



ASTORIA

QUEENS

Commercial District Needs Assessment



careers
businesses
neighborhoods



Central Astoria Local Development Coalition
Queens Economic Development Corporation



Background

Avenue NYC is a competitive grant program created by the **NYC Department of Small Business Services** to fund and build the capacity of community-based development organizations to execute commercial revitalization initiatives. Avenue NYC is funded through the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development's Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) Program, which targets investments in low- and moderate-income neighborhoods.

Avenue NYC Commercial Revitalization grants provide multi-year commitments aimed at building the capacity of partner organizations to better understand neighborhood needs, develop impactful programs, and sustain their work in the community for at least three years.

The **Commercial District Needs Assessment (CDNA)** highlights a neighborhood's existing business landscape and consumer characteristics.

This CDNA features 6 commercial corridors in **Astoria: Steinway Street, Broadway, Astoria and Ditmars boulevards, 36th and 30th** avenues. The study was conducted in partnership with the **Central Astoria LDC** and **Queens Economic Development Corporation** between September 2022 and June 2023.

Key issues and opportunities identified through this assessment will help prioritize SBS-supported local investments, and serve as an informational and marketing resource for the neighborhood.

In This Report

Existing conditions, business data, and qualitative depictions of the neighborhood were gathered from more than **790 surveys** and various stakeholder meetings with neighborhood merchants, shoppers, street vendors, property owners, and residents.

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Bordered by the East River, Long Island City, Sunnyside, and Woodside, Astoria is a unique neighborhood and kaleidoscope of people. Home to residents hailing from more than 80 countries, a trip to Astoria is a trip around the world. Well-tended residential blocks crisscross commercial corridors with an international flair. The neighborhood's pace is neither Manhattan's hectic bustle nor the steady routine of a suburb – it is a village within the city, ideal for strolling, shopping, dining, and living.

Astoria's "village" feeling can be traced back to its settlement in the 17th century by William Hallet, an English farmer and landowner. Wealthy fur trader Stephen Halsey redeveloped the area in 1835, soliciting the financial help of John Jacob Astor in exchange for renaming the area "Astoria". Through the early 1900s Astoria attracted factories like the Steinway Piano Company, which established a company town in northern Astoria. The 1900s witnessed the continuing modernization of Astoria, with the construction of numerous film studios, streetcar and subway lines, and worker housing.

Astoria continues to celebrate its filmmaking legacy, hosting the Museum of the Moving Image, Kaufman Astoria Studios, and the soon-to-be-completed Wildflower Studios. The neighborhood boasts other renowned cultural institutions, including the Noguchi Museum and Socrates Sculpture Park. The 56-acre Astoria Park is the neighborhood's green jewel, though green space is sparse across Astoria. The area is well served by public transportation, featuring four subway lines, numerous bus lines, and NYC Ferry's Astoria route. The area is also easily accessible by car and bike, with several bike lanes and connections to the Grand Central Parkway, BQE, and the Robert F. Kennedy Bridge.

Astoria is home to hundreds of exquisite restaurants, intimate cafes, quaint coffee shops, and specialty food stores reflective of its multicultural population. Following early settlement by Dutch, English, German, and Irish immigrants, large Greek American and Italian American populations made Astoria home, showcasing their cuisines and cultures. More recent immigrant groups have carved out their own enclaves, arriving from diverse locales including Southeast Asia, China, Brazil, Central and South America, the Balkans, the Middle East, and North Africa.

Astoria's primary commercial corridors include Astoria Boulevard, Broadway, Ditmars Boulevard, 30th Avenue, 36th Avenue, and Steinway Street. Each corridor is distinctive and serves different populations with a wide variety of shops and services.

Neighborhood Demographics

See more on page 16

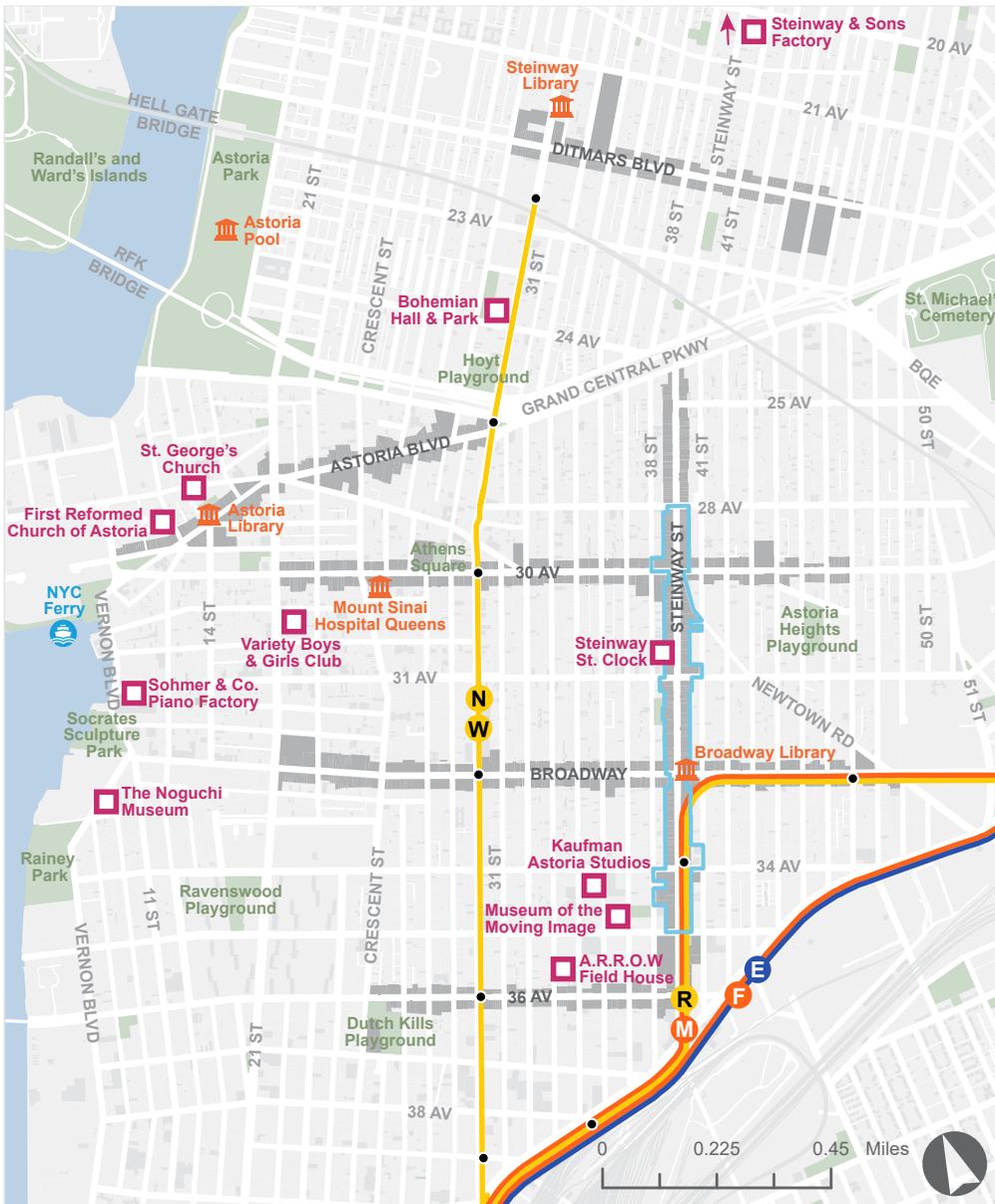
Astoria is home to 152,362 residents, 37% of which are foreign born. 51% of residents are White, 26% are Hispanic/Latinx, 14% are Asian, and 5% are Black. Most Astorians are between the ages of 25-44 years old, comprising 44% of the population, compared to 31% citywide. The neighborhood's median household income is \$82,971, compared to \$70,663 citywide. Compared to 40% of New York City residents, 52% of Astoria residents have a bachelor's or master's degree. While 63% of Queens residents are car owners, only 42% of Astorians own a car.

