



WAKEFIELD

THE BRONX

Commercial District Needs Assessment



careers
businesses
neighborhoods



Mosholu Preservation Corporation



ABOUT WAKEFIELD

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 ODNA features the commercial corridors of **White Plains Road** and **East 233rd Street** in Wakefield and was conducted in partnership with **Mosholu Preservation 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 **200 surveys** and various stakeholder meetings with neighborhood merchants, shoppers, workers, property owners, and residents.

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Background

Located in the northernmost section of the Bronx, Wakefield is a residential neighborhood with a rich Caribbean identity and a strong sense of community. Bordered by Westchester County, Woodlawn Cemetery, Williamsbridge, Olinville, and Eastchester, visitors from across the Bronx and Westchester County frequent the neighborhood's bustling commercial corridors for a taste of the Caribbean and West Africa.

Wakefield was named after the Virginia plantation and birthplace of George Washington, like neighboring Mount Vernon named after the first president's famous home. Originally part of Westchester County before New York City annexed it in 1895, the Wakefield area was a forest until it was cleared for farmland. The construction of the IRT subway line in the 1920s spurred growth and development in the area, with Irish, Italian, and Eastern European immigrants making Wakefield their new home. Following the Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965, families from across the Caribbean started to make their way to Wakefield, and by the 1980s the neighborhood became a center of Caribbean life. Today, almost 40% of residents are foreign born, with Jamaica, the Dominican Republic, Guyana, and Nigeria the most common countries of origin.

White Plains Road serves as the district's principal commercial corridor, with business activity extending along East 233rd Street and other sites centered around subway stations. Although the neighborhood is primarily made up of one- and two-family homes, residents don't need to leave Wakefield to find all their necessities. Beauty supply shops and salons dominate the district, but there is no shortage of grocery and specialty foods stores, limited-service restaurants, and professional services ranging from medical offices to legal practices.

Wakefield is a transportation hub for the North Bronx, with access provided by the 2 and 5 trains along White Plains Road. Multiple bus routes serve the area, and a Metro-North station on East 233rd Street allows for fast and reliable access into Manhattan and north of the five boroughs.

Neighborhood Demographics

See more on page 12

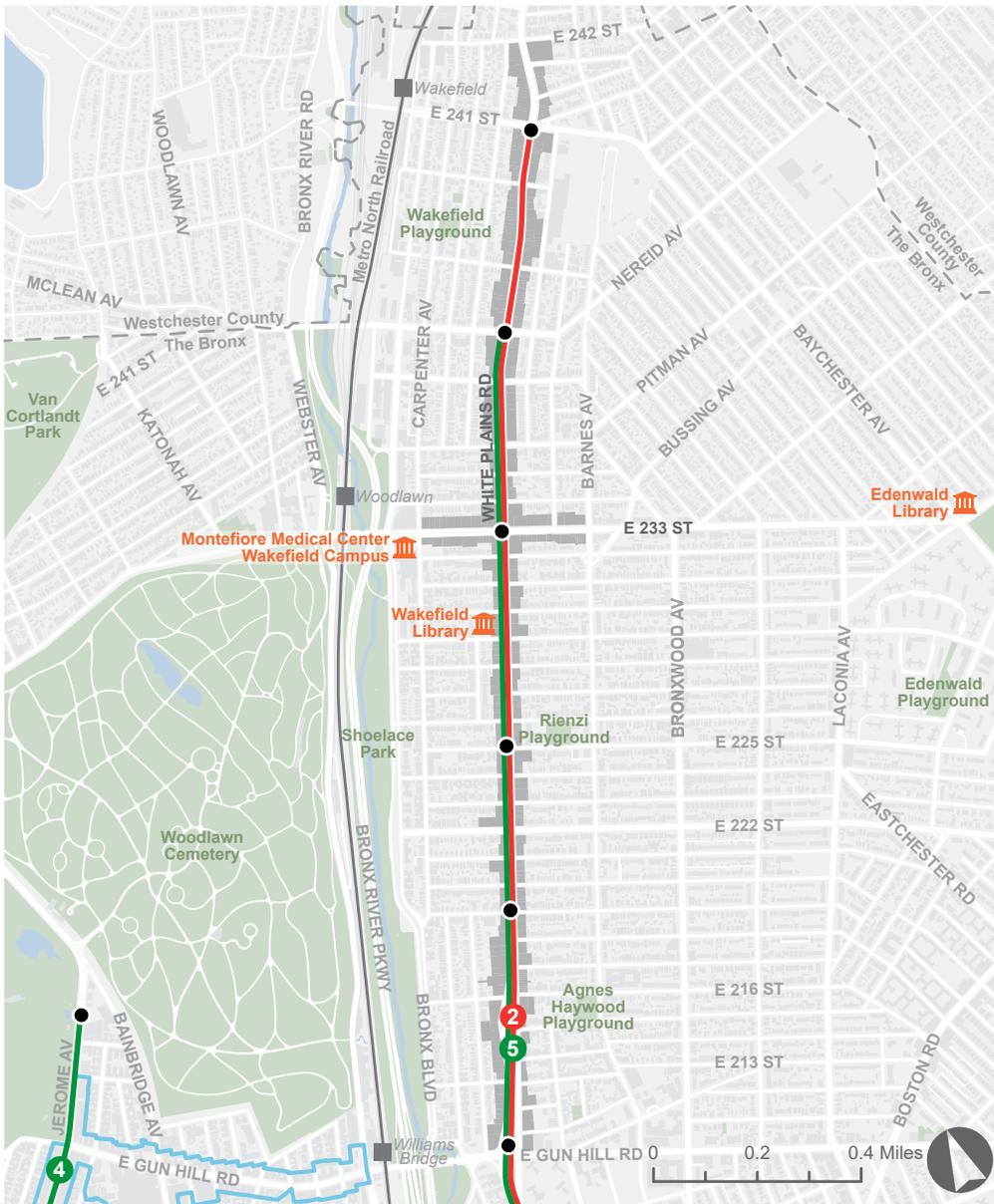
Wakefield is home to approximately 111,921 people representing an array of cultures. More than half of residents are African American (56%) and almost 30% of residents identify as Hispanic/Latinx. About 50% of community members are native New Yorkers and 39% are foreign born, with the remaining 11% coming from other U.S. states or territories. The median household income in Wakefield is \$57,173 which is higher than that of the Bronx (\$43,726) and lower than that of New York City (\$70,663).

