

Flushing West Neighborhood Planning Study: Outreach Feedback Summary



Flushing West Neighborhood Planning Study

In support of Mayor de Blasio’s Housing New York Plan, the Department of City Planning (DCP) proposes a new neighborhood planning study for a 10-block area located in the western portion of downtown Flushing. The 32-acre study area consists of predominately underutilized commercial, warehouse and industrial land uses that can serve the needs of expanding Flushing’s thriving downtown further westward to the waterfront along Flushing Creek, and also ensure that future development will provide new open space amenities and permanently affordable housing.

Background

This study will build upon a draft land use, zoning and master planning effort initiated in 2011 by the Flushing Willets Point Corona Local Development Corporation (LDC)—a community-based nonprofit organization working closely with State and City agencies and the community to support economic growth in the area. This organization received a \$1.5 million Brownfield’s Opportunity Area (BOA) grant in 2010 and selected a consultant team lead by AKRF, SHoP Architects and Mathews Nielsen Landscape Architects to study the area between downtown Flushing and the Flushing

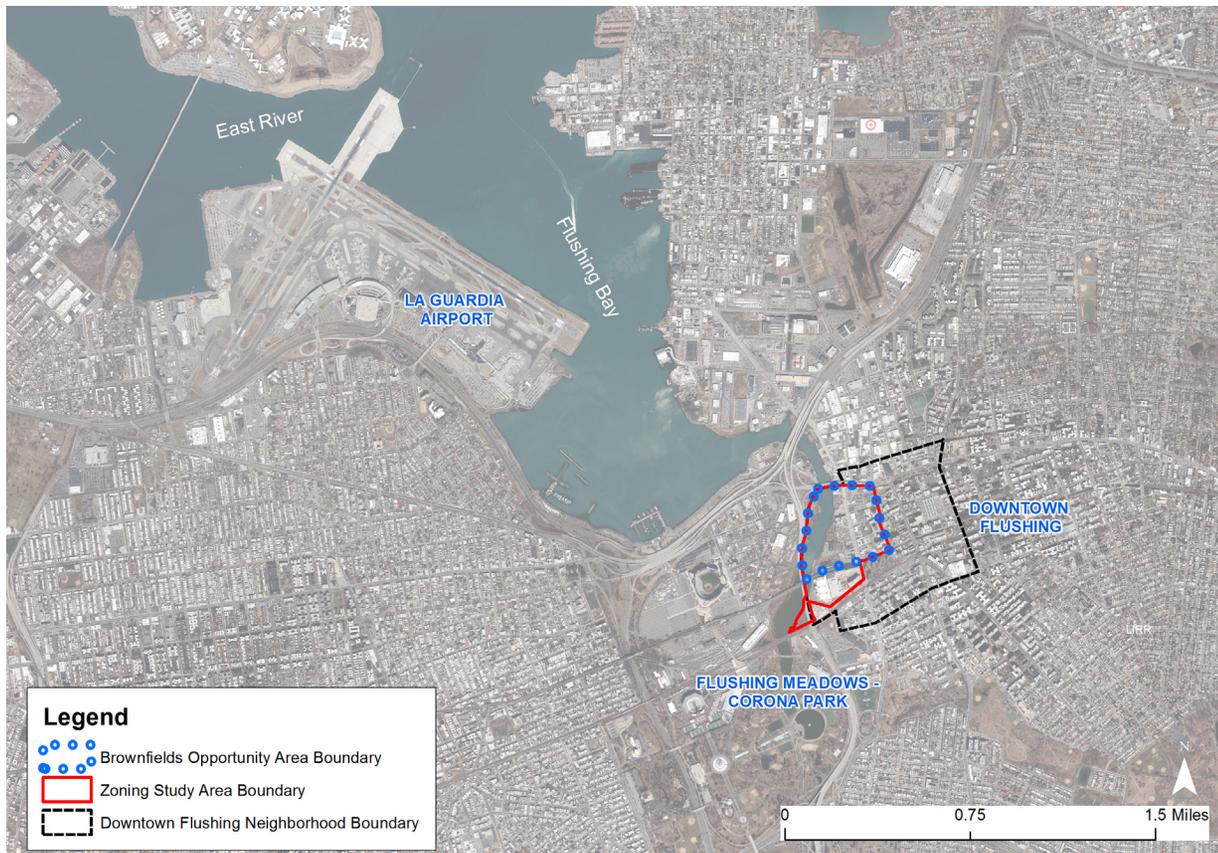
Creek. For this project, the LDC solicited feedback from a wide range of community stakeholders, including local civic and community organizations, property owners, tenant businesses, and elected officials. Likewise, multiple city and state agencies advised the LDC throughout its planning process and will continue to work with City Planning as it undertakes the Flushing West study.