Future Opportunities

See more on page 5

Located at the nexus of Queens and Manhattan, Astoria is supported by a base of locally owned legacy businesses, which provides the opportunity for increasing the population while retaining the character of the neighborhood. Apartment buildings continue to rise throughout the neighborhood, including the 3,200-unit mixed-use development Innovation QNS. This development will transform the mostly industrial southeast corner of Astoria, increasing foot traffic and commercial activity along Steinway Street and 36th Avenue. Northern Astoria will soon see the completion of Robert De Niro's Wildflower Studios, adding to the Steinway Factory's impact on commercial activity in the neighborhood. As the MTA explores how to connect LaGuardia Airport to the city's public transit system, multiple options suggest that Astoria will be the first neighborhood many of these travelers will see or set foot in on their way west from the airport. Astoria is beloved as a culturally diverse hub by both its residents and businesses, which will serve the community well as it seeks opportunities for growth.

Astoria



Notable Places



Points of Interest

- Assessed Commercial Corridors
- Parks and Public Spaces
- Public Facilities
- Notable Places
- Business Improvement Districts

Neighborhood Events

- 31st Avenue Open Street
- Astoria Halloween Parade
- Steinway Street Annual International Cultural Festival
- Steinway Street Artwalk

Merchant & Community Groups

- 30th Avenue Business Association
- ANSOB Center for Refugees
- Art House Astoria Conservatory For Music and Art
- Astoria Home Owners and Tenants Associations
- Astoria Houses Resident Association
- Central Astoria Local Development Coalition

- HANAC Astoria Community Center
- Kiwanis Club of Astoria/LIC
- Old Astoria Neighborhood Association
- Queens Economic Development Corporation
- Steinway Astoria Partnership
- Urban Upbound

KEY FINDINGS & OPPORTUNITIES

Strengths

- ▶ Astoria's vast cultural and ethnic diversity is celebrated through rich, global dining options, specialty food stores, and community institutions
- ▶ Astoria's strong sense of community and civic engagement is illustrated by multiple community-based and civic organizations that are dedicated to improving quality of life for both residents and businesses
- ▶ The neighborhood has excellent transportation accessibility via subway, bus, car, and ferry
- ▶ Astoria boasts an overall low vacancy rate with many long-standing small businesses
- ▶ A strong core of long-standing businesses and institutions — including two film studios, museums, art galleries, and multiple sites listed on the National Register of Historic Places — make Astoria a cultural destination
- ▶ Astoria's proximity to Manhattan continues to attract new residential development

Challenges

- ▶ Attempts to attract clothing retailers to Astoria, both independent boutiques and affordable stores, have fallen short as consumers have shifted to shopping online and available commercial space is not large enough to attract larger national retailers
- ▶ Language and cultural differences create barriers for merchants to get help with regulatory or lease negotiation issues
- ▶ Businesses must contend with insufficient parking and limited meter times that cannot keep up with shopper demand
- ▶ Egregious double-parking leads to congestion across commercial corridors
- ▶ The neighborhood suffers from a high volume of litter, abandoned outdoor dining sheds, rat infestations, and incidents of illegal dumping





Opportunities

- ▶ Attract new and diverse businesses to fill vacant storefronts that meet the neighborhood's demand for quality retail stores, more culturally diverse restaurants and coffee shops, and national retailers
- ▶ Support educational campaigns and cleanup services to keep streets, sidewalks, and storefronts free of litter, graffiti, and double-parked vehicles
- ▶ Identify locations for new public open spaces and launch pilot programs to activate the streetscape
- ▶ Implement landscaping and beautification efforts to attract and retain local shoppers and visitors
- ▶ Develop neighborhood wayfinding and signage to guide people to commercial corridors, key points of interest, transit, and other community destinations
- ▶ Create a unified Astoria marketing campaign highlighting the neighborhood's assets and business offerings
- ▶ Expand merchant collaboration and participation in business marketing promotions and community events
- ▶ Provide culturally relevant support services to help merchants grow their businesses
- ▶ Partner with local civic organizations and the arts community to develop new placemaking projects and commercial corridor activations

What's Next?

To address these key findings and opportunities, Neighborhood 360° Grants have been awarded by SBS to nonprofit organizations.

For more information, visit: nyc.gov/neighborhood360

BUSINESS LANDSCAPE: ASTORIA

Business Inventory

1,450

Total Number of Storefronts

10.1%

Storefront Vacancy*

*Note: In 2022, New York City's 76 Business Improvement Districts reported an average ground floor vacancy rate of 11.6% and median ground floor vacancy rate of 10.1% (SBS BIDs Trends Report, FY22).

