

March 9, 2015

## **Bhaumik: LI stagnation can be reversed**

By: Shuprotim Bhaumik

A recent report by the [Long Island Index](#), published by the [Rauch Foundation](#), underscores the economic stagnation that Long Island will increasingly experience if a new direction isn't taken soon. The report, entitled "Long Island's Future: Economic Implications of Today's Choices," recommends that new way, and it's one that holds great promise for the region.

Long Island's growth is stunted by three interconnected factors: limited housing options; failure to replace defense and manufacturing industries with well-paying jobs; and a high property tax burden. All three combine to hinder Long Island's economic competitiveness.

The history of these and other socioeconomic trends on Long Island over the last 40 years can be explored in a series of interactive maps accompanying the report, created by the Center for Urban Research at the City University of New York Graduate Center. The maps, available free at [LongIslandIndexMaps.org](#), illuminate the trajectory that we're on and why we must change.

The reality is that Long Island's future will be greatly diminished. Under the do-nothing scenario, jobs on Long Island are projected to grow at a significantly lower rate than in the 1990s and 2000s. That trend has already led to a significant decline in the number of young workers on Long Island. By 2010, 25-to-34-year-olds represented just under 11 percent of the total population. Young workers moved elsewhere in search of better opportunities.

As a longtime resident of Syosset and a graduate of Stony Brook University, I was especially pleased to author the report. The economic stagnation that Long Island must overcome is substantial. But the future can hold great promise if Long Island pursues two game-changing policy interventions simultaneously: expanding Long Island's biomedical cluster and the region's multifamily housing options.

Long Island's biomedical industry is relatively small, but growing, and includes, among others, such powerhouse resources as [Brookhaven National Laboratory](#), [Cold Spring Harbor Laboratory](#) and [Stony Brook University](#), and our world-class health system in North Shore-LIJ. Developing multifamily housing in downtowns – especially transit-oriented ones – would add more diverse housing options while preserving existing neighborhoods, farmland and open space. These interventions, together with enhanced connectivity within Long Island and with the rest of the metropolitan area through projects such as "Third Track," are critical to revitalizing our economy.

A 2014 survey of Long Islanders by the Long Island Index showed that a majority of Long Islanders support local, high-density, residential opportunities in downtown areas. In 2010, the Long Island Index and the Regional Plan Association identified 8,300 acres within a half-mile of Long Island Rail Road stations and downtowns available for infill development.

The report takes those two policy proposals and quantifies what it would mean for the region if they were simultaneously implemented. The results are impressive. As compared to baseline trends, the report projects by 2040:

- Between 44,500 and 73,000 new jobs
- Between 82,000 and 138,000 new residents
- Between 12,000 and 23,000 new residents age 25 to 34
- Between \$7.7 billion and \$12.6 billion in annual new income
- Between \$9.5 billion and \$15.1 billion in annual new gross regional product

The key to all of this is that the two policy proposals are linked – and tied as well to enhanced capacity to reverse-commute (from New York City to Long Island) on the Long Island Rail Road. That's the subject of another Long Island Index report that our firm authored last year.

Biomedical companies, especially startups, will come to and grow on Long Island if they can attract the specialized talent that they need. That talent, particularly recent college graduates, wants housing options they can afford. They want vibrant downtowns and easy access to New York City or they want to live in the city and commute out. Either way Long Island must accommodate them or lose them to other communities that are more hospitable.

The economic future of Long Island is in our hands. We can actively pursue the biomedical industry and multifamily housing, using the implementation tactics described in the report. Or we can watch passively as attractive jobs that could have been on Long Island locate elsewhere.

*Bhaumik, a resident of Syosset, is a partner at HR&A Advisors.*

<http://libn.com/2015/03/09/bhaumik-li-stagnation-can-be-reversed/>