

**Prepared for the Rauch Foundation  
by:**

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# LAND USE IN NASSAU AND SUFFOLK COUNTIES

## ANALYSIS

This analysis of the breakdown by acreage and percentage for Nassau and Suffolk Counties affords several insights into the development patterns that constitute the built environment. The material is presented in graphic form, depicting the contrast that has occurred over the two decade period of 1980 and 2000. In addition, the material has been updated to the present in terms of land use development according to building permits issued since 2000. Building permit data alone does not mean that construction has occurred. But, it does signal that the land involved is committed to such usage. In addition, subdivision and site design approvals have also been examined to determine other additional commitments of land where building permits have not yet been applied for.

An important aspect of the data pertains to the privately owned vacant undeveloped acres. The application of existing zoning criteria by use to vacant acreage is one method of calculating the land use capacity at saturation. In the instance of residential usage, the multiplication of average household size with the number of allowable dwelling units will yield the added population subsequent to the 2000 census data until saturation occurs. This result is predicated on a stable zoning pattern. This information is vital for long-range planning. Depending on the land use needs, as identified in town, county and regional plans, it may become evident that departures from existing zoning practices may become required. For example, the projection of the quantity of affordable housing units may be limited by the availability of land that is pre-empted by large lot residential construction. The solution would include, in part, the rezoning to higher residential yield, which could be applied to existing residentially zoned land; or the conversion of surplus or overzoned commercial and industrial acreage; and/or the application of Planned Unit Development (PUD) to achieve integrated commercial, residential and light industrial or office uses within new or revitalized “downtown” communities.

Table 1 identifies the range of activities that are included under each of the broad activities summarized in Figures 1 through 6 under the headings of Residential, Commercial, Industrial, Agriculture, Open Space and Vacant.

**Table 1**  
**Land Use Classifications<sup>1</sup>**

<b>Residential</b>		<b>Industrial</b>	
Residential	Single Family Two Family Multi-Family Farm Houses Estates Rooming & Boarding Houses Seasonal Houses Trailers	Manufacturing	Production of a product-finished or unfinished Food products Printing, publishing and bookbinding
		Non-Manufacturing	Warehousing, wholesaling Distributors Construction material, welding shops General contractors, masonry Salvage and junk yards
<b>Commercial</b>			
Hotels-Motels	Commercial establishments in which short term lodging is the major business activity--		

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**Table 1 (cont'd)**  
**Land Use Classifications**

**Commercial (cont'd)**

- Hotels-Motels (cont'd)
  - Hotels
  - Motels
  - Cabins
- Retail & Services Establishments whose main purpose is the sale or rendering of a personal service on a retail level and not listed under "offices."
- Automotive
  - Service stations
  - Dealers
  - Repair, painting and washing
  - Tire sales
  - Seat cover installation
- Marine
  - Boat yards and marinas (private)
  - Sales and services
  - Fishery services
  - Boat storage
- Recreational
  - Amusement parks
  - Beaches
  - Billiards
  - Bowling
  - Dance (school, hall, studio, etc.)
  - Day camps and nursery schools
  - Miniature golf and driving ranges
  - Theaters - indoor and drive-in
  - Sports arenas, skating rinks
  - Race tracks
- Offices
  - Banks, credit agencies and loan companies
  - Investment and securities
  - Advertising, blueprinting and mailing services
  - Doctors, dentists & legal services
  - Medical labs and animal hospitals
  - Employment and travel services