Storefront & Retail Mix

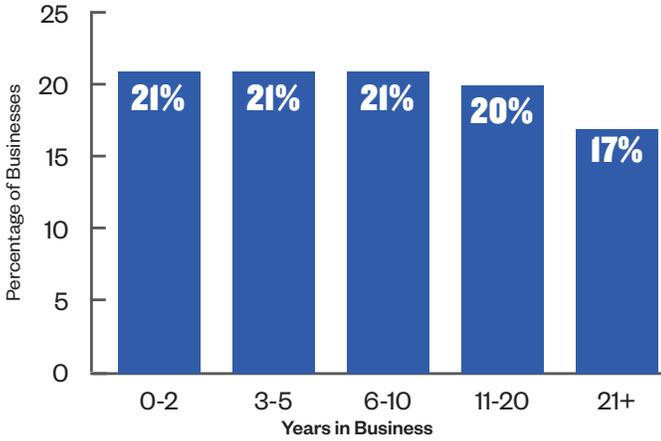


Business inventory and retail mix data were gathered by Central Astoria LDC and Queens EDC through a comprehensive area inventory of storefront businesses located along Steinway Street, Broadway, Astoria Boulevard, Ditmars Boulevard, 30th Avenue, and 36th Avenue. (October to December 2022).



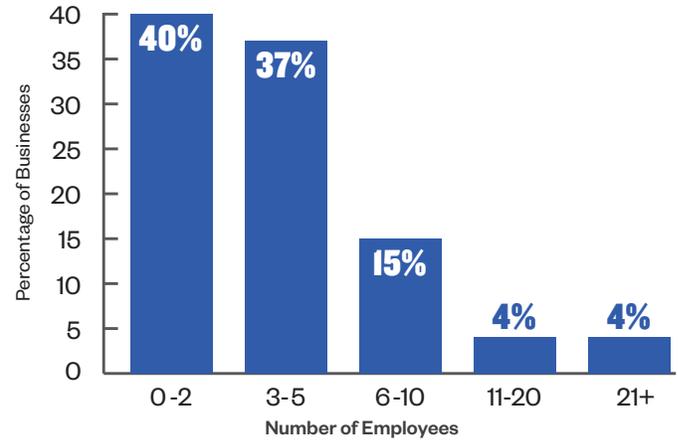
What We've Heard from Astoria Merchants

How many years have you been in business here?



Note: The mean is the average of all responses, the median is the middle number when all responses are arranged in ascending order, and the mode is the most common response.

How many full-time employees do you have?



Do you own or rent your property?



Does your business currently have a website?



Over the past year, has your business improved, stayed the same, or decreased?



What kinds of resources would help you grow your business?

Resource	% Merchant Responses
▶ Marketing Support	44%
▶ Access to Financing	25%
▶ Lease Support	19%
▶ Legal Services	17%
▶ Training for Staff	17%
▶ Space Improvements	16%
▶ New Equipment	15%
▶ Other	6%
▶ Regulatory Compliance Assistance	4%

Source: Based on 288 merchant surveys conducted by QEDC and Central Astoria LDC in Fall/Winter 2022.

BUSINESS LANDSCAPE

30th Avenue

Business Inventory

238

Total Storefronts

6%

Storefront Vacancy

Storefront Conditions

6%

Poor

8%

Average

86%

Good

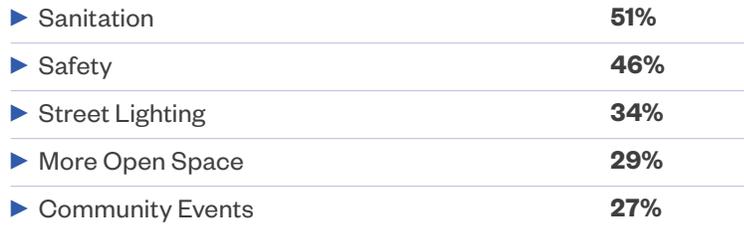


Most Common Businesses



What changes need to occur on or around your corridor to attract more shoppers?

% Merchant Responses



Steinway Street

Business Inventory

477

Total Storefronts

12%

Storefront Vacancy

Storefront Conditions

4%

Poor

41%

Average

55%

Good



Most Common Businesses



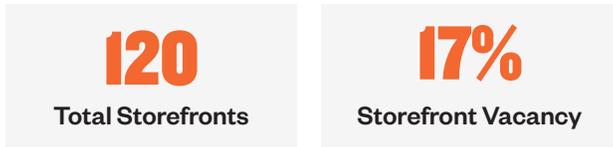
What changes need to occur on or around your corridor to attract more shoppers?

% Merchant Responses



Astoria Boulevard

Business Inventory



What do merchants like about Astoria Boulevard?



Most Common Businesses

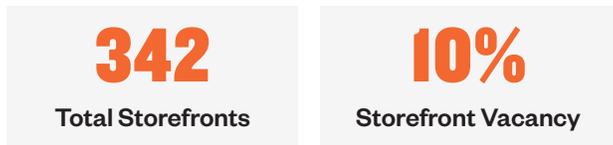


Storefront Conditions



Broadway

Business Inventory



What do merchants like about Broadway?



Most Common Businesses



Storefront Conditions



BUSINESS LANDSCAPE

Ditmars Boulevard

Business Inventory

175

Total Storefronts

9%

Storefront Vacancy

What do merchants like about Ditmars Boulevard?

"Convenience of Manhattan, yet it's a residential neighborhood."

"Family centric corridor."

"Small town community. People know each other and it feels safe."

"It has great bars and restaurants."

Most Common Businesses



Storefront Conditions

10%

Poor

9%

Average

81%

Good



36th Avenue

Business Inventory

98

Total Storefronts

7%

Storefront Vacancy

What do merchants like about 36th Avenue?

"Quick food to eat on commute."

"The people, high foot traffic."

"Mixed businesses."

"The liveliness, the colors, the community."

Most Common Businesses



Storefront Conditions

7%

Poor

18%

Average

75%

Good



Source: Based on 156 (out of a total 288) merchant surveys conducted by QEDC and Central Astoria LDC.

What We've Heard from Astoria Merchants

What do you like about the commercial district?

"Multiple businesses in a short distance that can serve your needs."

"Diversity: friendly community. Like a village in the middle of the city. Centrally located close to Manhattan."

"Diversity in the customers who patronize here."

"A lot of nice places to eat and grab a coffee. Supermarkets and specialty food shops."

