



# HOMECREST BROOKLYN

## Commercial District Needs Assessment



careers  
businesses  
neighborhoods



Brooklyn Alliance



# ABOUT HOMECREST

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 the commercial corridors of the **Avenue U, Coney Island Avenue, and Gravesend Neck Road in Homecrest**, and was conducted in partnership with **Brooklyn Alliance** between September 2021 and June 2022.

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 **206 surveys** and various stakeholder meetings with neighborhood merchants, shoppers, workers, property owners, and residents.

*Jump to...*

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## Background

A charming neighborhood located between Midwood and Sheepshead Bay in southern Brooklyn, Homecrest was originally Gravesend farmland developed in the 1900s as "Homecrest by the Sea." Lined by many historic single-family homes and low-density apartment buildings, residents enjoy quaint, quiet streets served by multiple lively commercial corridors. Homecrest is a pleasant and serene neighborhood that offers surprises at every turn.

Initially consisting of standalone Victorian houses, there are still many remnants of the neighborhood's early history. Local buildings were even captured in major films, including *A Bronx Tale* (1993) and *Brooklyn's Finest* (2009). Indicative of changes in the population over time, the historic Homecrest Presbyterian Church founded in 1900 has a multiethnic congregation reflective of the diverse neighborhood. Since the 1990s, immigration from China, Syria, Latin America, South Asia, Israel, Russia, and the former Soviet Union have been credited with revitalizing the local commercial corridors with small, locally owned businesses and the creation of Brooklyn's second Chinatown. Residents are served by the commercial corridors of Avenue U, Coney Island Avenue, and Gravesend Neck Road that run through the neighborhood. On Avenue U, the neighborhood's main commercial corridor, Chinese-owned businesses — including grocery stores, restaurants, pharmacies, and beauty salons — are interspersed with a variety of other businesses with merchants hailing from Georgia, Syria, Turkey, Vietnam, Italy, and Russia.

As a neighborhood with services directly oriented towards its residents, the local commercial corridors contribute to the neighborhood's character and make it a desirable area for residents aging in place and those looking to join the mix. Served by the B and Q subway lines, the neighborhood is easily accessible with residents maintaining connections to Manhattan's Chinatown and visiting nearby Brighton Beach and Coney Island.

## Neighborhood Demographics

See more on page 12

Homecrest is a neighborhood with a diverse population of more than 61,000 residents that reflects its various waves of demographic shifts. The racial makeup of the neighborhood is predominantly white (52%) and Asian (28%), with 7% African American residents, and 11% Hispanic or Latinx residents. 51% of the population is foreign born and 63% of the population speak a language other than English at home, with 21% speaking Russian, Polish, or other Slavic languages and 22% speaking Chinese, including Mandarin and Cantonese.

## Future Opportunities

See more on page 5

Homecrest boasts an inviting, safe residential and family-centered environment that makes it attractive for existing and new residents. There is an opportunity for merchants to partner with nearby anchor institutions, including schools, hospitals, and Kingsborough Community College, to bring together the community to enhance the neighborhood's commercial corridors and continue to support long-standing businesses. Homecrest's residential community can also be tapped into for employment and neighborhood development efforts, such as the creation of a merchants association to lead commercial revitalization efforts. By organizing Homecrest's longtime residents and merchants, the community can leverage the area's great diversity to gain new clientele and continue to grow the neighborhood's economic base.

