

Bronx Sustainable Communities: Melrose Community Workshop Summary March 10th, 2012

NYCPLANNING
DEPARTMENT OF CITY PLANNING CITY OF NEW YORK

COMMUNITY WORKSHOP



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melrose workshop summary

AGENDA AND OVERVIEW

Overview of Events

On consecutive Saturdays, March 3rd and March 10th of 2012, the Bronx Sustainable Communities team held interactive workshops around the University Heights and Melrose Metro North Station areas. The 3 hour workshops were designed as an opportunity for residents and stakeholders to provide early input that will guide the project outcomes as well as an educational opportunity to better understand the concept of Transit Oriented Development.

The events were preceded by community tours, on January 28th, which provided an opportunity for the project team to learn more about the community and the community to understand the project. A number of community members attended each workshop to provide valuable insights which transitioned into high level discussions around access, the pedestrian environment and land use. DCP staff, which consisted of multi-disciplinary planners and urban designers, was able to listen and learn about the communities while also serving as an educational resource.

The workshops were designed to be interactive with a focus on community input and education. Each began with a brief presentation which framed the Bronx in a regional perspective, provided existing conditions of the station area and then led into an informative explanation of the principles of Transit Oriented Development (TOD). At the conclusion of the presentation attendees were broken out into groups and a rotated to three interactive stations.

Workshop Agenda

Melrose Community Workshop

March 10th, 2012 1PM – 4PM

Boricua College, 4th Floor Conference Room

Workshop Objectives:

Understand the relationship between land use, transit, and the pedestrian environment.

Identify opportunities to improve access and the pedestrian environment.

Identify land use opportunities that contribute to a more complete neighborhood which maximizes transit assets.

12:45 – 1:15

Sign In and Open House

1:15 – 1:45 Introduction and Presentation

Welcome Dean Ted Goldstein – Monroe College

Regional Overview – Sarah Goldwyn, DCP

Bronx Sustainable Communities – Shawn Brede DCP, Chris Hayner DCP

2:00 – 3:30 – Breakout Groups

Station 1: Access

Station 2: “Pedestrian Experience”

Station 3: Land use

3:30 – 4:00 - Summary/Next Steps

Breakout Group Summary

Next Steps and Wrap Up

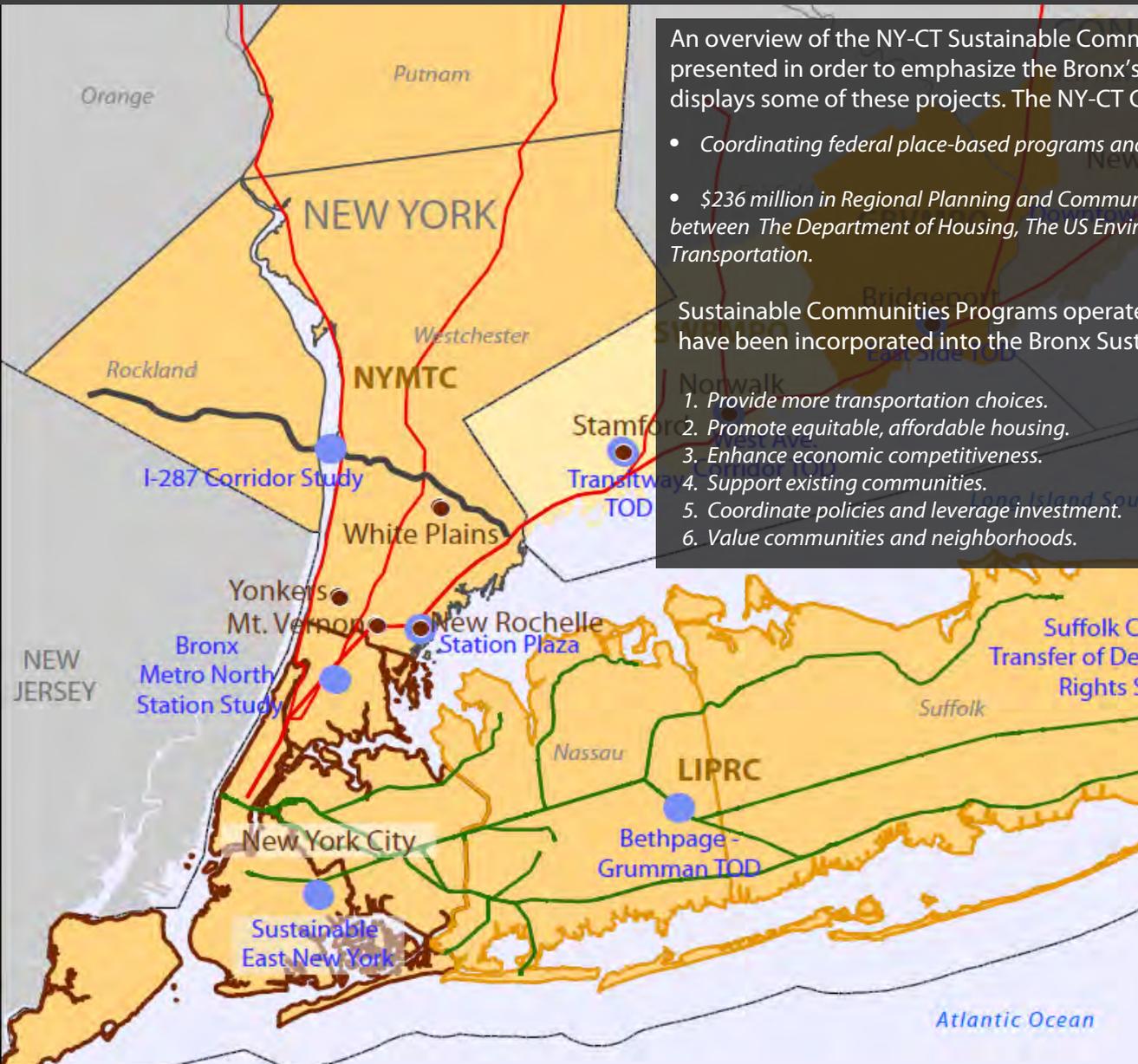
What do we expect from you?

Tell us what you think! All ideas are good ideas, we are here to listen and learn too.

Ask questions! We have a multi-disciplinary staff that will try to answer all questions.