"Reliable, perfect for get-togethers. Great food and great nightlife."

"It has great bars and restaurants."

"Variety of things and types of people."

"Lots of shops, so many options."

"It's very diverse open to new people and they are all very friendly."

"Location, people are local and comfortable patronizing local businesses."

What makes the Astoria commercial district unique?

"Mixture of old world and new world, diversity. All ages are represented."

"The fruit markets on 30th Avenue, the different types of restaurants: Thai, Greek, Chinese, Southern, Pizza, Spanish, Mexican, etc..."

"It's like a mini Manhattan."

"The old timers. Everyone feels like they belong here. It's a warm community."

"Centrally located close to all boroughs, CT, and NJ. Diverse."

"Arab culture and others coming together."

"The people around here are very nice and respectful which makes working environment a great place to work."

"Location to Manhattan, good transit."

"Very European, international, affordable."

"It's quiet compared to Manhattan."

"There is so much to do in a small area with family and friends."

BUSINESS LANDSCAPE

What We've Heard from Astoria Merchants and Shoppers

What changes would you like to see to improve the Astoria commercial district?

"Property taxes, heat and electricity prices are extreme. Retail is not the same."

"More community events to bring the different cultures together like food trucks or tents with different foods to buy clothes, gifts, and music."

"Safety is an issue weekend nights, want more officers."

"Green spaces to allow for people to hang out outside in the community will lead to increased shopping."

"Close off Steinway Street (specifically by the hookah bars). It's always crowded and driving through that area is insane because everyone double parks. If that area became an Open Street, I think it would be great for businesses during the summer months."

"Beautification, better sanitation (the rats and garbage are terrible), more variety in businesses."

"Illegal food trucks are an issue. The street is a mess. There are too many cannabis shops."

"A lack of bike racks and bike lanes makes it difficult for me to access stores. Business support for these will improve my experience as well as the experience of others arriving by bicycle."

"Keep Open Streets during spring, summer, fall. Provide funding to Open Street community planners on Ditmars Blvd., 30th Ave., Broadway."

"Could benefit from more benches/seats on the streets — especially on 30th Avenue."

"Outdoor sheds should no longer be allowed, need more space for parking."

What changes need to occur in Astoria to attract more visitors/shoppers?

	% Merchant Response	% Consumer Response
▶ Safety	62%	37%
▶ Sanitation	58%	50%
▶ Landscaping/beautification	49%	52%
▶ Community events	26%	40%
▶ Street lighting	17%	26%
▶ More open space	16%	51%
▶ Storefront improvements	16%	35%
▶ Transportation improvements	14%	44%
▶ Merchant collaboration	11%	26%
▶ Other	10%	12%
▶ Graffiti removal	6%	11%

Source: Based on 288 merchant surveys and 504 consumer surveys conducted by QEDC and Central Astoria LDC in Fall/Winter 2022.

Astoria Retail Demand

Residents spent

\$4.06B

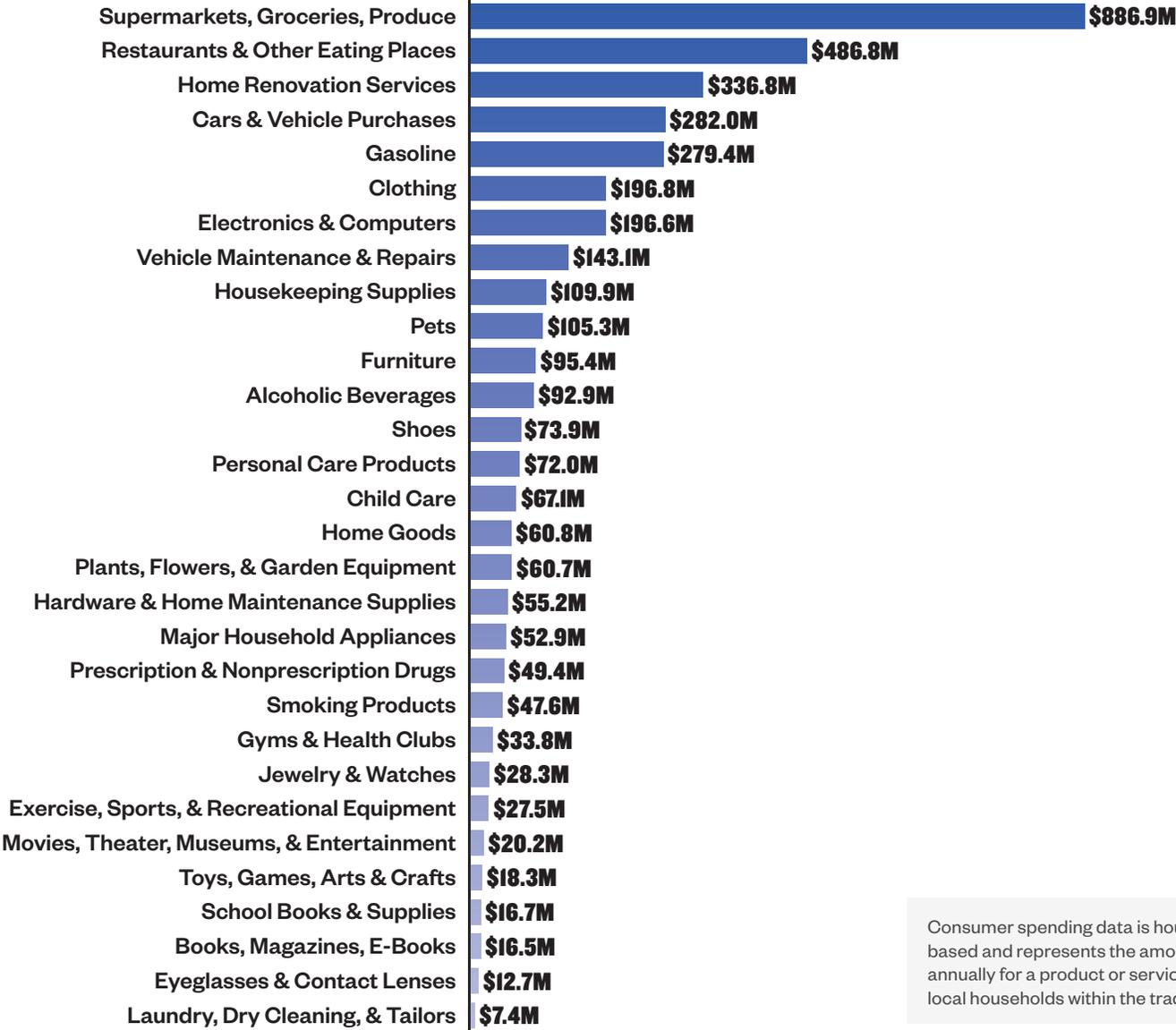
each year on retail goods and services in 2023

