

# 2018-2019 Blueprint for a Greener Long Island



**NEW YORK LEAGUE OF CONSERVATION VOTERS**

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**NYLCV EDUCATION FUND**

# INTRODUCTION

Every two years, the New York League of Conservation Voters Long Island Chapter works closely with local advocates to develop a policy agenda. This Blueprint for a Greener Long Island provides specific actions government officials can take to fight climate change, conserve our land and water, and protect public health.

Climate change is not only transforming our world, it's transforming Long Island. Recent severe storms destroyed our infrastructure, damaged our neighborhoods, and changed our landscape. We must become more resilient to the next storm, but we must also work to mitigate the long-term effects of a changing climate by promoting renewable energy, building efficiency, sustainable transportation, and better solid waste management.

Long Island boasts vibrant natural resources, from national and state parks to renowned beaches and waterways, like the Long Island Sound and Peconic Bay. Yet they are being threatened by development, pollution, and chronic underfunding. We must safeguard and restore them for the next generation.

Finally, we must make sure that we take steps to protect public health. Every Long Islander deserves access to clean air, well-maintained parks for recreation, fresh food from local farms, and protection from toxic chemicals.

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# TOP PRIORITIES

**Renewable Energy:** Renewable energy can reduce greenhouse gas emissions and air pollution across Long Island, but it is challenging to site large-scale renewable energy installations and can be needlessly difficult to install small-scale renewable technology. We will work with municipal and county governments to establish guidelines for siting utility-scale renewable energy and to reduce red tape and create new incentives for small-scale renewable energy.

**Improve Water Quality:** Protecting Long Island's sole-source aquifer is one of the most important challenges facing the region. While recent legislation and financial commitments from State and local governments are moving us in the right direction, there is still much work to be done.

**Electric Vehicles:** Electric Vehicles (EVs) reduce greenhouse gas emissions and emit zero particulate matter, improving air quality. Increasing the amount of easy-to-access charging stations will encourage more drivers to switch to EVs. Local governments can also spur EV adoption by purchasing them for municipal fleets and encouraging the use of electric school buses. We will work with county and local governments on Long Island to advance policies that will put more EVs on the road.

# SUSTAINABLE & TRANSIT-ORIENTED DEVELOPMENT

**Rising housing costs, traffic congestion, and a lack of coordinated planning pose serious threats to Long Island's environmental and economic future. A comprehensive growth strategy that incorporates affordable, reliable mass transit and walkable neighborhoods that connect people to jobs and education is needed to address these threats and create livable, sustainable communities.**

1. Modernize zoning, tax incentives, and regulation to encourage mixed land use, higher density development, downtown revitalization, open space protection, and historic preservation.
2. Support the expansion of workforce housing in all communities to reduce the need for workers to commute long distances.
3. Identify and encourage redevelopment of brownfield sites and utilize the Brownfields Opportunity Area program to ensure local communities are engaged.
4. Become a DEC certified Climate Smart Community by reducing greenhouse gases and taking action to protect communities from extreme weather.
5. Ensure waterfront development is consistent with smart growth goals and facilitates public access to the water.
6. Continue to support the speedy and efficient construction of the Long Island Rail Road's third track from Floral Park to Hicksville.
7. Encourage bike and car share initiatives.
8. Support full funding of the MTA Capital Plan, especially East Side Access and other projects that would increase capacity and reliability on the LIRR.
9. Ensure that any congestion pricing plan in New York City carefully considers impacts on Long Island commuters, including potential increased ridership on the LIRR.
10. Increase funding for regional transit and increase service and routes, especially for buses; improve interconnectivity between buses, trains, and planes.
11. Redesign arterial streets as safer streets including traffic calming projects, lower speed limits, electronic speed enforcement, increased penalties and enforcement for reckless and dangerous driving, and other initiatives in order to make communities more walkable and bikeable.
12. Create a network of complete streets that include dedicated bus lanes, protected bike lanes, bike and pedestrian trail networks, and connect residential areas to commercial areas, parks, and green spaces.