Future Opportunities

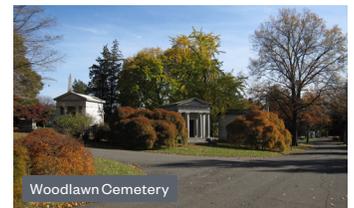
See more on page 5

Wakefield's proximity to Westchester County and Montefiore Medical Center, the largest hospital system in the Bronx, makes it a shopping destination that provides stability for existing businesses and the prospect to attract new businesses. The neighborhood's many long-standing businesses are the backbone of the Wakefield community, and there is opportunity for these merchants to use their collective knowledge and experience to build relationships with community stakeholders, anchor institutions, and elected officials to enact changes that will improve the commercial corridor and the neighborhood at large. Wakefield has a tight-knit and culturally diverse community of merchants and residents that feel like family. There is opportunity to increase business and enhance the corridor to benefit existing community members and new visitors alike.

Wakefield



◀ Notable Places



▲ Points of Interest

- Assessed Commercial Corridors
- Parks and Public Spaces
- Public Facilities

Merchant & Community Groups

- 47th Precinct Council
- I'RAISE Boys and Girls International
- Jerome Gun Hill BID
- Mind-Builders Creative Arts Center
- Wakefield 4 Change
- Wakefield Taxpayers & Civic League

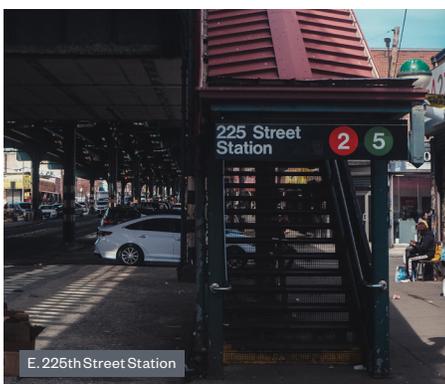
KEY FINDINGS & OPPORTUNITIES

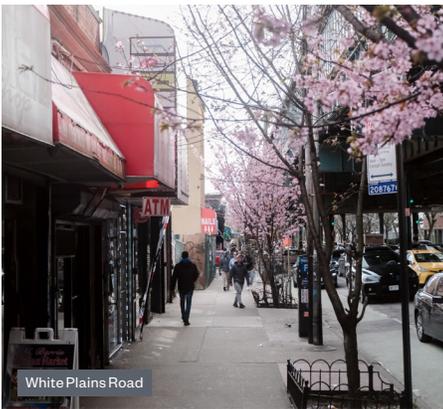
Strengths

- ▶ Multiple transit options including the 2 and 5 subway lines, Metro-North Railroad, several bus lines, and the Bronx River Parkway make the corridor a highly accessible transportation hub for the North Bronx
- ▶ Diverse community of businesses bring Caribbean and West African culture to the commercial corridor, making the district a destination for specialty goods and services
- ▶ Access to extensive goods and services allows residents to do the bulk of their purchasing locally without leaving the neighborhood
- ▶ Long-standing merchants contribute to a strong sense of identity and community in Wakefield, with almost 40% of local businesses surveyed in operation for more than 11 years
- ▶ High population density along and adjacent to the White Plains Road commercial corridor supports the vitality of the district, and the concentration of diverse small businesses makes the area a shopping center for residents and visitors alike
- ▶ Tight-knit community of merchants and shoppers creates a sense of trust and familiarity in the neighborhood

Challenges

- ▶ The recent installation of a protected bike lane has reduced parking options and deterred shopping on portions of White Plains Road
- ▶ Lack of full-service restaurants discourages shoppers from spending long periods of time on the corridor
- ▶ The commercial corridor does not have many community spaces for family activities, leaving children and teens with few recreational options in the neighborhood
- ▶ A majority of merchants do not have the tools or marketing knowledge to promote their business effectively
- ▶ Merchants and consumers reported safety concerns on the corridor, especially in the evening when there is little nightlife or activity
- ▶ Graffiti, litter, and sparse plantings and greenery in the neighborhood give merchants and consumers the sense that the community lacks necessary investments





Opportunities

- ▶ Collaborate with local stakeholders and businesses to create more community spaces and host family-friendly activities and neighborhood events that enhance public programming along the commercial corridor
- ▶ Invest in street cleaning, sidewalk and tree pit planting and maintenance, and other beautification efforts to make the commercial corridor more inviting and friendly for shoppers
- ▶ Engage and support merchant leaders to build the necessary capacity to enact the changes they want to see in the community and help them develop a more unified voice
- ▶ Improve lighting along the commercial corridor under the elevated train to tackle safety concerns, and build trust among merchants and residents with the local NYPD precinct
- ▶ Connect merchants to business support programs and launch new initiatives to equip them with the skills needed to grow their businesses
- ▶ Work with local artists to create vibrant murals that enliven the commercial corridor and dissuade vandalism, graffiti, and tagging

What's Next?