Residents will spend

\$4.71B

each year on retail goods and services by 2028

2023 Consumer Spending



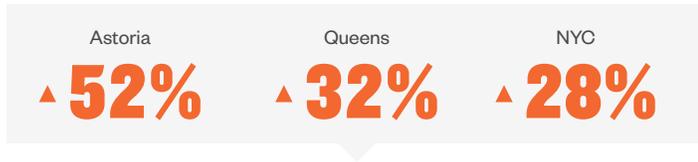
Consumer spending data is household-based and represents the amount spent annually for a product or service by all local households within the trade area.

Source: ESRI forecasts for 2023 and 2028; Consumer Spending data are derived from the 2019 and 2020 Consumer Expenditure Surveys, Bureau of Labor Statistics.

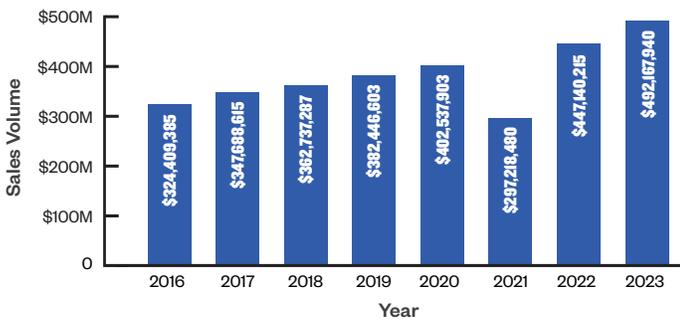
BUSINESS OUTLOOK

Business Trends

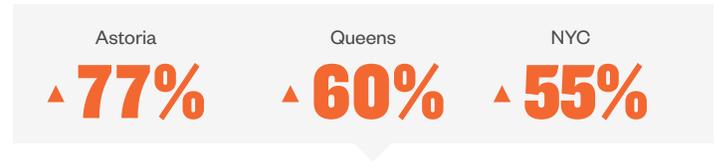
Change in Total Business Sales, 2016-2023



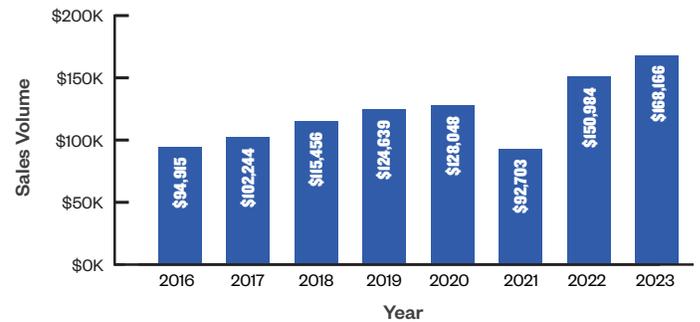
Astoria Total Business Sales



Change in Median Sales by Business, 2016-2023



Astoria Median Sales by Business



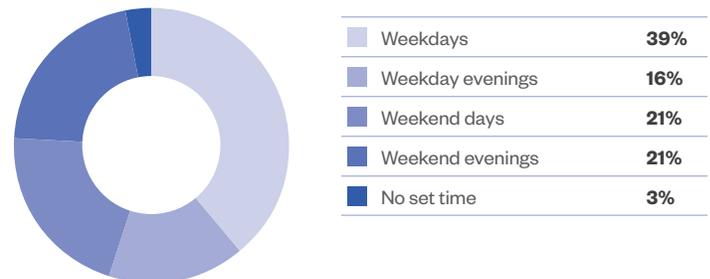
*Year 2023 reflects data gathered up until March 2023. Source: Division of Tax Policy, NYC Department of Finance

What We've Heard from Shoppers

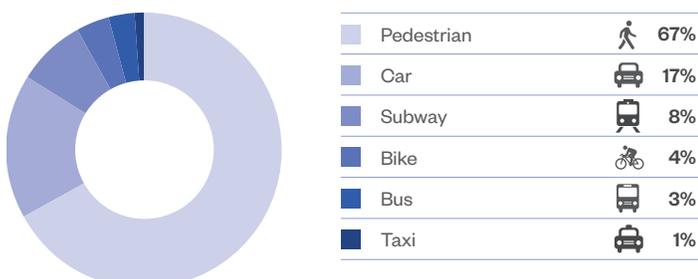
What additional types of businesses would you like to see in Astoria?

- ▶ Quality Retail Stores 
- ▶ Culturally Diverse Restaurants 
- ▶ Coffee Shops 
- ▶ Book Stores 
- ▶ National Retailers 
- ▶ Specialty Food Stores 

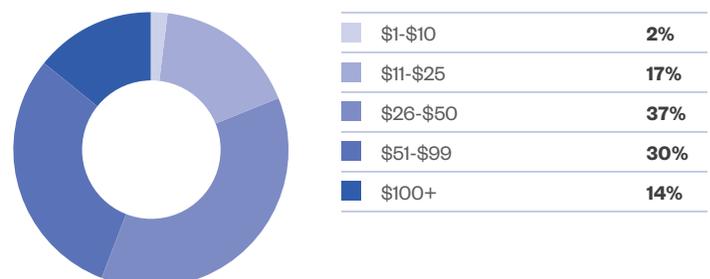
When do you usually shop in Astoria?



How do you usually travel to Astoria?