## Homecrest



### ▲ Points of Interest

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

### Community Groups

- Health Essential Association
- Homecrest Community Services
- United Chinese Association of Brooklyn

### Neighborhood Events

- Homecrest Community Services Lunar New Year Gala
- Homecrest Community Services Senior Health Fair

### ▲ Notable Places



# KEY FINDINGS & OPPORTUNITIES

## Strengths

- ▶ Residents have long-term connections to the neighborhood and investments are being made in new development projects including synagogues and communal spaces
- ▶ Home to many long-standing businesses that provide a sense of stability and community for the neighborhood
- ▶ Small town feeling provides a welcoming atmosphere for residents and visitors
- ▶ Accessible location via bus, train, and major vehicular avenues. Located in close proximity to major attractions including Brighton Beach and Coney Island
- ▶ Variety of dining and retail options that represent Homecrest's authentic Eastern European, Asian, and Middle Eastern ethnic, cultural, and culinary diversity

## Challenges

- ▶ Apprehension and lack of cooperation among merchants to organize due to discrimination and enforcement of signage regulations over the past few years
- ▶ Absence of litter baskets for residents and businesses is causing sanitation issues and contributing to rat infestation problems
- ▶ Little to no public spaces, parks, gardens, and community centers where youth, elderly, and intergenerational connections can happen
- ▶ Certain parts of the district lack variety in storefront offerings, consisting mostly of pharmacies, beauty and barbershops, cafes, and small restaurants
- ▶ Entrepreneurs and existing stores lack adequate knowledge and awareness of the public and private resources available to help them start and grow their businesses
- ▶ Lack of cohesive neighborhood marketing and placemaking
- ▶ Drivers are concerned about parking conditions and enforcement, especially along Avenue U





Turkish Bakery



Flower Shop



Avenue U

## Opportunities

- ▶ Create an online business directory for businesses and residents as an opportunity to explore neighborhood offerings
- ▶ Partner with community organizations to provide business support services to merchants in multiple languages
- ▶ Host public events and cultural programs to encourage stronger connections within the community and attract more visitors
- ▶ Clean, beautify, and maintain streets and sidewalks
- ▶ Improve pedestrian safety at key intersections, including at Nostrand Avenue and Avenue U
- ▶ Create a farmers market on Avenue U between Brown Street and Nostrand Avenue to increase fresh food and produce offerings in the area
- ▶ Foster relationships among merchants to form a merchants association and build the capacity of community-based organizations that serve Homecrest

### What's Next?

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

For more information, visit: [nyc.gov/avenuenyc](http://nyc.gov/avenuenyc)

# BUSINESS LANDSCAPE: HOMECREST

## Business Inventory

**508**

Total Number of Storefronts

**10.6%**

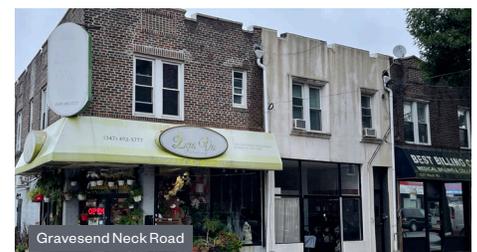
Storefront Vacancy\*

Note: In 2021, New York City's 76 Business Improvement Districts reported an average ground floor vacancy rate of 13% and median ground floor vacancy rate of 11% (SBS BIDs Trends Report, FY21).

## Storefront & Retail Mix

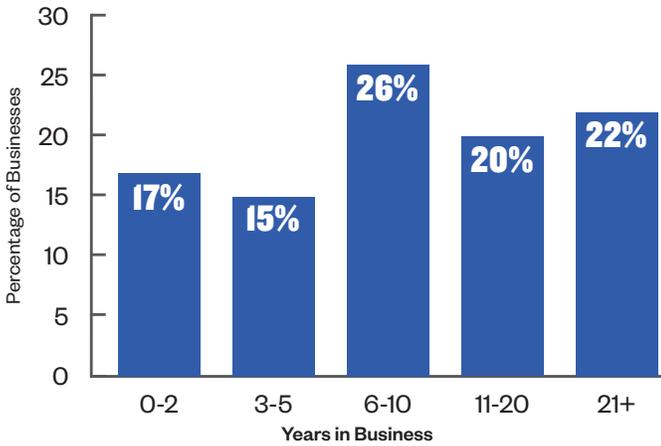


Business inventory and retail mix data were gathered by Brooklyn Alliance through a comprehensive area inventory of storefront businesses located along Avenue U, Coney Island Avenue, and Gravesend Neck Road (November 2021 to February 2022).



