



Long Island Regional
Planning Council

**Long Island 2035
Regional
Comprehensive
Sustainability Plan**

Technical Report-
Equity



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Technical Report- Equity

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This report takes into account the particular instructions and requirements of our client.

It is not intended for and should not be relied upon by any third party and no responsibility is undertaken to any third party

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1 Methodology for Equity Analysis

1.1 Baseline Data Source

Baseline data for the equity analysis is from the 2000 US Census, which is the most recent source of demographic data at the census tract level. Because racial, economic, and social disparities occur at the geographic level of Long Island's smallest political units – villages, hamlets, and places – more current sources such as the American Communities Survey will not reveal the patterns that need to be identified to discuss equity issues and trends.

Mapping of census data reveals patterns of racial and ethnic segregation, as well as spatial disparities in income, poverty, property wealth, and access to employment and economic opportunity.

We have also reviewed the Long Island Index, studies by other organizations on housing segregation and discrimination, and the Economy and Governance sections of this report.

2 Current Conditions

2.1 Racial and ethnic segregation

Mapping of census data confirms that while Long Island's population is increasingly diverse, it remains highly segregated. The majority of Long Island's villages, hamlets, and places are predominantly white non-Hispanic, while black and Hispanic residents are concentrated in a small number of places. Asians today make up a small but growing proportion of Long Island's population, but 2000 census data is unclear on the degree to which their places of residence are dispersed or segregated.

Historical factors contributing to present-day patterns of racial segregation include practices that were codified in both law and practice until the passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1968. Deeds on Levittown's initial 17,400 homes, for example, prohibited their ownership or occupancy by "anyone other than a member of the Caucasian race."

While a small number of free black communities on Long Island date back to the pre-Civil War era, restrictive covenants and other forms of *de jure* segregation limited the choices available to black families who came to Long Island during the post World War 2 period when the island experienced its most rapid growth, and set into place patterns of segregation that have persisted for decades. Those patterns have been perpetuated in some instances by overt and ongoing racial discrimination by landlords, sellers, and lenders; racial steering by real estate brokers has also been documented. Additionally, some nominally race-neutral policies, such as a preference for local residents in the allocation of new affordable housing units, have the effect of reinforcing pre-existing patterns of segregation. And enforcement of fair housing laws by state and federal agencies has been inconsistent. For example, the US Department of Housing and Urban Development has largely failed to follow its own regulations, which require municipalities receiving funding under HUD programs to report on their plans and policies for reducing segregation. As of 2008, only four of the 100 Long Island municipalities that receive HUD funding have submitted the required reports, according to *The Racial Equity Report Card: Fair Housing on Long Island* – released in 2008 by ERASE Racism.¹

¹ *The Racial Equity Report Card: Fair Housing on Long Island*, ERASE Racism, 2009. Available at: http://www.eraseracismny.org/html/library/housing/resources/published_reports/ERASE_Housing_report_card_final_2009.pdf

Thus, while approximately 23.5% of Long Island's total population was black, Hispanic, Asian, or other as of 2000, many areas have non-white populations between zero and ten percent, while a relative handful of communities have populations that are over 85% non-white.

