

Bronx Sustainable Communities: University Heights Community Workshop March 3rd, 2012

Summary Report

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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

University Heights Community Workshop

March 3rd, 2012 1PM – 4PM

Monroe College Gymnasium/Corner of 190th Street and Jerome Avenue

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

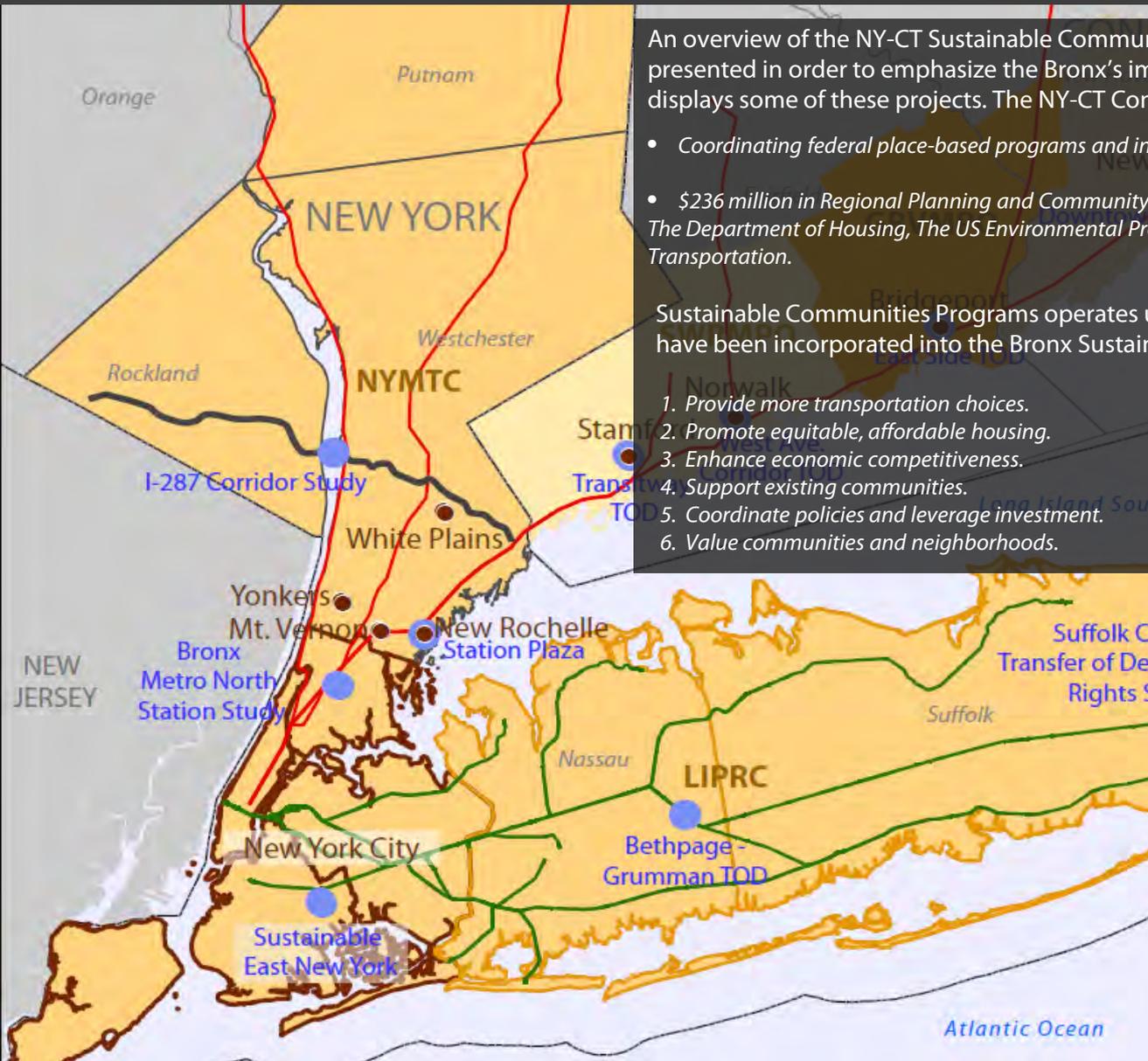
What do we expect from you?