# What We've Heard from Homecrest Merchants

## How many years have you been in business here?



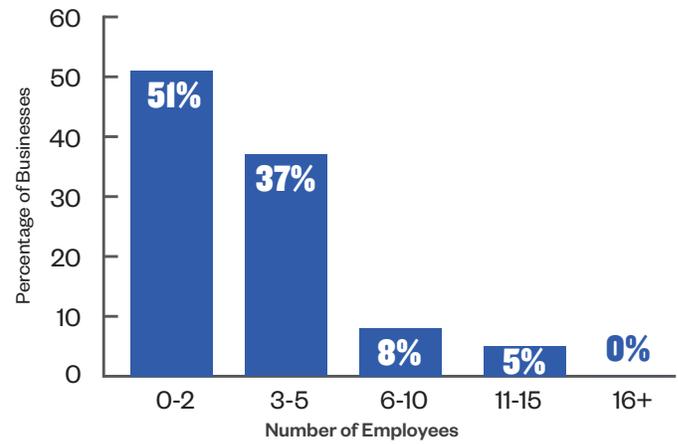
**14.3**  
Mean

**10**  
Median

**30**  
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?



**3.4**  
Mean

**2**  
Median

**2**  
Mode

## Do you own or rent your property?

**88%**  
Rent

**6%**  
Own

**6%**  
No Response

## Does your business currently have a website?

**49%**  
Yes

**51%**  
No

## Are you a minority or woman-owned business?

**72%**  
Yes

**28%**  
No

## Does your business currently use social media?

**50%**  
Yes

**50%**  
No

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

**11%**  
Improved

**39%**  
Stayed the Same

**45%**  
Decreased

**5%**  
N/A or No Response



Source: Based on 100 merchant surveys conducted by Brooklyn Alliance between December 2021 and June 2022.

# BUSINESS LANDSCAPE

## What We've Heard from Homecrest Merchants & Shoppers

### What makes the Homecrest commercial district unique?

- "Everyone knows each other."
- "Chinese community is great."
- "The proximity to trains and buses. Close to Sheepshead Bay and Kings Highway."
- "The fish markets."
- "There is a lot to do and everything is local. Family and friends here."
- "There are a lot of interesting stores."
- "Feels like home."

### What do you like about the commercial district?

- "It's a safe neighborhood. The neighbors are calm, quiet, and respectful."
- "There's a lot of foot traffic. Lively."
- "It's a nice area. Safe after dark."
- "There's lots of food options."
- "Asian community and authentic goods."
- "Family-oriented. Long-time residents. Diverse."

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

	% Merchant Response	% Consumer Response
▶ Safety	38%	49%
▶ Sanitation, street cleaning	38%	60%
▶ Transportation improvements	33%	30%
▶ Community events	30%	29%
▶ Landscaping/beautification	26%	35%
▶ More open space	26%	28%
▶ Other	19%	14%
▶ Street lighting	12%	22%
▶ Storefront improvements	11%	26%
▶ Merchant collaboration	10%	13%
▶ Graffiti removal	9%	20%

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

- "Small business classes to build resiliency."
- "Gardens and parks."
- "Marketing and more foot traffic would be helpful."
- "Social/community events. Dancing."
- "Beautify the area. Community organizations would benefit the area. Special activities would draw customers to area."
- "Street improvements and sanitation."
- "More places for kids."
- "Language accessibility."

Source: Based on 100 merchant surveys and 106 consumer surveys conducted by Brooklyn Alliance between December 2021 and June 2022.