Listen! Your fellow community stakeholders have good ideas too.

REGIONAL EFFORTS AND PARTNERS



An overview of the NY-CT Sustainable Communities Consortiums regional efforts was presented in order to emphasize the Bronx's important role in the region. The map below displays some of these projects. The NY-CT Consortium is also responsible for :

- Coordinating federal place-based programs and initiatives
- \$236 million in Regional Planning and Community Challenge Grants. It functions as a partnership between The Department of Housing, The US Environmental Protection Agency and the US Department of Transportation.

Sustainable Communities Programs operates under the following livability principles which have been incorporated into the Bronx Sustainable Communities effort:

1. Provide more transportation choices.
2. Promote equitable, affordable housing.
3. Enhance economic competitiveness.
4. Support existing communities.
5. Coordinate policies and leverage investment.
6. Value communities and neighborhoods.

partnership for
Sustainable Communities
an interagency partnership HUD • DOT • EPA

Projects

- Blue Circle

Consortium Members

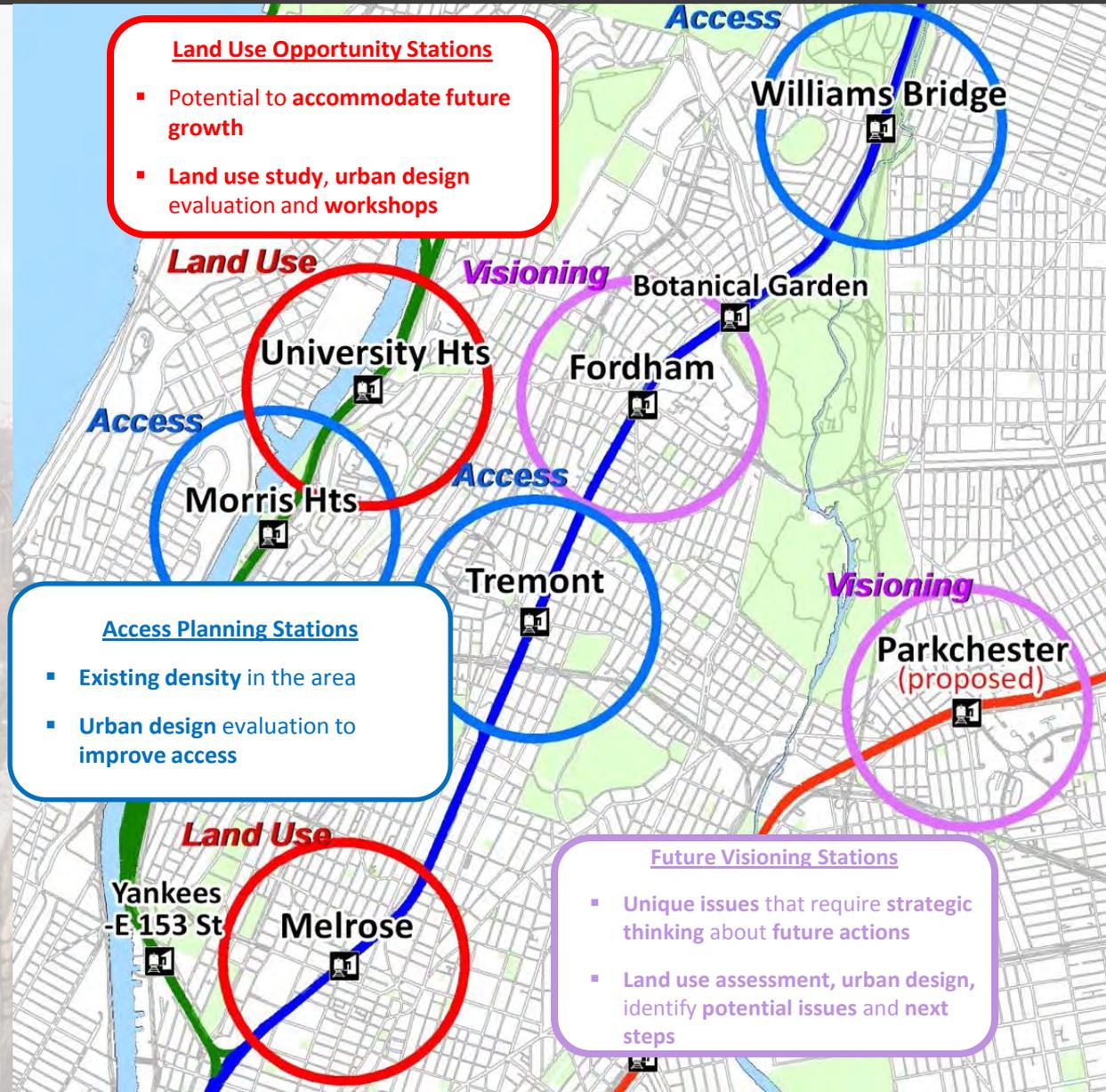
- Brown Circle: Cities
- Red Outline: New York City
- Light Yellow Fill: Southwestern CT MPO
- Yellow Fill: Greater Bridgeport Valley MPO
- Light Orange Fill: South Central CT C o G
- Orange Fill: NYMTC
- Light Orange Outline: LI Regional Planning Council
- Green Line: Long Island RR
- Red Line: Metro North Commuter RR
- White Outline: States
- White Outline: Counties

STUDY AND STATION SELECTION

DCP staff provided the participants with an overview of the Sustainable Communities program in the Bronx. Starting in 2011, the New York City Department of City Planning (DCP) began working with communities in the Bronx to plan for the future of the Bronx Metro-North Corridor. The goals of the plan include:

- Connecting Bronx residents to job centers in the region;
- Capitalizing on the Bronx Metro-North corridors by identifying opportunities for transit oriented development (TOD);
- Spur investment in lively, sustainable, mixed-use neighborhoods, by permitting new mixed-income housing around stations where growth is appropriate; and
- Improve station visibility, pedestrian access and intermodal connections around selected Bronx Metro-North Stations.

