

OPINION

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Securing the future for LI's COVID generation



**Matt
COHEN**

A global pandemic that has fundamentally changed our society, economy and way of life forever has also given birth to a new generation: Generation Covid. And how we – Baby Boomers, Generation X, Millennials and Generation Z – respond to today's historic crisis will impact Gen C and Long Island for decades.

While some experts are using the term to refer to the coronavirus' impact on all children alive since its onset, others have slightly different definitions of when this generation begins and ends, such as babies born from 2016 to the mid-2030s. Even those born after the worst of Covid will have their lives influenced by it. The challenge, however, is clear. Our children and grandchildren are living through profound and tumultuous changes that will echo throughout their lives; mentally, socially and economically. It is up to us to take the necessary steps now so Gen C inherits what will continue to be the best place in the world to live, work and play: Long Island.

To continue adapting to the new normal, the public and private sectors must invest in a post-Covid infrastructure that meets the needs of health

care, education, energy, broadband and the entire business community while ensuring equitable access for underserved communities. The potential to reimagine and rebuild a new economy could be facilitated by the federal infrastructure proposal currently known as the American Jobs Plan, and Long Island must receive its fair share to capitalize on this significant investment.

Just as Long Island played a direct role in landing a man on the moon when Grumman built the lunar module during NASA's Apollo program, the region can again meet the magnitude of this moment in history and be at the forefront of emerging industries and new technologies. In fact, our health and scientific communities played a vital role in the fight against the coronavirus and thus we need to continue developing our Research Corridor and the world-class local facilities comprising it, from Brookhaven National Laboratory in the east to The Feinstein Institutes for Medical Research at Northwell Health in the west.

Long Island is also home to a number of entrepreneurs, many of whom created their own businesses despite the upheaval and uncertainty of the last year. Nationally, more than 4.4 million new businesses have been created since last March, according to the Census Bureau. These growing companies could ultimately become stable employers and lead to new jobs. Similarly, our region can take advantage of our unique research assets, superior schools and academic institutions, and a highly skilled workforce to lead the way in

biotechnology, artificial intelligence, cybersecurity, electric vehicles, new manufacturing and applied sciences, and other nascent 21st century industries while establishing itself as the offshore wind capital of the United States.

It is also imperative that Long Island remains a place where young families and future business leaders want to be; both now and for when Generation Covid grows older. This means that we continue to prioritize affordable rental housing and home ownership opportunities, better access to childcare, the transformation of the workplace and office culture to reflect the pandemic's legacy, continued investments in the Nassau and Ronkonkoma Hubs and transit-oriented development projects in our downtowns, and a modernized electric grid.

Gen C will have lived through a traumatic period of emotional anguish and economic calamity. But for those who have already experienced these burdens, we have also watched our own children demonstrate a resilience and character that will help guide and strengthen them for their entire lives. And there is light at the end of the Covid tunnel with a world of new opportunities in front of them for the taking. Here on Long Island, it is our collective responsibility to take the steps today that will allow Gen C to grow up here, stay here, and thrive long into the future.

Matt Cohen is vice president of government affairs with the Long Island Association.

Black and Brown Millennials and Long Island economics



**Martin R.
CANTOR**

Long Island's socio-economic fabric has evolved over the last several decades as Baby Boomers age and retire and are replaced by the Millennial generation. Since employers often relocate and expand in regions with a supply of educated and talented workers, the Millennial generation, including Long Island's professional Black and Brown Millennials, are leaving for less expensive destinations and taking with them the skills essential to a robust Long Island economy.

And leave they will, according to responses of a survey I conducted for the Babylon Industrial Development Agency, in cooperation with Minority Millennials, Inc.

An overwhelming majority, 88%, agreed that if Long Island continues to ignore young people's needs' they see themselves leaving, with only 18.8 percent strongly agreeing that remaining on Long

Island was important to them. They have reasons.

While 28.6 percent have college and post college degrees, 59.9 percent have tried finding a job here in the past year, 49.3 percent were unable to find jobs aligned with their skills, 75.4

percent were unable to find jobs aligned with their salary expectations, and 82.7 percent indicated

that finding a job that allows them to stay here is important, resulting in 72.6 percent having concerns for their financial future.

If the Millennial generation continues to leave the region, Long Island will find it harder to maintain its technological business base that requires an educated workforce. That is supported by 74.4 percent of respondents who agree that Long Island will not attract the high paying industries where they wish to work. That concern is clearly illustrated by the inhospitable treatment of Amazon, resulting in its' not putting down roots in Queens. Failure to attract companies that offer high paying jobs will hurt the Long Island economy, so say nearly 95 percent of respondents who agreed that the flight of Long Island's young workforce will hurt the Long Island economy.

So, what can the region do to keep the Black

and Brown Millennials here? Answers are in the relationships existing between young people leaving Long Island and the lack of housing options, high housing costs (despite 95 percent wanting to purchase their own home), finding a job aligned with salary expectations, the adverse impact on the Long Island economy from the flight of young people, finding a job aligned with their skills, and the belief that Long Island will not be able to attract the high paying industries where they wish to work.

The respondents who agreed that if Long Island continues to ignore young people's needs, such as lack of housing options, continued flight of the region's young workforce, and that the region will be unable to attract the high paying jobs where they wish to work, they see themselves leaving.

Black and Brown Millennials leave little doubt about what needs to happen for them to remain and be part of Long Island's future workforce. Their message is unmistakable. If Long Island continues to ignore young people's need, they will continue to leave.

Martin Cantor is director of the Long Island Center for Socio-Economic Policy and a former Suffolk County economic development commissioner.

LONG ISLAND
BUSINESS NEWS

EDITOR & ASSOCIATE PUBLISHER

Joe Dowd

jdowd@libn.com

631-913-4238

ASSOCIATE PUBLISHER, SALES

Ali Jabbour

ajabbour@libn.com

631-913-4233

EVENTS MANAGER

Jenna Natale

jnatale@libn.com

631-913-4246

PUBLIC NOTICE

Robin Burgio

publicnotice@libn.com

631-737-1700

ACCOUNT MANAGERS

Barbara Pescuma

bpescuma@libn.com

631-913-4249

Jackie Douglas

jdouglas@libn.com

631-913-4259

LAW & GOVERNMENT

Adina Genn

agenn@libn.com

631-913-4241

REAL ESTATE / RETAIL / FRANCHISING

David Winzelberg

dwinzelberg@libn.com

631-913-4247

RESEARCH MANAGER

Kathy Lombardo

klombardo@libn.com

631-913-4248

NEWS DESIGNER

Anna Otto

AD PRODUCTION

Abby Wilhelm

Send address corrections to
service@bridgetowermedia.com

Customer Service

For inquiries, call 877-615-9536 or email
service@bridgetowermedia.com

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THE ALLIANCE
OF AREA BUSINESS PUBLICATIONS

Long Island Business News (ISSN 0894-806), (USPS No. 318-380) is published weekly by Long Island Business News Inc., 2150 Smithtown Ave., Suite 7, Ronkonkoma, N.Y. 11779-7348. Periodicals, 52 issues in 2021 plus 4 additional issues in the months of March, October, November and December mailed separately and periodicals postage paid at Ronkonkoma, N.Y. 11779 at additional entries. Phone: 631-737-1700, Fax: 631-737-1890.