To address these key findings and opportunities, Avenue NYC Grants have been awarded by SBS to nonprofit organizations.

For more information, visit: nyc.gov/avenuenyc

BUSINESS LANDSCAPE: WAKEFIELD

Business Inventory

661

Total Number of Storefronts

11.0%

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 Mosholu Preservation Corporation through a comprehensive area inventory of storefront businesses located along White Plains Road and East 233rd Street (November 2022 to February 2023).



White Plains Road



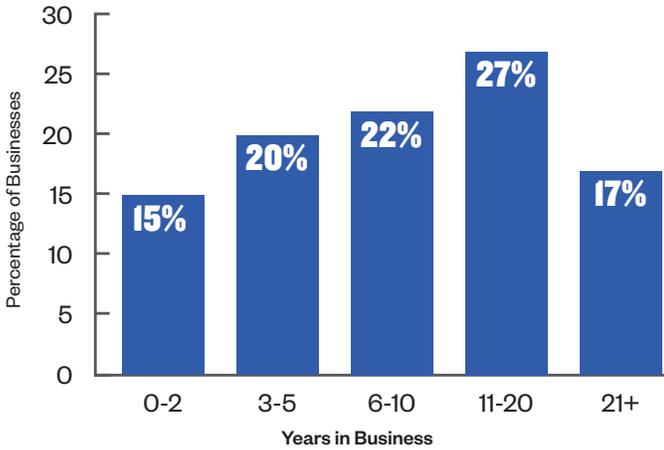
White Plains Road



E. 233rd Street

What We've Heard from Wakefield Merchants

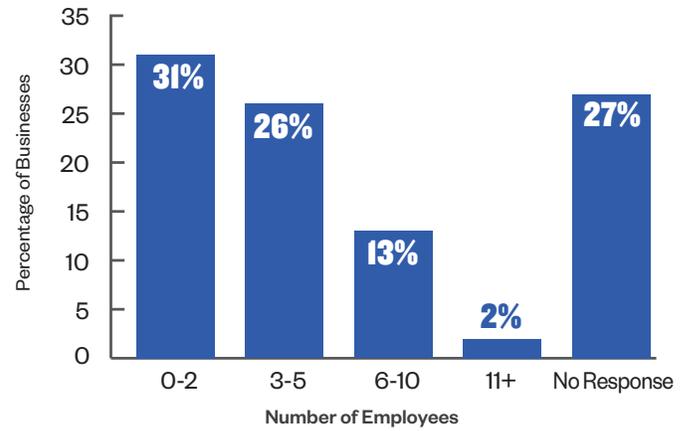
How many years have you been in business here?



13 Mean
10 Median
5 Mode

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?



4 Mean
3 Median
1 Mode

Do you own or rent your property?

76% Rent
7% Own
17% No Response

Does your business currently have a website?

46% Yes
51% No
3% No Response

Are you a minority or woman-owned business?

60% Yes
29% No
11% No Response

Does your business currently use social media?

46% Yes
45% No
10% No Response

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

23% Improved
34% Stayed the Same
38% Decreased
4% N/A or No Response



Source: Based on 136 merchant surveys conducted by Mosholu Preservation Corporation between December 2022 and June 2023.

BUSINESS LANDSCAPE

What We've Heard from Wakefield Merchants & Shoppers

What do you like about the commercial district?

- "Very diverse — feel accepted by everyone. There is a store for everything. Easy to get to."
- "The fact that it is an active neighborhood. People are always passing by which helps increase everyday sales. It is within walking distance of everything."
- "The people feel like family."
- "You can find almost anything."
- "Calm and everyone knows each other."
- "The other business owners."
- "The people are warm and caring."

What makes the Wakefield commercial district unique?

- "Safe and I can keep the door unlocked."
- "Caribbean community — the neighborhood has a different accent."
- "The diversity and the vibrancy of the neighborhood."
- "It's busy no matter what. White Plains Road is a shopping area."
- "Multicultural. More Black-owned businesses than most neighborhoods."
- "The community bond."

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

	% Merchant Response	% Consumer Response
▶ Safety	62%	28%
▶ Sanitation	56%	32%
▶ Street Lighting	48%	10%
▶ Community Events	47%	21%
▶ Landscaping/Beautification	44%	40%
▶ Graffiti Removal	41%	10%
▶ More Open Space	33%	12%
▶ Storefront Improvements	25%	11%
▶ Merchant Collaboration	24%	5%
▶ Other	21%	3%
▶ Transportation Improvements	14%	2%

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

- "We need more community spaces."
- "More foot traffic, safety, lighting. After dark, people don't like to walk outside."
- "We need more trees and programs for kids in the area."
- "The parking rules on White Plains Road are killing the small businesses. Nobody uses the bike lane."
- "More community events to bring people out to businesses."
- "Better collaboration, merchants associations."
- "Street parking needs to be better."
- "Advertise more, get businesses' names out there."