## Homecrest Retail Demand

Residents spend

# \$2.23B

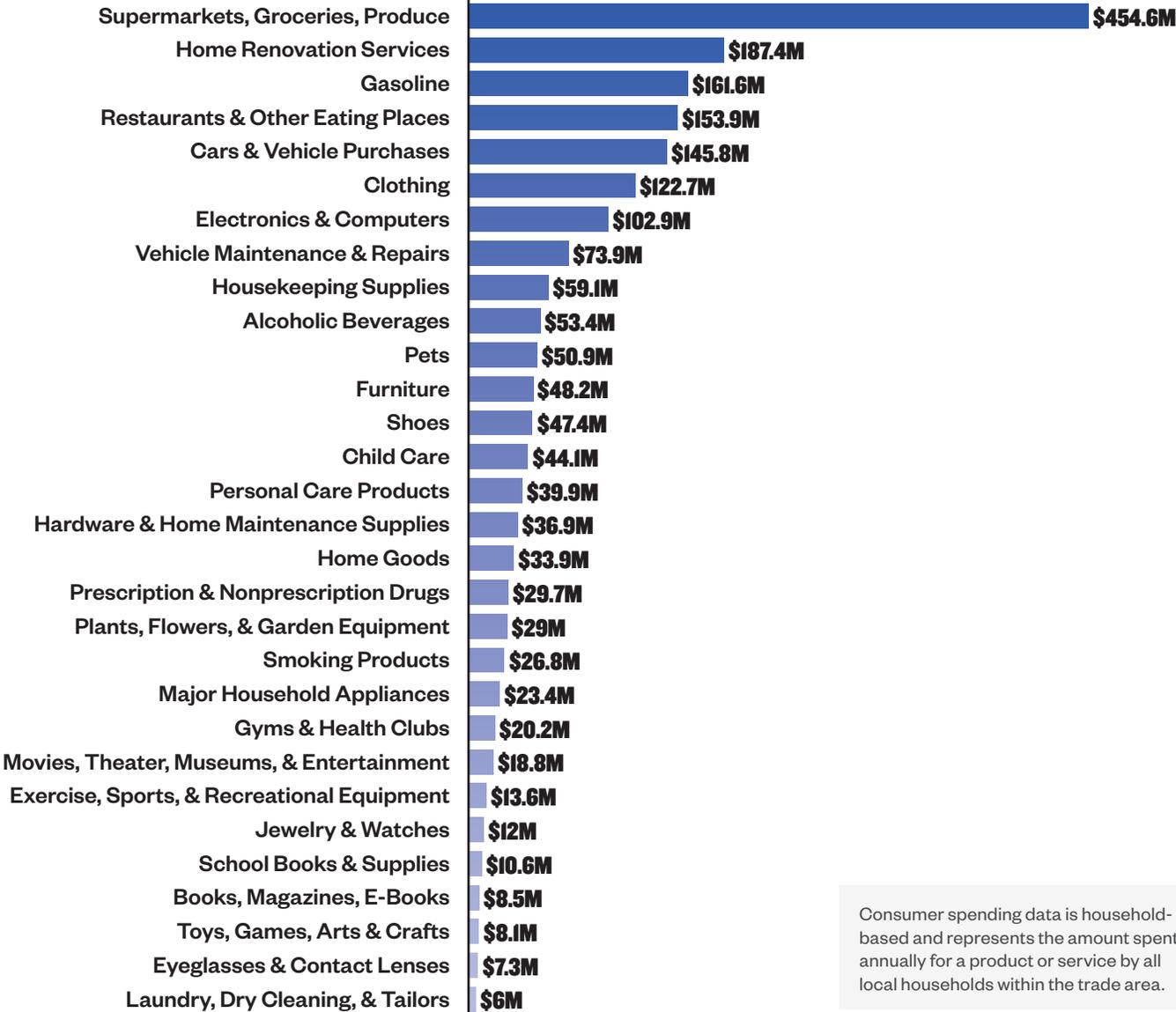
each year on retail goods and services

Residents will spend

# \$2.52B

each year on retail goods and services by 2027

## 2022 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 2022 and 2027; Consumer Spending data are derived from the 2018 and 2019 Consumer Expenditure Surveys, Bureau of Labor Statistics.