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

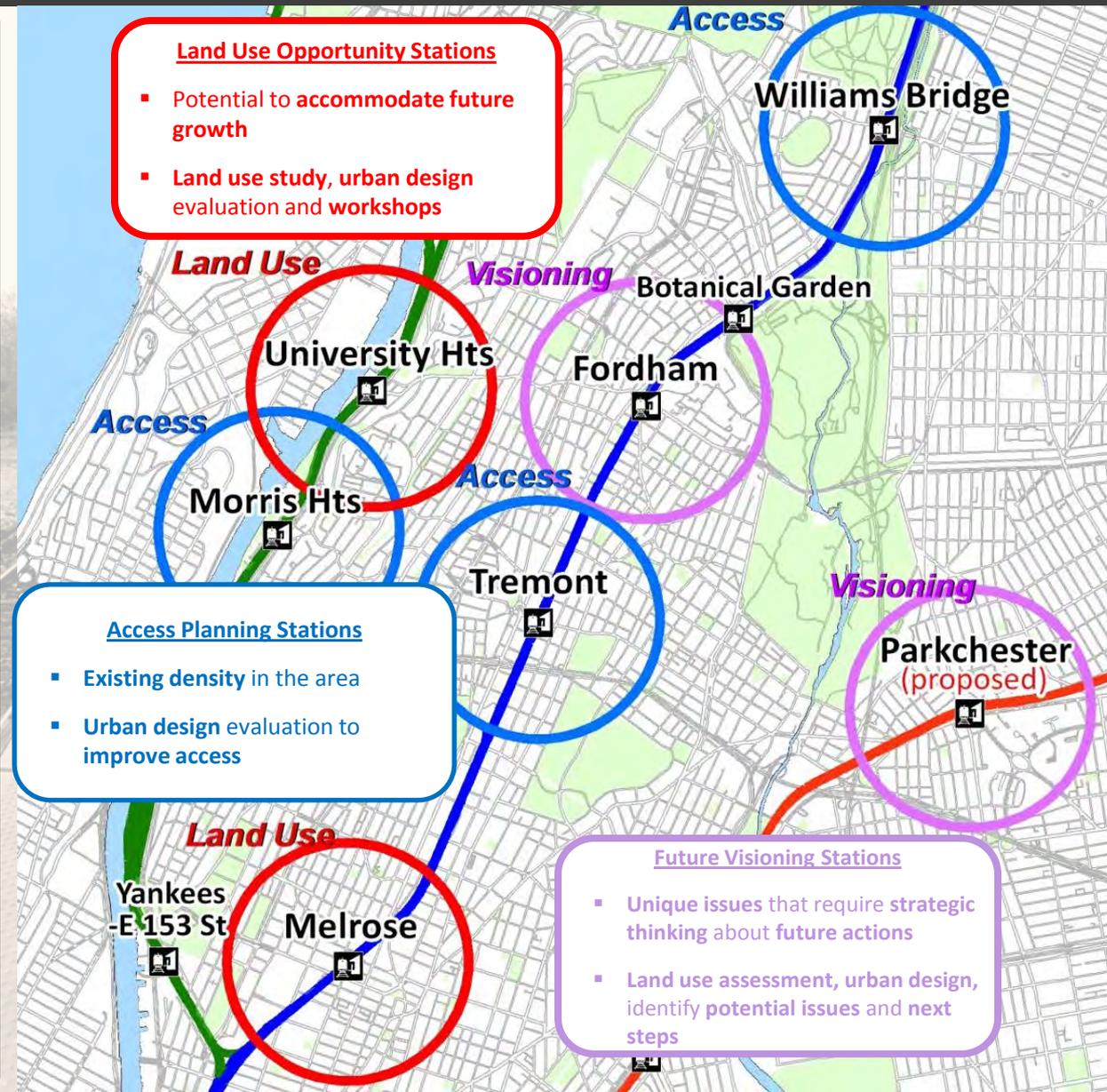
- Projects
- Cities
- Consortium Members
 - New York City
 - Southwestern CT MPO
 - Greater Bridgeport Valley MPO
 - South Central CT C o G
 - NYMTC
 - LI Regional Planning Council
- Long Island RR
- Metro North Commuter RR
- States
- Counties

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** } **May 2011– Nov 2011**
- **Site Tours** }
- **Initial Stakeholder Outreach** } **Dec 2011– Jan 2012**
- **Public Visioning/Workshops** } **March/April 2012**
- **Draft Recommendations** } **Fall 2012**
- **Final Recommendations** } **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 UNIVERSITY HEIGHTS STATION?

The University Heights station was selected as one of our “land use opportunity” stations along with the Melrose 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:

- At the outset of the study there were 43 vacant lots
- Many of the vacant lots were large accounting for 944,813 square feet of vacant land, second highest amount out of the Bronx Metro North Stations.
- 333,549 sq ft of land dedicated to surface parking, while parking is necessary the location of lots, amount and type need to be examined.
- The Metro North Station itself is difficult for pedestrians to access.
- There are major institutions that are large employers as well as key economic and community stakeholders.
- The most recent ridership documented is 138 inbound, this is low considering there are 25 inbound stops per day.
- The community that surrounds the immediate station area is disconnected from the commercial centers that surround it.
- The station sits on the Harlem River waterfront area. an important asset which has been analyzed in prior planning studies, but it is still highly underutilized and disconnected from the surrounding community.



university heights LAND USE & MASS - TRANSIT

Manhattan

Intermodal transit connections exist within the 1/2 mile radius including the #4, 1 and A subway lines. The BX12 SBS provides Access to Manhattan and Fordham Road shopping area to the West and East respectively. The area directly surrounding the station contains a number of large vacant parcels as shown in gray on the map below. Commercial uses become sparse along Fordham Road as the station is approached (seen in dark red).