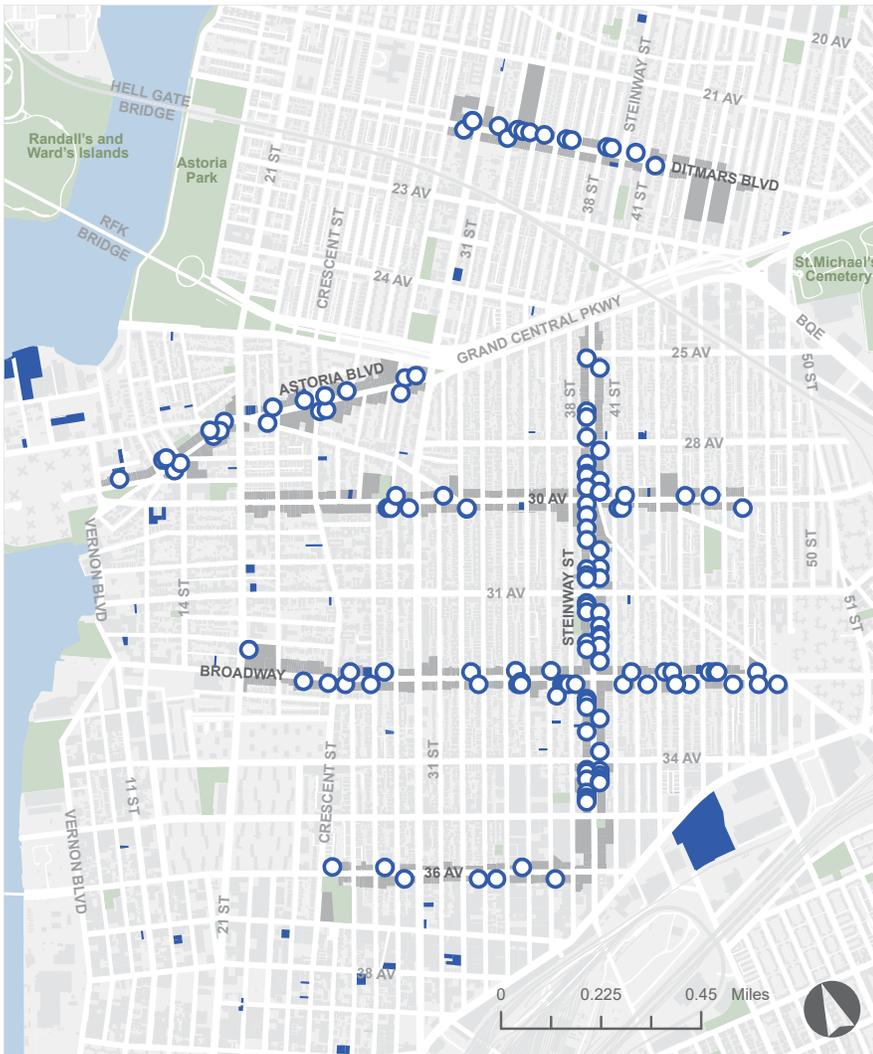


How much do you typically spend when you shop in Astoria?

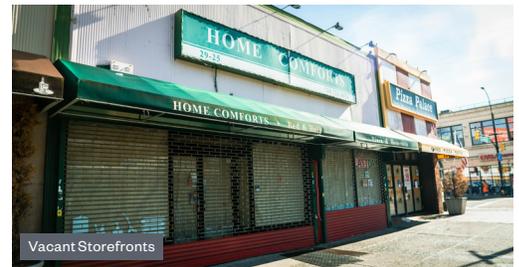


Source: Based on 504 consumer surveys conducted by QEDC and Central Astoria LDC in Fall/Winter 2022.

Storefront Vacancies



■ Vacant Lots
 ○ Vacant Storefronts
 ■ Parks & Open Spaces



Vacant Storefronts



Garbage



Storefront Graffiti

An analysis of 1,450 storefronts on commercial corridors throughout Astoria, including Steinway Street, Broadway, Astoria Boulevard, Ditmars Boulevard, 36th Avenue, and 30th Avenue, revealed that 9% of storefronts are in poor condition, 23% are in average condition, and 68% are in good condition.

Streetscape Observations

- ▶ Sidewalks, curbs and street roadbeds are generally in good condition throughout the corridor besides some deteriorated curbs and roadbeds in need of repair and a few sidewalks that don't appear to be maintained and/or are uprooted by trees.
- ▶ Street lighting is adequate but disparate and distinctive lighting would be desirable.
- ▶ Landscaping and beautification are limited on some blocks and has been requested by most merchants.
- ▶ NYC Department of Homeless Services provides ongoing outreach to individuals facing homelessness who frequent the corridors.
- ▶ USPS collection boxes and newspaper boxes are frequently covered in graffiti and are poorly maintained.

- ▶ Double parking and litter are issues on several blocks.
- ▶ Construction of new mixed-use buildings in specific areas can cause road congestion and poor driving and bike conditions.
- ▶ The Steinway Street Municipal Parking Lot back wall is rife with graffiti casting a pall on the block; a mural would enhance this area.
- ▶ The Steinway Street corridor is long; added open space in the core could provide opportunity for new programming.
- ▶ Subway stations and flood gates at Steinway Street are in poor condition and need an overhaul. Other subway stations are recently renovated and in good condition.
- ▶ The outdoor eating areas on 36th Avenue are among the poorest in physical conditions in Astoria.

DATA APPENDIX

Study Area Boundaries

Assessed Commercial Corridors

Primary data on Astoria storefront businesses presented on pg. 6-9 was gathered along the following commercial corridors:

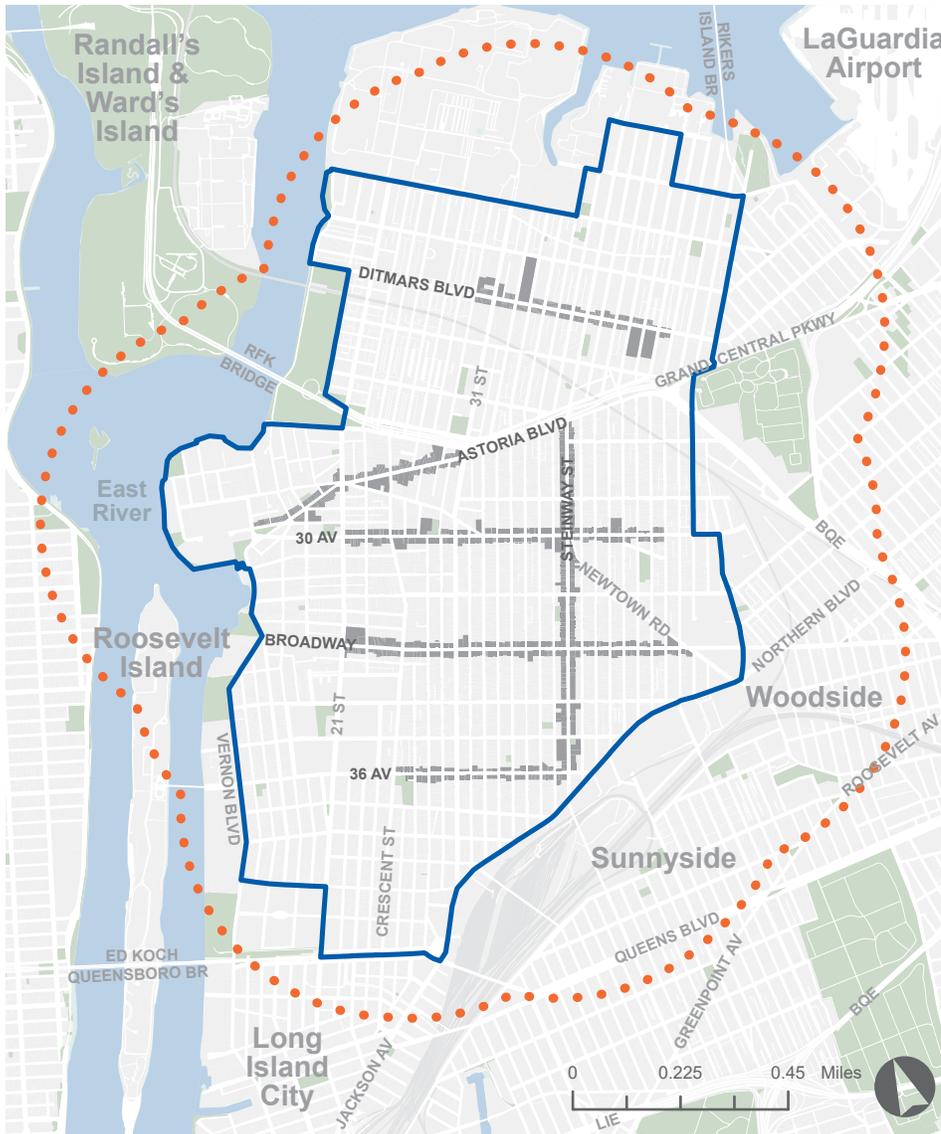
- ▶ Ditmars Boulevard between 29th and 47th streets
- ▶ Astoria Boulevard between 8th and 31st streets
- ▶ 30th Avenue between 21st and 47th streets
- ▶ Steinway Street between Astoria Boulevard South and 36th Avenue
- ▶ Broadway between 21st Street and Newtown Road
- ▶ 36th Avenue between Crescent and Steinway streets

Astoria Context Area

Demographic and employment data on pg. 16-17 represents the population within the Astoria neighborhood context area.

Trade Area

Consumer spending data on pg. 13 corresponds to the 0.75 mile trade area.



Area Demographics

Total Population

152,362 Astoria

2,393,104 Queens

8,736,047 New York City

Population Density (per square mile)

40,095 Astoria

21,911 Queens

28,893 New York City

Average Household Size

2.32 Astoria

2.93 Queens

2.63 New York City

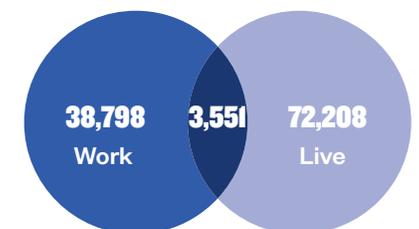
Car Ownership

41.8% Astoria

63.3% Queens

45.5% New York City

Commuting Patterns



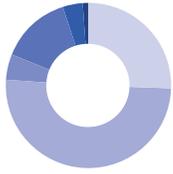
38,798 Work in Astoria, live elsewhere

3,551 Live & Work in Astoria

72,208 Live in Astoria, work elsewhere

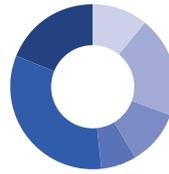
Area Demographics

Race/Background



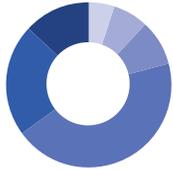
	Astoria	Queens	NYC
Hispanic or Latino (of any race)	26%	28%	29%
White alone	51%	25%	32%
Black or African American alone	5%	17%	21%
Asian alone	14%	26%	14%
Two or more races	4%	3%	3%
Some other race alone	1%	2%	1%
American Indian and Alaska Native alone	0%	0%	0%
Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander	0%	0%	0%

Educational Attainment



	Astoria	Queens	NYC
12th Grade or Less, No Diploma	11%	17%	17%
High School Graduate	20%	27%	24%
Some College, No Degree	11%	14%	14%
Associate's Degree	7%	8%	7%
Bachelor's Degree	33%	21%	23%
Graduate or Professional Degree	19%	13%	17%

Population Age



	Astoria	Queens	NYC
Under 5 Years	5%	6%	6%
5-14 Years	7%	11%	11%
15-24 Years	9%	11%	12%
25-44 Years	44%	29%	31%
45-64 Years	22%	27%	25%
65+ Years	13%	16%	15%

Median Age

35.9	Astoria
39.6	Queens
37.3	New York City

Foreign-Born Population

37%	Astoria
47%	Queens
36%	New York City

Income

Median Household Income

\$82,971	Astoria
\$75,886	Queens
\$70,663	New York City

Pop. Below Poverty Line

12%	Astoria
11%	Queens
17%	New York City

Employment

Population in Labor Force

72%	Astoria
64%	Queens
63%	New York City

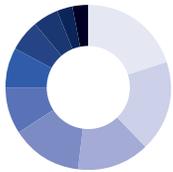
Unemployment*

5.4%	Astoria
4.4%	Queens
4.7%	New York City

*Note: As of May 2023, the unemployment rate is 4.5% for Queens and 5.1% for New York City (NYSDOL); updated neighborhood-level data for Astoria is not available.