Boundary

The Flushing West study area is located in Community District 7, and it is within the 20th Council District represented by Council Member Peter Koo. The Brownfields Opportunity Area is bounded by Northern Boulevard to the north, Roosevelt Avenue to the south, Prince Street to the east and the Van Wyck Expressway and Flushing Creek to the west. The Zoning Study Area encompasses the same geography, with the addition of the Sky View Parc site and a waterfront parcel west of the Van Wyck Expressway.

Study Goals & Objectives

The Flushing West study will address the following objectives: facilitate a community-based planning process to support policy changes that will shape a more livable neighborhood; leverage strong real estate market forces to create opportunities for requiring affordable housing; encourage walkability by extending the vibrant downtown area to the waterfront and create new opportunities for new open space; support the existing and growing immigrant and small business culture by providing economic opportunities; and align investments in infrastructure and services to support current demands and future growth. This study presents an unparalleled opportunity to draw people from downtown Flushing to the waterfront, redevelop underutilized sites, create jobs, and provide affordable new spaces in a remarkably diverse and growing neighborhood.



Public Outreach Process

To engage the broader community for the Flushing West Neighborhood Planning Study, the Department of City Planning (DCP) held four public open houses and workshops between May and September 2015. At these events, the public was invited to learn and share about the Flushing West study area and the greater downtown Flushing context area, and engage in the planning process.

Overall, more than 300 people from across the study area and beyond attended the public events. The Department of City Planning, along with representatives from other city agencies, engaged the community on discussions about zoning and land use, affordable housing, transportation, parks and open space, small businesses and workforce

development, youth and senior services, immigrant services, health and placemaking, schools, brownfields, and water quality, and the public realm.

This Outreach Feedback Summary is a description of the four public events held, followed by ideas generated in five main topic areas: Housing, Transportation, Parks and Open Space, Community Resources, and the Public Realm. For each topic area, there is a summary of concerns as well as a selection of quotes from community members that were expressed at one of the four events. Quotes were chosen to represent the most common concerns shared at the events.

The Department of City Planning and its sister agencies will use the ideas and concerns shared at these events as a foundation for the land use, housing, and infrastructure strategies that will comprise the Flushing West Neighborhood Planning Study. The study will encompass strategies that support the long-term viability of the vibrant downtown Flushing area.



Public Outreach Timeline

The Flushing West Neighborhood Planning Study is engaged with ongoing conversations with the broader public as well as stakeholder groups. Meetings with the community will continue through the completion of the Flushing West neighborhood plan.

Town Hall

Flushing Town Hall / ~145 participants
Presentation by and discussion with the Department of City Planning

May 21, 2015



Public Realm Workshop

Flushing YMCA / ~45 participants
Community discussions with the Department of City Planning, Department of Housing Preservation and Development, Department of Environmental Protection, Office of Environmental Remediation, Department of Parks and Recreation, and the Department of Transportation

August 20, 2015



Open House

Flushing YMCA / ~80 participants
Hosted by the Department of City Planning, with representatives from the Department of Housing Preservation and Development, Department of Parks and Recreation, School Construction Authority, Department of Transportation, Office of Environmental Remediation, Department of Environmental Protection, Small Business Services, Department of Health, Mayor's Office of Immigrant Affairs, and the Department for the Aging

July 29, 2015



Community Services Workshop

P.S. 20 / ~25 participants
Community discussions with the Department of City Planning, Department of Housing Preservation and Development, Small Business Services, Department of Health, Department for the Aging, Department of Youth and Community Development, and the Mayor's Office of Immigrant Affairs

September 12, 2015



Throughout the Flushing West Neighborhood Study outreach process, the Department of Housing Preservation and Development provided an overview of the Mayor's Housing Plan, a housing profile of the existing area which included data on the existing housing stock and government regulation, case studies of affordable housing developments, and information regarding preservation strategies.