University Heights Station

the Bronx





Manhattan

Harlem River

#1 Train

VA Hospital

Fordham Hill Apartments

Devoe Park

* University Heights Station

Fordham Shopping District

University Woods

Bronx Community College

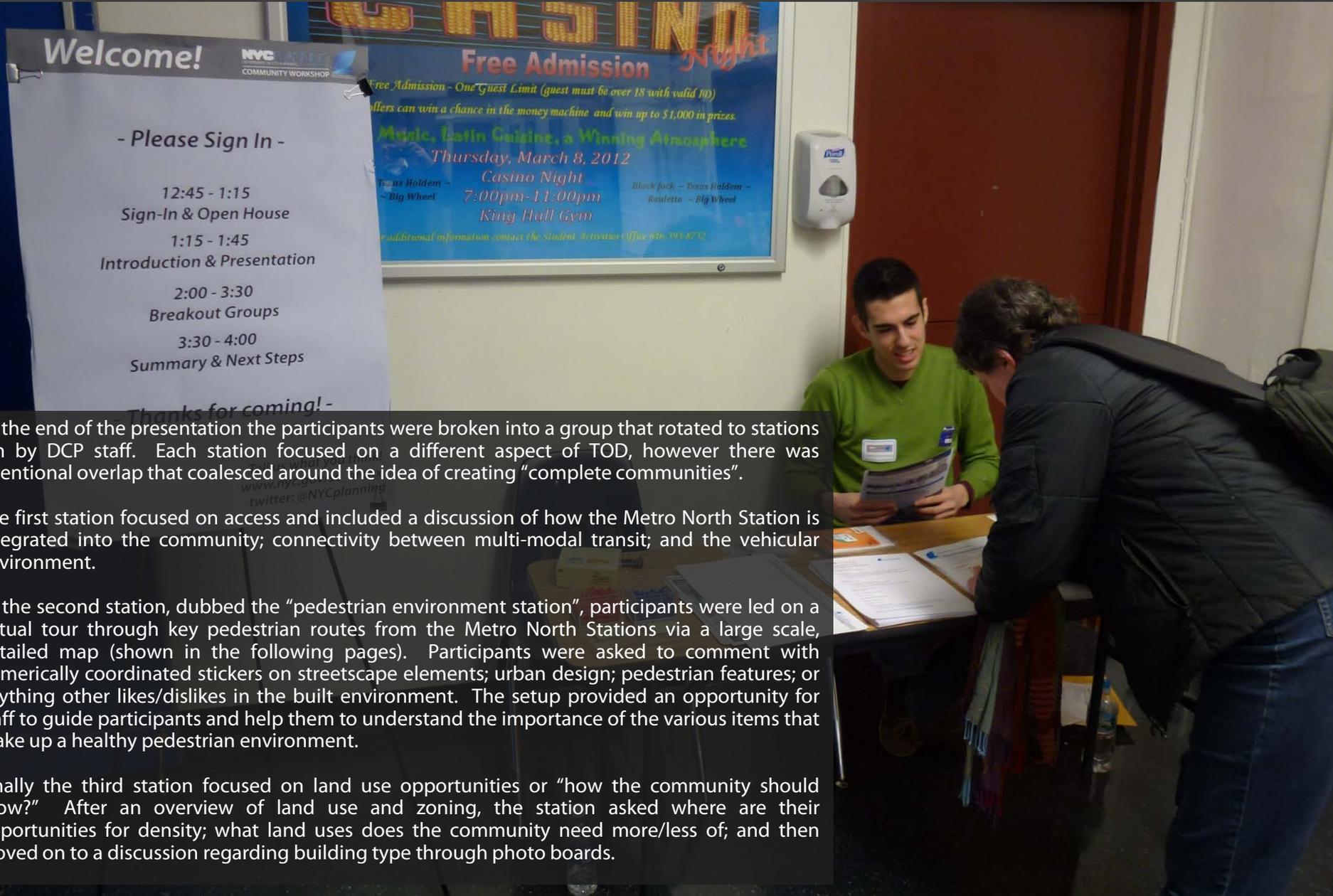
Aqueduct Park

Key features in the study area, as shown on this map, include James J. Peters VA Hospital, Bronx Community College and Fordham Hill Apartments. The ½ study area includes a number of natural features and open space with includes the Harlem River, University Woods, Aqueduct Park, and Devoe Park. It is important that these assets are maximized and work with each other to complete a more complete community. This Pictometry image illustrates the change in grade, lower density development, and vacant parcels that are located closer to the Harlem River.

the Bronx

university heights workshop

BREAKOUT GROUP FORMAT



Welcome!



- Please Sign In -

12:45 - 1:15

Sign-In & Open House

1:15 - 1:45

Introduction & Presentation

2:00 - 3:30

Breakout Groups

3:30 - 4:00

Summary & Next Steps

Thanks for coming! -

Free Admission

Free Admission - One Guest Limit (guest must be over 18 with valid ID)
Guests can win a chance in the money machine and win up to \$1,000 in prizes.

Music, Latin Cuisine, a Winning Atmosphere

Thursday, March 8, 2012

7:00pm - 11:00pm
King Hall Gym

For additional information contact the Student Activities Office 646-393-8732

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.

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.

A little history...

- 1872** The NY Central Railroad Company connects the South Bronx with Spuyten Duyvil. Univ. Heights station opens.
- 1881** NY Central expands, opening the Putnam Line. The two rail corridors share a station house at the current Univ. Heights station.
- 1881** First bridge connecting University Heights to Manhattan opens. The structure is a wooden foot bridge.
- 1894** NYU opens their Bronx campus.
- 1898** The Bronx is annexed to NYC, creating the five boroughs of today.
- 1908** The Univ. Heights Bridge opens.
- 1917** IRT Jerome Avenue line opens, linking people for the first time to Manhattan. Previous farmland immediately repurposed for low-rise apartment buildings.
- 1953** The New York City Transit Authority is created under the TA Act. The city now oversees a consolidated IRT, BMT and IND subway/elevated network.
- 1956** Major Deegan Expressway opens.
- 1958** The New York Central discontinues service on the Putnam Line, leaving the University Heights station to only serve the Hudson Line.
- 1965** New York State creates the MTA
- 1972** The MTA assumes operation of Hudson commuter rail line.
- 1973** NYU sells their campus to the city, renaming it BCC
- 1973** Roberto Clemente State Park opens.
- 1982** Hudson Line is ceded to the newly created MTA Metro-North Railroad.
- 2008** Renovations to current station

Where do I go and for how much?



← 20 minutes to Grand Central Terminal
24 weekday trains
20-30 minute headways (60 O/P)
\$5.75 one-way (\$7.50 peak) or \$178 Monthly





13 minutes to Yonkers
53 Minutes to Croton Harmon →
27 weekday trains
20-30 minute headways (60 O/P)
\$2.75 or \$59.50 Monthly/\$4.50 or \$88 Monthly



Where is it? What is it near?



Distance to...

- Bronx Community College = .57 miles/12 min (via Sedgwick)
- Fordham Shopping District = .7 miles/16 min
- James Peters VA Medical Center = .6 mi/15 min
- #1 Subway Line = .32 miles/9 min
- A Subway Line = .62 miles/15 min
- #4 Subway Line = .67 miles/16 min
- BX12 Select Bus = .1 miles/7 min

What does it look like?