# BUSINESS OUTLOOK

## Business Trends

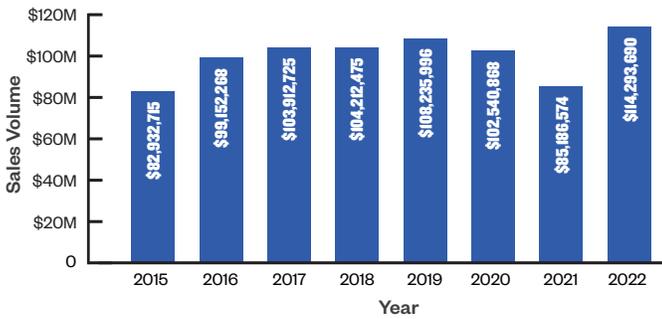
Change in Total Business Sales, 2015-2022



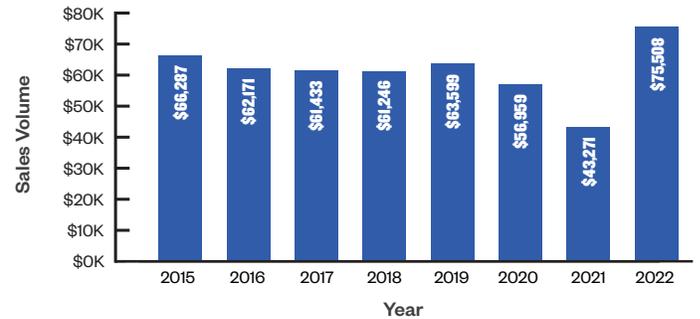
Change in Median Sales by Business, 2015-2022



Homecrest Total Business Sales



Homecrest Sales by Business



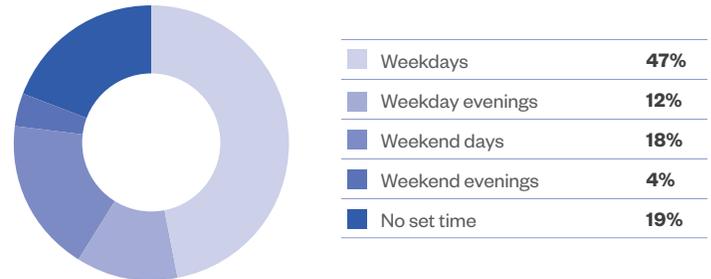
\*Year 2022 reflects data gathered up until March 2022. Source: Division of Tax Policy, NYC Department of Finance.

## What We've Heard from Shoppers

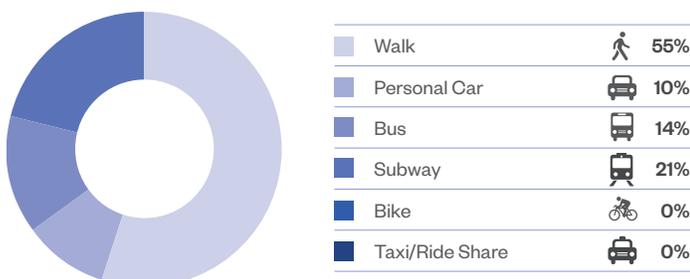
### What additional types of businesses would you like to see in Homecrest?

- ▶ Supermarkets
- ▶ Coffee shops & cafes
- ▶ Restaurants
- ▶ Clothing stores
- ▶ Pharmacies
- ▶ Large national retailers

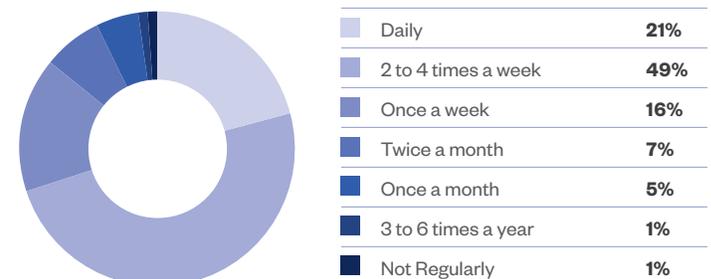
### When do you usually shop in Homecrest?