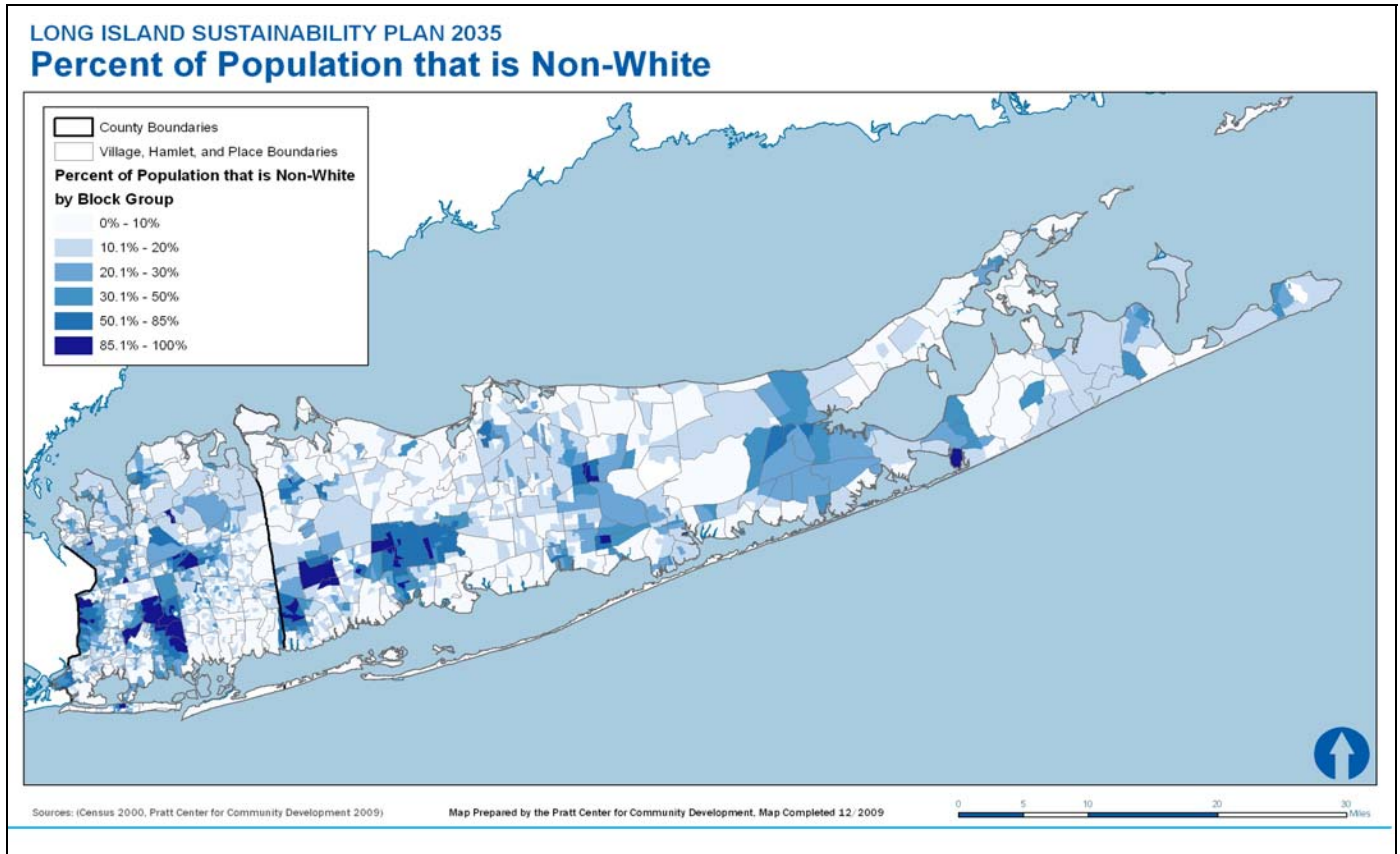


Figure 1: While the overall percentage of Long Island residents who describe themselves on the US Census as other than white non-Hispanic is 23.5%, this map shows the uneven distribution of this population among Long Island's communities.

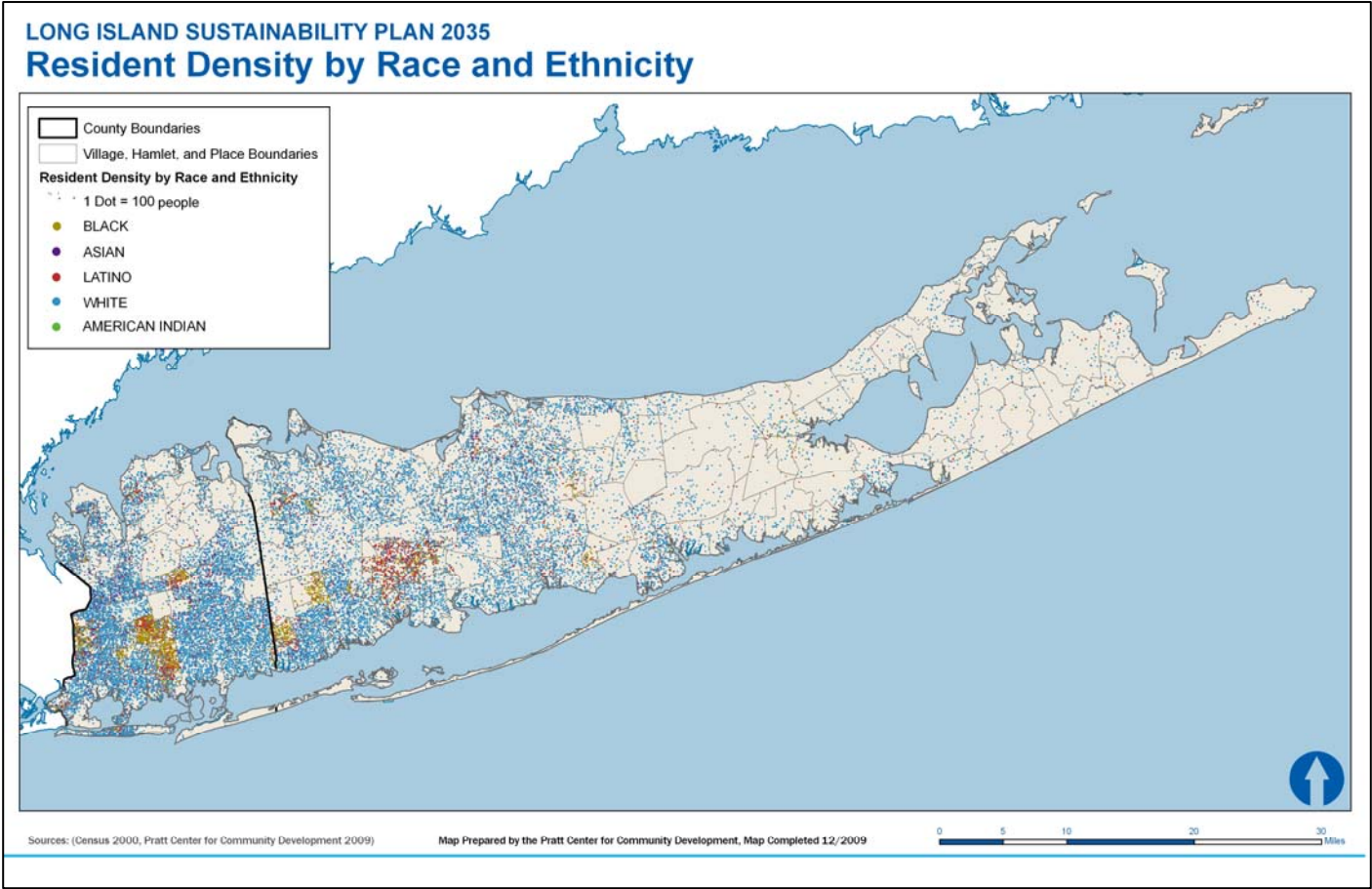


Figure 2: This map shows the geographic distribution of Long Island’s racial and ethnic groups.

