

# North Brooklyn **INDUSTRY & INNOVATION PLAN**









# Executive Summary

**The *North Brooklyn Industry & Innovation Plan (North Brooklyn Plan)*, announced as part of Mayor de Blasio's *Industrial Action Plan* and supporting the *New York Works* jobs plan, identifies strategies to better align local land use policy in the North Brooklyn Industrial Business Zone (IBZ) with the needs of today's businesses while supporting citywide policies for a diverse and equitable 21st century economy.**

Based on the most comprehensive study of an industrial area the NYC Department of City Planning (DCP) has conducted in decades, the *North Brooklyn Plan* includes a Land Use Framework that proposes to increase space for jobs and economic activity by both supporting essential industrial businesses in an industrial core, which constitutes two-thirds of the *North Brooklyn Plan's* Study Area, while also increasing job density in transit-accessible areas adjacent to residential neighborhoods.

The *North Brooklyn Plan* originated in the 10-point *Industrial Action Plan*, released in 2015, which proposed

updating land use policy and making \$115 million in City investments to help ensure that industrial and manufacturing businesses have the space to evolve and grow. The City also committed to investing significant resources to provide training to help workers access quality industrial jobs.

The *Industrial Action Plan* proposed updating land use policy in several ways: (1) Strengthen Core Industrial Areas, (2) Create New Models for Flexible Workspace and Innovation Districts, and (3) Limit New Hotels and Personal Storage in Core Industrial Areas.

In connection with the first and second goals, the City launched the *North Brooklyn Plan* in order to conduct an in-depth study of business needs and to develop policy tools for core industrial areas and mixed industrial and office districts. Addressing the third initiative, limitations on self-storage in IBZs were approved by City Council in December 2017, and limitations on hotels in M1 districts (areas zoned for light industrial uses) are undergoing public review as of the publication of this report.

The *North Brooklyn Plan* also supports the *New York Works* jobs plan released in 2017, which proposed initiatives to combat economic inequality, grow middle class jobs, and adapt the economy to ongoing changes in technology. It committed to supporting growth in both emerging and established sectors, including tech and cybersecurity, life sciences and healthcare, industrial/manufacturing, and creative activities. The *North Brooklyn Plan* supports *New York Works*' goals of growing good-paying jobs in these sectors, as well as promoting the creation of new work space that meets the needs of the city's economy.

The *North Brooklyn Plan*, the *Industrial Action Plan*, and *New York Works* all propose strategies to take advantage of a rapidly growing and diversifying citywide economy in order to create better economic

opportunities for New Yorkers. The city's economy is larger than ever, having gained 660,000 jobs between 2010-2017 with growth in almost every sector.<sup>1</sup> While the city remains a global center for finance, other sectors such as healthcare, education, tech, and media are ever-increasing contributors to the local economy.

New geographic patterns of employment are also emerging as office-based businesses, particularly in fields such as TAMI (technology, advertising, media, information), are moving into more affordable space outside of established commercial districts in Manhattan, close to their Brooklyn- and Queens-based workforces. This is happening in many M districts (areas generally zoned for industrial as well as some commercial uses) near transit in neighborhoods such as Gowanus, DUMBO, Long Island City, Greenpoint-Williamsburg, and the Study Area.

At the same time, some traditional industrial sectors — such as wholesale, transportation, construction, and waste management — are also growing, albeit at a slower pace. Further, after dramatic decades-long decline, manufacturing employment has essentially stabilized.