### How do you usually travel to Homecrest?

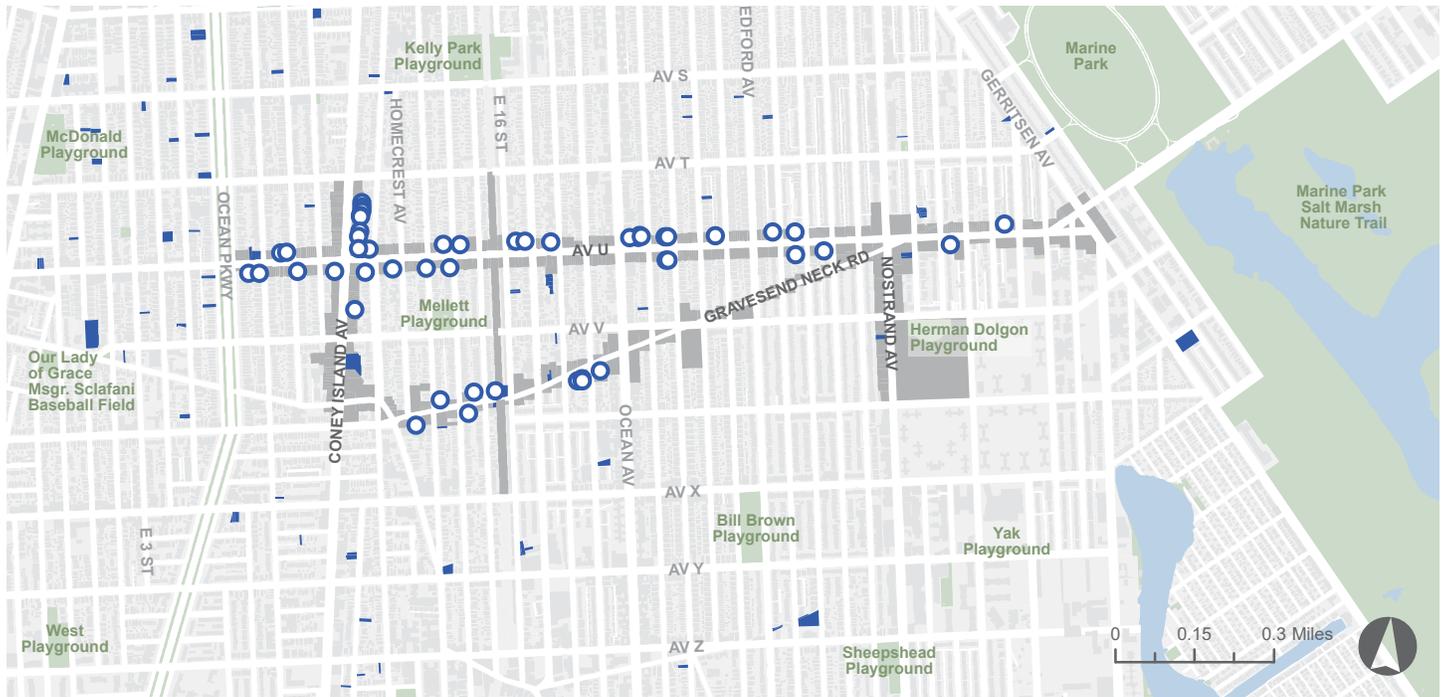


### How often do you shop in Homecrest?



Source: Based on 106 consumer surveys conducted by Brooklyn Alliance between December 2021 and June 2022.

## Storefront Vacancies



■ Vacant Lots

○ Vacant Storefronts

■ Parks & Open Spaces

An analysis of 508 storefronts along Homecrest revealed that 26% of storefronts are in poor condition, 28% are in average condition, and 46% are in good condition.

## Streetscape Observations

### Avenue U

- ▶ Litter on sidewalks and in tree pits with missing or ineffective tree guards increase unsanitary conditions.
- ▶ Absence of street furniture and lack of sufficient lighting at night lead to poor perceptions of safety on the corridor.