Source: Based on 136 merchant surveys and 217 consumer surveys conducted by Mosholu Preservation Corporation between December 2022 and June 2023.

Wakefield Retail Demand

Residents spend

\$1.67B

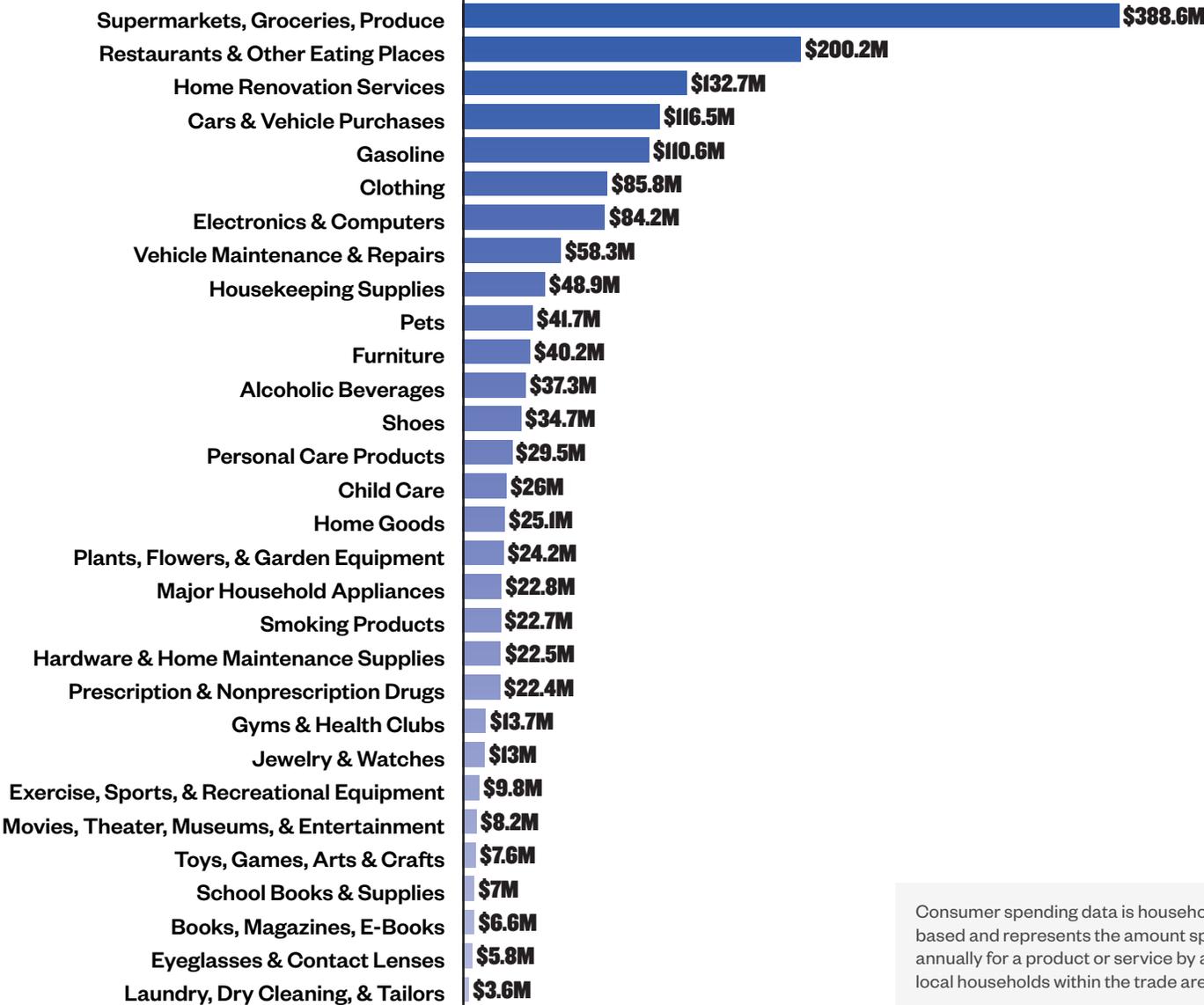
each year on retail goods and services in 2023

Residents will spend

\$1.91B

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

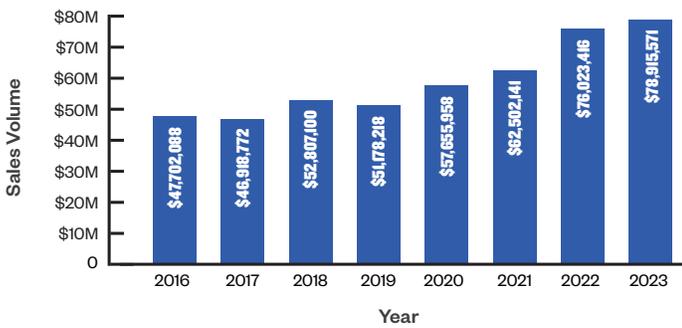
Change in Total Business Sales, 2016-2023