2.2 Income and poverty

Household and per capita incomes and rates of child poverty show a similar pattern of disparity. The concentration of affluence and poverty generally tracks the distribution of non-Hispanic white vs. black and Hispanic populations, insofar as all of the communities whose populations are predominantly black or Hispanic also have low incomes and high concentrations of poverty, though some communities whose populations are more than 50% white also have low household and per capita incomes, relative to Long Island as a whole.

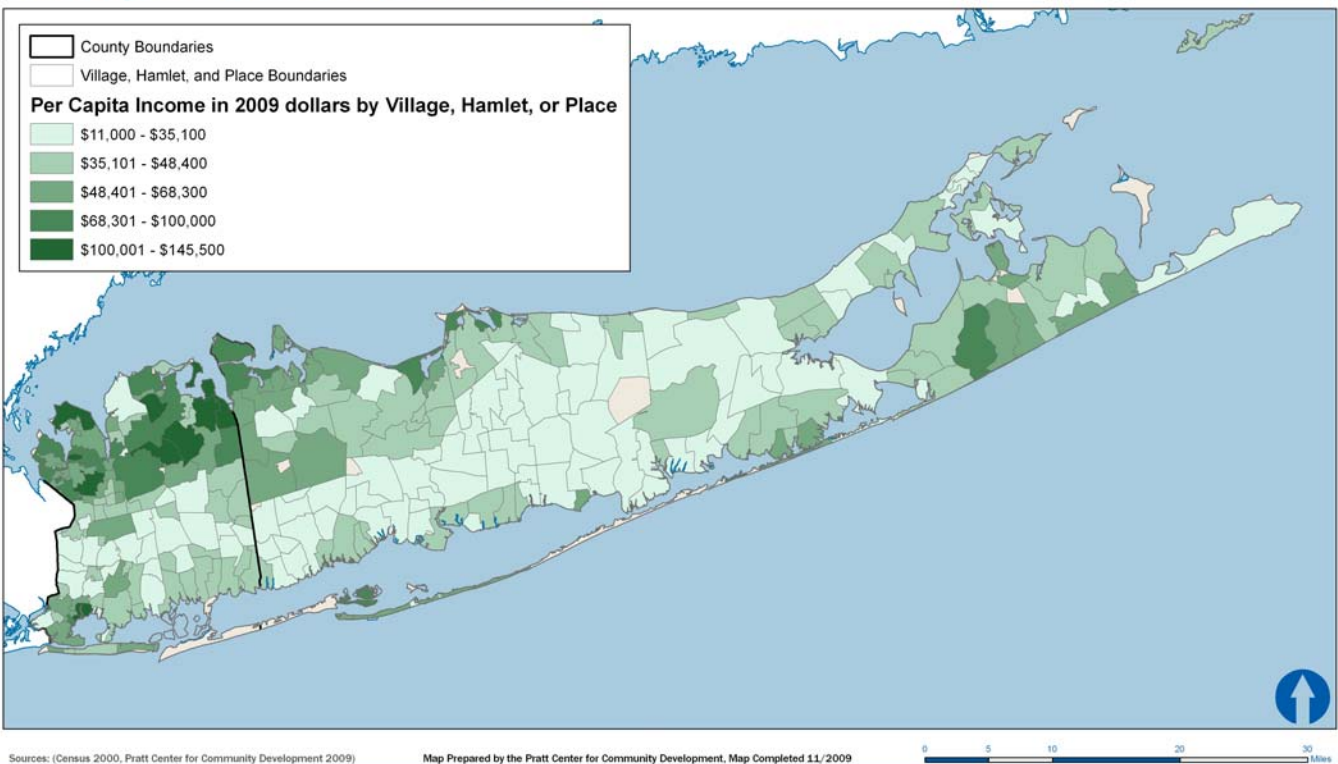
(see map, Per Capita Income of Residents.)

In many communities, income inequality manifests at a very fine-grained spatial scale. Village and town centers (mapped here as areas within ½-mile of Long Island Rail Road stations) in almost every case have median household incomes lower than those of the surrounding village, hamlet, or place. This disparity is probably a function of the concentration of both rental and (relatively) low-cost housing in these centers, discussed further in the housing section of this chapter.

(see map, Comparison of Median Household Income with Half Mile Buffer of LIRR and Entire Village, Hamlet, or Place.)

LONG ISLAND SUSTAINABILITY PLAN 2035

Per Capita Income of Residents



LONG ISLAND SUSTAINABILITY PLAN 2035

Comparison of Median Household Income within Half Mile Buffer of LIRR and the Entire Village, Hamlet, or Place