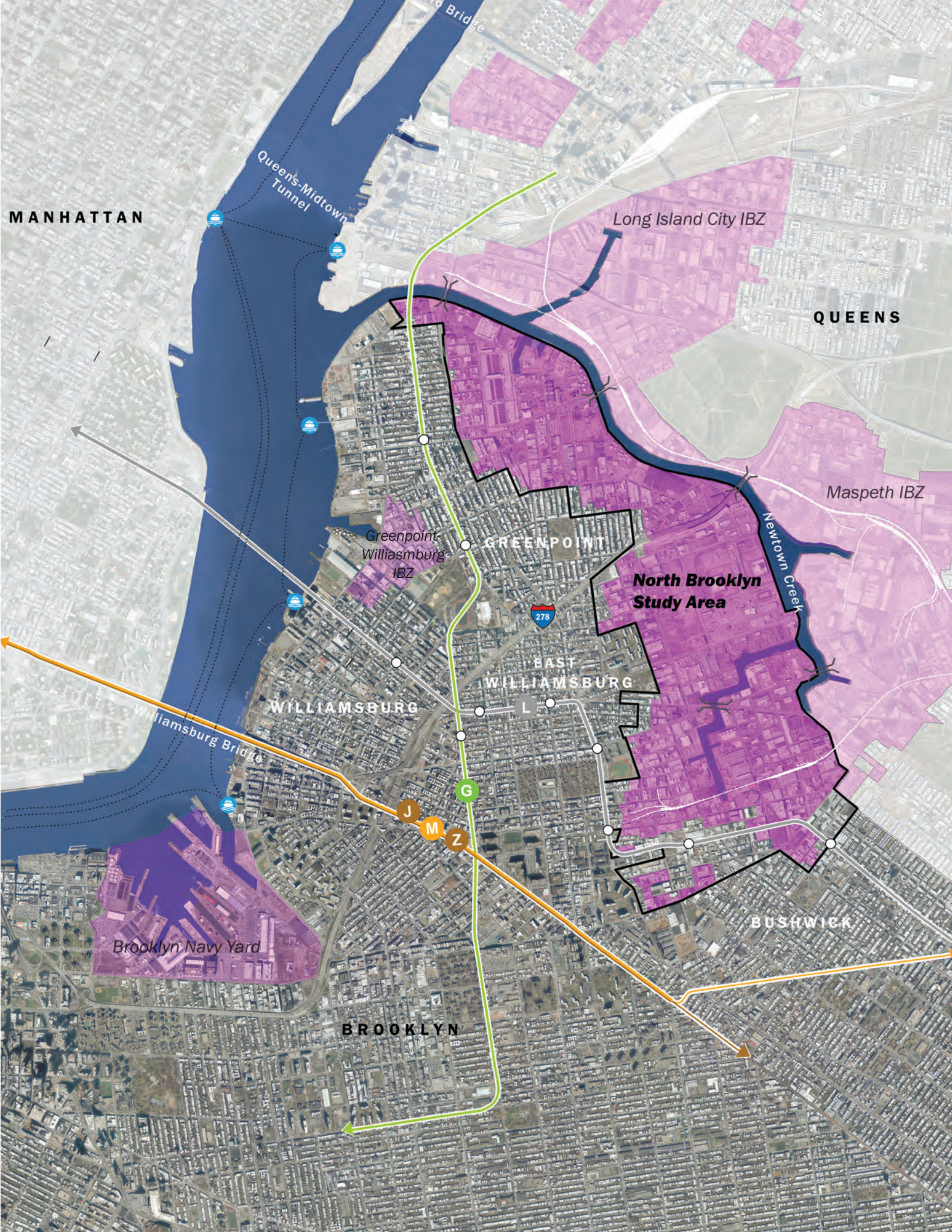
These trends are contributing to growing demand for space in New York City's industrial areas, from both industrial and non-industrial businesses. However, industrial

zoning districts have changed little since put into place in 1961, and existing use, bulk, and parking regulations often hamper the expansion of existing space or the creation of new space.

The City must revisit industrial zoning to better align it with the needs of today's businesses. Land use policy should identify areas for retention of heavy, truck-intensive industrial sectors that provide essential services to a growing New York City population as well as a significant number of jobs. It should also identify targeted transit-accessible portions of industrial areas where zoning can be modified to encourage creation of office space for the city's fastest growing sectors.

The *North Brooklyn Plan* identifies updates to existing zoning that can achieve these goals in the Study Area. Based on the findings of this *Plan*, DCP has also begun to analyze potential changes to parking, use, and bulk regulations that could apply to other commercial and industrial areas throughout the city.