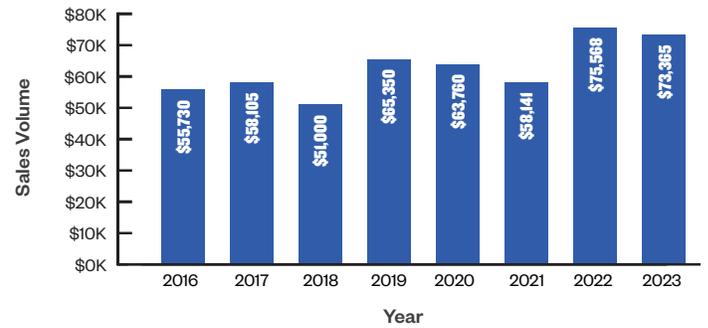
Change in Median Sales by Business, 2016-2023



Wakefield Total Business Sales



Wakefield Sales by Business



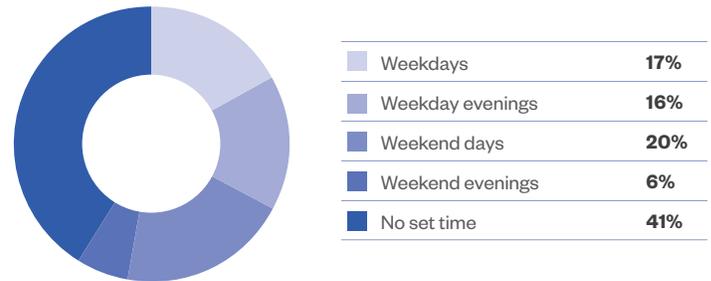
*Year 2023 reflects data gathered up until March 2023. Source: Division of Tax Policy, NYC Department of Finance

What We've Heard from Shoppers

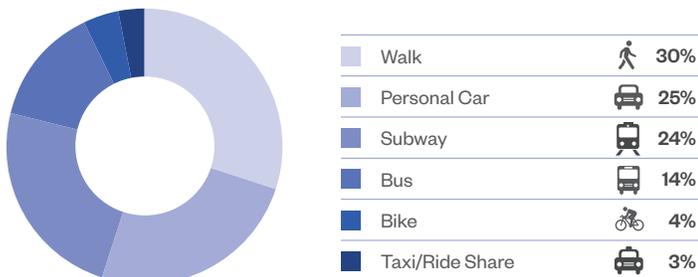
What additional types of businesses would you like to see in Wakefield?

- ▶ More Diverse and Healthy Food Options 
- ▶ Art/Community Spaces 
- ▶ Clothing & Shoe Stores 
- ▶ Health & Fitness 
- ▶ Better Quality Supermarkets/Food Stores 
- ▶ Coffee Shops 

When do you usually shop in Wakefield?



How do you usually travel to Wakefield?

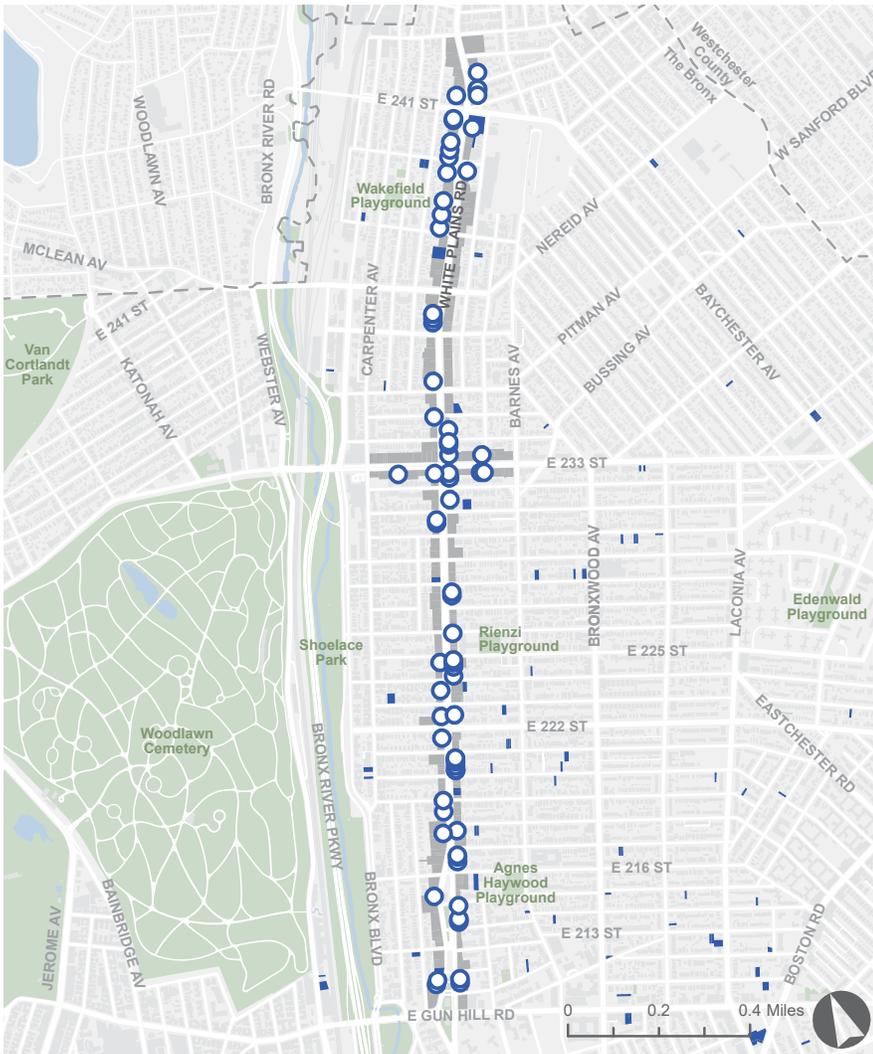


How often do you shop in Wakefield?



