

The Growth Of Long Island Commercial Real Estate

A Retrospective.....By William Greiner, With John Maltz

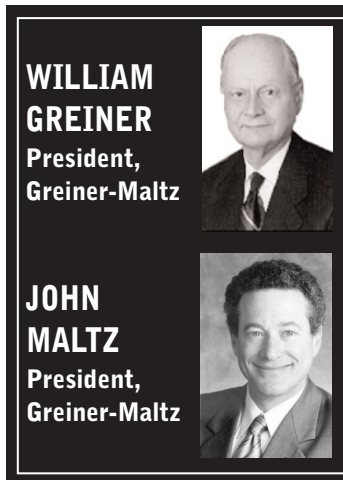
Where were you when the Long Island Expressway was built? Bill Greiner knows, for he was tracking the creation of each new exit with available Industrial and Commercial property listings. The Long Island of fifty-years ago would be unrecognizable to today's denizens. While the geography remains one dimensional as it was then; with water to the North and South, in many parts of Nassau and Suffolk Industrial land sold for more per square foot than did residential! Unless you happen to be in the real estate business or drive to the Hamptons each weekend, little known is the fact that the land mass of Suffolk County is twice that of Queens and Nassau combined.

Going back 50 years to 1955, the pace of development quickened with the construction of the Westbury Industrial Park, situated, to this day, on Shames Drive off Brush Hollow Road. While many of the buildings today would be considered "functionally challenged", they were then considered the height of enlightened construction design with 14 ft. ceilings, wide spans of 25 - 32 ft. and cavity wall construction. Off street drive-ins and tail board loading were mod-

ern marvels to the type of occupant coming out of crowded Soho and Chelsea. Rental rates of up to \$2.00 per sq. ft. were hotly negotiated. The development of the next significant Industrial Park had to wait to the early 1960's when the LIE was completed to Syosset and Plainview. The Syosset Industrial Park, situated at Eileen Way and Michael Drive off of route 25 covered tens of acres and quickly absorbed the expanding economic demand heading eastward from Manhattan, Queens and Brooklyn.

In the early 60's, exit 49 and the route 110 Corridor was considered too far east and therefore an undesirable location (the North/South Commercial thoroughfare at the Nassau/Suffolk border). Acreage with route 110 frontage, went begging at prices from \$5.00 per square foot. The guiding principal of real estate, "location, location, location" was in evidence with the price of industrial zoned land in the Melville areas of Western Suffolk County going for half the cost of a similar site in Plainview.

Economic expansion, as well as pricing continued to drive industrial development Eastward throughout the 60's with areas such as Deer Park



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with sophisticated racking systems. New types of heating systems such as gas radiant were designed into new construction to allow for efficiencies at a time when energy prices were sky rocketing. Wherein 30 years prior, a couple of overhead doors were adequate for a 25,000 sq. ft. building, current user specifications required at least one loading door per 5,000 sq. ft. with 50 ft. deep interior tail board loading positions to accommodate the ever lengthening tractor trailer bodies.

Long Island's proximity to Manhattan coupled with the unhindered development of attractive industrial parks helped it to become home to more companies listed on the New York and OTB Stock Exchanges than any other geographic area of the country. While there are frequent complaints that: the LIE is a shipping bottle neck, utility costs are higher than in other areas of the country, and labor is in short supply, it is our experience that once a company is planted in Long Island it not only grows quickly, but would rather stay in Long Island than to move to any other part of the world. To drive the Long Island Expressway today is to witness the history, exit by exit, of the changing development of Long Island over the years; the home of a broad based and diverse family of companies which on their own have gross sales which exceed the gross national product of many countries.

The 1980's witnessed continued industrial expansion, this time to Long Island's McArthur airport area of Bohemia/Ronkoma. This, the newest area of industrial development, benefited from significant changes in warehouse construction due to the changing demands of industrial occupancy. Wherein during the 50's 14 ft. ceiling heights were considered adequate, now 20 ft. was considered inadequate. Many buildings were now constructed "clear span" so as to not interfere

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