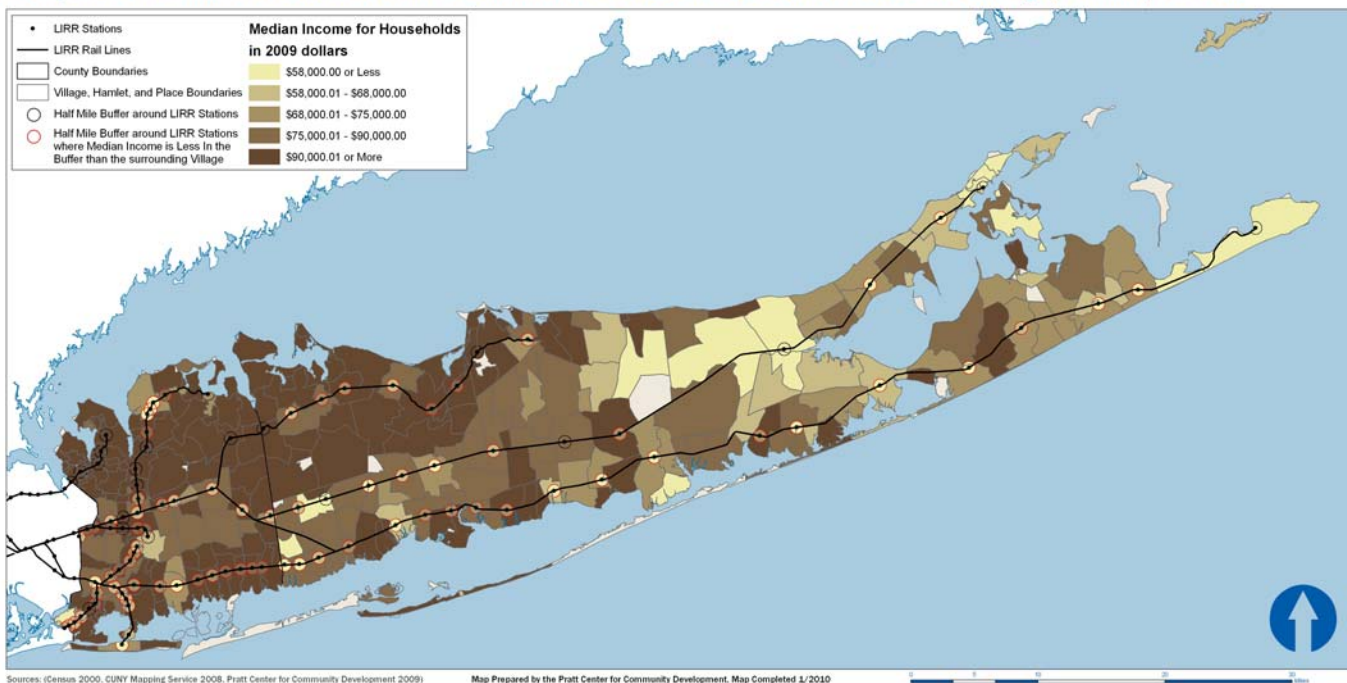


Figure 3: Per Capita Income

Figure 4: Comparison of Median Household Income within Half Mile Buffer of LIRR and the Entire Village, Hamlet, or Place

Child Poverty

Communities with high concentrations of child poverty face multiple challenges to providing those children with a high-quality education. Children living in poverty need more – and more expensive services – from their schools, from remedial and special education classes to nutrition programs and added school security. But the districts in which they live are precisely those with the lowest levels of taxable property wealth, and often also lack commercial real estate and sales tax revenue. They thus have the highest school expenses per child, and the lowest levels of revenue from the sources upon which local school districts depend for funding.²

This pattern not only results in marked disparities in present-day expenditure per child, but is of even greater concern in view of the trend toward unsustainable future levels of school costs island wide, as described in the Governance section of this report.

² 2009 Long Island Index: Long Island's Educational Structure: Resources, Outcomes, Options, 2009, The Long Island Index. Available at:
http://longislandindex.org/fileadmin/pdf/2009_Index_Files/SpecialAnalysis.pdf