Source: Based on 217 consumer surveys conducted by Mosholu Preservation Corporation between December 2022 and June 2023.

Storefront Vacancies



■ Vacant Lots ○ Vacant Storefronts ■ Parks & Community Gardens

An analysis of 661 storefronts along White Plains Road and East 233rd Street revealed that 32% of storefronts are in poor condition, 27% are in average condition, and 41% are in good condition.

Streetscape Observations

- ▶ Graffiti on most storefronts and buildings along White Plains Road, primarily between East 211th and East 224th streets, makes the shopping corridor feel neglected.
- ▶ Litter along the sidewalk and garbage in tree pits create an unfriendly environment for shoppers.
- ▶ Lack of greenery and plantings in tree pits makes the area look dull and uninviting.
- ▶ High volumes of pigeon waste stain the sidewalks and roads under the elevated train, creating an eyesore for community members.

- ▶ Construction and scaffolding inhibit storefront visibility and make the corridor seem less active to passersby on White Plains Road between East 238th and East 242nd streets.
- ▶ The protected bike lane, which in some sections goes through the middle of the sidewalk, creates confusion for pedestrians and drivers and increases congestion along the commercial corridor.
- ▶ Lack of sufficient lighting beneath the elevated train deters shoppers from spending time on the corridor at night due to negative perceptions of safety.



DATA APPENDIX

Study Area Boundaries

Assessed Commercial Corridors

Primary data on Wakefield storefront businesses presented on pg. 6-8 was gathered along the following commercial corridors:

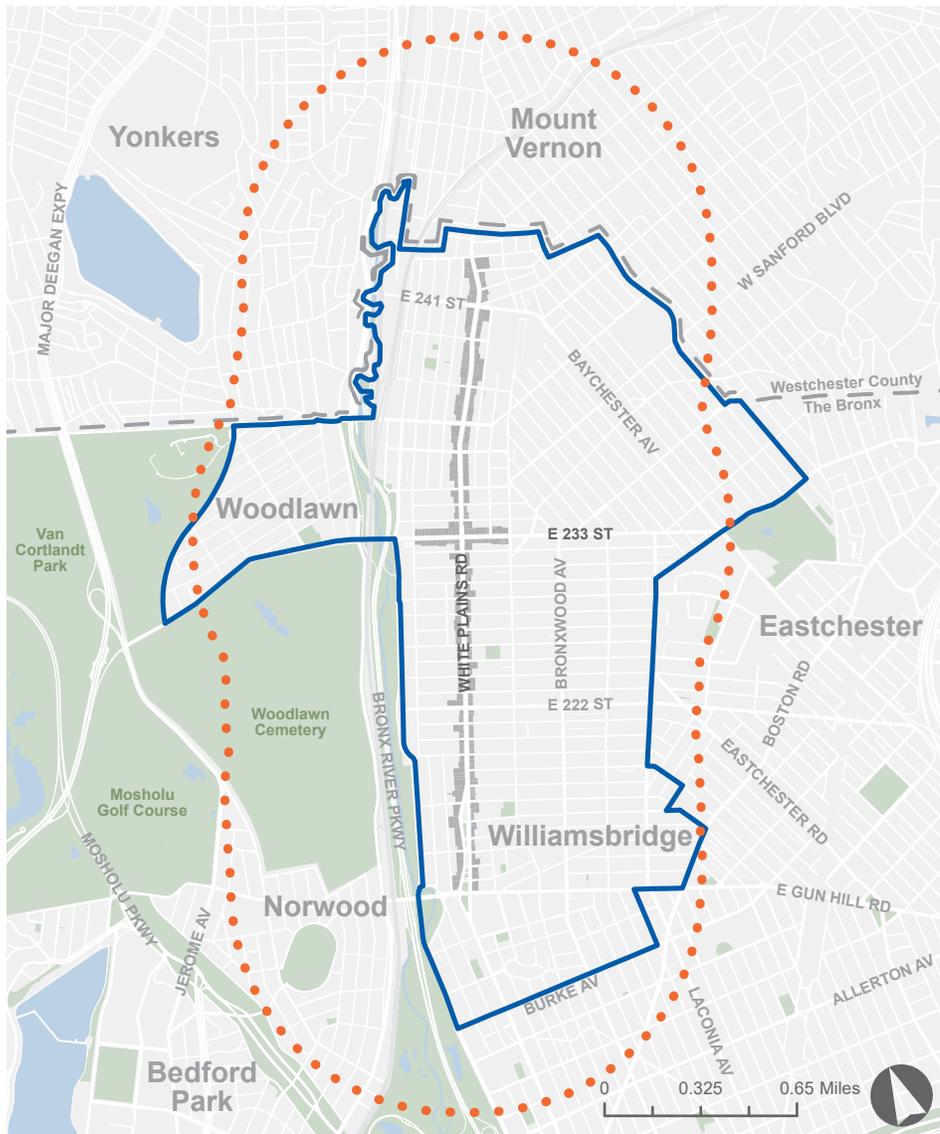
- ▶ White Plains Road between East Gun Hill Road and East 242nd Street
- ▶ East 233rd Street between Carpenter and Barnes avenues

Wakefield Context Area

Demographic and employment data on pg. 12-13 represents the population within the Wakefield context area.