## PUBLIC HEALTH

**Every Long Islander deserves access to clean air, well-maintained parks for recreation, fresh food from local farms, and protection from toxic chemicals.**

1. Encourage and accelerate the adoption of cleaner alternatives to #4 and #6 home heating oil, including natural gas and electric heat.
2. Replace diesel vehicles, especially those that transport children, with electric vehicles including electric buses.
3. Protect parks and playgrounds from alienation of parkland.
4. Adopt Integrated Pest Management plans for publicly-owned property to reduce the use of pesticides and herbicides.
5. Create pocket parks, community gardens and urban farms and protect them through conservation easements held by land trusts or municipalities.

# OPEN SPACE PRESERVATION

Open space is quickly disappearing or under development pressure throughout the region. Sustainable development requires not just denser, transit-oriented development but also strategies such as pocket parks in developed areas and aggressive protection of undeveloped green space.

1. Expand regional and local land banks to preserve green space for livable neighborhoods.
2. Protect open space from development by promoting local bond initiatives, conservation land trusts, community preservation funds, dedicated revenue streams for conservation, transfers of development rights, reduced property taxes for open space, and zoning that preserves existing green space and requires open space set-asides.
3. Ensure that any expansion of the Pine Barrens includes a new report from the Central Pine Barrens Commission on how new transferable development rights would be created and used.

# ENERGY

Investing in energy efficiency and renewable energy will reduce greenhouse gas emissions and air pollution, putting us on a path to a healthier and safer future.

1. Adopt green building standards for new construction projects, create incentives for energy-efficient upgrades to existing buildings, and fund public education and outreach on existing energy efficiency incentives.
2. Remove impediments in local laws and codes and streamline the permitting process for homeowners and businesses to install renewable energy sources.
3. Develop programs that ensure clean energy, microgrids, and efficiency programs are equitably delivered to low-income populations and tenants of affordable housing.
4. Participate in Property Assessed Clean Energy (PACE) financing programs to increase clean energy installation and use.
5. Support clean energy projects such as microgrids, solar, wind, and household-level renewable energy and energy efficiency.
6. Support Long Island-based renewable industries providing solar, wind, and energy storage to a smarter, more resilient grid.
7. Ensure PSEG expands LIPA's renewable energy and efficiency programs, improves storm resiliency, and makes meaningful investments in reliable, cost-effective, and large-scale renewable energy generation.

# SUSTAINABLE PUBLIC ASSET MANAGEMENT

**Local and county governments can spur changes in the private sector by making greener decisions about their energy use, municipal fleets, green and open spaces, and buildings.**

1. Purchase energy from renewable sources and increase clean energy purchasing power through intra-governmental aggregation.
2. Install clean energy generation projects on public lands and buildings.
3. Convert municipal vehicle fleets to hybrid, electric, or other clean energy technology, and install electric vehicle charging stations in public parking locations.
4. Plant street trees and support other green streets initiatives.
5. Create programming in parks, farms, and other open space to encourage public use and appreciation.
6. Conduct energy audits and retrofits of municipal facilities.
7. Purchase Energy Star-rated equipment and upgrade streetlights to energy-efficient LED bulbs.
8. Pass local ordinances to control light pollution.

## WASTE

**Long Island's remaining landfill capacity will be exhausted within a decade, while trucking waste off the island is expensive, contributes to climate change, and pollutes the air we breathe. Sustainable waste management can protect the environment and create jobs.**

1. Work with local governments to boost recycling rates.
2. Incentivize regional recycling facilities, anaerobic digesters, compost sites, and other technologies that can process waste with a smaller impact on the environment.
3. Export as much waste as is feasible by rail rather than by truck.
4. Explore curbside collection of residential food waste and commercial organic waste recycling programs.
5. Develop waste reduction plans and engage schools, restaurants, and municipalities in food composting programs.
6. Consider implementing a "save-as-you-throw" program to charge for collection of non-recyclable trash based on the amount being discarded.