MANHATTAN

QUEENS

BROOKLYN

Long Island City IBZ

Maspeth IBZ

Greenpoint-Williamsburg IBZ

North Brooklyn Study Area

EAST WILLIAMSBURG

BUSHWICK

Brooklyn Navy Yard

Queens-Midtown Tunnel

Williamsburg Bridge

278

G

J

M

Z

L



# Why Study North Brooklyn?

The Study Area is the third largest industrial hub in the city by employment, containing 19,500 jobs as of 2016, 77 percent of them industrial, and spanning 1,066 acres across the neighborhoods of Greenpoint, East Williamsburg, and Bushwick, adjacent to Newtown Creek and Queens. The Study Area consists of the North Brooklyn IBZ as well as small adjoining M districts outside the IBZ.

The Newtown Creek waterfront has been a major hub of large-scale industry since the early 1800s when industries such as shipbuilding and kerosene and petroleum refineries were attracted by both strategic waterway access and a location in the geographic center of New York City. Portions of the Study Area farther from Newtown Creek also have a long history as eclectic mixed-use areas; they were initially developed with both residential and industrial uses, adjacent to the residential neighborhoods of Greenpoint, Williamsburg, and Bushwick, forming truly walk-to-work neighborhoods.

After a long decline in industrial and manufacturing jobs since the mid-20th century, which paralleled citywide trends, the Study Area has seen job growth for the first time in decades, driven by a diversification of jobs and growth in both industrial and non-industrial sectors.

While between 2000-2010 the Study Area lost 1,570 jobs, it gained 2,270 jobs between 2010-2016, and more than one third of new jobs were in office and retail, arts, and entertainment sectors. (Available data may underestimate office-based jobs, as it does not capture self-employed workers or contractors and is less likely to capture companies based in coworking spaces.)

Along the Newtown Creek waterfront, large lots and large blocks support an active hub of industrial activities. This includes not only manufacturing, but also essential industrial services that keep the city running: wholesalers delivering food to New York's restaurants and supermarkets; depots providing fuel for residents; recycling companies carting and processing waste; construction supply companies helping to build major projects, such as Hudson Yards and the Second Avenue Subway; and a wastewater treatment plant serving more than one million people.

Located in the center of city, the Study Area offers a unique advantage for businesses seeking access to customers and suppliers in Brooklyn, Queens and Manhattan. Together, the North Brooklyn, Long Island City, and Maspeth IBZs clustered around Newtown Creek contained 41 percent of jobs in IBZs citywide as of 2014, while they only constitute 14 percent of the total land area of IBZs.