**Vacant**

- Vacant
  - Land not in use
  - Land containing abandoned buildings

**Industrial (cont'd)**

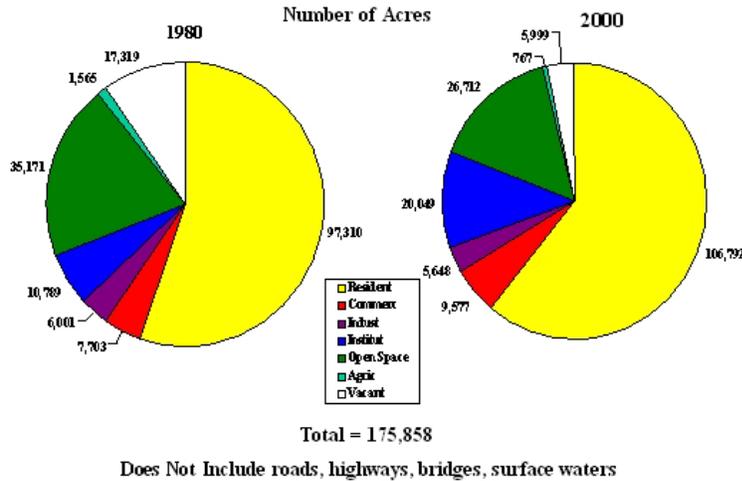
- Non-Manufacturing (cont'd)
  - Coal and oil bulk stations
- Institutional**
  - Public
    - Schools (elementary, junior and senior high school)
    - Colleges and universities
    - Municipal buildings
    - Courts
    - Hospitals
    - Post Offices
    - Indian reservations
    - Fire stations
  - Quasi-Public
    - Churches, convents, seminaries
    - Colleges and universities
    - Nursing and rest homes
    - Schools-parochial and private
    - Synagogues and temples
  - Fraternal organizations
    - Hospitals
  - Open Space**
    - Public
      - Beaches and pools
      - Golf courses, conservation and wildlife areas, arboretum
      - Cemeteries
      - Marinas and boat ramps
      - Parks
      - Playgrounds
    - Quasi-Public
      - Beach clubs, golf clubs, gun clubs
      - Cemeteries, scout camps and all non-profit recreation
  - Agriculture**
    - Agriculture
      - Crop
      - Orchard
      - Poultry and ducks
      - Dairy and livestock
      - Nursery
      - Greenhouse

<sup>1</sup>Source: Long Island Regional Planning Board

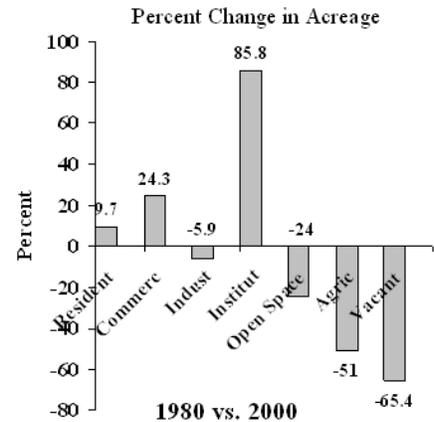
## LAND USE IN NASSAU AND SUFFOLK COUNTIES

Figures 1 and 1a depict the breakdown of land uses in Nassau County by acreage and percent change between 1980 and 2000. The suburbanizing pattern is clearly evident in the preponderant residential usage. It can also be seen that the rate of growth has almost stabilized over the two decade period, with less than a ten percent increase or 0.5 growth per year.

**Figure 1**



**Figure 1a**

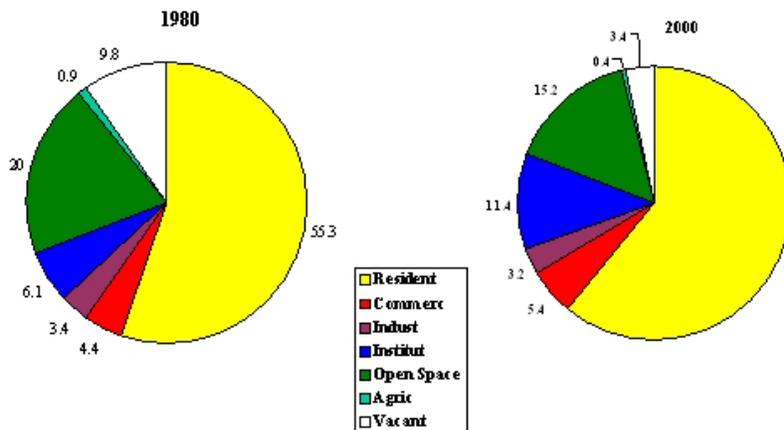


The very significant expansion of institutional uses occurred in the expansion of educational and medical facilities. General commercial development expanded by almost 25 percent, which was largely a reflection of the retail expansions at the Hempstead HUB, including Roosevelt Field, the Source at Fortunoff and the modernization of older business areas and establishments.

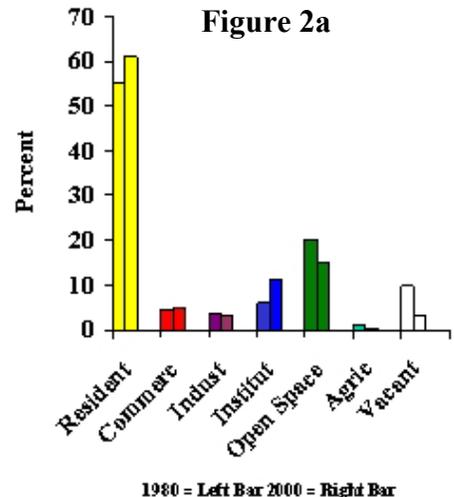
The acreage devoted to these growth sectors produced a concomitant decrease in agricultural properties and vacant land. A potentially surprising indicator is the diminution of open space by almost 25 percent. This occurred mainly in the quasi-public sector. Dedicated publicly owned parks and conservation lands have been maintained.