# WATER QUALITY AND AQUIFIER PROTECTION

**Clean water is essential for health, recreation, agriculture, and economic development. Water is one of Long Island's most precious - and most threatened - resources.**

1. Continue to implement the Long Island Nitrogen Action Plan with strong reduction plans for all sources of nitrogen pollution.
2. Invest in wastewater treatment plant upgrades to remove nitrogen effectively and consistently to restore the health of our waterways, oceans, and bays.
3. Support the conversion of the Bay Park Sewage Treatment Facility into a pump station that would reroute waste to the Bay Park Water Reclamation Facility.
4. Delay any decision on reopening Jamaica Water Service wells until after the conclusion of the U.S. Geological Survey's sustainability assessment.
5. Support rigorous monitoring of wastewater treatment plants to ensure compliance with permitted nitrogen levels.
6. Encourage continued U.S. Geological Service participation in groundwater aquifer testing and mapping on Long Island specifically for monitoring saltwater intrusion in vulnerable areas.
7. Adopt and implement updated plans and regulations that integrate best-available, next-generation septic systems.
8. Ensure that funds allocated in the Clean Water Infrastructure Act of 2017 and county grant programs are efficiently leveraged and reauthorized going forward for septic upgrades, replacements, and alternative septic management initiatives.
9. Adopt a revised Peconic Bay Community Preservation Fund initiative to extend and allocate some of the fund for water quality projects.
10. Work with homeowners, public agencies, and the agricultural community to implement sustainable management practices that promote water quality.
11. Develop and build sewer systems in targeted priority areas.
12. Develop stormwater and agricultural runoff management programs for key watershed and estuary areas across Long Island.
13. Implement comprehensive pesticide reduction and phase out plans, particularly in Special Groundwater Protection Areas, based on sound science and risk assessment.



Photo credit: Brian Harkin for The New York Times

# NATURAL RESOURCE PROTECTION

**Managing and protecting regional natural resources will require a comprehensive effort that looks at air, water, and land.**

1. Continue to reduce the use of single-use bags and encourage reusable bags through fees and regulations in Nassau County; ensure a smooth rollout of Suffolk County's bag fee.
2. Provide incentives and technical assistance for communities, property owners, and developers to manage stormwater on-site with a variety of technologies such as green roofs, bioswales, rain gardens and rain barrels, and implement strategies outlined in stormwater management plans.
3. Encourage the use of native plants for landscaping and implement programs to address the growing threat of invasive species.
4. Prioritize and fund a forestry and street regeneration program, including downtown and main street areas.
5. Develop regional, county, and local plans to restore streams and other water resources.
6. Encourage permeable paving surfaces.
7. Continue carrying out the Long Island Sound, Peconic and South Shore Estuary Comprehensive Conservation and Management Plans (CCMP) to restore and preserve the estuaries by incorporating CCMP recommendations into enforceable town and village codes.

# FARMS AND LOCAL FOOD

**A vibrant agricultural sector plays a key role in providing access to healthy, locally grown food, combating climate change, and creating food sustainability.**

1. Work with the Department of Agriculture and Markets to expand the FreshConnect Program to create more farmers markets throughout the region - especially in food desert communities.
2. Explore and encourage funding streams for farmland preservation that can leverage private and public dollars.
3. Maintain productive farmland through the acquisition and donation of development rights and clarify that protected farmland can be used for "farm operations," as defined by State law.
4. Create outreach and awareness campaigns to take advantage of the growing popularity of regional agriculture, sustainable viticulture, and local agricultural products.
5. Adopt affordable farmland and affirmative farming legislation that ensures protected land remains farmed for food production.
6. On the East End, enhance agricultural districts within which farmers receive incentives to continue using their land for agricultural purposes, including changes to real property tax and estate tax treatment of working farms, protections against local laws that inhibit farming practices, and incentivize zoning such as Agricultural Planned Development Districts.
7. Seek funding on behalf of the agricultural community through conservation programs in the federal Farm Bill.



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### **NEW YORK LEAGUE OF CONSERVATION VOTERS, INC.**

*NYLCV is the only nonpartisan, statewide environmental organization in New York that fights for clean water, clean air, renewable energy and open space through political action.*

### **NEW YORK LEAGUE OF CONSERVATION VOTERS EDUCATION FUND, INC.**

*NYLCVEF educates, engages and empowers New Yorkers to be effective advocates for the environment.*