

## EDITORIAL

# A creative idea for LI housing

## Southampton considers limits on rent and income for accessory apartments

**A**ffordability has been a Long Island conundrum for decades. In recent years, the region's high housing costs, high taxes and overall high cost of living have left many residents, homeowners as well as renters, in crisis.

So we welcome an innovative proposal in Southampton Town that addresses this intractable equation by reducing the cost of housing. The legislation allows homeowners to obtain permits for accessory apartments with rent and income restrictions. The proposed law would apply to owners of half-acre or larger lots in less densely populated hamlets, nearly 2,000 properties in all. The numbers tell the affordable story: Rents in 2019 would be capped at \$1,240 for a studio, \$1,548 for a one-bedroom, and \$1,907 for a two-bedroom, and a single renter could earn no more than \$106,200 — 130 percent of the area's median income.

The East End has its own problems — a workforce that largely cannot afford to live anywhere near where it works, employers who face increasing difficulty finding workers, morning and evening traffic jams created by those who must commute from outside the area, rising real estate values compounded by second-home purchases that take potential housing off the market, and little property left to build workforce housing.

Southampton Supervisor Jay Schneiderman and his staff deserve credit for their out-of-the-box approach to a solution.

But their proposal is a winner in so many ways that other Long Island municipalities whose housing stock and issues may be different could explore or adopt similar strategies.

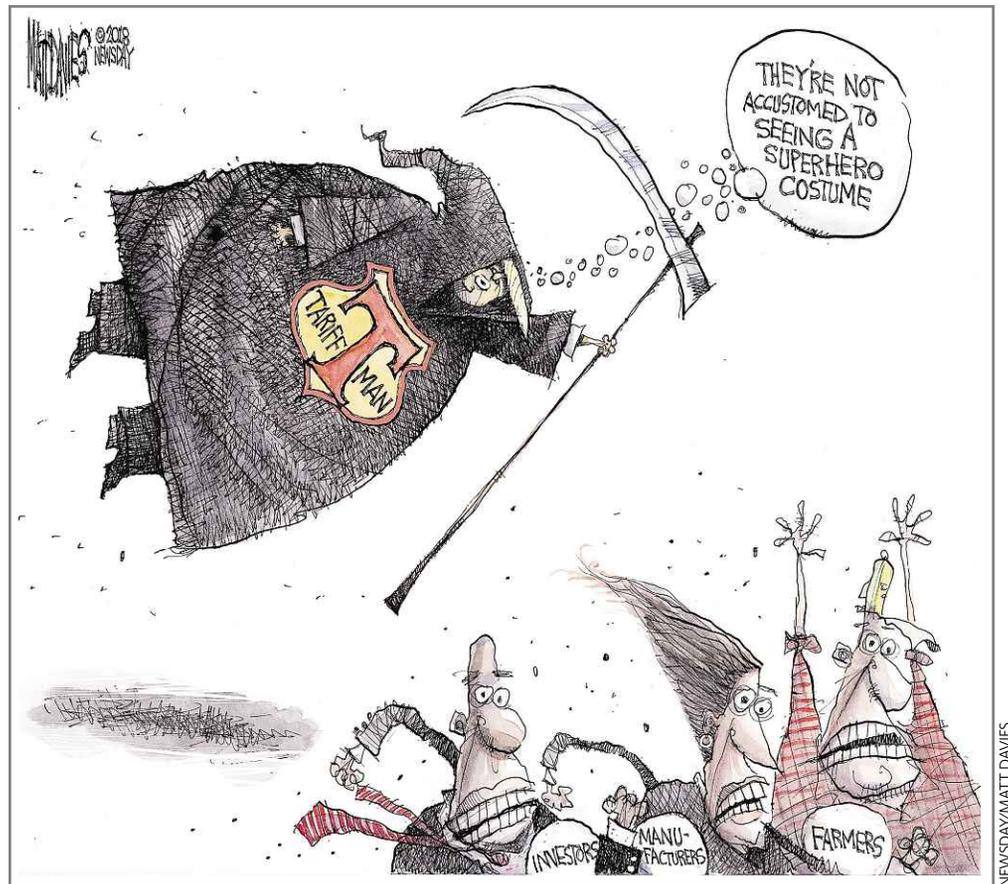
Affordable accessory apartments give both young people and longtime residents seeking to downsize an opportunity to stay on Long Island. They give struggling homeowners — especially seniors, some dealing with foreclosure, many squeezed by escalating property taxes and flat incomes — revenue to allow them to remain at home, providing continuity for communities and companionship for our older generation. Making apartments legal subjects them to building and sanitary codes, which means no one has to trade safety for affordability. Many homeowners in Long Island municipalities that allow accessory apartments don't bother to get required approvals, which is bad for any community.

But virtually none of that hodgepodge of rules include caps on rents or incomes of renters. The Long Island Housing Partnership built two developments in Bay Shore and Bridgehampton over the past decade with a total of 20 single-family homes with affordable accessory apartments. They have been immensely popular. And the need is dire.

Some 60 percent of Long Island residents in a Long Island Index poll last year said it was somewhat or very difficult to pay their rent. More than two-third of residents in the same poll supported changing zoning laws to make it easier to put apartments in single-family homes. And the region still has a shortage of rentals in general. Only 21 percent of Long Island's housing stock is rentals, compared with 35 percent in the Hudson Valley and 39 percent in northern New Jersey.

Southampton's proposal is a strong step toward making life here less expensive. The rest of Long Island should take a long look at the plan. Other communities cannot afford to do otherwise. — *The editorial board*

## MATT DAVIES



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## LETTERS

### Congress must tackle opioid crisis

As I read Sharon Richmond's opinion piece about how the insurance company denied her son the treatment he so desperately needed for drug abuse and how she lost him to a fentanyl overdose ["My son wanted to end his addiction," Nov. 29], I was transported back in time.

Fifteen years ago, my own child needed help for opioid addiction. The insurance company agreed to detox treatment at a hospital for about three days, but then it was an uphill battle to get longer care at inpatient treatment centers. I spent countless hours on the phone with the insurer to get our child that kind of treatment through four relapses. My husband and I fought hard. The treatment centers helped, but it was on us to get the insurer to pay each time.

No parent should have to go through this while dealing with a child who is struggling with this awful disease. I am so sorry that it continues. We were lucky. Our child made it and is still with us today, thriving, because of a family that would not give up, dedicated treatment professionals and our faith in our child.

President Donald Trump promised in his first State of the Union speech to fight the drug epidemic and provide treatment for this deadly disease. He has done virtually nothing to stem the tide. We are losing a generation of young people. The problem is in every community. No one is immune. We need to demand that Congress get to work and start doing something before we lose any more of our young people.

*Trish Burr,  
Freeport*

### Not happy with changes at GM

When General Motors was foundering on the shoals of bankruptcy, seeking extraordinary relief after its poor business decisions, entire nations came together to buttress the incompetents there, including a multi-billion-dollar bailout from the U.S. government during the 2008-09 economic downturn.

Now because of the trade war begun by President Donald Trump, combined with Detroit's characteristic failure to design cars people want to buy, the company is going to betray members of the United Auto Workers, its white-collar lifetime employees and communities that rallied to save it — all for the sake of soulless equity holders ["GM: Layoffs ahead," News, Nov. 27].

When GM next teeters near going belly up, let its ex-



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