

BIZfact

\$31,980

Average salary of taxi drivers and chauffeurs on Long Island

Source: New York State Department of Labor

SMALL CARS LAG IN SHIFT TO SUVs

In April 2014 the compact Chevrolet Cruze outsold the Equinox midsize SUV by more than 1,000 vehicles. A year later the Equinox trounced the Cruze by nearly 8,000 in sales.

Those numbers sum up the shift in attitude among U.S. auto buyers: As they increasingly fall in love with SUVs, small and midsize cars are having a harder time getting a date.

SUVs and trucks powered U.S. auto sales to a 4.6 percent gain last month, with several automakers reporting their strongest April sales ever. The stylish and practical new SUVs are pulling people away from cars, forcing automakers to discount sedans and even furlough workers to control growing inventories.

A big drop in gas prices, to an average of \$2.60 a gallon from \$3.69 a year ago, also works in favor of SUVs.

The Equinox posted a 42 percent sales increase to almost 29,000 in April, while Cruze sales fell nearly 4 percent to just under 21,000. Both vehicles are made by General Motors.

"The demand for crossover SUVs is off the charts," said Bill Fay, a group vice president at Toyota, which posted record April sales of the RAV4 and Highlander SUVs. Still, buyers didn't abandon Toyota's bread-and-butter vehicles. Sales of the Corolla compact grew 10 percent, and while sales of the midsize Camry fell, the sedan remained the top-selling car in America. — AP

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Eye on workforce housing

Builders Institute chief keeps focus on young talent

EXECUTIVE SUITE

BY CHRISTINE GIORDANO
Special to Newsday

Shifting demographics and employment trends are creating major new housing and transportation needs on Long Island, Mitch Pally says. He is chief executive of the Long Island Builders Institute in Islandia and serves as the Suffolk County representative on the board of the Metropolitan Transportation Authority, giving him a unique view of the interrelated issues.

As companies recruit talent from Brooklyn and Queens, commuting trends are beginning to reverse from the crush of traffic going westward in the mornings toward Manhattan, said Pally, 63. And as people get married later in life and look to drive less, there is more demand for apartments near train stations.

"It's essential that the non-real-estate business community support these type of projects because they are being done for their benefit," he said. "They have their businesses here, they need employees, and those employees have to live someplace on Long Island."

On May 21 Pally will moderate a panel on "How to Revitalize Long Island's Economy" for the HIA-LI's annual trade show at Suffolk Community College in Brentwood.

What's driving these lifestyle changes?

Especially in the last 10 years, people are not getting married at 22, they're getting married at 32. They are having children later, they are having fewer children. The diversity of our population continues to increase. And that puts pressure on the housing stock. They don't want a single-family home now. They may want one when they get to 35. And they don't really want a car; they want the ability to get on



Mitch Pally, at his office in Islandia, says it's "essential" that the business community support apartment projects near train stations, because it needs employees and places for them to live.

a train. I wouldn't call it 'urbanism,' but I would call it 'new suburbanism,' because it's a combination of suburban and urban lifestyle.

If we don't provide the housing option now for [young people] to be able to live on Long Island in the type of housing they want, they won't be here five to 10 years from now to buy your house.

What areas will see the greatest demand for more trains?

We obviously have demand now for reverse commuting. As the innovation economy on Long Island expands, that's going to be our future. The question is, Where are we going to get the workers for those types of jobs? Some of them will live on Long Island, and obviously, for them, intra-island commuting is essential, but in addition to that, reverse commuting — bringing the workforce in from Brooklyn and Queens, where many young people now live — is as important. That is a very difficult thing for us to do during peak hours because most of the trains are going westbound to the city.

CORPORATE snapshot

NAME: Mitch H. Pally, chief executive, Long Island Builders Institute in Islandia

WHAT IT DOES: Trade association representing residential and mixed-use

builders and those employed in the industry.

EMPLOYEES: 3 full time, 1 part time

BUDGET: \$1 million

Where are new housing projects underway?

Farmingdale has a number of projects, one of which just opened; Wyandanch will open shortly, Ronkonkoma is moving forward, there are projects in Port Jefferson, which has the advantage of being near Stony Brook University. Valley Stream just had a new project, Baldwin has options, we're all hoping at some point Hicksville might be an opportunity, and Mineola is expanding dramatically with regard to housing. Most [projects] tend to be right along the railroads or near the railroads, and of course, then you have the largest project on the Island, which is continuing to move forward: Heartland in Brentwood.

You serve on the boards of the Nassau and Suffolk Workforce Housing commissions. What are their goals?

Suffolk's goal is to provide the infrastructure necessary to build the housing, [such as] sewage treatment plants and sewer extensions in certain areas. Then communities can rezone the properties for multifamily housing, then you can build such housing. There are many places where it cannot happen; the infrastructure is not available. Downtown Smithtown is a perfect example, Kings Park, the Mastic-Shirley area does not have sewers; they are looking for a major sewer enhancement there.

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