

East New York Community Visioning Forum May 10, 2012

Summary Report

Image: NYC DCP



NEW YORK & CONNECTICUT
SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES

NYCPLANNING
DEPARTMENT OF CITY PLANNING CITY OF NEW YORK

Sustainable East New York



WHY A VISION FORUM?

The Vision Forum the Department of City Planning held on May 10, 2012 at Brooklyn's Community Board 5 in East New York is part of the Department's outreach effort for its "Sustainable East New York" study. Sustainable East New York is one of several projects throughout the region undertaken by the [New York-Connecticut Sustainable Communities Consortium](#), a collaboration of 17 municipalities, counties and planning organizations funded by a U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development Sustainable Communities Grant.

The Vision Forum was intended to identify issues and opportunities with resident and stakeholder input.

This information will inform zoning, land use and streetscape recommendations for the Sustainable Communities East New York Study.

"Sustainable East New York" is one of three [New York City projects](#) under this program, the other two focusing on transit-oriented development around Metro-North Stations in the Bronx and a city-wide study to increase climate resilience.

The Sustainable East New York Study takes advantage of the availability of five subway lines (A, C, J, L, Z trains) converging at the Broadway Junction Station in close proximity to the Long Island Railroad East New York Station.



Goal & Objectives

The Goal of the Sustainable East New York study is to coordinate land use planning with transportation and sustainability objectives



Image: NYC DCP

In order to reach this goal, Sustainable East New York has five main objectives:

1. Facilitate new housing opportunities, including affordable housing, through zoning changes and other targeted measures
2. Improve the physical environment through streetscape enhancements
3. Improve access to job centers through better transit connections
4. Improve access to fresh food and retail services through FRESH and other programs
5. Improve the area's environmental performance by promoting building retrofits and implementation of "green" measures



Study Area

The Sustainable East New York Study area extends roughly from Broadway Junction to the west to Broadway Junction to the east, and from Fulton Street to the north to Pitkin Avenue to the south. The East New York Industrial Business Zone north of Sutter Avenue is also part of the study area.

Because the study area is rather expansive with roughly 260 blocks and issues and opportunities vary, as well as giving as many local residents and other stakeholders the opportunity to participate, we focused this Visioning Forum on the eastern section of the study area.

The Visioning Forum focused on the eastern section of the Sustainable East New York Study Area



Image: NYC DCP



Community Outreach

The Visioning Forum was part of a comprehensive outreach strategy to include as many residents, City Agencies and other stakeholders to make the planning process as inclusionary and transparent as possible.

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Between June 2011 and April 2012 we had 25 meetings with community-based organizations, presented several times to Community Boards 5 and 16 and convened and facilitated a Technical Advisory Committee, which includes the MTA and other City Agencies such as the Departments of Transportation, Parks, Housing Preservation and Development, and others. We also convened and facilitated a Community Advisory Committee with representatives from local community-based organizations, and reached out and briefed elected officials on the city, state and federal level whose districts overlap with the study area.

For the visioning forum, we emailed over 180 residents and other stakeholders, made announcements at Community Boards 5 and 16 and made numerous phone calls to residents and local stakeholders. The event was posted on the DCP and the Sustainable Communities Consortium website and facebook and there were twitter updates from the Department of City Planning.



Image: NYC DCP



Forum Participants

More than 30 people participated in the forum that included a virtual tour and breakout workshops

More than 30 people participated in the workshop. They included East New York, Cypress Hills and Brownsville residents, representatives from non-profit organizations, city-agency representatives and staff from elected officials.

Each breakout group had three DCP facilitators and note takers.

Image: NYC DCP



Forum Activities

The event consisted of a virtual neighborhood tour and breakout workshop groups



6:00pm Registration

6:30pm Welcome & Introductions

- Winston Von Engel, Deputy Director, DCP Brooklyn Office
- Ralph Blessing, SCENY Project Manager, DCP Brooklyn Office

6:40pm Virtual Walking Tours

- Participants were guided by DCP facilitators around the study area with the use of a virtual walking tour. Participants were asked to think about and discuss issues and opportunities along the way.

7:00pm Break-out Groups

- The facilitator conducted three exercises. The first one identified “good places and bad places” in the area, based on the observations from the virtual walking tour and from personal experiences. The second exercise aimed at finding ways to fix the previously identified issues and in the last step, group members were asked to prioritize their recommendations.

8:15pm Wrap-up

- Volunteers from each break-out group presented their groups’ recommendations to all of the participants.

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What we heard...

Forum Participants identified over 60 issues, concerns and opportunities throughout the focus area

Major themes included:

Creating access to a diversity of jobs; development of new community centers and active recreational opportunities; development of new mixed-use and mixed-income affordable housing; improvement of pedestrian safety and accessibility; and encouragement of more services and retail opportunities.

