000. Even these prices are well below current levels. Median prices rose by 26% in Nassau and 35% in Suffolk between 1999 and 2001, and have continued to escalate since then. However, when considered as a suburb of a large metropolitan area, Long Island's costs are not much different from the suburbs of other large metro area suburbs, such as San Francisco, Los Angeles or Washington, D.C. Prices in other New York area counties were similar or even higher. For example, the median price in Bergen County was $250,000 while Westchester topped the list of suburban counties at $326,000. More distant counties, such as Middlesex, NJ ($168,000) and Orange, NY ($145,000) had prices that were more in line with Suffolk.

More than a third of renters are spending 35% or more of their household income for a place to live. A recent analysis by Dr. Pearl M. Kamer prepared for the Long Island Housing Partnership found that that almost 62,000 rental homes or apartments and 165,000 owner homes cost more than 35% of the householders' income.[4] Even at this high standard of affordability (the Department of Housing and Urban Development uses 30% as a threshold), these numbers represent 1 out of 3 renters and 1 out of 4 owners. Percentages are similar for Nassau and Suffolk. Unlike housing prices, we have some of the highest rents in the metropolitan region. Although Long Island has the smallest proportion of renters (20%) of any of the major areas of the New York region, it has the lowest vacancy rates and highest rents.

[4] Kamer, Pearl M., *Lack of Affordable Housing: Prescription for Economic Disaster*, prepared for the Long Island Housing Partnership and financed by the Roslyn Savings Foundation.

Housing Costs in Selected Counties, 2000

	Housing Units	Owner-Occupied	Median Value	Renter-Occupied	Median Rent
Long Island					
Nassau	458,151	80%	$242,300	20%	$964
Suffolk	522,323	80%	$185,200	20%	$945
New York City					
Bronx	490,659	20%	$190,400	80%	$620
Brooklyn	930,866	27%	$224,100	73%	$672
Manhattan	798,144	20%	$1,000,000	80%	$796
Queens	817,250	43%	$212,600	57%	$775
Staten Island	163,993	64%	$209,100	36%	$742
Northern Suburbs					
Westchester	349,445	60%	$325,800	40%	$839
Rockland	94,973	72%	$242,500	28%	$884
Orange	122,754	67%	$144,500	33%	$714
Fairfield	339,466	69%	$288,900	31%	$838
New Jersey					
Bergen	339,820	67%	$250,300	33%	$872
Passaic	170,048	56%	$190,600	44%	$747
Hudson	240,618	31%	$150,300	69%	$703
Essex	301,011	46%	$208,400	54%	$675
Union	192,945	62%	$188,800	38%	$752
Middlesex	273,637	67%	$168,500	33%	$845

