

Keeping IDAs on track



THE COLUMN

Joye Brown

joye.brown@newsday.com

There's nothing wrong with the mission of Long Island's eight industrial development agencies, which is to attract and keep businesses — and the jobs they create — in exchange for tax breaks and other financial incentives.

But a Newsday analysis of IDA activity for 2004, compared with IDA activity for 2016, nonetheless found a few things worth examining.

While tax breaks for businesses, new housing developments and other projects jumped 231 percent, jobs created rose by only 109 percent.

Put a simpler way, residents in some IDA jurisdictions are picking up the tab for business

tax breaks and getting little significant job creation in return — in a region where young people are fleeing, in part, because of too few good-paying jobs.

Some IDAs are more successful at creating jobs than others. In 2016, the Suffolk IDA created the most of any of the agencies, the analysis by Newsday's James T. Madore showed.

Suffolk and Brookhaven appear to be more selective about what they back, working to help manufacturers or regional projects like the Ronkonkoma Hub.

Others — and Nassau IDA, we're looking at you — have, as is allowed under state law, extended help more broadly to businesses such as car dealerships and storage facilities.

Between 2014 and 2017, Nassau's IDA granted breaks to four dealerships to expand showrooms, using a "tourism exemption" because many of

the car customers came to the dealership from New York City.

But while Nassau's breaks for car dealerships seem a stretch — and highlight a law that could benefit from some tightening — the county IDA also has helped fuel the building boom around Farmingdale's Long Island Rail Road station.

Nonetheless, there remains cause for concern, if only because the number of active IDA projects is growing to the point where various IDAs are competing with each other.

In Nassau, there's been discussion of consolidating the county and Hempstead Town IDAs, a move that could make it easier to — finally — gain significant redevelopment in the Hub area in Uniondale.

Consolidation, in fact, is one remedy that IDA reformers believe will boost projects, while removing competition they blame for driving up business

property tax breaks — which, in turn, burden taxpayers left to take up the slack.

Until 2016, most IDA activity drew little public notice.

But that changed after public outcry over tax breaks requested by the developer of waterfront apartments on Long Beach's Superblock.

There also were protests over tax breaks granted to Green Acres Mall and an adjacent shopping strip by the Hempstead IDA. Tax bills increased for some residents because of a budgeting error by two Valley Stream school districts.

As one result, there currently are eight IDA reform bills pending in Albany. And on Monday, Nassau Comptroller Jack Schnirman said his office would audit Nassau's IDA.

The trick, all around, will be to keep IDAs on their original mission.

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Long Island Office
235 Pinelawn Rd., Melville, NY
11747-4250

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CORRECTIONS

Because of an editing error, the location of the Fire Island Lighthouse was incorrect in a photo caption Friday.

Rights activist Asma Jahangir's last name was misspelled in an obituary, headline and photo caption Monday.

THIS DATE IN HISTORY

1542 The fifth wife of England's King Henry VIII, Catherine Howard, was executed for adultery.

1861 Abraham Lincoln was officially declared winner of the 1860 presidential election as electors cast their ballots.

1935 A jury in Flemington, New Jersey, found Bruno Richard Hauptmann guilty of first-degree murder in the kidnap-slaying of Charles A. Lindbergh Jr., the 20-month-old son of Charles and Anne Lindbergh. (Hauptmann was later executed.)

1974 Nobel Prize-winning Russian author Alexander Solzhenitsyn was expelled from the Soviet Union.

2008 Under oath and sometimes blistering questioning, seven-time Cy Young Award winner Roger Clemens told Congress: "I have never taken steroids or HGH," while his accuser, former personal trainer Brian McNamee, sat a few feet away.

2016 Justice Antonin Scalia, the influential conservative and most provocative member of the U.S. Supreme Court, was found dead at a private residence in the Big Bend area of West Texas; he was 79.

Levittown woman hails smoke alarm

BY WILLIAM MURPHY
bill.murphy@newsday.com

An apartment building fire in Levittown late Sunday left a 68-year-old woman hospitalized for smoke inhalation and damaged several units, officials said.

The fire on North Newbridge Road was reported at 11:34 p.m., Nassau County police said. The building is part of Newbridge Gardens Condominiums.

The fire began in a second-floor apartment that was occupied by two people, and the female resident was taken to Nassau University Medical Center for treatment of minor smoke inhalation, according to Assistant Chief Fire Marshal Michael F. Uttaro.

Michele Sanchez identified herself as the resident taken to the hospital, telling News 12 Long Island she "woke up because of the smoke alarm," saw the flames and got out.

"Everybody has to get smoke



Firefighters at the scene of Sunday's fire in Levittown. A woman was treated for smoke inhalation.

alarms," Sanchez said. "They save lives."

She told News 12 she went to the hospital for smoke inhalation because she has asthma.

The Red Cross responded to the scene and assisted about 20

people who were displaced by the fire, Uttaro said.

The fire does not appear to be suspicious, and the investigation into its cause is continuing, Uttaro said.

After getting out of the hospi-

tal, Sanchez surveyed the damage to her home, finding it "much worse" than she thought it would be.

"I'll be OK," Sanchez said. "Put one foot in front of the other."



Michele Sanchez