Trade Area

Consumer spending data on pg. 9 corresponds to the 0.75 mile trade area.



Area Demographics

Total Population

111,921	Wakefield
1,468,262	Bronx
8,736,047	New York City

Population Density (per square mile)

41,452	Wakefield
34,489	Bronx
28,893	New York City

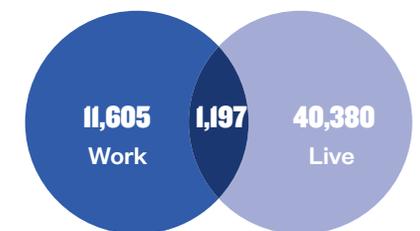
Average Household Size

2.83	Wakefield
2.73	Bronx
2.63	New York City

Car Ownership

55.9%	Wakefield
40.4%	Bronx
45.5%	New York City

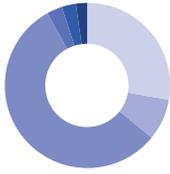
Commuting Patterns



11,605	Work in Wakefield, live elsewhere
1,197	Live & Work in Wakefield
40,380	Live in Wakefield, work elsewhere

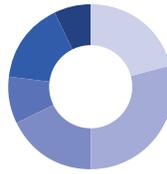
Area Demographics

Race/Background



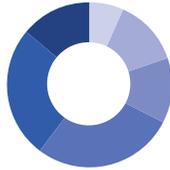
	Wakefield	Bronx	NYC
Hispanic or Latino (of any race)	28%	56%	29%
White alone	8%	9%	32%
Black or African American alone	56%	29%	21%
Asian alone	3%	4%	14%
Two or more races	3%	2%	3%
Some other race alone	2%	1%	1%
American Indian and Alaska Native alone	0%	0%	0%
Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander	0%	0%	0%

Educational Attainment



	Wakefield	Bronx	NYC
12th Grade or Less, No Diploma	21%	26%	17%
High School Graduate	29%	28%	24%
Some College, No Degree	18%	17%	14%
Associate's Degree	9%	8%	7%
Bachelor's Degree	16%	13%	23%
Graduate or Professional Degree	7%	8%	17%

Population Age



	Wakefield	Bronx	NYC
Under 5 Years	7%	7%	6%
5-14 Years	13%	14%	11%
15-24 Years	13%	14%	12%
25-44 Years	28%	28%	31%
45-64 Years	26%	24%	25%
65+ Years	14%	13%	15%

Median Age

36.3	Wakefield
34.8	Bronx
37.3	New York City

Foreign-Born Population

39%	Wakefield
34%	Bronx
36%	New York City

Income

Median Household Income

\$57,173	Wakefield
\$43,726	Bronx
\$70,663	New York City

Pop. Below Poverty Line

18%	Wakefield
27%	Bronx
17%	New York City

Employment

Population in Labor Force

62%	Wakefield
59%	Bronx
63%	New York City

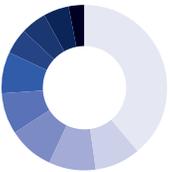
Unemployment*

9.8%	Wakefield
11.2%	Bronx
4.7%	New York City

*Note: As of May 2023, the unemployment rate is 6.7% for the Bronx and 5.1% for New York City (NYSDOL); updated neighborhood-level data for Wakefield is not available.

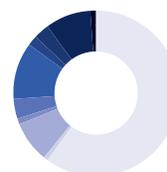
Local Jobs and Employment

Local Residents' Employment



Educational Services, Health Care, Social Assistance	39%
Professional, Scientific, & Technical Services	9%
Retail Trade	9%
Transportation, Warehousing, Utilities	9%
Accommodation, Food Services, Arts, Entertainment	8%
Other Services	8%
Construction	5%
Finance, Insurance, Real Estate	5%
Public Administration	5%
Manufacturing	3%

