



TO : Town of Islip
FROM : Islip Forward
SUBJECT : re: TOI 360 Civic Questionnaire
DATE : January, 27 2025

Overview

Islip Forward is a dynamic community collective committed to empowering the residents of Islip through civic engagement, advocacy, and accessible information. Our mission is to foster a civically engaged, informed, and active community that drives the growth and advancement of Islip. We achieve this by delivering comprehensive voter education, emphasizing the critical importance of every vote, and ensuring equitable access to voting resources.

Our organization operates impactful initiatives, including Brentwood Votes, Central Islip Votes, and Bay Shore Votes, to enhance voter engagement in historically underserved communities. We hold regular monthly meetings to plan initiatives, address community concerns, and collaborate with residents, elected officials, and local organizations. In less than three months, **Islip Forward has garnered over 300,000 social media impressions, demonstrating the broad reach and resonance of our efforts.**

Recent Projects and Actions

Since its inception, Islip Forward has implemented several significant projects aimed at fostering community engagement and addressing local needs:

Voter Engagement Initiatives

- Through campaigns like Brentwood Votes, Central Islip Votes, and Bay Shore Votes, we have increased voter education and turnout in historically underserved communities, empowering residents to make their voices heard.

Community Advocacy

- Organized panels featuring elected officials and community leaders to address local concerns, including infrastructure development, public safety, and economic opportunities.

Local News Dissemination

- Provided timely updates on community events to keep residents informed and promote awareness of developments across Islip.

Policy Platform Development

- Initiated the creation of a comprehensive policy platform that addresses critical community needs.

Community Service Events

- Organized local cleanups in Brentwood, Central Islip, and Bay Shore, contributing to the beautification and sustainability of our neighborhoods.



Key Issues of Concern

Islip Forward has identified several critical issues affecting our community:

1. Voter Engagement

- Persistent barriers to equitable voter participation, such as limited access to resources and information, have stunted turnout in underserved communities. These areas have the potential to become strong coalitions but remain sidelined from the civic process.

2. Infrastructure Deficiencies

- Outdated facilities and inadequate public transportation hinder sustainable development and limit residents' mobility.

3. Economic Disparities

- Insufficient job opportunities and lack of economic development, particularly near transit hubs, have restricted growth in key areas.

Priorities for the Comprehensive Plan

Islip Forward envisions a future where every resident of Islip thrives in a community that is vibrant, inclusive, and equitable. To achieve this vision, we urge the Town to adopt the following priorities as central pillars of the TOI-360 Comprehensive Plan, each designed to address pressing local issues and inspire transformative growth over the next two decades:

1. Modernized Recreational Facilities

Example - Transforming Central Islip's Recreation Center into a Hub of Opportunity

The Central Islip Recreation Center must evolve into a flagship facility that reflects the diverse needs of the community. We propose:

- **Comprehensive Renovation:** Upgrade existing structures to include state-of-the-art fitness and wellness equipment, multipurpose rooms for community events, and designated spaces for youth mentorship programs.
- **Incorporation of Green Design:** Implement sustainable building practices, such as solar panels and energy-efficient systems, to reduce operational costs while promoting environmental stewardship.
- **Expanded Programming:** Offer tailored classes in arts, technology, and vocational training to provide opportunities for lifelong learning and creative expression.
- **Inclusive Accessibility:** Ensure ADA compliance and culturally responsive programming to engage residents of all ages, abilities, and backgrounds.

This revitalized facility will not only enhance quality of life but also act as a cornerstone for community connection and empowerment.

2. Transportation Enhancements to Create a Connected Islip

Example - A Free Brentwood Shuttle Bus to Connect Communities

Brentwood, one of the most densely populated areas in Islip, suffers from limited transit options that restrict mobility and economic opportunities. To address this, we propose:

- **Free Community Shuttle Service:** Establish a reliable, no-cost shuttle system that connects residential neighborhoods with critical destinations, including schools, healthcare centers, and transit hubs.
- **Smart Technology Integration:** Utilize GPS tracking and mobile apps to provide real-time updates, ensuring efficiency and accessibility for all users.
- **Environmental Benefits:** Transition to electric or hybrid vehicles to reduce emissions and align with the town's broader sustainability goals.