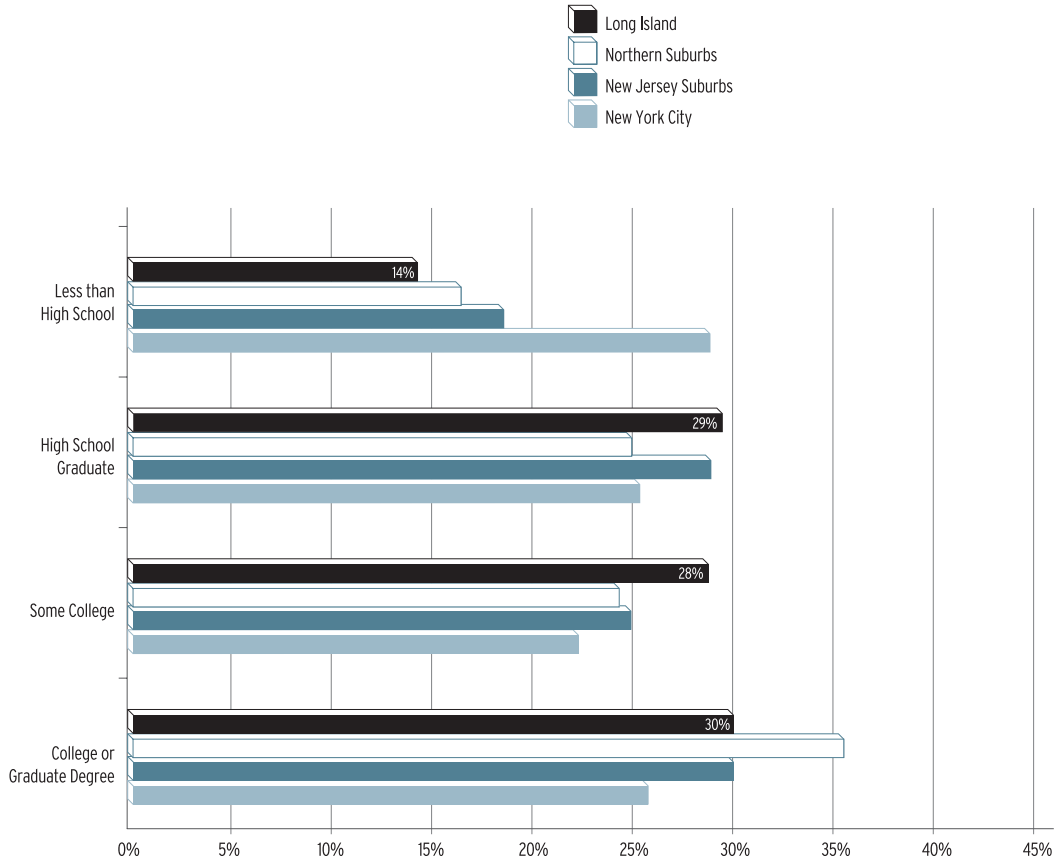
Source: U.S. Census of Population

On average, the median rent of $954 accounts for 27.6% of household income. This is only slightly higher than the national average of 25.5%, which includes high numbers of urban poor that Long Island does not have. Low and moderate-income owners with high relative housing costs also represent a substantial number of Long Islanders. Median owner costs represent 22.8% of the average household income, compared to a national average of 18.7%.

The housing cost burden varies considerably from place to place, with residents of some towns and villages bearing substantially higher relative costs. The Housing Partnership found that more than 200 renters in each of the following Nassau County places spent at least 50% of their household income on housing: Great Neck Village, Great Neck Plaza, Port Washington, New Cassel, Hempstead Village, Uniondale, Cedarhurst Village, Glen Cove City and Long Beach City. And in Suffolk County, these places included Huntington Station, North Amityville, Wyandanch, Kings Park, Central Islip, Bayport, Port Jefferson Station, Patchogue Village, East Patchogue, Shirley, Mastic Beach, Moriches, Riverhead and Flanders/Hampton Bay. For homeowners, only Wyandanch and North Amityville had more than 200 households paying more than 50% of their household income.

EDUCATION

CHART 7: SHARE OF ADULTS BY EDUCATION LEVEL, 1999



Source: U.S. Census of Population

Long Island has the highest share of high school graduates in the New York region, and 30% of adults have at least a college degree. Only 14% of adults have not graduated high school, and 58% have at least some post-secondary education.

By most measures, our elementary and high schools perform well above the state average. Nearly three-fourths of fourth graders in the 127 school districts in Nassau and Suffolk either met or exceeded New York State reading standards in 2000, compared to 58% of students statewide. This difference is mirrored in reading and math scores at different grade levels, and measures of high school performance.

One out of eight of our public school students attend schools in "High Need" districts that are characterized by low test scores, graduation rates and college placement. These students are concentrated in nine districts—Roosevelt, Hempstead, Westbury and Freeport in Nassau and Brentwood, Wyandanch, Amityville, Central Islip and William Floyd in Suffolk—that have been defined by the state as High Need districts based on their ability to meet the needs of their students with local resources.[5] Schools in these districts perform below the state average and well below other districts on Long Island by most outcome measures. For example, only 9% of fourth graders receive the highest rating for reading and English language skills, compared to 16% of students statewide and 23% in other Nassau-Suffolk districts.

[5] The measure is calculated by dividing the district's poverty rate by an index that combines the district's property values and average income.

Nassau-Suffolk Public School Student Outcomes, 2000

Type of School District	Met or Exceeded Grade 4 English Standards	Exceeded Grade 4 English Standards	Annual Hign School Drop-Out Rate	% of Graduates to College
Nassau	77%	25%	0.9%	92%
Suffolk	71%	19%	2.3%	85%
New York State	58%	16%	n/a	77%
High Needs Districts in Nassau - Suffolk *	50%	9%	3.9%	74%
All Other Districts in Nassau - Suffolk	77%	23%	1.3%	90%

* Defined by the NYS Dept. of Education based on district poverty and property values

Source: New York State Department of Education

Forty-two percent of Nassau and Suffolk's African-American and Hispanic students attend school in High Need districts, which have fewer resources per pupil than more affluent districts. Poverty rates in these districts are more than three times those of other districts, and the share of students with limited proficiency in English is four times as high. With smaller local tax bases to draw from, these districts also require much higher levels of state aid to approach the level of spending in more affluent districts.