To achieve these goals DCP is evaluating the areas around six existing stations and one proposed station for their potential to accommodate **future growth, station visibility, ease of access, and intermodal connections**. Based on this evaluation the stations will be divided into three categories as shown in the accompanying graphic.



bronx sustainable communities

SCHEDULE AND GOALS

The project team has completed initial data collection and fieldwork and is now in the community outreach and visioning phase. As the team summarizes the input we will begin to develop draft opportunities for each of the stations over the next year. An overview of our schedule is show below:

- **Initial Outreach to BP's Office, Borough Board & CB's**
 - **Data Collection/Fieldwork**
 - **Site Tours**
 - **Initial Stakeholder Outreach**
 - **Public Visioning/Workshops**
 - **Draft Recommendations**
 - **Final Recommendations**
- May 2011– Nov 2011**
- Dec 2011– Jan 2012**
- March/April 2012**
- Fall 2012**
- Spring 2013**

Once initial opportunities are identified the project team will present draft recommendations to community stakeholders for comment. Final recommendations will be completed in the Spring 2013. The final product will result in a set implementable recommendations that cover a range of principles related to Transit Oriented Development and the idea of creating more complete communities.

WHY THE MELROSE STATION?

The Melrose station was selected as one of our “land use opportunity” stations along with the University Heights Station. As such the team will be performing a more comprehensive study of the station area. Focus areas of the study will include access to the station, the pedestrian environment around the station, and land use in the study area with the idea of creating a more complete community through TOD principles. The station was chosen due to some of the following qualities:

- Despite recent redevelopment efforts the Station Area still had 244 Vacant lots at the commencement of the study, this is the highest number of all the stations in the Bronx.
- 133 Lots are used for parking, this is also the highest number.
- In recent years there has been significant public and private investment around station much of this a result of the Melrose Commons Urban Renewal Plan.
- There is not subway access within the ½ mile radius (just outside) which emphasized the need for connectivity.
- The community has a unique history of transit, urban decay and urban renewal.
- There are strong contrasts in density; design; land uses; old and new buildings that provide a unique opportunity.
- Current service and ridership on the Metro North is among the lowest of the Bronx stations despite high density around the station. Currently there are 12 inbound and 16 outbound stops per day.



melrose station area

KEY FEATURES AND STAKEHOLDERS



Key features in the study area, as shown on this map, include the Bronx Hall of Justice, Boricua College and The New York City Housing Authority (NYCHA) properties. This Pictometry image shows the contrast in density, design and scale of both old and new buildings in the station area. Bringing all of these together to form a more complete community is a unique challenge in this area.

melrose

LAND USE & MASS - TRANSIT

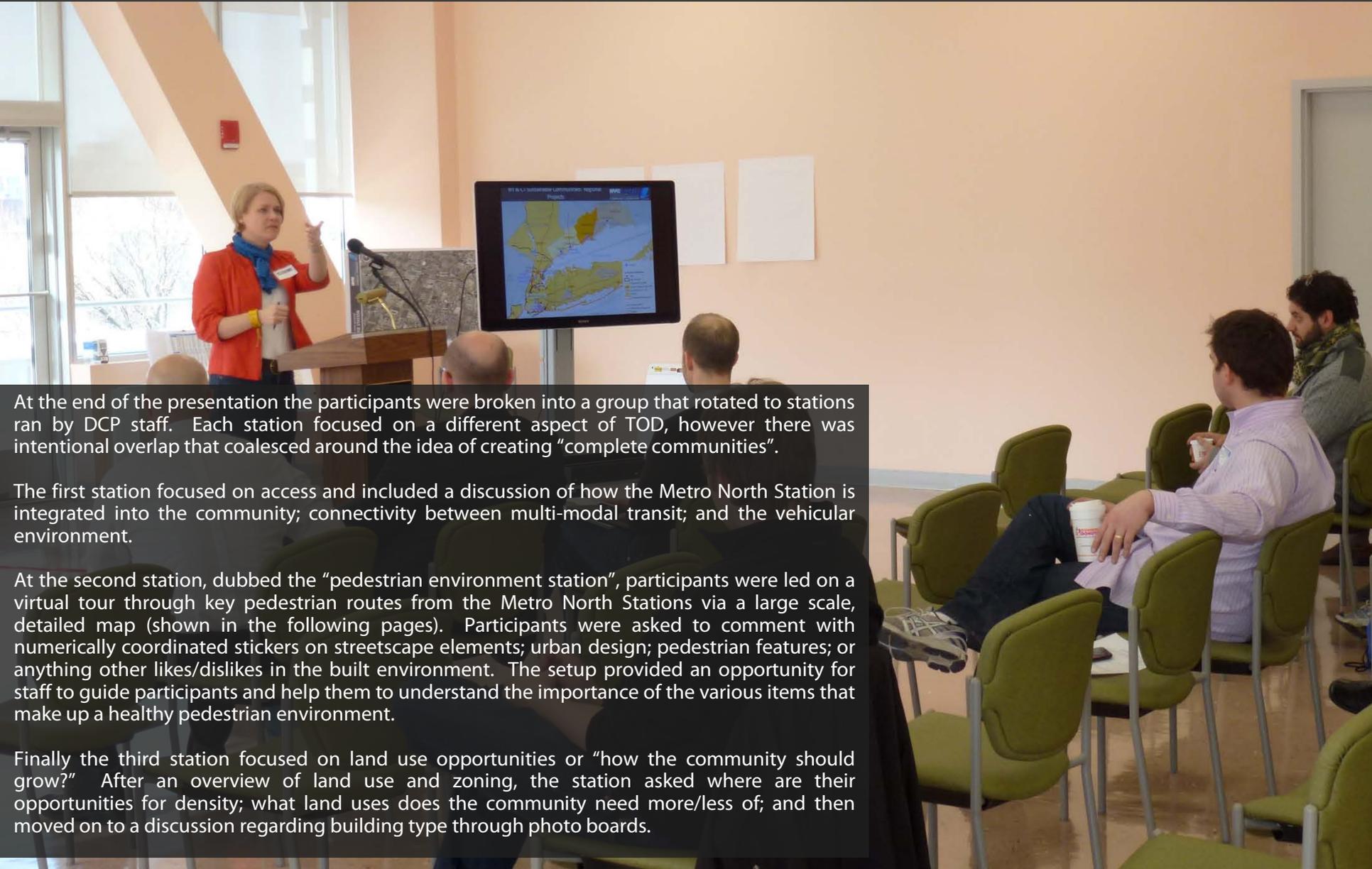


Subway connections exist just outside the 1/2 mile radius including the B/D and #2/5/4 subway lines. The BX 6 and 41 bus lines serve as the main connection to between subway, rail and surrounding amenities in the 1/2 mile radius. The neighborhood contains a diverse mix of land uses and is located between the Hub shopping area and Yankee Stadium. High density residential uses lie directly adjacent to the station area.