A brief survey at the event ranked participants' most important issues:

- 1) Housing
- 2) Beautification & Safety
- 3) Culture & History
- 4) (TIED) Transportation and Business & Industry
- 6) Urban Design
- 7) Environment



Image: NYC DCP



What we heard...LAND USE

The abundance of existing transit access and infrastructure is a testament to the historic density of development and commercial activity in the neighborhood. Many residents cited they would like to see more mixed-use development and active uses to encourage greater access to services and safer and more enjoyable streets.



ISSUES

- Too many one and two family homes
- Too many Vacant lots and vacant buildings
- Underutilized and vacant properties are an eye-sore
- Too many shelters
- Atlantic Ave is unsafe and unattractive for pedestrians and retail

PROPOSALS

- Reuse and rehabilitate existing structures
- Bring in mixed-uses and higher densities along the main corridors
- Make Atlantic Ave a retail and commercial destination with vibrant activities on the street
- Reuse old precinct house on Miller for the community
- CB5 building should be rehabilitated to allow for a recreation and community center
- Need more activity on Pitkin Avenue
- More local services at subway stops

What we heard...URBAN DESIGN

Residents of East New York are proud of their community's diversity, art and cultural heritage and want their streets to represent this vibrancy.



ISSUES

- Lack and inconsistency of lighting makes the streets unsafe
- Neighborhood is grey and dull, does not reflect the cheerfulness and colorfulness of the community
- Atlantic Ave is too busy and unsafe to cross
- Not a lot happening here
- Feels bare, not pleasant to walk

PROPOSALS

- Plant more trees and improve streetscape
- Work with local artists for a street art program on Atlantic Ave;
- Bring in sculptures that would improve the streetscape and also reflect the cheerfulness of the community
- Create public spaces and plazas where residents have spaces to sit and relax
- Want spaces that are “nice, tidy and safe”
- Want development with storefronts, outside seating on Atlantic Avenue

What we heard...JOBS & INDUSTRY

Much of the area is currently zoned for low-density industrial and auto-oriented uses which has resulted in numerous vacant and underutilized properties over the years. Residents said they would like to see greater employment opportunities and redevelopment of many underutilized sites.



ISSUES

- There are not a lot of services or retail within walking distance
- There are a lack of jobs
- Not enough office space and incubator space
- Manufacturing brings nothing new to the community

PROPOSALS

- Bring housing and jobs that are here to stay
- Chloe food site could be developed to have retail at the ground floor with office spaces and affordable housing above
- M&T bank site could become a small business incubator
- Encourage a college campus to locate here
- Need career training, not just job training; more trade skills
- Organize businesses into a distinct business district, into a cluster
- Want green jobs, large-scale agriculture, healthcare jobs, IT jobs
- Develop a credit-union to reinvest in community

What we heard...HOUSING

East New York has a diversity of housing types and styles. However many residents have complained of a lack of quality and affordable housing options, poor access to neighborhood retail and services and the inability to attract new residents

ISSUES

- Lack of quality affordable housing

PROPOSALS

- Create affordable mixed-use, mixed-income housing
- Make sure it is affordable to residents of this community, but that it will also bring in new people from outside ENY
- Give a house to people that otherwise would go into the shelters
- Need more housing with greenspace
- Renovated and rehabilitate existing housing



Image: NYC DCP



What we heard...TRANSPORTATION

Highway and Parkway connections make travel out of the community relatively easy by private vehicle, but residents have said that inter-neighborhood travel, especially north-south, is very difficult. Community members would like to see improved streetscapes and amenities to improve walkability and access to transit.

ISSUES


- Roads are not well paved, there are holes in the streets
- Hendrix and Miller are important streets because they connect Cypress Hills with ENY
- Unsafe and dull streets

PROPOSALS

- Improve pedestrian safety and accessibility



What we heard...PARKS & ENVIRONMENT



Highland Park borders the northern portion of the Study Area and numerous community gardens and school playgrounds dot northern East New York. Even with this proximity, residents are still looking for greater access to publicly-available greenspace citing overcrowding and a lack of both active and passive recreational opportunities.

ISSUES

- Highland Park “is for people from Queens” and not large enough for all of its current users
- Poor sanitation
- Snow trucks never show up
- Need more greenspaces with active recreation

PROPOSALS

- Open more school playgrounds to the community
- Develop a soccer field with summer youth activities
- Create community centers, youth and senior activities, pool and active recreation

Image: NYC DCP



What we heard...OTHER ISSUES & IDEAS

East New York residents want to leverage existing assets to help the community grow and continue to attract a diverse and vibrant population.



ISSUES

- The community needs cultural centers and community facilities
- Not enough schools
- Want youth to be able to/want to move back when they grow up and become successful

PROPOSALS

- Attract middle-income young professionals to Atlantic Avenue
- Develop a museum to celebrate Latino and Black community
- More medical services and a hospital
- No more fast-food or drive-thrus

Thank You!

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