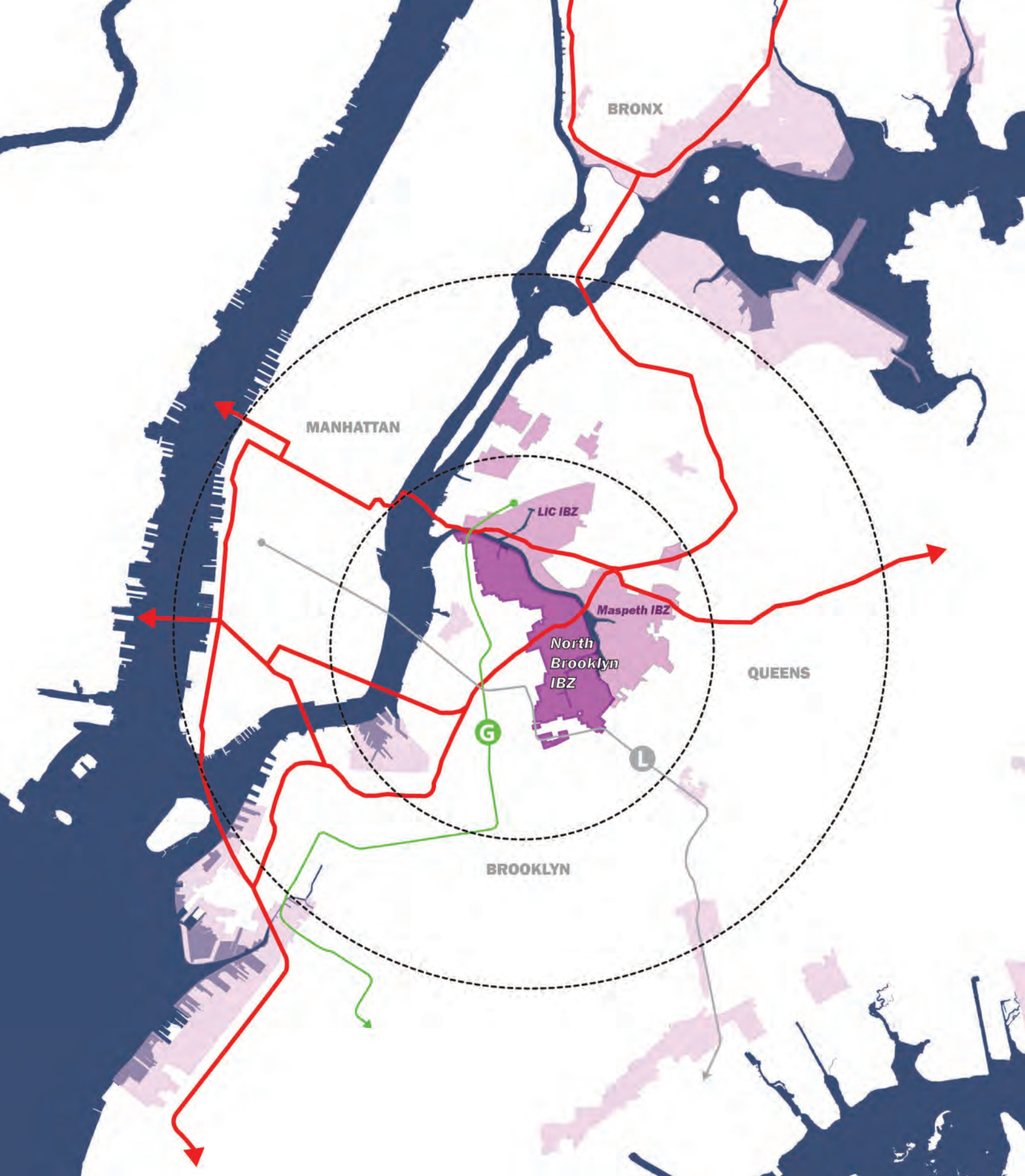
## STUDY AREA JOB GROWTH (2010-2016)

### INDUSTRIAL

**+1,200 jobs (+8%)**  
**+85 businesses (+12%)**

### NON-INDUSTRIAL

**+1,070 jobs (+23%)**  
**+219 businesses (+61%)**



*The North Brooklyn IBZ is located in the geographic center of New York City with excellent subway and highway connections.*

The growth in non-industrial jobs has been concentrated in areas close to established residential neighborhoods and the L train subway line. In those areas, there is a vibrant, rapidly changing neighborhood with a stock of historic industrial loft buildings — generally three to five stories with large, easily divided floorplates, large windows, and high ceilings — that have been repurposed for a diverse mix of artist studios, light artisanal manufacturing, film and photography, advertising, media, and tech.<sup>2</sup> These portions of the Study Area also contain restaurants, entertainment venues,

and art galleries, as well as large and small industrial activities.

However, development in both areas has become increasingly haphazard, leading to increased competition for land and conflicts between different types of land uses. Further, growth has led to increasing strains on local transportation and other infrastructure. Updates in zoning can help to channel and facilitate growth of industrial and non-industrial jobs into different portions of the Study Area, while key infrastructure improvements can help to better support growth.

NORTH BROOKLYN PRIVATE EMPLOYMENT, 1969-2016



*"Non-Industrial" jobs data not available for 1969. "All Industrial" 1969 data includes Construction, Manufacturing, Transportation, Wholesale Trade.*

*Source: NYS Department of Labor. QCEW, 2000, 2010, 2016 (3Q), ES-202, 1991 (3Q); NYC Department of City Planning. "Planning for Jobs." 1971. "Citywide Industry Study." 1993. North Brooklyn defined as M-zones along Newtown Creek, approximately the same geography as the Study Area.*