- Land uses**
- One and two family homes
 - Multi-family walkups
 - Multi-family elevator buildings
 - Mixed Com/Residential buildings
 - Commercial buildings
 - Institutional buildings
 - Manufacturing buildings
 - Transportation / utility buildings
 - Park / Open Space
 - Parking Lots
 - Vacant Land

melrose workshop

BREAKOUT GROUP FORMAT



At the end of the presentation the participants were broken into a group that rotated to stations ran by DCP staff. Each station focused on a different aspect of TOD, however there was intentional overlap that coalesced around the idea of creating “complete communities”.

The first station focused on access and included a discussion of how the Metro North Station is integrated into the community; connectivity between multi-modal transit; and the vehicular environment.

At the second station, dubbed the “pedestrian environment station”, participants were led on a virtual tour through key pedestrian routes from the Metro North Stations via a large scale, detailed map (shown in the following pages). Participants were asked to comment with numerically coordinated stickers on streetscape elements; urban design; pedestrian features; or anything other likes/dislikes in the built environment. The setup provided an opportunity for staff to guide participants and help them to understand the importance of the various items that make up a healthy pedestrian environment.

Finally the third station focused on land use opportunities or “how the community should grow?” After an overview of land use and zoning, the station asked where are their opportunities for density; what land uses does the community need more/less of; and then moved on to a discussion regarding building type through photo boards.

TRANSPORTATION, ACCESS, AND CONNECTIVITY

The first station focused on access and included a discussion of how the Metro North Station is integrated into the community; connectivity between multi-modal transit; and the vehicular environment.

Station Goals:

1. Identify opportunities and constraints at the University Heights Metro North Station
2. Identify opportunities and constraints relating to intermodal transit connections within the study area
3. Identify opportunities and constraints in the vehicular environment

Through our initial outreach effort, specifically the January 28th community tour, it was noted that many residents are unfamiliar with the service, location, and price of the University Heights Metro North. The station began with an overview of station service as shown right. The conversation was then passed on to attendees where a discussion related to the aforementioned topics was moderated by DCP staff. All input was recorded and then summarized to identify common themes.

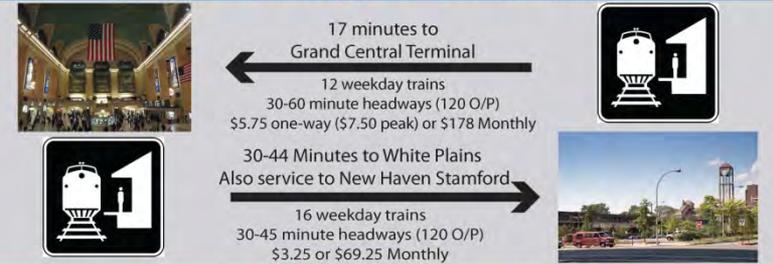
Your Metro North Station...



A little history...

- 1850s** Melrose sees its first development, small houses designed for people commuting and working in Manhattan.
- 1887** The New York Elevated Railway Co. opens the Third Avenue El.
- 1890** New York Central Railroad opens Melrose station, with two island platforms and a suspended indoor ticket/waiting room.
- 1896** The New York Elevated Railway Company connects the Third Avenue El in Manhattan to the Bronx.
- 1898** The Bronx is annexed to New York City, creating the five boroughs
- 1909** The Grand Concourse is completed and it becomes a wealthy residential corridor for middle-class Bronxites.
- 1920s** The neighborhood's population continues to grow, as large numbers of Russians, Jews, and the Irish begin to settle.
- 1923** Yankee Stadium opens.
- 1950s** The neighborhood sees its first large influx of African-American and Puerto Rican residents.
- 1953** The New York City Transit Authority is created under the TA Act forming a consolidated IRT, BMT and IND subway/elevated network
- 1965** New York State creates the Metropolitan Transportation Authority.
- 1970s** The neighborhood sat center stage during the Bronx is Burning era, as landlords torched their vacant properties for its insurance payout. These acts of arson lasted nearly an entire decade.
- 1973** Third Avenue El is discontinued, and replaced by the Bx55 bus.
- 1982** Harlem & Hudson Lines are ceded to the new MTA Metro-North RR
- 1990s** The city tries to raze 30 blocks of Melrose for redevelopment. The community fights back, ultimately retaining their neighborhood and launching one of the best urban renewal projects in the region.
- 2005** Bronx County Hall of Justice opens on 161 Street.

Where do it go and for how much?



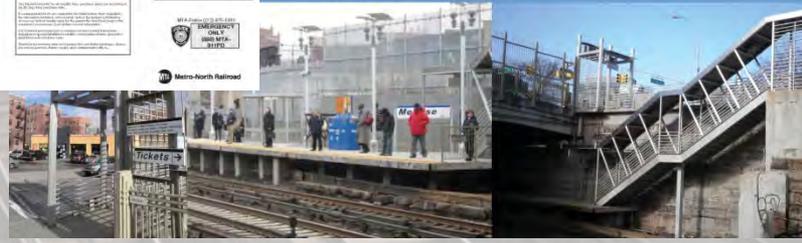
Where is it?

What is it near?

Distance to...

- Boricua College = .3 miles/9 min
- Bronx Hall of Justice = .25 miles/5 min
- Yankee Stadium = .65 mi/15 min
- #4, B/D Subway Line = .65 miles/15 min
- #2/5 Subway Line = .65 miles/15 min
- BX 6/13 Bus = .1 miles/2 min
- BX41 Bus = .22 miles/8 min

What does it look like?