MONDAY-FRIDAY NEW YORK-POUGHKEEPSIE		Please read all rules carefully.		SEE SERVICE ON BOARD TRAINS	
TO NEW YORK	TO POUGHKEEPSIE	TO NEW YORK	TO POUGHKEEPSIE	TO NEW YORK	TO POUGHKEEPSIE
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06:15	06:15	06:15	06:15	06:15	06:15
06:30	06:30	06:30	06:30	06:30	06:30
06:45	06:45	06:45	06:45	06:45	06:45
07:00	07:00	07:00	07:00	07:00	07:00
07:15	07:15	07:15	07:15	07:15	07:15
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23:45	23:45	23:45	23:45	23:45	23:45
24:00	24:00	24:00	24:00	24:00	24:00

RETURNING TICKETS

Grand Central North

REFERENCE NOTES

1. Grand Central North is a new station located at the intersection of Grand Central Avenue and 125th Street, between 125th and 126th Streets, in the University Heights neighborhood of the Bronx.

2. Grand Central North is a new station located at the intersection of Grand Central Avenue and 125th Street, between 125th and 126th Streets, in the University Heights neighborhood of the Bronx.

3. Grand Central North is a new station located at the intersection of Grand Central Avenue and 125th Street, between 125th and 126th Streets, in the University Heights neighborhood of the Bronx.

Train Time

MTA Press 212.637.1000

EMERGENCY ONLY
800.MTA.9110

MTA Press 212.637.1000

EMERGENCY ONLY
800.MTA.9110

university heights TRANSPORTATION, ACCESS, AND CONNECTIVITY: SUMMARY OF INPUT

The discussion resulted in some the following observations:

Vehicular Access

- Traffic patterns along Cedar and Sedgwick need to be revisited
- Intersection of Fordham Road and Major Deegan :
 - There is not enough transition off of I-87 (ex: Yankee Stadium)
 - Enforcement/traffic agents could avoid cars blocking up intersections (ex: "don't block the box")
 - Pedestrian signals and right turn on red for vehicles creates conflict and confusion
 - Lighting to alert drivers to pedestrians
- Bridge is used as a shortcut to Washington Heights/Manhattan
- Truck parking along the waterfront adds to congestions and discourages a healthy walking environment
- On street parking should only be on side streets

Pedestrian Access:

- More visible and well defined crosswalks are needed
- Traffic lights along Fordham Road need better coordination
- Pedestrian activated crossing signals
- University Heights Bridge walkway is too narrow
- People take bridge to avoid tolls creating a bottleneck



university heights TRANSPORTATION, ACCESS AND CONNECTIVITY: SUMMARY OF INPUT



Transit specific input included the following:

The Metro North Station and Service:

- Difficult pedestrian access
- Needs improved lighting and safety measures around the station
- It is hard to see from neighborhood
- Lack of signage to indicate location
- The platform is very narrow and feels unsafe
- Service has limited stops which still require a transfer and more affordable options are available
- Transfers from Metro North to BX12 Select bus are not easy
- The Schedule is infrequent and not advertised well

Other Transit

- The BX12 select bus schedule needs to be coordinated better
- Need to have clearer signage along bus routes
- Need to let people know sooner that regular BX12 does not go to Manhattan – otherwise it forces a transfer that could be avoided

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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.

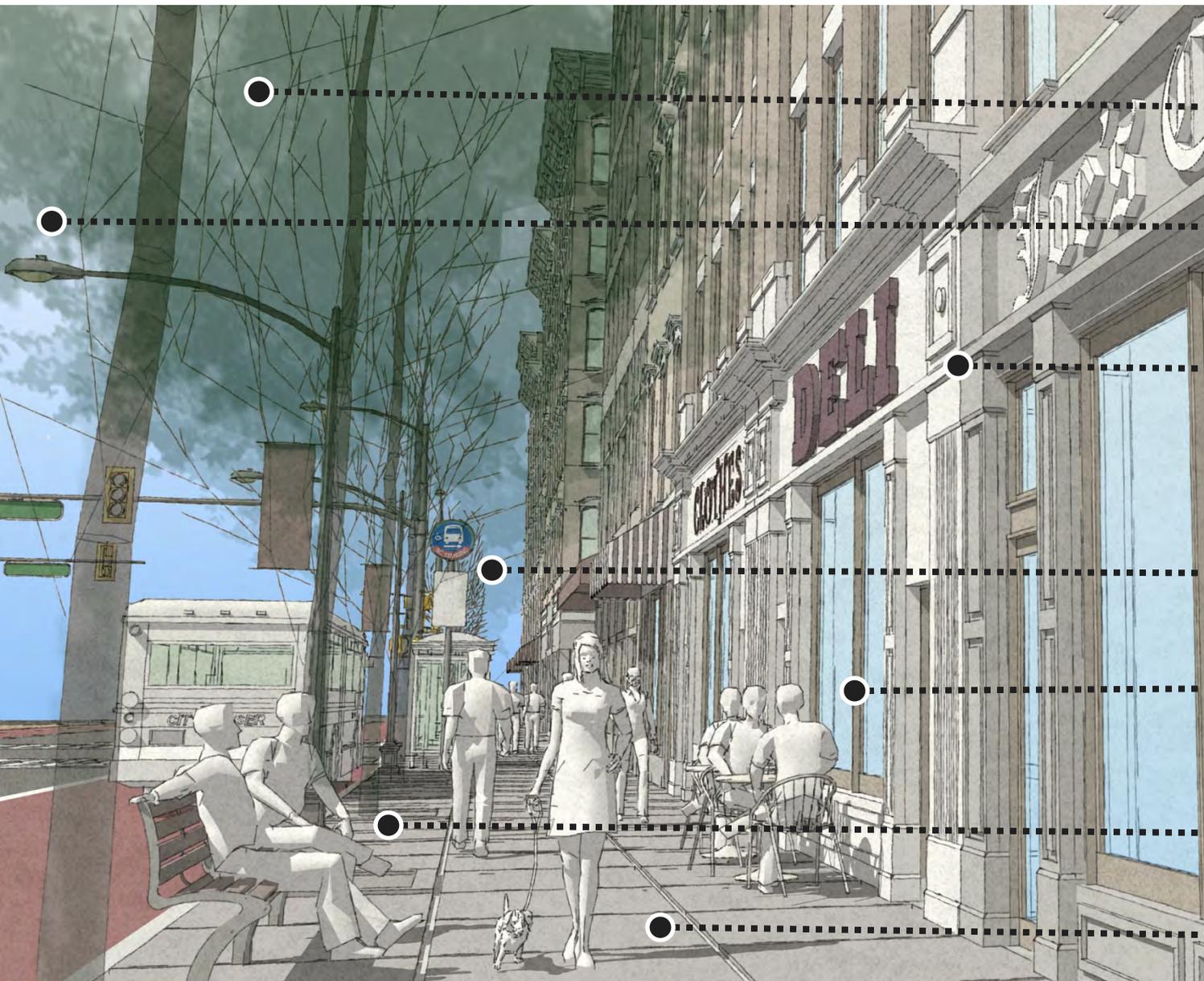
Well-defined **street-walls** abutting the sidewalk edge. In well-established neighborhoods, scale of new development should **blend with existing context**.