This service will foster economic activity, reduce reliance on single-occupancy vehicles, and build a more connected community.





3. Sustainable Mobility

Example - Bike Lanes Along Fifth Avenue: A Pathway to a Greener Future

Fifth Avenue is one of the busiest thoroughfares in Brentwood, yet it lacks safe infrastructure for cyclists. Adding bike lanes will:

- Promote Public Health: Encourage active transportation that reduces sedentary lifestyles and fosters a healthier community.
- Increase Safety: Design protected lanes with clear markings to ensure the safety of both cyclists and pedestrians.
- Strengthen Connectivity: Link bike lanes to key community landmarks, schools, parks, and transit hubs, creating a cohesive network.
- Boost Economic Vitality: Attract local businesses by fostering foot and bike traffic, increasing the visibility and accessibility of commercial areas.

Integrating bike lanes will not only reduce traffic congestion and emissions but also reimagine the streetscape as a shared space that prioritizes people over vehicles.

4. Economic Development in Marginalized Communities

Example - Establishing an Economic District Around the Brentwood LIRR Station

Transit-oriented development has the potential to transform the Brentwood Long Island Rail Road station into an economic engine for the community. We recommend:

- Mixed-Use Zoning: Encourage the development of retail, residential, and office spaces within walking distance of the station to create a vibrant economic hub.
- Local Business Incentives: Provide grants or tax breaks to small businesses and startups to establish themselves in the area, prioritizing minority- and women-owned enterprises.
- Job Creation Initiatives: Partner with vocational schools and local employers to create a job training pipeline that equips residents with the skills needed for high-demand industries.
- Pedestrian-Friendly Design: Invest in streetscape improvements, including sidewalks, lighting, and public art, to create a welcoming and walkable environment.

By investing in this district, Brentwood can become a model for equitable and sustainable economic growth.

Additional Considerations for a Holistic Approach

Affordable Housing Development

- Introduce mixed-use developments that combine affordable housing units with commercial spaces, ensuring economic and social diversity.
- Incentivize green construction practices to enhance energy efficiency and reduce long-term costs for residents.

Environmental Sustainability

- Launch green infrastructure projects, such as permeable pavements and rain gardens, to mitigate flooding and improve water quality.
- Expand tree-planting initiatives to enhance air quality and create cooler, shaded areas in urban spaces.

Youth Engagement and Leadership

- Establish mentorship programs in partnership with local schools and organizations to cultivate the next generation of civic leaders.
- Create a Youth Innovation Fund to support student-led projects that address community challenges.





Conclusion

The TOI-360 Comprehensive Plan represents a transformative opportunity for the Town of Islip to chart a bold, inclusive, and forward-thinking vision for the next two decades. By addressing the pressing needs of our community through modernized recreational facilities, enhanced transportation, sustainable mobility, robust economic development, and equitable voter access, Islip has the potential to become a model of innovation and equity for towns across Long Island and beyond.

We at Islip Forward firmly believe that these priorities reflect the values, aspirations, and untapped potential of our residents. With a collaborative spirit and a shared commitment to progress, we can create a community where every resident—regardless of background—can thrive, contribute, and take pride in the place they call home.

We extend our deepest gratitude to the Town of Islip for the opportunity to contribute to this historic planning process. By welcoming input from community organizations, the Town demonstrates its commitment to inclusive decision-making and fostering a government that truly listens to its people. We are inspired by the collective possibilities that lie ahead and are eager to continue working hand in hand with the Town to bring this vision to life.

Should further discussion on our recommendations or areas of collaboration be needed, we stand ready to engage and assist. Please do not hesitate to reach out to us at info@islipforward.org.

Thank you for your dedication to creating a brighter, more equitable future for Islip. Together, we can turn this vision into a reality that will benefit generations to come.

Sincerely,



Brian Delgado
Director of Policy
Islip Forward