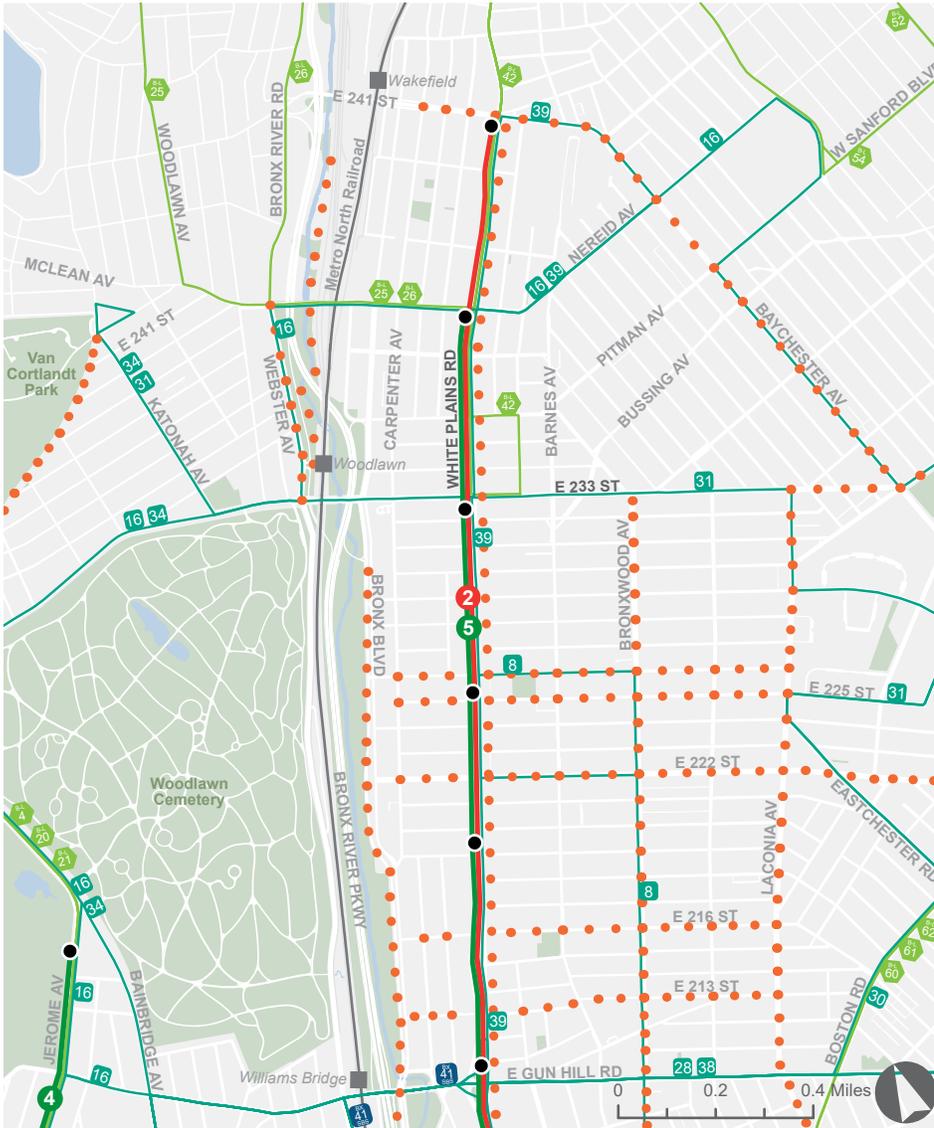
Jobs Located in Wakefield



Educational Services, Health Care, Social Assistance	60%
Professional, Scientific, & Technical Services	1%
Retail Trade	8%
Transportation, Warehousing, Utilities	1%
Accommodation, Food Services, Arts, Entertainment	4%
Other Services	11%
Construction	9%
Finance, Insurance, Real Estate	3%
Public Administration	2%
Manufacturing	1%

DATA APPENDIX

Wakefield Transportation



Wakefield Transportation



Average Weekday Subway Ridership (2022)

3,690	2 5	Gun Hill Road
1,719	2 5	219 Street
2,015	2 5	225 Street
2,753	2 5	233 Street
1,957	2 5	Nereid Avenue
2,554	2 5	Wakefield-241 Street

Average Weekday Bus Ridership (2022)

3,818	Bx8
3,672	Bx16
7,423	Bx28/Bx38
3,343	Bx30
4,687	Bx31
1,817	Bx34
6,835	Bx39
8,369	Bx41 SBS

Average Daily Vehicular Traffic (2019)

1,823	East 226 Street from White Plains Road to Bronxwood Avenue
1,300	East 232 Street from Ely to Carpenter avenues
1,589	East 220 Street from Fenton to Carpenter avenues

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

Recent SBS Neighborhood Investments

- ▶ *Commercial Revitalization*, Avenue NYC multi-year grant of \$300,000 awarded to Mosholu Preservation Corporation, 2022-2025.
- ▶ Small BID Grant of \$100,000 awarded to the Jerome Gun Hill Business Improvement District, 2022- 2023.

Existing Plans & Studies

Wakefield/Edenwald Community Needs Assessment, WHEDco and Wake-Eden Community Baptist Church, 2019.

Wakefield/Eastchester Rezoning, NYC Department of City Planning, 2007.

Wakefield Village Transit Oriented Community Development, Newman Architects.

Sources

ESRI and Consumer Expenditure Surveys, Bureau of Labor Statistics. 2023 ESRI Retail Demand Outlook.

Metropolitan Transportation Authority, 2022. Average Weekday Subway Ridership and Average Monthly Bus Ridership.

NYS Department of Labor. May 2023. Unemployment Rate Rankings by County.

NYS Department of Transportation. 2019 Annual Average Daily Traffic, using Traffic Data Viewer.

NYC Department of Finance, Division of Tax Policy, using data from NYS Department of Taxation and Finance. Business sales are reported by tax year, which runs from March 1st to February 28th. Sales data are compiled from sales tax returns, which are rolled up by tax filer within a year, excluding returns with negative sales amounts. For each year, each tax filer is reported according to the address listed on their latest return. Large outliers were removed from the analysis, and the top 5% of filers from Manhattan and the top 1% of filers from the outer boroughs by sales were removed.

NYC Department of Small Business Services. Fiscal Year 2023. Business Improvement Districts Trends Report.

U.S. Census Bureau. 2020. OnTheMap Application. Longitudinal-Employer Household Dynamics Program.

U.S. Census Bureau. American Community Survey, 2021 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates, using NYC Population FactFinder. Wakefield Census Tracts: 336.02, 338.02, 368,370,372,374,376,378,380,382,388,390,392,394,396,398,404,406,408,414,418,420,422,424,428,430,434, 435.01,436,442,444, 448,449.01,449.02,451.01,451.02

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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.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

We would like to recognize and thank the following individuals and organizations for their contributions to the development of the Wakefield Commercial District Needs Assessment:

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Bronx Community Board 12
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Wakefield Shoppers and Residents