Figures 2 and 2a depict the same information by percent distribution rather than acreage.

**Figure 2**



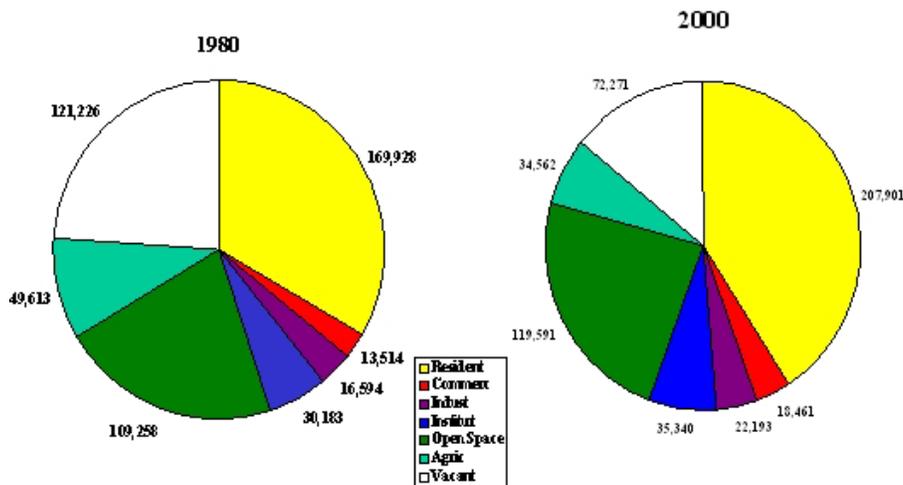
**Figure 2a**



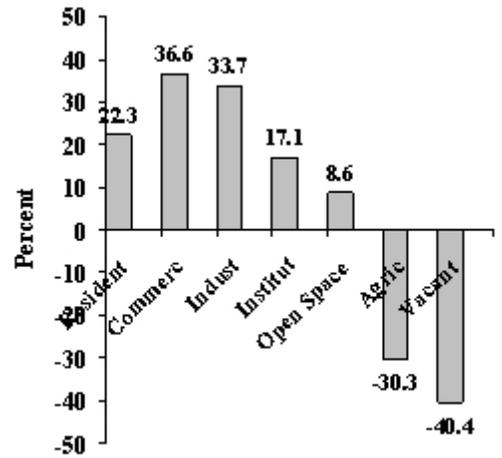
## LAND USE IN NASSAU AND SUFFOLK COUNTIES

Figures 3 and 3a, 4 and 4a present similar analyses for Suffolk County. The strong growth suburbanization that has occurred is clearly seen with positive percentage increases in all categories except in agriculture and vacant land. Suffolk's population surpassed that of Nassau County, having reached Nassau's 1980 level in 1990, while Nassau's population actually decreased by more than 50,000 persons. In percentage, Nassau grew by 1.0 percent, while Suffolk grew by 10.5 percent.