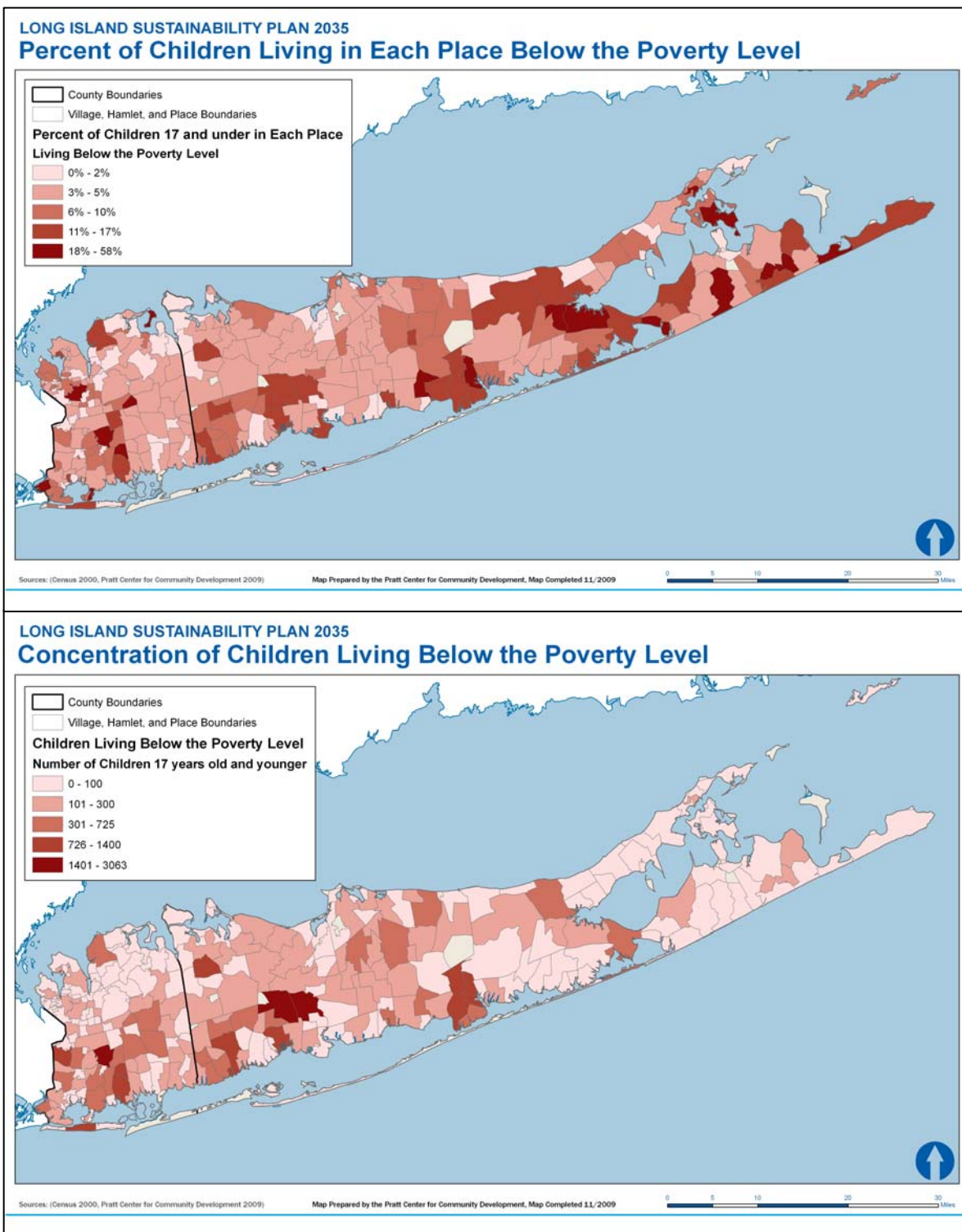
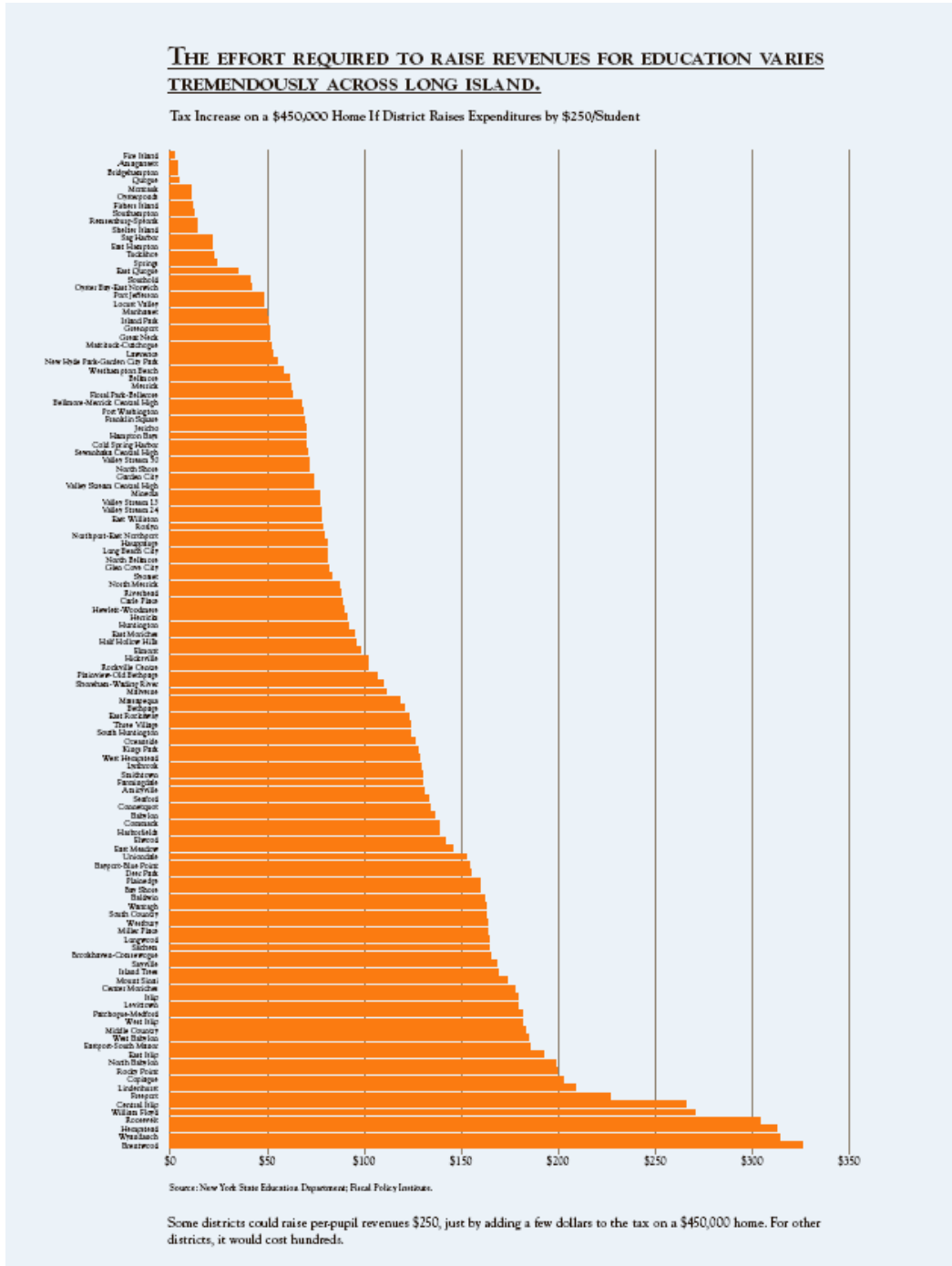


Figure 5: Percent of Children Living in Each Place Below Poverty Level. Figure 6: Concentration of Children living below the Poverty Level

In some areas with low overall population densities, the prevalence of child poverty as a percentage of all children is relatively high. Mapping both the percentage and number of children in poverty helps to clarify both the extent and the intensity of the problem.

Table 1:Chart from the Long Island Index: The effort required to raise revenues varies tremendously across Long Island

Many of the districts with the largest numbers of children also have the lowest property values, while districts serving fewer children often have much higher property values. Thus, the impacts of disparities in property wealth are multiplied. This graph illustrates the relative cost to homeowners in each district of increasing per-pupil expenditures by \$250 per year. In the most property-rich districts, the owner of a home valued at \$450,000 would pay as little as \$10 per year in added property taxes, while the owner of a \$450,000 home in the poorest districts would pay over \$300 more per year.