MONDAY - FRIDAY		NEW YORK - SOUTHEAST	
12:00 PM	12:30 PM	1:00 PM	1:30 PM
2:00 PM	2:30 PM	3:00 PM	3:30 PM
4:00 PM	4:30 PM	5:00 PM	5:30 PM
6:00 PM	6:30 PM	7:00 PM	7:30 PM
8:00 PM	8:30 PM	9:00 PM	9:30 PM

RETURNS

RETURNS

RETURNS

RETURNS

RETURNS



Line	Time	Headway	Price
12:00 PM	12:30 PM	1:00 PM	1:30 PM
2:00 PM	2:30 PM	3:00 PM	3:30 PM
4:00 PM	4:30 PM	5:00 PM	5:30 PM
6:00 PM	6:30 PM	7:00 PM	7:30 PM
8:00 PM	8:30 PM	9:00 PM	9:30 PM

The discussion resulted in some the following observations:

Vehicular/Pedestrian Access

- Traffic is caused due to lack street connectivity (one-way and dead end streets)
- Reopening access to 162nd Street at Brook would enhance through traffic
- On Street Parking an issue throughout the community is an issue
- 161st Street has dangerous crossings, specifically near Melrose Avenue and at Boricua College

Metro North Station :

- There is a lack of parking
- The station is difficult, unsafe to access, and not visually inviting
- Adjacent to a vacant parcel that is used as a dumping ground which could be a positive community asset
- Entrance should be moved to 161st Street
- No handicapped access
- Adjacent park [Railroad Park] is underutilized and could serve as a gateway to the station. The building in the park could be repurposed as commercial
- Signage is nearly non-existent



TRANSPORTATION, ACCESS AND CONNECTIVITY: SUMMARY OF INPUT



Transit specific input included the following:

The Metro North Service:

- Not affordable to the community that is closest to it the station.
- There is a need to promote reverse commuting opportunities
- Other modes of transit are more convenient

Other Transit Related:

- More bike lanes are needed, but improved marking and maintenance could help now
- It was also noted that more bike lanes could further reduce on street parking
- Air quality in the area is a problem
- Bus stops on 161st need more benches and shelters
- Bus stop across from Boricua is unsafe and difficult to access
- There is a lack of subway access which highlights the need for better connections between bus/rail/pedestrian/bike
- BX41 Bus is erratic – Select Bus Service would be beneficial
- BX6 Bus constantly overcrowded which serves as the main connection to subways. Larger buses would be a helpful solution .

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PEDESTRIAN EXPERIENCE STATION



The quality of the streetscape experienced by a pedestrian on route to the station could be a large contributor or deterrent to ridership.

The **pedestrian experience station** focused on having community members reflect upon and analyze the quality of the streetscape experienced along two major routes to/from the station.

attributes of QUALITY PEDESTRIAN EXPERIENCES

In order for community members to analyze and critique aspects of those two routes, a primer was given to introduce community members to certain streetscape elements that contribute to a quality pedestrian environment. This introduction helped community members evaluate the quality of their own pedestrian experience to and from the Melrose Metro North station.

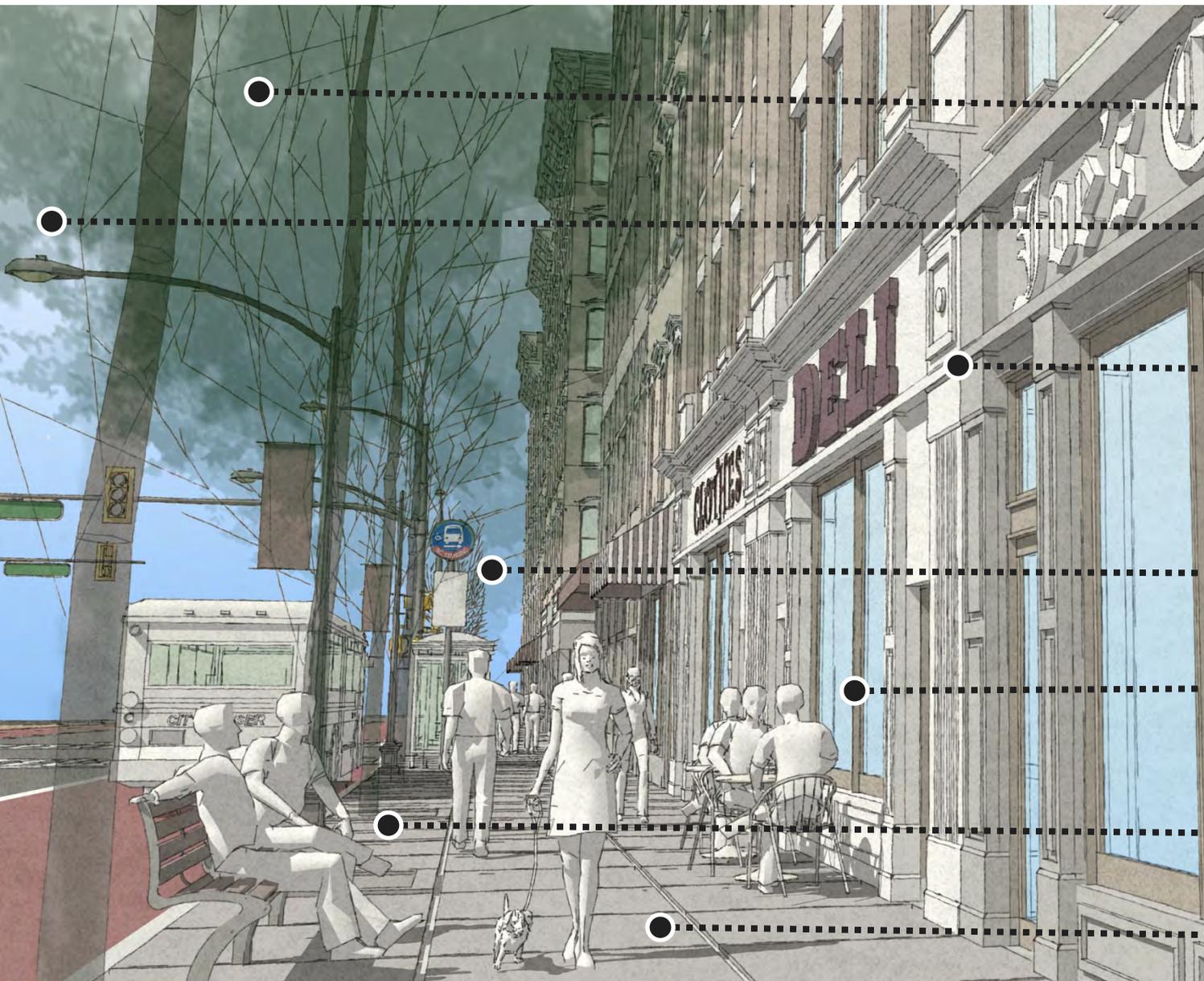
Well-defined **street-walls** abutting the sidewalk edge. In well-established neighborhoods, scale of new development should **blend with existing context**.