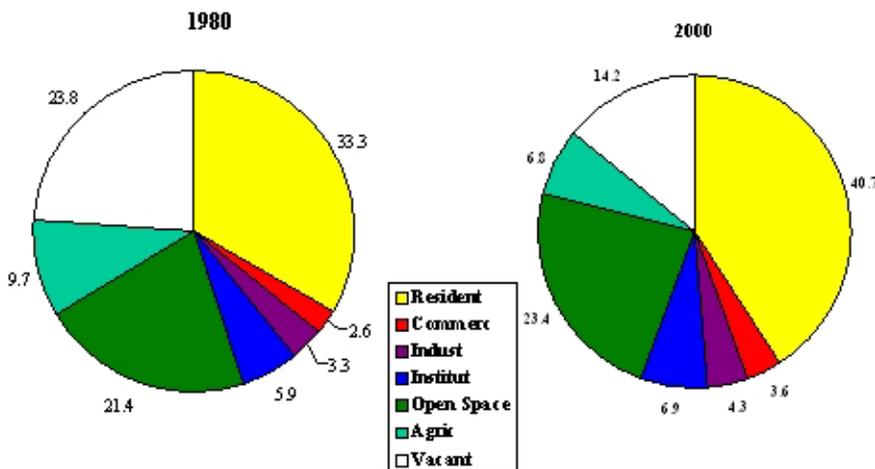
**Figure 3**



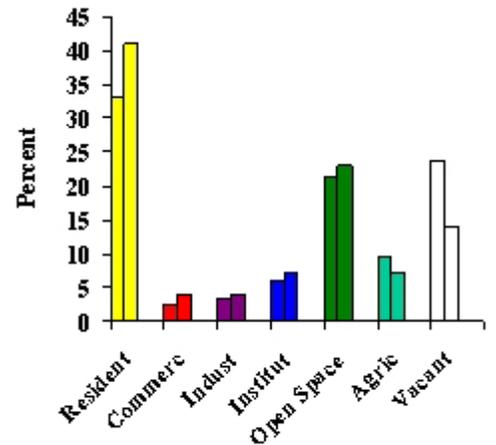
**Figure 3a**



**Figure 4**



**Figure 4a**



1980 = Left Bar 2000 = Right Bar

## LAND USE IN NASSAU AND SUFFOLK COUNTIES

Table 2 lists the population by County from 1980 to 2003.

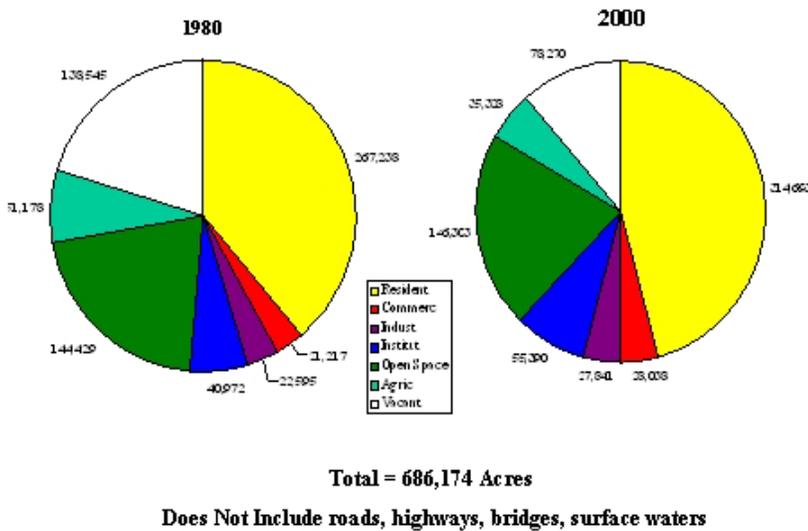
**Table 2**  
**Long Island Population<sup>1</sup>**

	Nassau County	Suffolk County	Nassau/ Suffolk
Census 1980	1,321,562	1,284,231	2,605,893
Census 1990	1,287,346	1,321,864	2,609,210
Census 2000	1,334,544	1,419,369	2,753,913
1980/2000 Change	12,982	135,138	148,020
1980/2000 % Change	1.0	10.5	5.7
LIPA 2003 Population	1,342,680	1,455,555	2,798,235
1980/2003 Change	21,098	171,324	192,422
1980/2003 % Change	1.6	13.3	7.4

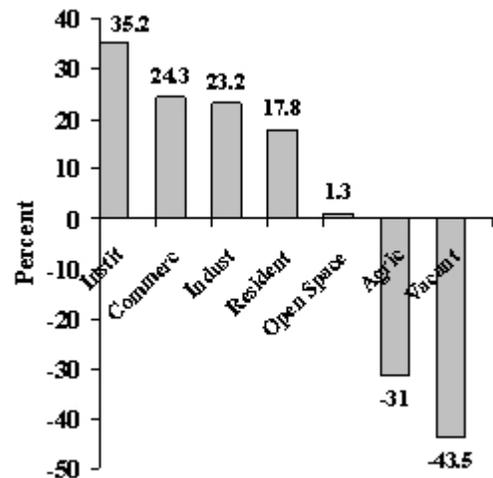
<sup>1</sup>Source: Long Island Regional Planning Board and LIPA

Figures 5, 5a, 6 and 6a present the information totaled for the combined Nassau/Suffolk region.

