

S. Hauppauge Finds an Identity: Islandia

By Sylvia Moreno

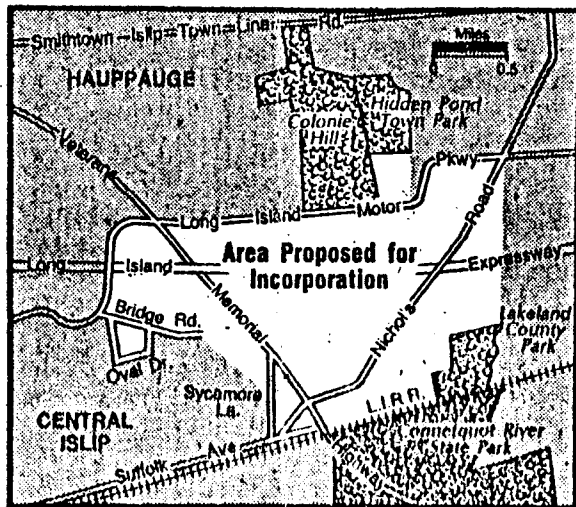
Islip—A 500-home cluster of ranch-style Levitt houses nestled between Hauppauge (unincorporated) and Central Islip (unincorporated) is trying to settle its years-long identity crisis by becoming Islandia (incorporated).

Residents of the would-be village have claimed independence and long confused post offices by informally calling their community South Hauppauge. Now, after 3½ years of door-to-door research, the same group yesterday appeared before town board and took its first step toward incorporating itself as Islandia.

"It's a simple name and it fits the community," said Warren Raymond, president of the Islandia Civic Association, the group that during the 1970s began the residents' fight to establish a separate village. "A lot of people are trying to promote Long Island, and this does, too—Islandia," said Raymond. The name, unlike South Hauppauge, emphasizes the community's desire to be separate from its neighbors.

Islandia would be Islip's fourth village and the first incorporated on Long Island since 1968, when Lake Grove was incorporated in Brookhaven Town. Raymond and several members of the association marked the beginning of the formal process of creating a village by presenting the Islip Town Board with petitions containing 432 names—more than twice the 180, or 20 per cent of the registered voters within the proposed village, required—and a \$1,000 filing fee.

The 2.25-square-mile area—which includes 147



Newsday Map by Brigitte Zimmer

acres of Islip's prime undeveloped industrial property straddling the Long Island Expressway from Exits 57 to 58 and a \$90-million tax base including the \$10-million Colonie Hill complex—would contain 80 per cent developed and undeveloped industrially zoned property and 20 per cent residential property. The proposed village would include 650 homes, including the 500 homes in the Islandia Civic Association.

Inclusion of the huge chunk of prime industrial property is designed to underwrite through property taxes the costs of running a village. "We think

we'll also be more attractive to industry because as a village we will be a more stable community," Raymond said.

The petitions for incorporation were greeted with little warmth by Supervisor Michael LoGrande, who has long opposed the residents' fight to shed their connection to neighboring Central Islip, a low-income to middle-income, racially mixed community of 42,000.

"They won't change anything geographically with their boundaries, so they're not really going to separate themselves," LoGrande said. "And the last thing we need is more government. No matter how you slice it, more government means more taxes."

But once the town rules within 20 days on the validity of the petition signatures, town officials have little standing to fight the incorporation drive. If the signatures are valid, the town board must hold a public hearing on the proposal within 20 to 30 days and then hold an election within 30 days after the hearing. Only persons living within the proposed village boundaries will decide Islandia's fate.

Both Raymond and William LeStrange, a former president of the Islandia Civic Association, said that incorporation would place government officials within closer reach of the community and would financially benefit residents. Residents would still pay town taxes but not the town highway tax of \$1.99 per \$1,000 assessed valuation.

"Besides, who are the best ones to run our community? We are," said Raymond, who already plans to run for mayor. "We are there 24 hours a day and feel we can manage it better."

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