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

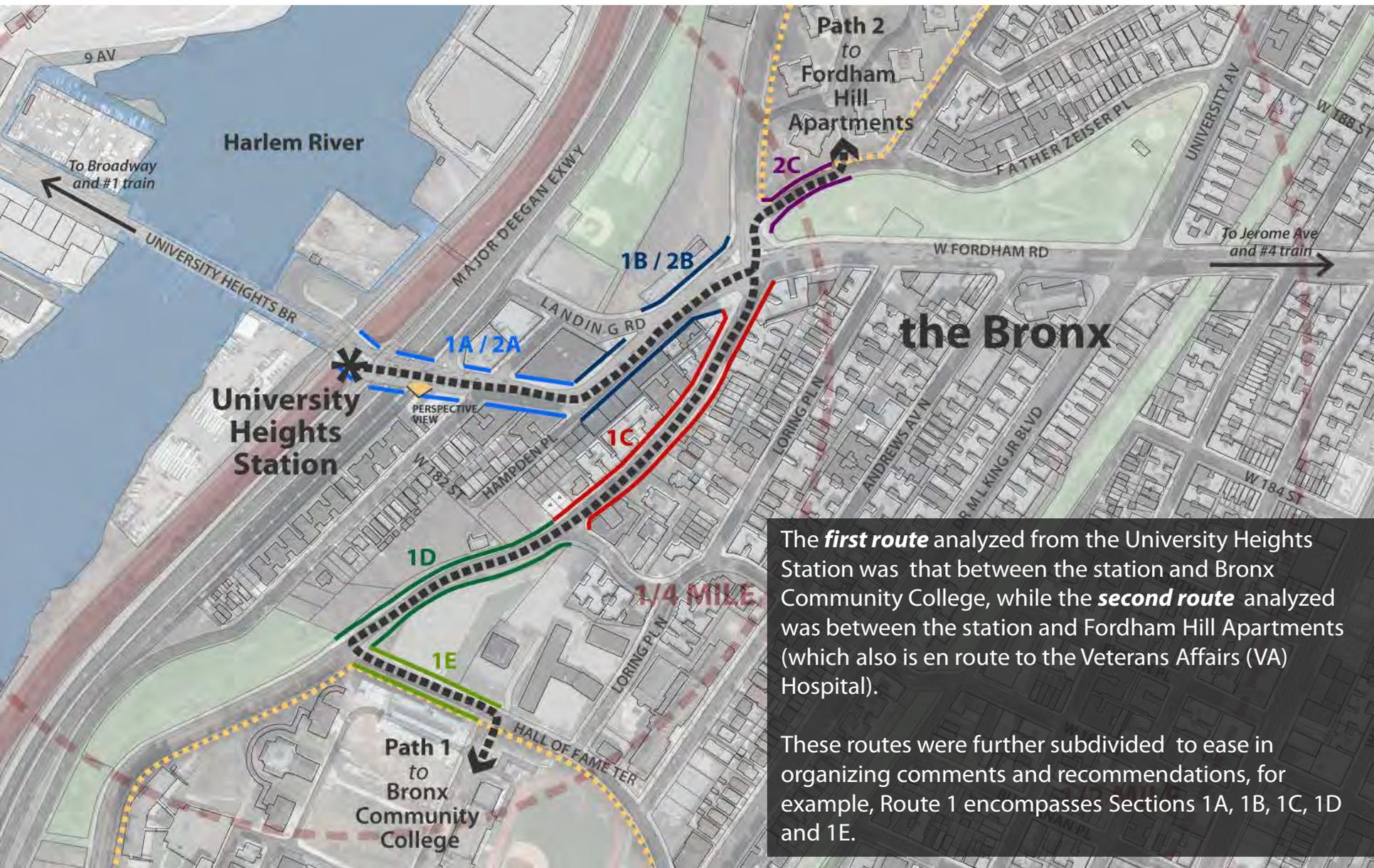
Variety of ground floor uses with multiple establishments per block

Bus shelters, seating, and other street furniture

Adequate **clear path** on sidewalk

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PEDESTRIAN EXPERIENCE ROUTES