2.3 Housing tenure, cost and affordability

Housing tenure, cost, and affordability vary greatly among Long Island communities. On the average, about 20% of housing units on Long Island are renter (19.70% of units in Nassau County, and 20.23% of units in Suffolk County.) But while some communities (shown on the map below in red) have a much larger proportion of rental units – 30 to 61% of their housing stock – others, shown in blue, have much less than their proportionate share of rental housing. Scarcity of rental units means that new and younger working families, who do not yet have sufficient savings to qualify for the purchase of a home, have very limited options in seeking housing on Long Island.

While high housing values underpin the ability of many Long Island communities to sustain schools and other public services, high housing costs also constitute a challenge to the region's future growth and competitiveness. Housing prices in almost all of Long Island's communities exceed levels affordable to most *current* Long Island residents, though affordability also varies markedly among communities.

Maps on the following page illustrate the uneven distribution of rental housing among villages, hamlets, and places, and the gap between the actual cost of housing, and levels that would be affordable to households earning the median incomes in Nassau and Suffolk Counties.

The combined cost of housing and transportation add to the burden carried by many Long Island households, and to the challenges facing younger workers, their families, and their employers. Data from the Center for Neighborhood Technology indicates that even in areas where housing alone is relatively affordable, the combined cost of housing and transportation frequently exceeds its benchmark of affordability (combined housing and transportation costs of less than 48% of household income), leaving families struggling to meet these basic needs.

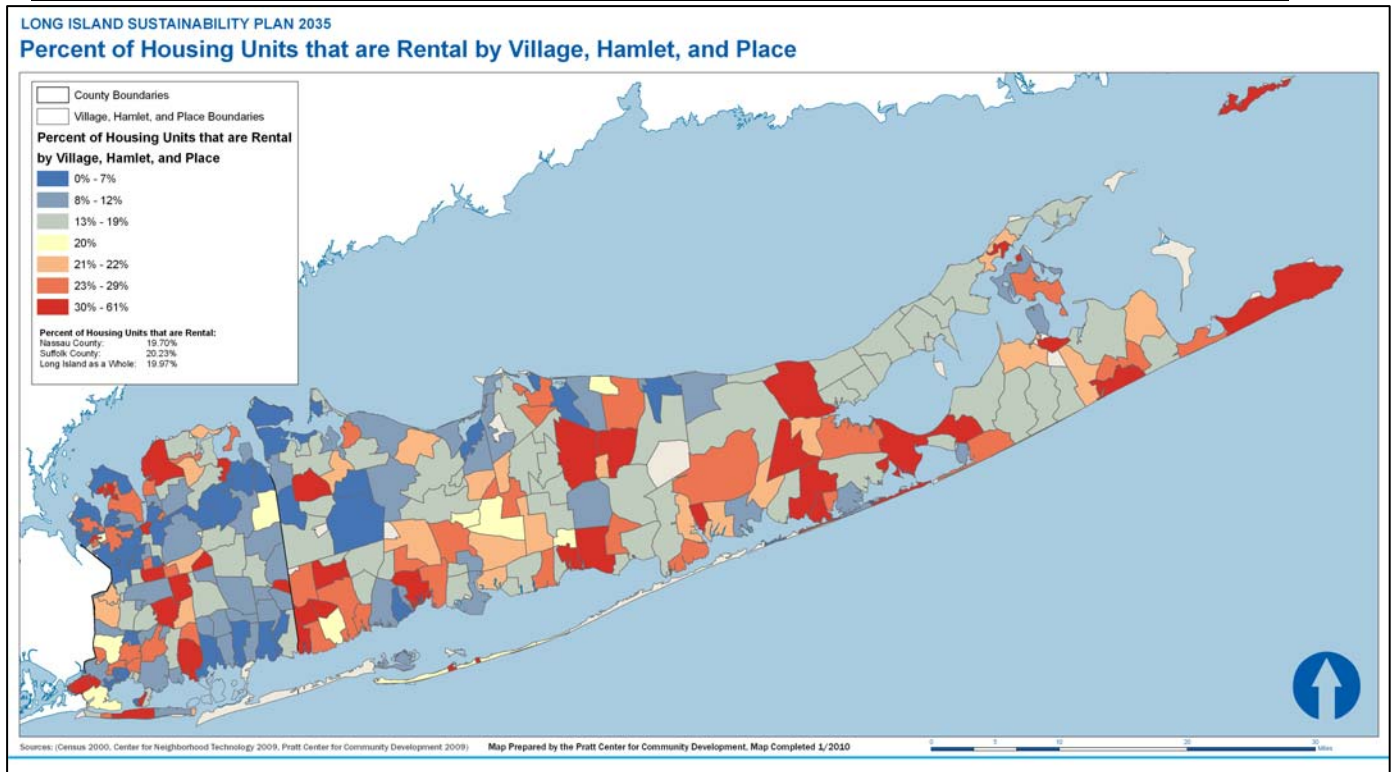
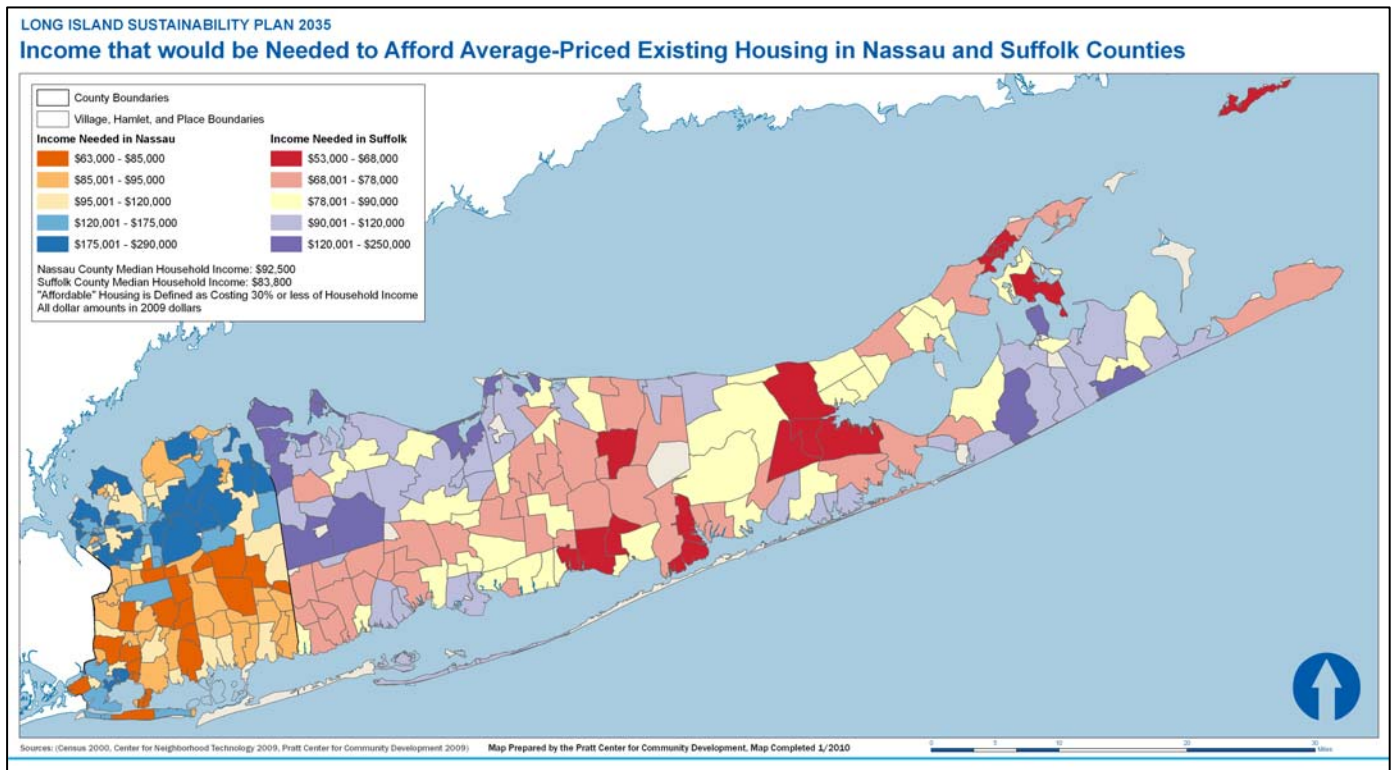