Nassau-Suffolk Public School Student Characteristics, 2000

Type of School District	Enrollment	% White	% Black	% Hispanic	% Other	Poverty Index	Limited English
High Needs Districts	57,617	25%	39%	35%	2%	13%	12%
All Other Districts	388,422	80%	12%	11%	4%	4%	3%

Source: New York State of Department of Education

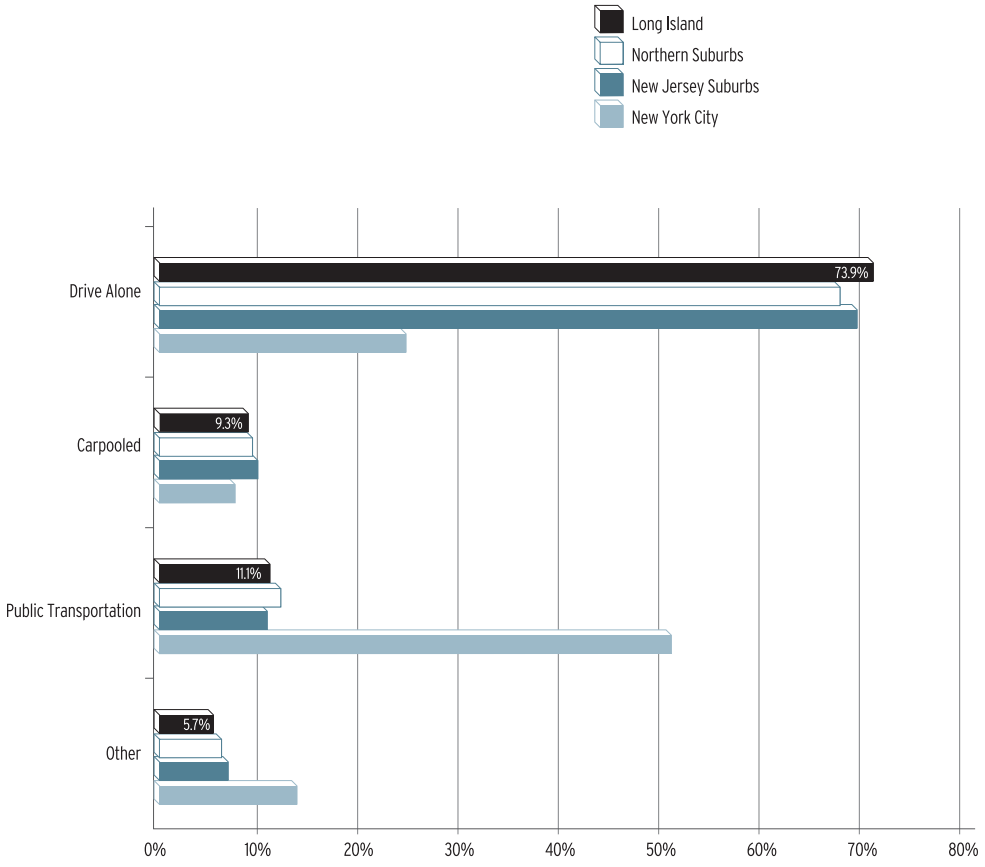
Nassau-Suffolk Public School Resource Characteristics, 2000

Type of School District	Expenditures Per Pupil	State Share of Budget	Pupil/Teacher Ratio	Instruction $ per Reg. Pupil	Instruction $ per Disabled Pupil	% of Pupils with Disabilities
High Needs Districts	$12,394	50%	15.4	$6,914	$16,632	15.5%
All Other Districts	$12,757	27%	13.8	$7,662	$7,662	13.5%

Source: New York State of Department of Education

TRANSPORTATION

CHART 8: Means of Transportation to Work, 2000



Source: U.S. Census of Population

Three out of every four Long Island workers drive alone to work This is slightly higher than in other suburban areas of the New York region, and demonstrates our dependency on auto travel. Only about 1 in 10 takes public transportation to work, with a large proportion of these workers representing Long Island Rail Road riders to Manhattan. For work trips completely within Nassau and Suffolk counties, an even smaller share use public transportation, with bus travel being the predominant means of transit trips to work. For both work and non-work travel, the average Long Islander makes three-and-one-half trips per day. In Nassau, about 6% of these trips are by public transportation, while in Suffolk transit accounts for 2% of trips.[6]

Number of Vehicles per **Long Island** Household, 2000

Persons per Household	Share of households by number of vehicles per household			
	No Vehicles	1 Vehicles	2 Vehicles	3+ Vehicles
All Households	6%	28%	45%	21%
1 - person	19%	69%	10%	3%
2 - person	4%	28%	57%	10%
3 - person	3%	17%	48%	31%
4 - person	3%	12%	51%	34%

Source: 2000 Census of Population

[6] New York Metropolitan Transportation Council & New Jersey Transportation Planning Authority, *1997/1998 Regional Travel-Household Interview Survey, April 2000.*

Nearly 60,000 households, or 6% of all households, do not have a car. In addition, 28% of two-person households and 17% of three-person households have only one vehicle. For many of these residents, the public transit system is more of a necessity than a convenience.

Over the last twenty years, the number of vehicles that we own has grown more than three times as fast as the population. While the population has grown by 6%, the number of registered vehicles has grown by 19%. Over this same period, very little capacity has been added to either the highway or the transit network. As a result, a transportation system that was largely built for east-west travel and commutation to Manhattan must now deal with both greater volume and more complex travel patterns. Traffic exceeds design capacity on the Long Island Expressway and the Parkways at rush hour, and many arterial highways are also crowded.