Dirty Underpass

### Coney Island Avenue

- ▶ Good sidewalk and bus stop maintenance enhance the streetscape for pedestrians.
- ▶ Lack of litter baskets and trees on the west side of the corridor contribute to litter overflowing on streets and a lack of greenery.



Avenue U

### Gravesend Neck Road

- ▶ Adjacent vacant storefronts attract graffiti and sidewalk litter, making parts of Gravesend Neck Road unpleasant for visitors and residents.
- ▶ Many long-standing anchor businesses and newer diverse businesses provide a sense of community and a unique shopping experience.



Coney Island Avenue



Graffiti on Vacant Storefront



Cluttered Sidewalk



Vacant Storefront

# DATA APPENDIX

## Study Area Boundaries

### Assessed Commercial Corridors

Primary data on Homecrest storefront businesses presented on pg. 6-7 was gathered along the following commercial corridors:

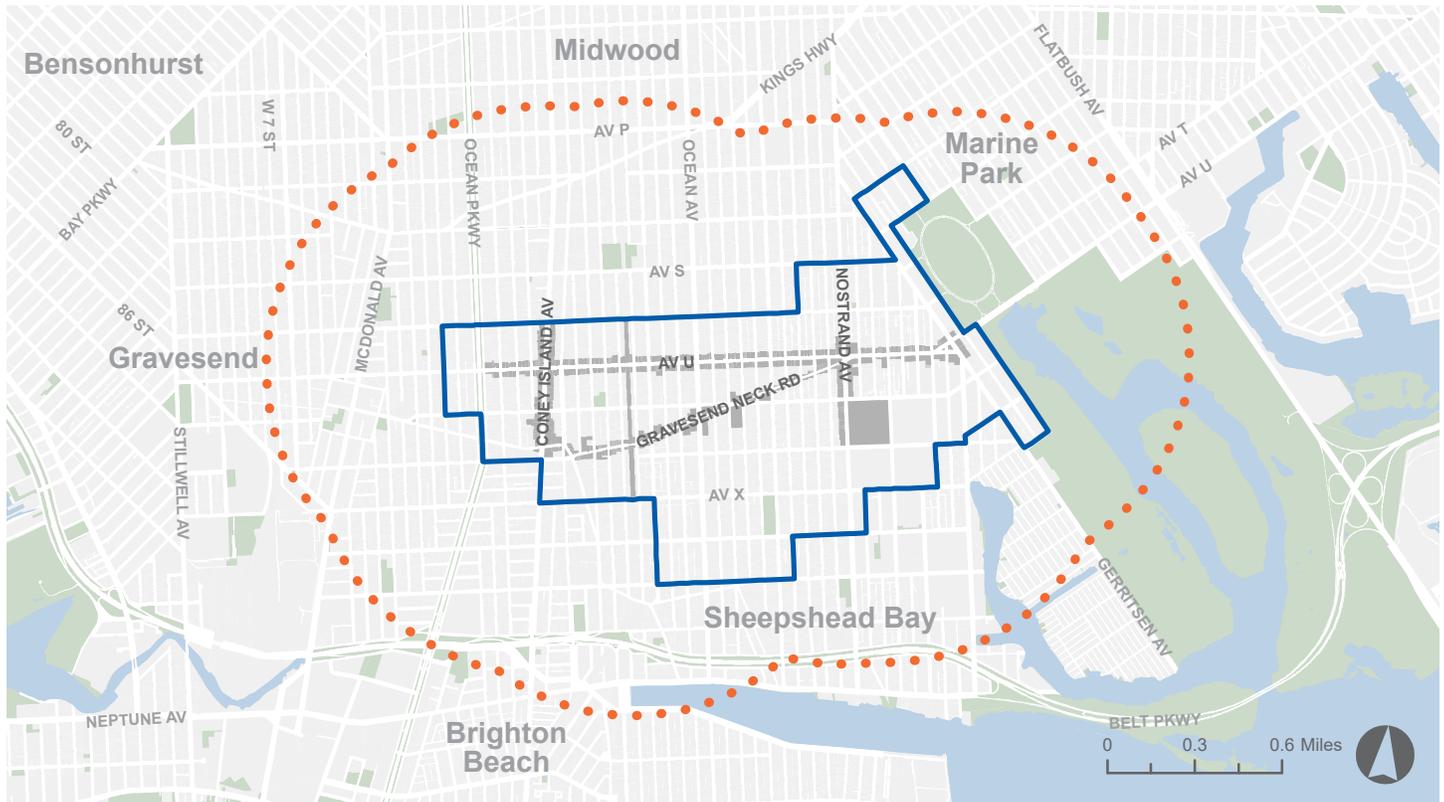
- ▶ Avenue U between Ocean Parkway and Gerritsen Avenue
- ▶ Coney Island Avenue between Avenue T and Gravesend Neck Road
- ▶ Gravesend Neck Road between Coney Island and Nostrand avenues

