

What Every Long Islander Should Know: “Eight Things Long Island Should Do”

By Nancy Rauch Douzinas

I often hear people say that Long Island can't get anything done, that we can't get out of our own way.

There may be some truth to that. Other regions have successfully addressed problems that all we do is talk about.

We need to break that habit and start doing. Here are some concrete steps that would get us going in the right direction.

1. **Give parents of newborns an “owner’s manual.”** You can't buy a t-shirt without getting care instructions on the label. But we leave young people to raise children on their own. Information packets, commonplace in Europe, give the basics on medical care, effective child-care, available resources, and more. Getting children off to a good start is the single best investment we can make.
2. **Legalize accessory apartments** (above garages, etc.). This is the fastest, simplest way to make a dent in our housing crisis. It would provide housing options for young people and seniors . . . relief from the brain drain for area employers . . . and extra income for hard-pressed homeowners. A win-win-win deal.
3. **Run vans to and from train stations.** What sense does it make for thousands of us to drive one-by-one every day, just to fight for spaces in sprawling station parking lots? Convenient van service would save gas, reduce pollution, ease traffic, and free up space for housing near stations.

We also need to start building the capacity we need for long-term change. The next two items won't make a difference overnight, but will start incubating the kind of leadership we need.

4. **Take our county executives on a field trip**—to visit leaders in regions that have been successful in solving problems like ours. Sure, Long Island is unique, but we can learn tons from other regions' experience. It's pointless trying

to reinvent the wheel—we're only spinning ours in the process.

5. **Hold an international Hicksville contest.** Hicksville could be a model town center: a key hub and prosperous, magnetic place to live and work. But its enormous potential is not being realized. A contest for the best development plans would get us some good ideas, plus get Long Islanders more involved in thinking about our future.

Next are things for us to do individually:

6. **Shop at farmers markets.** You get the freshest produce while supporting area farmers—another win-win. Check locations at www.nyfarmersmarket.com. Better still, partner with a local eco-friendly farm by joining a CSA (Community Sponsored Agriculture). Find a list at www.greenpeople.org/csa.htm.
7. **Change to compact fluorescent bulbs.** We each save money, and together reduce the need for more power plants. Also get an energy audit from LIPA. The average Long Island home can reduce its carbon footprint, and its monthly bill, 30-40%.

And finally:

8. **Add to this list.** What do you think Long Island should do right now? E-mail your ideas to ideas@rauchfoundation.org. Getting Long Island moving is a job for all of us.

Nancy Rauch Douzinas is president of the Rauch Foundation. The “Long Island Index” provides data about the Long Island region, in order to promote informed public debate and sound policy making. For more information visit www.longislandindex.org.