Streets can safely accommodate **multiple modes** of transit safely (bus & bike lanes, etc.)
Limit **curb cuts**.

Short block-fronts with well-defined **crosswalks** and adequate **curb drops** at intersections.

attributes of QUALITY PEDESTRIAN EXPERIENCES



Street trees at regular intervals, with adequate tree pits in amenity strip

Street lamps at regular intervals, including crosswalks, ensures safety

ground floor level has appropriate balance of **transparency**, and **articulation**, w/ **signage** incorporated into facade

Way-finding signage is clearly visible

Variety of ground floor uses with multiple establishments per block

Bus shelters, seating, and other street furniture

Adequate **clear path** on sidewalk

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PEDESTRIAN ROUTE SECTIONS

Route 1 – from Station (Morrisania Air Rights) to Hall of Justice / Concourse Plaza

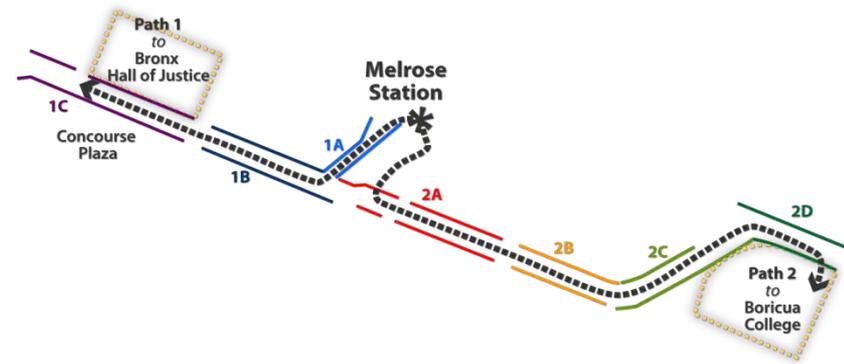


Route 2 – from Railroad Park to Boricua College



Each Section contained a photomontage of the elevation and a plan view of ground floor and streetscape for each side of the street in that portion of the route. Individual Sections were placed back to back to mimic the experience of walking down the street.

The elevations were helpful in noting building aesthetics (such as materials, scale, presence on street), while the plan view was useful in noting ground floor land uses and sidewalk amenities (such as street trees, street lamps, curb cuts, and driveways).

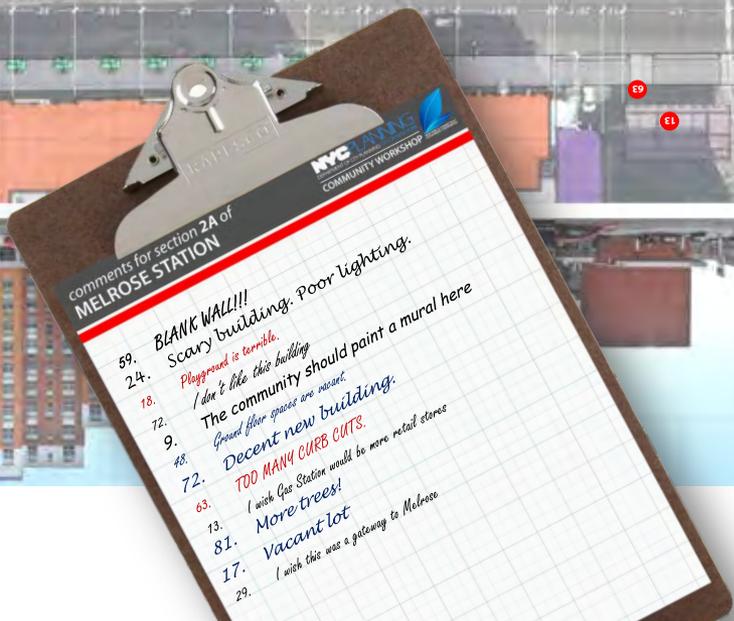
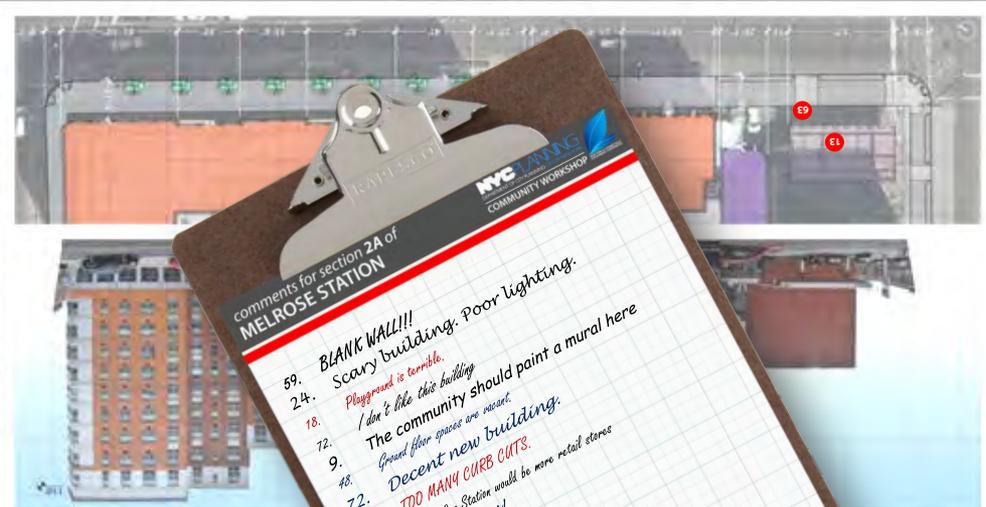
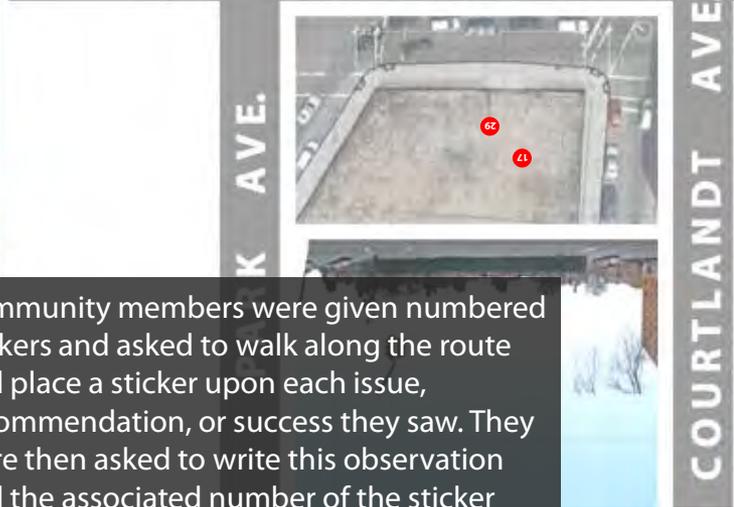