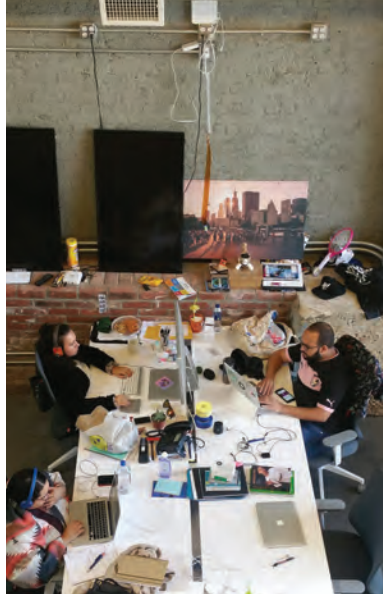


## TYPICAL NORTH BROOKLYN BUSINESS ACTIVITIES



### CRITICAL CITY FACILITIES

*Newtown Creek Waste Water Treatment Plant*



### TECH/MEDIA COMPANIES

*Remezcla*



### MANUFACTURERS

*Sightline Fabricators*



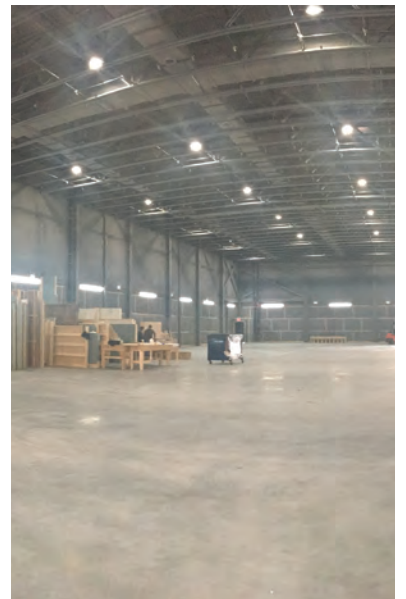
### RESTAURANTS

*Roberta's*



### DISTRIBUTION

*Frito Lay distribution facility*



### FILM/PRODUCTION

*Broadway Stages*



# The North Brooklyn Plan

The *North Brooklyn Plan* is the most in-depth industrial area study that DCP has conducted in decades. Launched in late 2015, it relied on substantial input from local stakeholders, including businesses, workers, residents, and community organizations, as well as detailed analysis of economic, land use, and infrastructure conditions. The *North Brooklyn Plan* aims to:

- **Create a better business environment** for all by preserving and growing industrial jobs, as well as compatible jobs in emerging TAMI and other office-based sectors.
- Create a balanced strategy that channels businesses into different subareas where they can thrive and **reduces competition for space** and potential for conflicts between industrial and non-industrial businesses.
- **Improve the quality of life for workers and residents** within the Study Area and nearby and connect workers with a variety of skill levels to quality jobs.
- **Identify improvements to transportation and infrastructure** to support economic growth.

In order to maximize availability of sites for industrial and commercial uses and limit land use conflicts, the *North Brooklyn Plan* does not propose to allow for development of new housing in the Study Area, apart from limited blocks on the periphery with predominantly residential uses today.

**The North Brooklyn Plan** relied on a substantial amount of community outreach.

This included: **three** public Open Houses with over **150** attendees; stakeholder roundtables and one-on-one interviews that reached **50** businesses, and multiple small meetings and presentations with local advocates and community groups.



Signs & Decals (custom sign manufacturing)



# Recommendations

The recommendations of the *North Brooklyn Plan* fall into four categories:

- **A Land Use Framework for North Brooklyn:** a vision for the future of the Study Area with a balanced strategy for land use changes to encourage the creation, expansion, or retention of workspace for industrial and office-based businesses, including areas for heavy, truck-intensive industrial businesses and a transit-accessible district for job growth in diverse sectors.
- **Zoning tools** that reflect the needs of modern businesses and ensure that workspaces can be created to accommodate growth in the Study Area.
- **Transportation and other infrastructure recommendations** to serve businesses, workers, and residents.
- Identification of opportunities to **leverage existing and new workforce force development strategies** to connect nearby residents and other New Yorkers to quality jobs in a variety of sectors.

The *North Brooklyn Plan's* land use policy recommendations are intended to provide guidance for future land use actions. A City-led rezoning reflecting these recommendations will be developed based on further analysis and outreach to stakeholders about the details of a rezoning proposal, including boundaries. It will also be subject to a comprehensive environmental review and full public review.



Sea Wolf restaurant on Wyckoff Avenue



# Land Use Framework for North Brooklyn

The North Brooklyn Land Use Framework identifies subareas based on existing trends and assets. Recommendations for the future development of each subarea are conceived of as pieces of a balanced overall strategy.