SUMMARY OF HOUSING CONCERNS

- *Preserve affordability of existing housing*
- *Ensure that new housing provides deep affordability levels accessible to Flushing's existing residents at risk of displacement, especially low-income seniors*
- *Improve housing quality and prevent tenant harassment through stronger code enforcement and education of tenants' rights*
- *Address issues of housing discrimination and housing issues for undocumented*
- *Integrate needed community resources, such as recreational space and community services, into new housing development*



Many immigrants, including undocumented people, sharing housing

Harassment tactics in rent-stabilized buildings

Garbage, pests, insects, rodents. Landlords do not take the responsibility due to lack of enforcement

Need affordable studios for seniors on a fixed income

Lower AMIs and deeper affordability

Issues with basement and cellar apartments

Condition of housing outdated (amenities, materials)

Tenant rights education for new immigrants

Streamline senior housing application process

Illegal subdivision of dwelling units



Day laborers can't live in Flushing

Lack of supportive housing

Lack of housing for young people (0-1 bedroom), but family housing also needed (2+ bedroom)

More homeownership opportunities needed

Not taking community consideration into account on building projects

Concern about adding so many more people to the area and the stress on sewer and other infrastructure

Very low and low/moderate income housing that meets incomes of Flushing residents

Tenant workshops on application process to apply for affordable housing or other rental assistance programs

Landlord workshops to hear about financing and tax incentives to develop affordable housing



Transportation

The Flushing West Neighborhood Study is working with the NYC Department of Transportation and the Metropolitan Transit Authority to identify transportation-related concerns in the area related to pedestrian, bus, rail, bike, traffic, and congestion. The Department of Transportation interacted with participants at several events to understand community priorities in Flushing.

SUMMARY OF TRANSPORTATION CONCERNS

PEDESTRIAN

- Improve pedestrian crossings over Roosevelt Ave. and Northern Blvd. bridges
- Pedestrian safety improvements at the intersection of College Point Blvd. and Roosevelt Ave.

TRANSIT

- Improve station accessibility for the 7 train
- Transit center needed to direct bus layovers away from downtown area
- Improve bus circulation to reduce traffic congestion

BIKES

- Need separated bike lanes and more bike connections
- More bike racks

TRAFFIC

- Enhance overall traffic flow in downtown area
- Improve intersection of College Point Blvd. and Roosevelt Ave.



Expansion of all transit services to meet the increase in population

Improve bus circulation in downtown Flushing

Roosevelt Ave. and Janet Pl. a dangerous intersection for pedestrians

Wider staircase at Main Street 7 station

Generally need more language access on signs

Bus layover on 41st Avenue is too congested

Bike lanes on Kissena Blvd. and 41st Avenue

Change bus depot away from Main Street

Too much congestion at Main Street

Need more public parking

Parking is scarce



Trains are overcrowded

Bus terminal needed

Traffic lights change too fast, signal improvements required

Expand 7 train platform

Sidewalks need to be repaired and widened

Rerouting of bus routes to alleviate traffic along Main Street

Roosevelt Avenue/College Point Boulevard intersection not pedestrian-friendly

7 train exits: more needed at Main Street

Simplify intersection at Kissena Boulevard and Main Street

Vehicular, transit, and pedestrian congestion reduction is a top priority

Improve bus routes Q13, Q16, Q18, Q65, and Q66 by adding more buses, rerouting buses, dispersing bus stops and reducing turning for buses



Parks and Open Space

The NYC Department of City Planning and Department of Parks and Recreation facilitated conversations with the community on open space priorities. The community asked for better services in existing parks, a greater range of types of open space for multi-generational users, and access to an improved Flushing Creek waterfront.

SUMMARY OF PARKS AND OPEN SPACE CONCERNS

- *More passive and active open spaces needed for outdoor activities such as walking, dancing, fitness, community gathering*
- *Provide safer and more enjoyable walking and biking access to existing open spaces, particularly to Flushing Meadows-Corona Park*
- *Interest in community gardens*
- *Create green space along a publicly-accessible waterfront*
- *Public plazas with shade, paths, tables, seating, fitness equipment*
- *Improve quality of existing open spaces: open spaces are overcrowded, disconnected from the neighborhood, and in need of amenities that benefit the community*
- *Public restrooms needed in existing parks*
- *Stronger enforcement to prevent drinking, smoking and drug use in neighborhood parks*



People might come to Flushing Meadows Park from Northern Boulevard if there are pedestrian and bike lane improvements

Active recreation should be included in the study area

Capitalize on cultural landmarks, like the Quaker House

People need a small park nearby, especially for seniors

Planting trees along the waterfront to invite more birds and people

More seating in the park with shade and a cafe

Need places to sit and talk

More open space in Flushing!