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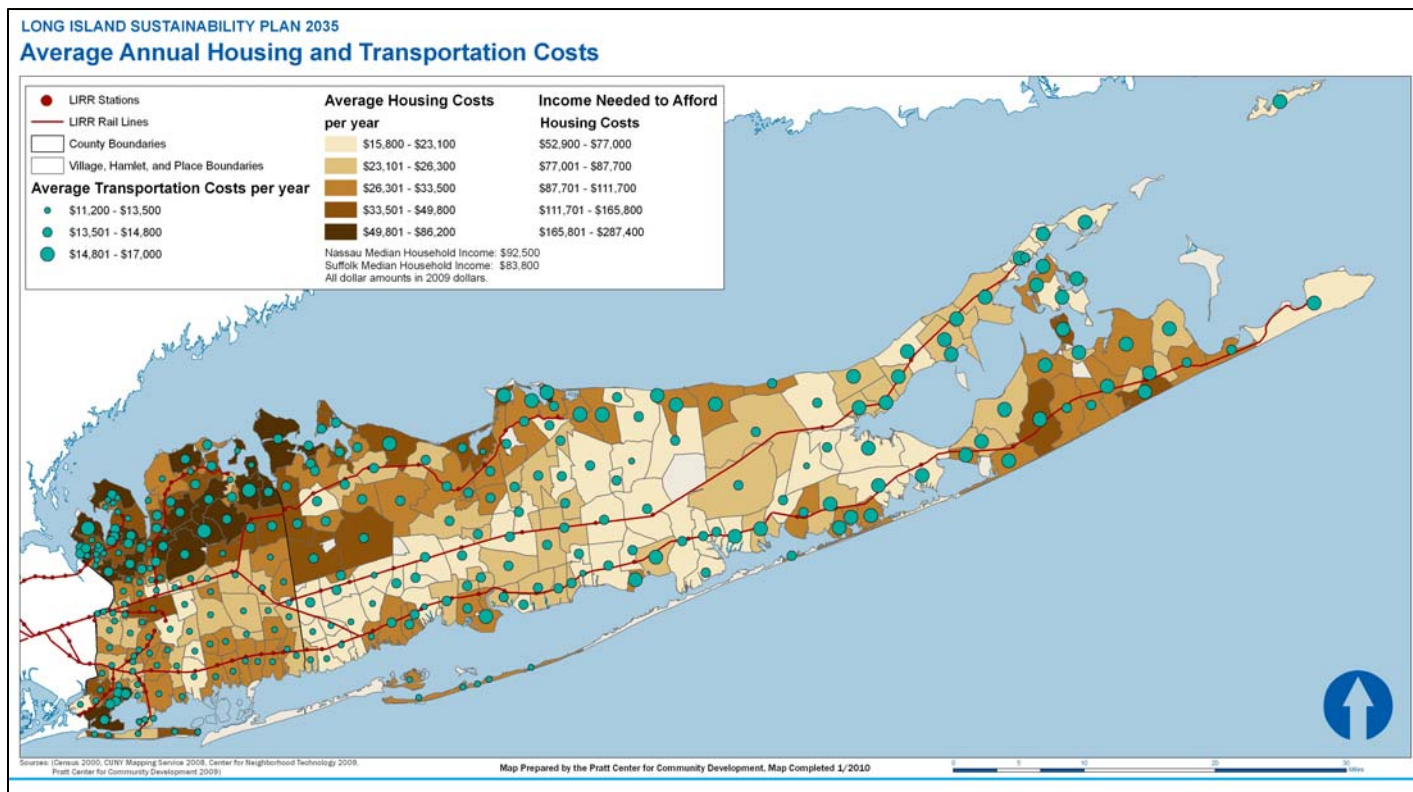