community input at PEDESTRIAN EXPERIENCE STATION

NORTH SIDE - 2A
PARK AVE.
SOUTH SIDE



MELROSE AVE.
2A - NORTH SIDE
SOUTH SIDE - 2A
MELROSE AVE.



Community members were given numbered stickers and asked to walk along the route and place a sticker upon each issue, recommendation, or success they saw. They were then asked to write this observation and the associated number of the sticker onto the clipboard provided for each Section.

comments for section 2A of MELROSE STATION

- 59. BLANK WALL!!!
- 24. Scary building. Poor lighting.
- 18. Playground is terrible.
- 72. I don't like this building
- 9. The community should paint a mural here
- 48. Ground floor spaces are vacant.
- 72. Decent new building.
- 63. TOO MANY CURB CUTS.
- 17. I wish Gas Station would be more retail stores
- 81. More trees!
- 17. Vacant lot
- 29. I wish this was a gateway to Melrose

panorama views along PEDESTRIAN EXPERIENCE STATION

The two-dimensionality of each Section was supplemented by large panoramas at strategic portions of the route.

The top image is the view one experiences immediately upon arriving into Melrose from the Metro North.

The bottom image is the vantage experienced while walking along 161st street between the Grand Concourse and Park Avenue.

Community members were encouraged to write comments about these panorama views as well.



recommendations from PEDESTRIAN EXPERIENCE STATION



While comments ranged, there were a lot of similar themes. Major themes included:

- Improving the safety and aesthetics around the station, especially around Morrisania Air Rights. This area could be re-imagined as the gateway to Melrose
- Limiting the overwhelming presence of institutional uses along 161st Street by promoting ground floor commercial uses, like restaurants, in the empty space of the courthouses
- Promote more retail, including opportunities for small local businesses, along 161st street.
- Improving the quality of Concourse Plaza shopping area with buildings fronting along the street instead of a suburban style strip mall
- Improving bus connections, and the amount of bus shelters
- Improving sidewalk amenities including amount of lighting, street trees and benches
- Improving signage to the station and to major landmarks, such as Yankee Stadium

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LAND USE STATION



The **land use station** focused on leading a discussion around how the community wanted to see the area develop. Asking what issues the community has today and how they want to see their community develop in the future.

By combining the input from the community with a land use analysis, we can determine if the current zoning is meeting the communities needs. From there, City Planning can make recommendations that can lead to a zoning study for areas of concern.

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LAND USE STATION

The scale of development in New York varies widely. An explanation of how transit relates to density was discussed with the group.

Neighborhoods characterized by low-density residential developments are often reliant upon vehicles and tend to be further from mass transit opportunities. Conversely, neighborhoods with higher density were often built so because of their proximity to mass transit.