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## Core Industrial Area

**A central hub for essential industrial businesses that create jobs and keep New York City running.**

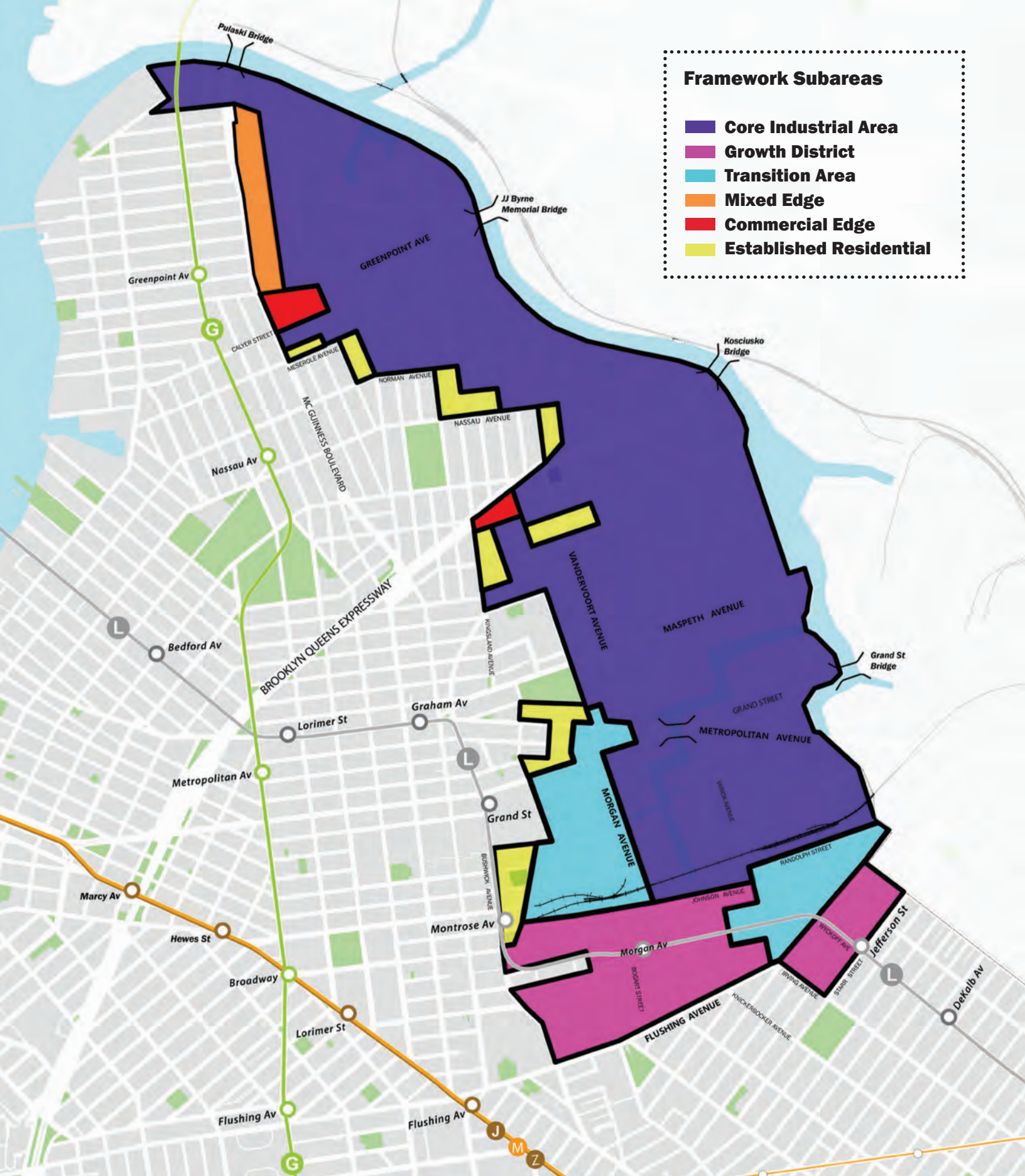
North Brooklyn's Core Industrial Area makes up over two-thirds of the Study Area and is located along Newtown Creek, away from residential neighborhoods and pedestrian-heavy areas. Core industrial areas play an important economic role in the city and contain hubs for heavy, truck-intensive industrial businesses that provide essential services, such as wholesale, recycling, construction materials storage, open industrial uses, and utilities. Core industrial areas also have key strategic advantages, such as access to truck routes, alternative freight modes, and other transportation infrastructure. They have large lots that can accommodate land- and truck-intensive industry and are generally separated from non-industrial uses.