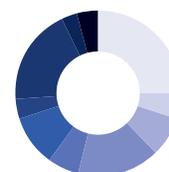
Local Jobs and Employment

Local Residents' Employment



Educational Services, Health Care, Social Assistance	20%
Professional, Scientific, & Technical Services	18%
Accommodation, Food Services, Arts, Entertainment	14%
Other Services	14%
Finance, Insurance, Real Estate	9%
Retail Trade	8%
Transportation, Warehousing, Utilities	6%
Construction	5%
Public Administration	3%
Manufacturing	3%

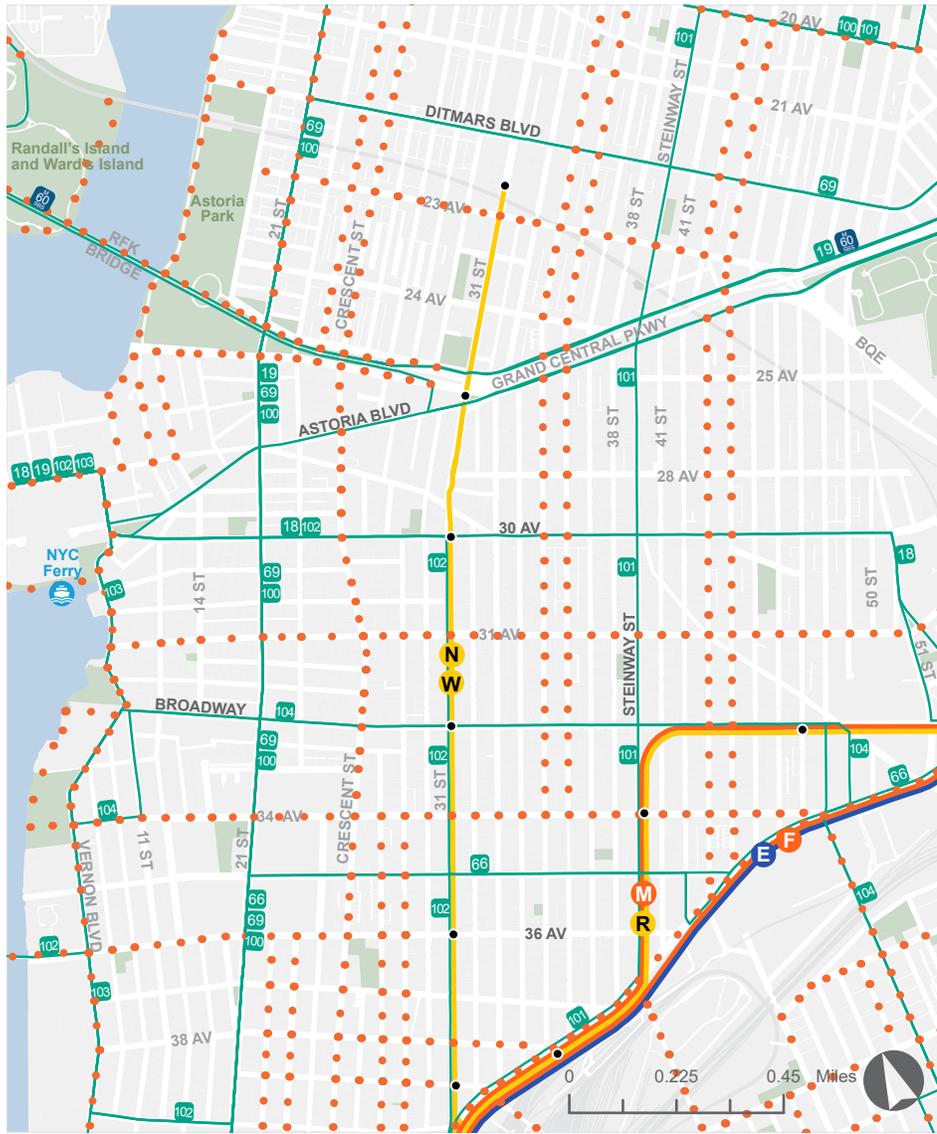
Jobs Located in Astoria



Educational Services, Health Care, Social Assistance	25%
Professional, Scientific, & Technical Services	5%
Accommodation, Food Services, Arts, Entertainment	8%
Other Services	16%
Finance, Insurance, Real Estate	6%
Retail Trade	10%
Transportation, Warehousing, Utilities	4%
Construction	19%
Public Administration	3%
Manufacturing	4%

DATA APPENDIX

Astoria Transportation



▲ Astoria Transportation



Pedestrian Counts (2021)

Steinway Street between 31st Avenue and Broadway

777 Weekday Morning

3,922 Weekday Afternoon

2,672 Weekend

Average Weekday Subway Ridership (2022)

9,544 **N W** Astoria-Ditmars Boulevard

8,399 **N W** 30th Avenue

8,254 **M R** Steinway Street

7,405 **N W** Broadway

6,807 **N W** Astoria Boulevard

Average Weekday Bus Ridership (2022)

7,591 M60 SBS

6,140 Q18

2,741 Q19

10,339 Q66

6,698 Q69

2,422 Q100

2,300 Q101

1,656 Q102

1,062 Q103

1,619 Q104

Average Daily Vehicular Traffic (2019)

26,428 21st Street from Queens Boulevard to Broadway

25,748 21st Street from Broadway to Hoyt Avenue South

1,558 Astoria Boulevard from 8th Street to Main Avenue

2,799 48th Street from Northern Boulevard to Interstate 278 Service Road West

19,455 Hoyt Avenue North from 31st to 21st streets

8,954 Hoyt Avenue South from 21st to 33rd streets

9,408 20th Avenue from 21st to Hazen streets

Source: MTA 2022; NYS DOT, 2019 Annual Average Daily Traffic data, NYC DOT 2021.

Recent SBS Neighborhood Investments

- ▶ *Commercial Revitalization*, Neighborhood 360° multi-year grant of \$600,000 awarded to Central Astoria LDC, 2023-2026.
- ▶ *Commercial Revitalization*, Neighborhood 360° multi-year grant of \$600,000 awarded to Queens Economic Development Corporation, 2023-2026.
- ▶ *Commercial Revitalization*, Avenue NYC single-year grant of \$20,000 awarded to Central Astoria LDC, 2022-2023.
- ▶ *Commercial Revitalization*, Avenue NYC single-year grant of \$100,000 awarded to Queens Economic Development Corporation, 2022-2023.
- ▶ *Small BID Grant*, single-year grant of \$50,000 award to Steinway Astoria Partnership, 2022-2023.

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ABOUT SBS

The NYC Department of Small Business Services helps unlock economic potential and create economic security for all New Yorkers by connecting New Yorkers to good jobs, creating stronger businesses, and building a fairer economy in neighborhoods across the five boroughs.

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