Want longer hours, especially in the evening

Would like boardwalk along water with green space

There are fewer parks in West Flushing

Interest in community gardens

Parks amenities are important for families

Need path improvements in parks

Bland Playground is used by many adults - at times the conditions can make the park feel uninviting

Passive open spaces desired - a lot of the parks in the greater Downtown Flushing area have spaces geared toward recreation or programs

Flushing Meadows Corona Park is not accessible

Would be nice to have public plaza with seating in the center

No reason to spend a day in Flushing - need for open space/breathing air



Community and Business Resources

The Flushing West Neighborhood Study identified community resources needs by facilitating conversations between the public and representatives from the Department of Health, the Mayor's Office of Immigrant Affairs, the School Construction Authority, Small Business Services, the Department for the Aging, and the Department of Youth and Community Development.

SUMMARY OF COMMUNITY AND BUSINESS RESOURCES CONCERNS

SCHOOLS, COMMUNITY FACILITIES AND SERVICES

- Improve outreach to immigrant communities and availability of language services (particularly Korean and Mandarin) to access information about city services
- Provide community services and facilities such as mental health services, child care, senior centers, jobs, internships and after-school programs for youth, health care access
- Provide an additional high school

ECONOMIC AND WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

- Support and services for existing immigrant small businesses
- Career development programs providing information on job opportunities, internships, training programs
- More support and education for women and minority-owned businesses
- Prevent displacement of existing small business by newer big-box chain stores
- Business incubator spaces are needed for entrepreneurs
- Retail corridors should be expanded outside of Main Street/downtown core



More mental health clinics needed: issues of depression, social isolation, economic pressures, and stress due to cost of housing

Generally need more language access on signs

Biggest challenge for immigrants is availability of resources for immigrants: financial, legal services, social safety net like food stamps

Lack of services in community to learn English for adults - wait list is too long

Need for additional high school in the area

Limited services for people with undocumented status

Expand after school programs

Is urgent care available?

Language access for mental health/stress resources



More stores outside of Main Street

Would like incubator spaces for entrepreneurs

Prices tend to be lower in Flushing

Business owners don't have information about City services that can help them

Korean and Chinese businesses that cannot be found elsewhere are a significant draw

Would like to see more affordable commercial spaces for local small and medium-sized businesses

Garbage detracts from businesses/shopping; would like to see more street cleanup

Many businesses are closing because of high rent and replaced with chain stores and restaurants

Concern that small, local businesses will be displaced by chains and larger businesses



Public Realm

The NYC Department of City Planning and Department of Parks and Recreation facilitated conversations with the community on open space priorities. The community asked for better services in existing parks, a greater range of types of open space for multi-generational users, and access to an improved Flushing Creek waterfront.

SUMMARY OF PUBLIC REALM CONCERNS

LAND USE AND STREETSCAPE

- Streetscape improvements to enhance and support walkability, such as lighting, widened and repaired sidewalks, and re-painted crosswalks, especially along congested corridors such as Main Street and Roosevelt Avenue
- Plant street trees
- Encourage strong retail corridors
- Install city benches

FLUSHING CREEK AND WATER QUALITY

- Improve water quality and reduce smell
- Create a publicly accessible recreation destination along the waterfront
- Address combined sewer overflow issues



Smaller, better-connected building forms with active retail uses on the ground floors

Consider impact of large scale developments which could exacerbate congestion issues - pedestrians and cars

Light and air issues on narrow streets with large developments

Wider walkways along the waterfront

Publicly accessible waterfront with emphasis on cleaning up Flushing Creek

Preserve and allow for small mom and pop businesses

Plant more street trees

Heavy manufacturing adjacent to potential new development is undesirable



Benches for senior population

Make Flushing Creek a recreation destination

Creek is full of garbage

Improve sidewalk conditions

Concern about building, including walkways and parkland, right along a very polluted creek

Smaller building footprints, with mix of uses

Public spaces, restaurants with tables and chairs outside, safer crosswalks and more people walking

Pollution in Flushing Creek - need to clean river

Concern about effects of the asphalt and other manufacturing plants on creek

Moving out factories and replacing them with parks and residential could improve creek quality

Linear waterfront park can only come with a clean creek



Flushing West: Next Steps

In order to create a robust plan for the greater Flushing West neighborhood, the Department of City Planning and its sister agencies are using ideas and concerns shared at these events as a foundation for the land use, housing, and infrastructure strategies.

Meetings with the community will continue through the completion of the Flushing West neighborhood plan. For the latest information on the Flushing West Neighborhood Planning study, please visit www.nyc.gov/flushing-west



Participants share transportation concerns on August 20th



Participants discuss affordable housing on August 20th



Presentation at May 21st Town Hall



Participants discuss land use and public realm ideas on August 20th



Participants map neighborhood opportunities on July 29th



Participants listen to a presentation by City Planning on September 12th



Participants discuss health issues on September 12th