Figure 9: Average Annual Housing and Transportation Costs: This map indicates that even in areas where housing costs alone are (relatively) affordable, high transportation costs push the combined basic living costs to levels unaffordable to many Long Island families. Transportation costs in many cases, including many high-growth areas of Suffolk County, reflect the cost of multiple car ownership that many households need for commuting and non-work travel

3 Implications of Demographic and Economic Trends

The Technical Report section on Long Island's economy projects a number of trends that have important implications for social and economic equity on Long Island. In particular, it notes that Long Island will continue to become more racially diverse through 2035. In both Nassau and Suffolk Counties, the white population will decline in absolute numbers and as a percentage of the total, with non-white Long Islanders likely to become a majority in both counties by 2035.

This diversification in many ways bodes well for Long Island's future. New Long Islanders – Black, Hispanic, and Asian – will help to mitigate the decline in the working-age population as the current and majority white workforce ages. And in a globalized economy, diverse and inclusive regions will have important competitive advantages. A diverse population brings a range of skills, entrepreneurial energy, and connections to worldwide social and business networks; it also adds cultural richness to Long Island's attractions for young workers from all racial and ethnic groups.

But if Long Island is to benefit from these advantages, it must welcome newcomers, and offer its signature assets - access to opportunity and a high quality of life – to all racial and ethnic groups. And this will not be possible if existing patterns of racial, ethnic, and economic segregation are allowed to persist.

Challenges:

The burdens of fragmented and inefficient delivery of key public services, particularly education, fall most heavily on low- and moderate-income communities. As the costs of those services continue to rise, communities with the lowest levels of taxable property wealth will be unable to sustain essential services, or to prepare their children to compete in a 21st-century economy.

Patterns of racial segregation in housing persist. Overt racial steering and discrimination by real estate professionals and lenders still occurs, and enforcement by state and federal agencies is poor. And policies that give local residents preference in new affordable housing perpetuates existing patterns of segregation.

Key sectors of Long Island's economy rely increasingly on an immigrant workforce, but businesses and communities have largely failed to grapple with the short- and long-term implications of that reliance. Agriculture, landscaping, and construction in particular rely on seasonal, transient, and permanent workers, many of whom are latino immigrants. The needs of these workers for housing, transportation, education, health care, and other essential services are often met in ways that create conflict with municipalities and expose the workers themselves to harassment and violence.

4 Conclusions

Many of the strategies and actions that are needed to address Long Island's economic and governance challenges, particularly those that seek to create more efficient structures for governance and for the financing of public services, to diversify housing and transportation choices, and to revitalize aging downtowns, also have the potential also to address issues of integration and equity.

But if these synergies are to be achieved, equity goals need to be articulated, a political consensus on their importance needs to be reached, and strategies need to be put in place to integrate equity into the planning and implementation of strategies on governance and taxation, the economy, land use, transportation, and infrastructure. In some cases, strategies will need to incorporate specific provisions to avoid exacerbating inequality. For example, plans to revitalize downtowns and incentivize transit-oriented development (TOD) need to incorporate measures to preserve the affordability of existing housing in station areas, and avoid displacing low-income residents.

In addition, specific actions need to be undertaken to eliminate discriminatory practices, particularly in the real estate industry, that have allowed segregation to persist half a century after the passage of the federal Civil Rights Act of 1968.

Examples of linkages and synergies

- **Housing:** increasing the range of housing options, *including choices of location*, available to all segments of the population, will help to reduce racial, ethnic, and economic segregation.
- **Governance and finance:** creating efficiencies and reducing the cost of public services, while enhancing their quality, as well as reducing reliance on local property taxes, will greatly reduce the inequities built into the current system of financing schools and other services.
- **Transportation:** broadening the range of transportation choices will improve the mobility of Long Islanders of all age and income groups, and will improve their access to jobs, education, recreation, etc. without adding to congestion.
- **Civic participation, cultural, and regional identity:** strengthening cultural and civic institutions and networks in minority and immigrant communities adds to Long Island's shared base of cultural assets, catalyzes economic development, and promotes a new and shared sense of regional identity.

Where Equity-specific initiatives are needed

- Develop an action plan and timetable to eliminate housing discrimination: a combination of enforcement of existing laws and regulations, and education of real estate industry actors. Set goals on a regional basis, and make a range of tools and strategies available to enable localities to choose how best to achieve them.
- Convene a task force on immigrant workers in agriculture, landscaping, construction, and other immigrant-dependent industries. Bring together industry leaders, immigrant organizations and advocates, representatives of impacted municipalities, and nonprofits with expertise in housing, education, health, and other relevant areas. Their mandate would include developing a shared framing of the problems faced both by workers and host communities, as a precursor to the development of goals and strategies for addressing them.