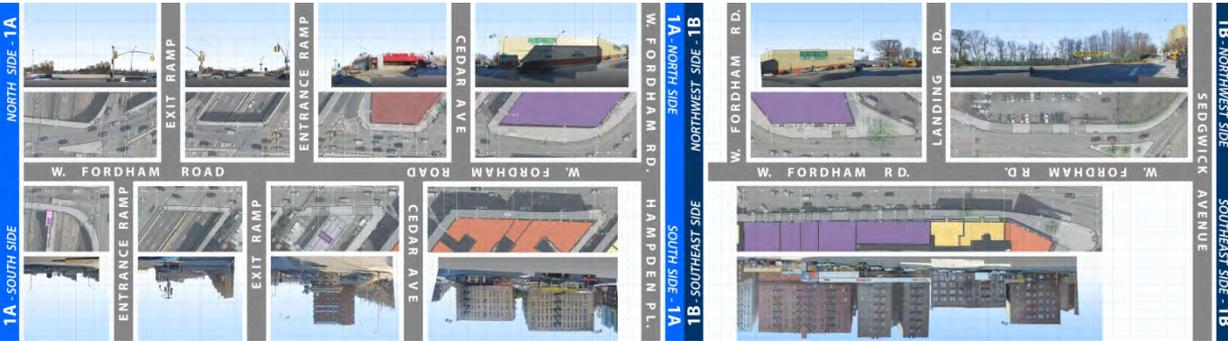
The **first route** analyzed from the University Heights Station was that between the station and Bronx Community College, while the **second route** analyzed was between the station and Fordham Hill Apartments (which also is en route to the Veterans Affairs (VA) Hospital).

These routes were further subdivided to ease in organizing comments and recommendations, for example, Route 1 encompasses Sections 1A, 1B, 1C, 1D and 1E.

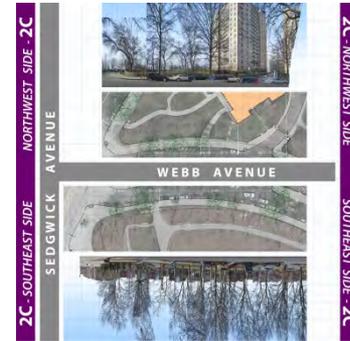
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PEDESTRIAN ROUTE SECTIONS

Route 1 & 2 – from Station to intersection of Sedgwick Ave.



Route 2 – from Sedgwick Ave. to Fordham Hill Apts.

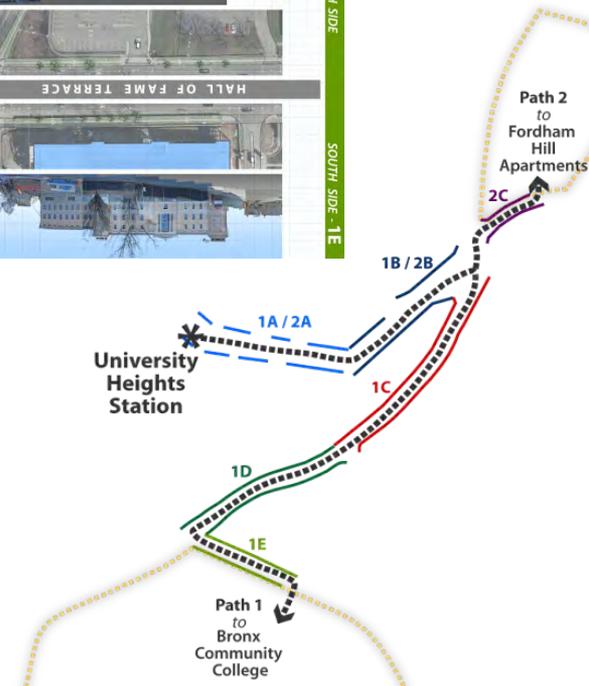


Route 1 – from Sedgwick Ave. to Bronx Community College



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

EAST SIDE - 1C
WEST SIDE

W. FORDHAM ROAD
SEDGWICK AVENUE

W. 193 rd ST.

1C - EAST SIDE
WEST SIDE - 1C



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 1C of UNIVERSITY HEIGHTS STATION

- 59 TOD MANY CURB CUTS!!!
- 24- New buildings don't match context.
- 75 More Street Trees Here
- 9 Nice building
- 72 I really like this building. Nice scale. Nice details.
- 48 More street trees here
- 62 Blank wall. Would rather see retail.
- 83 TOD LARGE OF A CURB CUT NO STREET TREES
- 73 I don't like new developments. They are cheap looking
- 29 More trees!

panorama views (Intersection of Fordham and Major Deegan)

PEDESTRIAN EXPERIENCE STATION



The two-dimensionality of each Section was supplemented by a large panorama at a strategic portion of the route.

The image is the view one experiences upon arriving into University Heights from the Metro North, where while walking along Fordham Road, one must cross the on-ramp and off-ramp to the Major Deegan Expressway to enter into the neighborhood.

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:

-Safer pedestrian crossings in area immediately around station, including better crosswalks, larger pedestrian refuge islands and longer walk signals with countdown indicators

-Promoting more active ground floor commercial uses along W. Fordham Road

-Improving mass transit connections and routes

-Improving sidewalk amenities including amount of lighting, street trees and benches

-Improving signage to the station, and to major institutions, such as Bronx Community College, including potential shortcuts, like through University Woods

-Reducing the impact from parking lots with more trees or replace with more active uses



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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

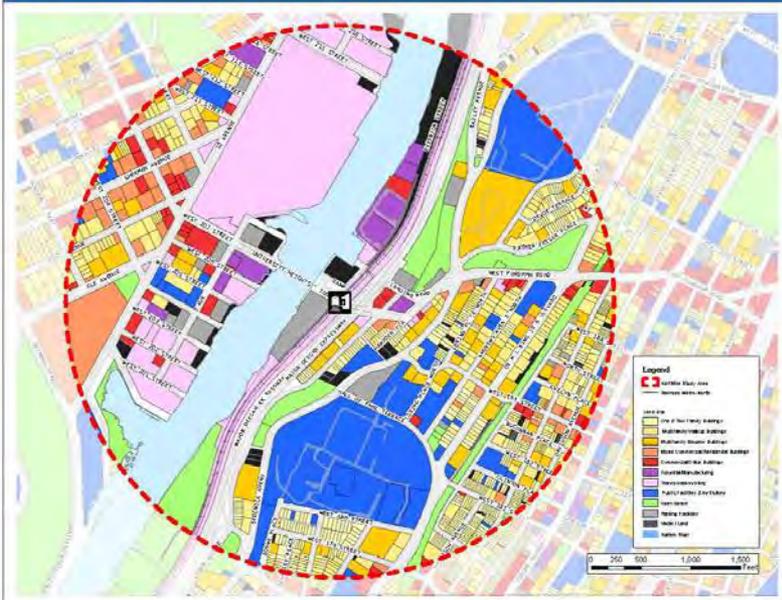
R7 - R8 w/
Residence Districts w/
C1 or C2
Overlays

