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A blue-collar boro shifts gears

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[Queens](#), long known as a haven for middle-class New Yorkers, may be outgrowing its blue-collar roots, a new report says.

In fact, it's more expensive to live in Queens than in [Orange County, Calif.](#); [Stamford, Conn.](#), and even [Nassau County](#), according to "Reviving the City of Aspiration," the report released by the think tank [Center for an Urban Future](#).

"More neighborhoods in Queens are out of reach to middle- and working-class families than ever before," said [Jonathan Bowles](#), co-author of the report, unveiled yesterday.

"It used to be that you could find a good deal on a home, whether it's [Sunnyside](#) or [Laurelton](#). Prices have gone through the roof," he said.

The report looked at a number of factors that have socked middle-class New Yorkers, such as rising child-care costs, fewer middle-income jobs, lack of public transportation and out-of-scale development in their neighborhoods.

These may be some of the reasons, Bowles said, that 44% more people moved out of the borough in 2006 than in 2003, even as its population increased overall.

"People are focused more than ever on the cost of getting by," said [Corey Bearak](#) of the Queens [Civic Congress](#), a coalition of community groups.

"It's always the middle-class income that gets squeezed."

Parents unhappy with city schools also are forced to pay big bucks for private or religious schools.

"Some people are paying private college rates from kindergarten," Bearak said.

"The first break they get is if their child goes to a city college."

Southeast Queens also is being squeezed - traditionally a stable, middle-class haven for African-Americans and Caribbean-Americans, Bowles said.

"I think the opportunities for the next generation of the black middle class may not be the same," Bowles said. "A lot of people who were municipal workers and health-care workers were able to buy homes in southeast Queens."

Longtime Cambria Heights resident [Cheryl Caddle](#) said the city needs to provide better educational programs.

"We have good elementary schools," said Caddle, who is the PTA president at Public School 176. "But after that, people feel that they need to find a private school or trek their kid to some other part of the city."

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