Low-Density Residential



Moderate Density Residential



Medium Density Residential



High Density Residential w/ Mixed Commercial



Central Business District

More automobile reliant

More mass transit options

R1 - R2

Residence Districts

R3 - R4

Residence Districts

R5 - R6

Residence Districts

R7 - R8 w/

Residence Districts w/
C1 or C2
 Overlays

R9 - R10

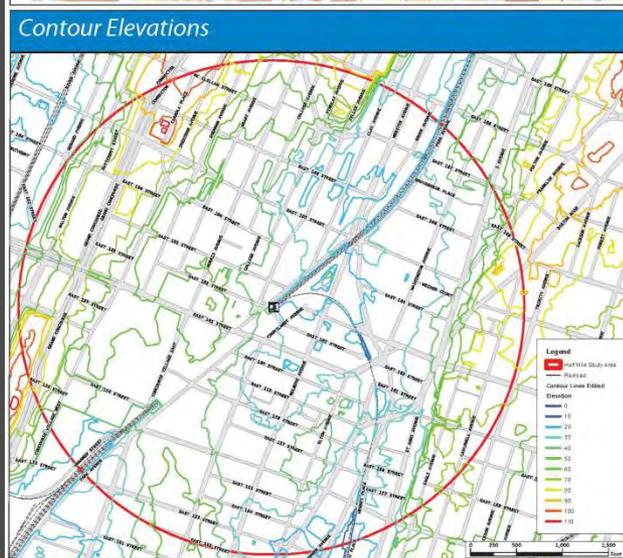
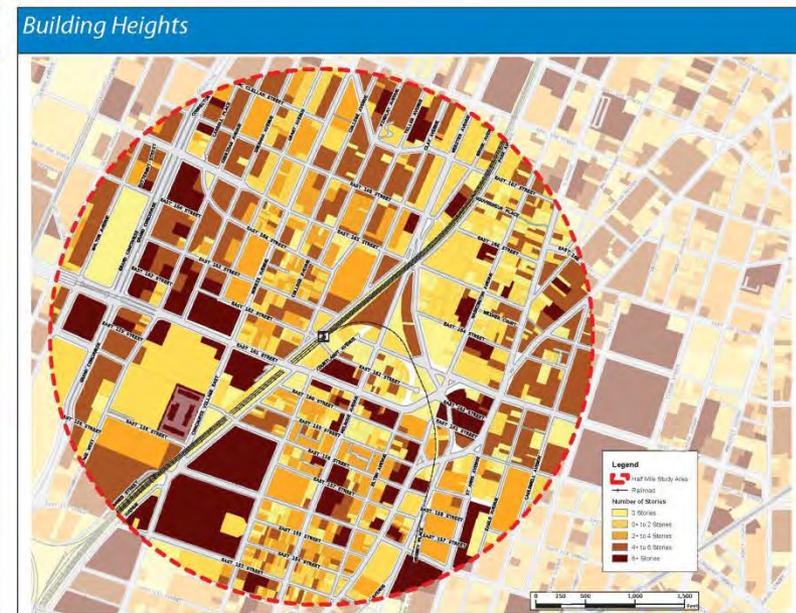
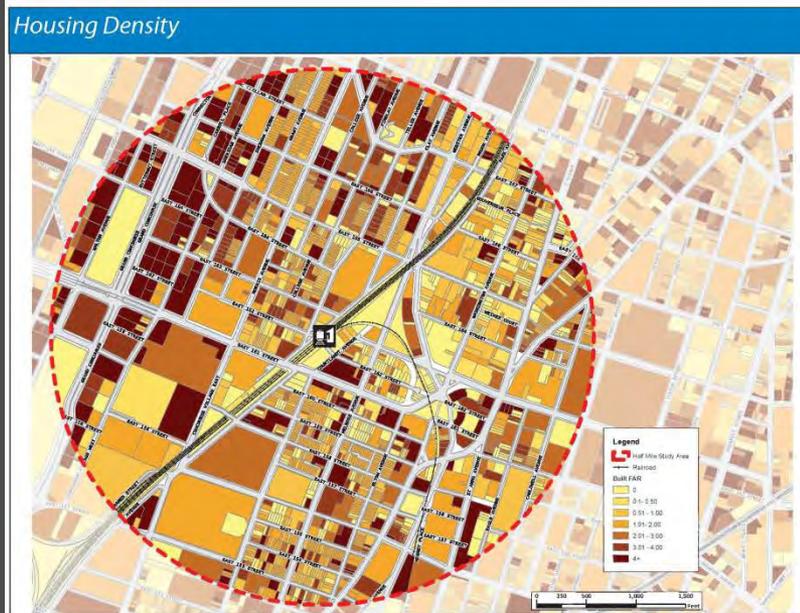
Residence Districts and
C4 - C6
 Commercial Districts

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LAND USE STATION

Housing density maps show how built up an area is, while the building heights show how tall buildings are on each lot. These two maps are useful in determining the built scale of an area.

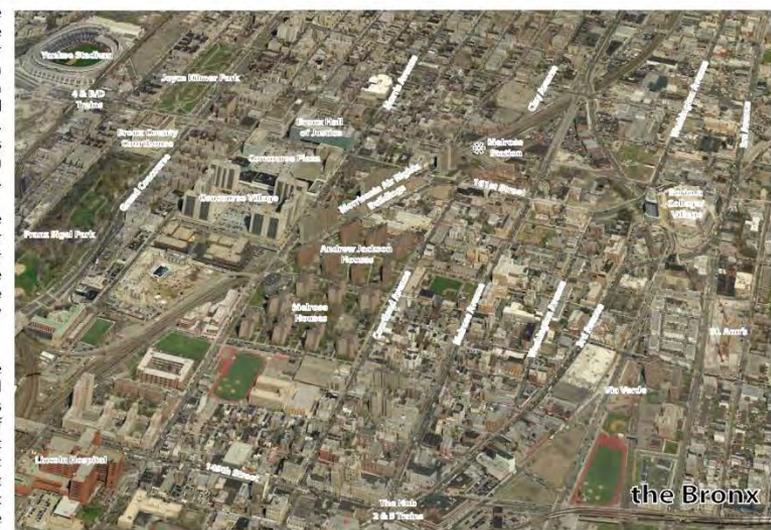
The topography has a minimal affect on the area. The exception being the below grade rail cut for the Metro-North tracks which impedes the pedestrian connections.



The Melrose station has a range of heights and densities in the area. There are a large number of NYCHA properties in the area including the Andrew Jackson Houses, Melrose Houses, and Morrisania Air Rights Buildings. All three of these developments are very tall buildings, ranging from 15 stories up to 30 stories.

On the other end of the spectrum, there are a number of single family homes or attached row-houses to the north-west of the Melrose Station, including the Clay Avenue Historic District.

There are a number of large public facility/institutional buildings in the area as well. With the Bronx Hall of Justice and the Criminal Court building lying within the civic corridor and Boricua College at the eastern end of 161st Street within the Boricua Village development.



recommendations from melrose LAND USE STATION

While comments ranged, there were a lot of similar themes. Major themes included:

- Uses that are needed in the community included a community /recreation center, banks, medical facilities, fresh food /grocery stores, parks/open space, and restaurants
- Bringing manufacturing opportunities to the area to create jobs
- Converting vacant warehouses into lofts and artist spaces (live/work space)
- For new development, mixed income home ownership with a focus on sustainable/green building practices
- Design, affordability, and ownership were the keys to new residential developments



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COMMON THEMES AND NEXT STEPS

At the conclusion of the breakout session the workshop regrouped to summarize the breakout groups and discuss the next steps. Common themes included:

- It was identified that there is a need for quality housing. Both rental and owned, both affordable and market rate.
- It was clear that the lack of subways in the immediate neighborhood requires improved bus service to ensure a smoother commute.
- Manufacturing uses have a place in the community specifically the MX district is working well and green industry should be encouraged.
- A more vibrant pedestrian environment that continues past office hours would create a safer environment. This could be achieved by filling ground floor uses, improving existing shopping centers, and adding street amenities.

WHATS NEXT?

The Bronx Sustainable Communities Team will compile all of the input it has received through these workshops, our community survey and various coordination with other stakeholders in the community. This will serve as a base to identify opportunities, issues, and constraints around access, the pedestrian environment and land use in the community that surrounds the stations. Subsequently draft recommendations will be developed and presented to the community later in the year.

During this time we encourage all community stakeholders to continue to provide input through our survey, website and through our planning staff. If you have questions, comments or concerns please contact Shawn Brede at:

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F (718) 584-8628

sc_bronx_dl@planning.nyc.gov

In the meantime continue to check our website for updates:

http://www.nyc.gov/sc_bronx