**Goal:** Retain as a hub for essential industrial businesses, balanced by growth in diverse sectors in the Growth District.

### Key Land Use Recommendations:

- Implement appropriate limitations on targeted non-industrial uses, including entertainment uses.
- Increase permitted industrial FAR to at least 2.0 across the subarea to allow for multi-story industrial buildings.
- Rightsize industrial parking and loading requirements to better align with business' needs and remove obstacles to creation of industrial space.





## Growth District

**A dynamic, transit-accessible district for creative and tech-driven jobs of the future.**

The Growth District is the most transit-accessible subarea with the greatest concentration of multi-story industrial loft buildings. It has a rapidly evolving mix of artist studios, restaurants, TAMI, other office-based businesses, artisanal manufacturing, and other industrial uses. While zoning does not allow for new residential development, the subarea contains limited residential uses in the form of both historic rowhouses and converted industrial loft buildings.



**Goal:** Grow an ecosystem of creative and tech-driven jobs in office-based and industrial sectors near transit, balanced by reinforcement of the Core Industrial Area for essential industrial uses.

### Key Land Use Recommendations:

- Increase density for commercial and industrial uses.
- Create new loft-like building envelopes.
- Reduce parking requirements to reflect excellent transit access.
- Rightsize loading requirements to reflect business needs and facilitate development.

## Transition Area

**A mix of industrial and non-industrial uses serving as a buffer between subareas.**

Separating the Core Industrial Area from other subareas as well as residential neighborhoods, the Transition Area is a predominantly industrial subarea with some commercial and artistic uses. It is mostly characterized by low-scale buildings but has a small number of scattered multi-story loft buildings. While it is more transit-accessible than the Core Industrial Area, it is generally less proximate to the subway than the Growth District.



**Goal:** Support a continued mix of industrial and commercial uses while channeling substantial commercial development to the Growth District.

### Key Land Use Recommendations:

- Modestly increase density for commercial and industrial uses and create new mechanism to incentivize industrial space.
- Create new loft-like building envelopes.
- Reduce parking requirements to reflect moderate transit access.
- Rightsize loading requirements to reflect business needs and facilitate development.

## Stable Areas

**Small peripheral areas where no change in land use is recommended.**

Stable Areas are portions of the Study Area where substantial zoning changes would not advance the job growth goals of the *North Brooklyn Plan* and are generally not recommended.



**Mixed Edge:** A longstanding mix of residential and industrial uses with no predominant use. No zoning change recommended.

**Commercial Edge:** Selected active commercial properties adjacent to residential neighborhoods outside the Study Area. No zoning change recommended.

**Established Residential:** Peripheral, predominantly residential areas that are currently zoned for industrial uses but are similar in character to adjacent residential neighborhoods. New residential zoning is appropriate to match existing conditions in these small areas.

## Additional Recommendations

### Transportation and Infrastructure

- Implement transportation pilots to advance innovative planning for industrial areas citywide, including new on-street design solutions for freight loading, enhanced truck wayfinding for truck routes, business incentives for usage of clean trucks, and roadway reconstruction with more durable materials.
- Prioritize high-impact capital projects, including replacement of Grand Street Bridge.
- Invest in state of good repair and operational improvements to transportation infrastructure, including improving pedestrian safety to reflect increases in pedestrian activity in some areas, creating additional bicycle infrastructure, and restriping and resurfacing roadways.
- Improve the public realm and create green infrastructure such as rain gardens and bioswales.
- Expand broadband access.

### Workforce Development

- Develop a broader Newtown Creek Valley workforce development strategy that connects to the Long Island City and Maspeth IBZs.
- Connect workers to fast-growing creative and tech-driven sectors.
- Reinforce and coordinate existing programs and organizations.
- Connect with local schools to prepare youth for strong career pathways.