**Figure 5**

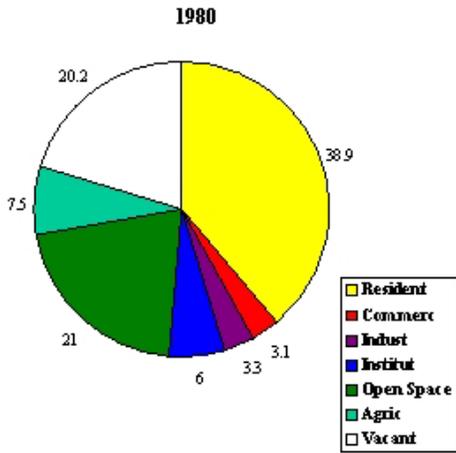


**Figure 5a**

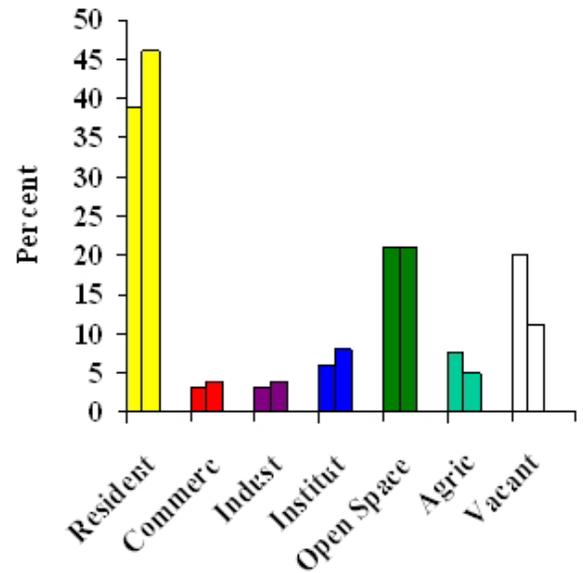


## LAND USE IN NASSAU AND SUFFOLK COUNTIES

**Figure 6**



**Figure 6a**



### Population Projections

1980 = Left Bar 2000 = Right Bar

In addition to the value of current indices it is essential for planning purposes to project to the future. This information is basic for the estimation of future needs for housing, employment, transportation, etc. Such data is vital to guide state, county, and municipal governments in reaching rational solutions for intelligent community growth. The analysis of current land usage provides the quantification of available land for future development. The projection of population growth contrasted with land available to accommodate growth will immediately identify if there will be a mismatch, or if the projected population can be accommodated without major changes to existing zoning.

Table 3 lists the population projections in five-year intervals to the year 2030 by county and combined for Nassau and Suffolk Counties.

**Table 3**  
**Population Projections 2000-2030**  
**Nassau and Suffolk Counties<sup>1</sup>**  
**(in thousands)**

	2000	2005	2010	2015	2020	2025	2030
Nassau County	1,334	1,343	1,362	1,379	1,394	1,408	1,421
Suffolk County	1,419	1,493	1,557	1,615	1,667	1,710	1,743
Nassau/Suffolk	2,754	2,836	2,919	2,994	3,061	3,118	3,164

<sup>1</sup>Source: Long Island Regional Planning Board

## LAND USE IN NASSAU AND SUFFOLK COUNTIES

These projections are arrived at by a calculation of the anticipated number of dwelling units multiplied by the average household size. Historical data combined with cohort analysis projecting age groupings yield an estimate for western Suffolk County an average increase annually of 0.13; and 0.14 for eastern Suffolk County for the years 2000-2030. Nassau County is expected to achieve a very modest annual increase in household sized of 0.08. The interpretation of these projections is that Nassau County and the four western towns of Suffolk County are already close to saturation. Brookhaven is the only western Town that has sufficient developable land to account for the 0.13 increase.

The presumption for the projections is that zoning will remain constant. If further increases in lot size occur, particularly in Brookhaven and the five eastern towns of Suffolk County; or if the open space programs of Suffolk County and these towns continue, which will diminish the land available for development, two policy scenarios will have to be resolved. Namely, either growth saturation will occur earlier at lower total population totals; or, some properties will have to be rezoned at higher density yields. At the present both actions are taking place.

Riverhead is moving to adopt a comprehensive plan and zoning ordinance calling for a blanket increase from one to two acre residential zoning. Although Transfer of Development Rights (TDR) at the one acre use would be allowed for eligible properties, the change nominally means up to a fifty percent reduction in houses and population.

The Town of Brookhaven is proposing a referendum for the November 2004 election to bond for 100 million dollars for open space acquisition.

The County and several other towns also have open space programs that will reduce the land available for development.