

# Newsday

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## The Way I See It

# Why Not Boosterism for Long Island?

By Hank Boerner

Long Island, U.S.A.! An island empire, stretching 120 miles into the Atlantic, more populous than most of the states in the union. Next door to the nation's financial and communications capital. Endowed with natural harbors, rolling countryside, and plenty of wide-open acres available for immediate development.

A diversified, highly skilled work force; a fairly stabilized economy; tremendous potential for recreational and sports activities. Home for two-and-a-half million, and home base as well for approximately 5,000 individual manufacturing firms.

Sound like a place where you'd like to live, work and play? Obviously, the residents of Nassau and Suffolk think just that, but...

But our island empire does not attract blue-chip companies, and very few of the Fortune 500 ever think seriously about locating here. Executives of firms like General Foods, Continental and Nationwide Insurance always seem to head for Westchester or Connecticut. What's wrong with our island?

Over the past 25 years, many worthwhile efforts have been made to attract more business interests to our two counties, to help relieve the taxpayers of some of the burden of running local governments, and to provide jobs nearer home than Manhattan (after years of being "bedroom counties").

But still today, we're not promoting Long Island properly to attract the better commercial and industrial firms to our shores. We're missing a vital spirit—an "esprit de Long Island," if you will. Let me give you a few examples. As a public relations executive for both American Airlines and the New York Stock Exchange, I have traveled to every part of the nation to meet with local businessmen and government officials. Almost without exception, there's a "pride of place" that can be found, notably in cities such as Atlanta, Miami, Kansas City, Los Angeles, Dallas/Fort Worth, Chicago, Cleveland.

In Dallas last year, I spoke to a gathering of executives on behalf of the New York Stock Exchange. When I finished my prepared remarks, I asked for questions—immediately, one man jumped up and asked, "What would it take to move the stock exchange here to our new airport complex?" I took this to be a large-sized Texas joke, but soon he was joined by others who demanded to know whether the Exchange would be interested in moving to Big D.

A developer recently got a multimillion-dollar

foundation grant to redevelop parts of downtown Atlanta, to keep the old city viable. When Long Island's aging downtowns are slated for renewal, will a foundation come in to pick up the tab? Will any foundation ever hear of the refurbishing of any of our downtowns? Many millions of Long Island dollars find their way every year to companies and projects thousands of miles away.

For example, New Yorkers have invested heavily in the future of Florida—in projects ranging from condominium apartments to luxury hotels and golf courses. We see little of that local money being plowed back into Long Island's future, and we live here! We need a new spirit—perhaps for the nation's Bicentennial we can create a second revolution here, with a real "Spirit of Long Island" developing in our ranks. The call to arms could be a plea for greater cooperation between businessmen and local government officials, and every segment of the local population, who would participate in the planning for Long Island's tomorrows. Just take a look at the tools and resources we have available to help us create a better Long Island.

Experienced, skilled workers and executives who live right here in Nassau and Suffolk. We're like the Colossus of Rhodes, astride the crossroads of the world. A quick jet flight from Long Island and you're in Canada, Chicago, Atlanta, Miami. Kennedy International Airport provides our business community with a gateway to every continent, with more than 45 scheduled airlines to every major city on the globe. We have a commuter railroad that is one of the finest in the nation, with over a half-billion taxpayer dollars invested in its redevelopment. We have natural resources unmatched anywhere on the East Coast plains. A deepwater port in Port Jefferson; the Long Island Sound waterway (over which high-speed ferries could link us with all of New England and Southern Canada). Wide-open, flat space, available for intelligent land uses at very low construction costs (no mountains to level, no swamps to fill). A thousand miles of waterfront, with the cleanest beaches in the region open to millions each day.

Superb residential areas; nearby, every type of recreation—golfing, bathing, boating, fishing, tennis. Lovely old downtowns such as Northport; sparkling new towns that came from nowhere overnight, such as Parr Village in Suffolk. We have major regional shopping malls to accommodate all our merchandise needs (enough, I hope, to satisfy all our needs; developing more malls could destroy valuable downtown shopping areas in both counties).

How do we merchandise such beauty and resources to businessmen who are in the "looking" stage for new sites for laboratories, offices, warehouses, industrial plants, perhaps even their company headquarters? In the December issue of Fortune, there are many pages of advertisements spelling out the qualities of competitive regions looking to attract industry—Arkansas, Dayton, Ireland, Japan, Milwaukee, Oklahoma. There is a even 20-page section on Houston, telling (in full, glorious color) of the "why's" of locating businesses in that area. When was the last time Long Island interests got together and promoted our homeland that way? Do you have to be from Texas to operate in a grand style?

I think not—we live in a grand style here, and we should be proud of what we have, and tell the world so. I guess that my experience in business promotion causes me to look at these things from a narrow point of view—but I chose Long Island for my home, and for my business location, and there are others who would do the same if they knew more about Long Island. The local developer who spends \$7,000,000 building an industrial park and only \$700 over a year promoting the place is doing both himself and Long Island a great disservice.

That developer and all his associates should join forces with the bankers, insurance and government executives, labor leaders, educators, and businessmen in an all-out effort to create a new spirit of cooperation and to plan wisely for the Island's future. In many large cities, as few as 30 men can meet for lunch and plan far-ranging, multimillion-dollar improvements for their hometown—why not here?

This approach will require a rethinking on the part of Long Island's many local governmental officials, who may have to merge town or county industrial development activities into a "metro Long Island" body. The time has come to begin our second revolution here in Nassau and Suffolk Counties. Our future well-being vitally depends upon new thinking and new spirit. Are you up to it, Long Island?

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