R9 - R10
Residence Districts and
C4 - C6
Commercial Districts

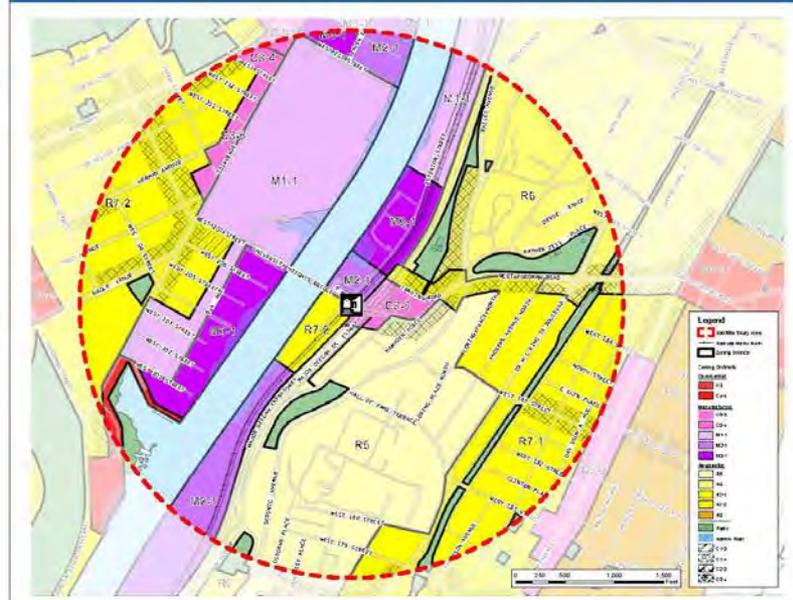
university heights workshop

LAND USE STATION

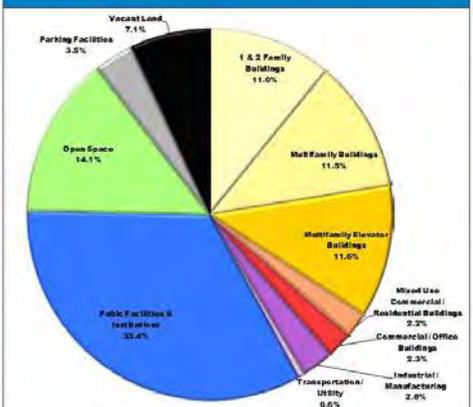
Land Use Map



Zoning Map



Land Use Totals



*The land use statistics are based on the total lot area for each land use within a 1/2 mile study area from the University Heights station, on the Bronx side of the Harlem River, which excludes Manhattan.

The land use map gives a snapshot of what is in the community today and opens the discussion to what uses the community wants to see in the future.

The zoning map shows the current zoning of the area, which directly affects what type of development is permitted and what will be built in the future. This includes the uses, heights, and bulk that would be allowed.

A broad mix of uses is represented including residential, institutional, commercial, manufacturing, and open space.

The predominant land use varies within the study area with an even split between lower-density, mid-density, and higher-density residential. The waterfront consists mostly of light industrial uses, while Fordham Road contains a mix of commercial uses.

The area has a very high percentage of public facilities/institutions due to the Bronx Community College and VA Medical center owning large parcels of land within the study area.

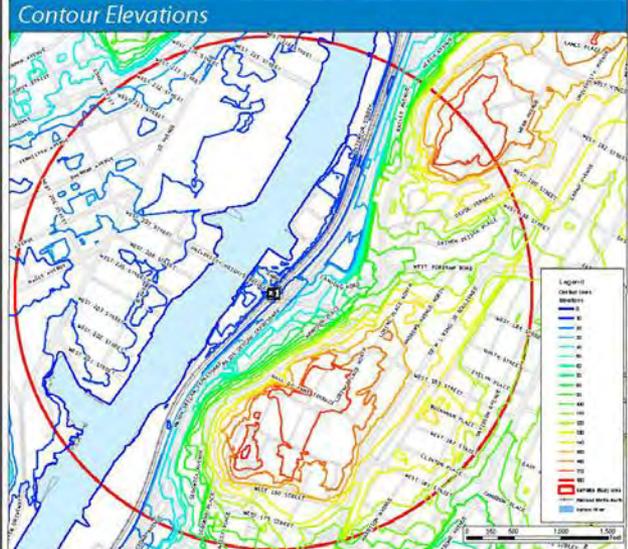
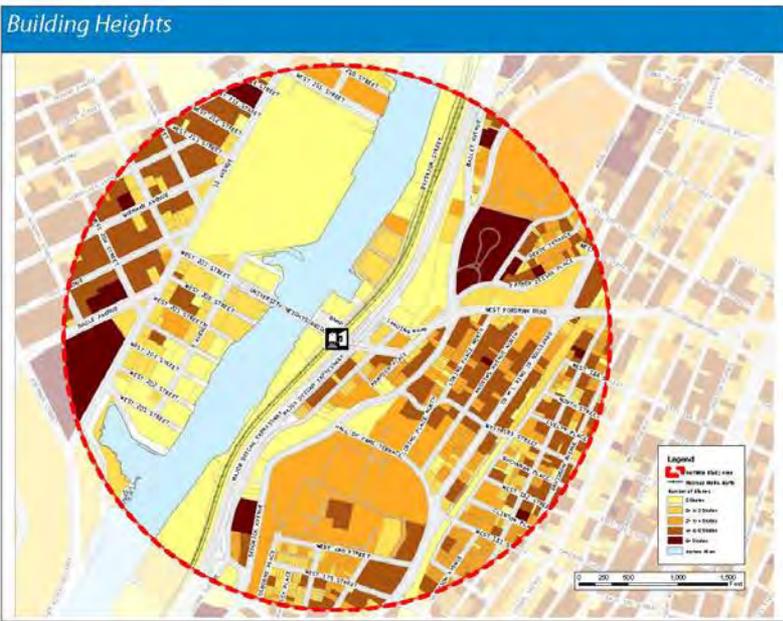
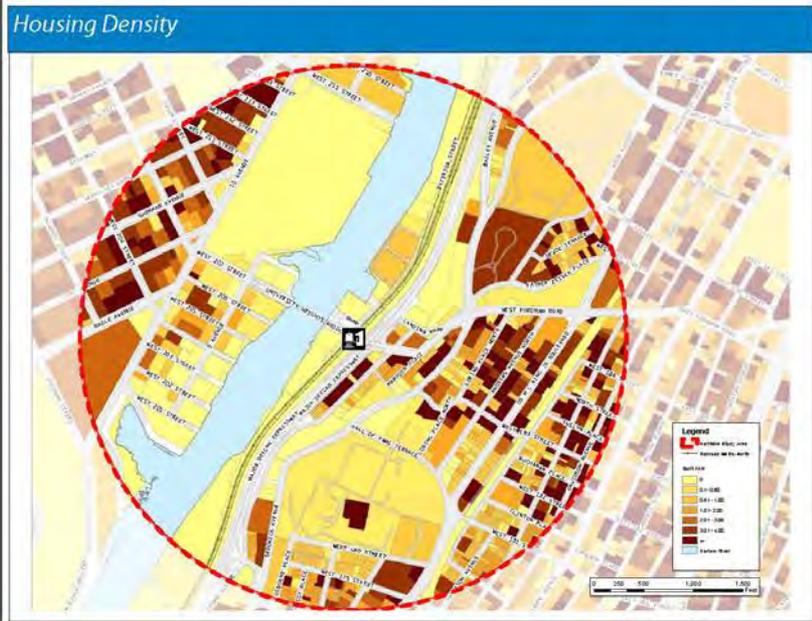


university heights workshop

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.

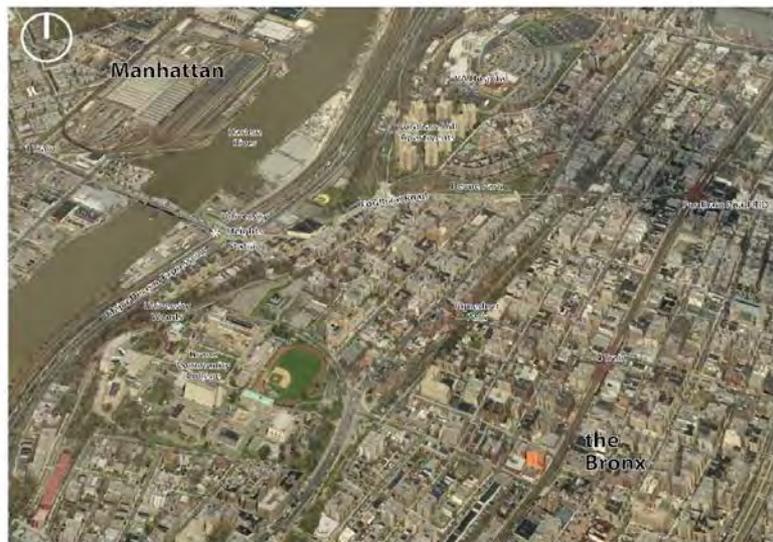
With the Harlem River affecting the topography of the area, there is a significant elevation change that minimizes the impact from the taller buildings.



The University Heights station has a range of densities in the area. There is a large amount of parkland in the area which increases the amount of land with no buildings, with Roberto Clemente State Park and University Woods just south of the site and Devoe Park to the east.

Additionally, while the Bronx Community College has a number of buildings, they have a relatively low built FAR due to the large lot all the buildings reside on.

The grade change has a significant affect on the area, as there is a very steep east-west slope just east of the Major Deegan Expressway and additional "hills" which peak at the Bronx Community College and VA Hospital. These grade changes minimize the impact from the taller buildings which are built on the lower elevations.



recommendations from university heights 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 center, fitness center, community gardens, and restaurants

-Accessing the water (bike paths, parks, etc) while not blocking the views to the water

- For new buildings, creating mixed income home ownership; for existing buildings, preserving existing homes

-Creating new buildings which fit with the topography of the area

-Preserving the "working class" nature of the Bronx as many middle class residents are feeling "squeezed"

-Building up the Bronx's negative image



university heights workshop summary

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:

- Development of a more comfortable pedestrian environment along Fordham Road from University Avenue to the University Heights Bridge. This could include improvements to pedestrian crossings signals; traffic patterns and enforcement; safety; sidewalk amenities; and more diverse ground floor uses to encourage pedestrian volume.
- Traffic on Fordham Road, approaching the University Heights Bridge is a problem
- A need for better coordination and promotion of existing modes of transit to improve overall commute
- A desire to encourage ownership both in housing opportunities and community pride.
- Continuing to move forward with the redevelopment of the waterfront. Specifically ensuring that is accessible to pedestrians and connected to the surrounding community; that plans contain recreational opportunities; and that the integrity of the community is maintained

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