### Homecrest Context Area

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

### Trade Area

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



## Area Demographics

### Total Population

<b>61,331</b>	Homecrest
<b>2,589,974</b>	Brooklyn
<b>8,419,316</b>	New York City

### Population Density (per square mile)

<b>44,835</b>	Homecrest
<b>37,267</b>	Brooklyn
<b>27,845</b>	New York City

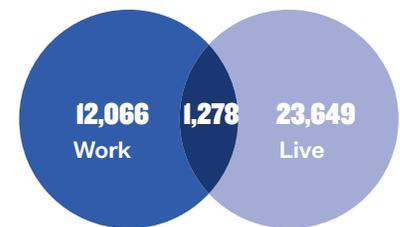
### Average Household Size

<b>2.72</b>	Homecrest
<b>2.66</b>	Brooklyn
<b>2.60</b>	New York City

### Car Ownership

<b>60.7%</b>	Homecrest
<b>44.3%</b>	Brooklyn
<b>45.4%</b>	New York City

### Commuting Patterns



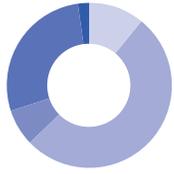
**12,066** Work in Homecrest, live elsewhere

**1,278** Live & Work in Homecrest

**23,649** Live in Homecrest and work elsewhere

# Area Demographics

## Race/Background



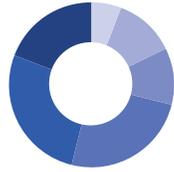
	Homecrest	Brooklyn	NYC
Hispanic or Latino (of any race)	11%	19%	29%
White alone	52%	36%	32%
Black or African American alone	7%	30%	22%
Asian alone	28%	12%	14%
Two or more races	2%	2%	2%
Some other race alone	0%	0%	1%
American Indian and Alaska Native alone	0%	0%	0%
Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander	0%	0%	0%

## Educational Attainment



	Homecrest	Brooklyn	NYC
12th Grade or Less, No Diploma	18%	18%	18%
High School Graduate	27%	26%	24%
Some College, No Degree	11%	13%	14%
Associate's Degree	8%	6%	6%
Bachelor's Degree	23%	23%	22%
Graduate or Professional Degree	13%	15%	16%

## Population Age



	Homecrest	Brooklyn	NYC
Under 5 Years	6%	7%	6%
5-14 Years	12%	12%	11%
15-24 Years	11%	12%	12%
25-44 Years	25%	32%	31%
45-64 Years	27%	23%	25%
65+ Years	19%	14%	15%

## Median Age

<b>41</b>	Homecrest
<b>35.2</b>	Brooklyn
<b>36.7</b>	New York City

## Foreign-Born Population

<b>51%</b>	Homecrest
<b>36%</b>	Brooklyn
<b>37%</b>	New York City

## Income

### Median Household Income

<b>\$63,495</b>	Homecrest
<b>\$60,231</b>	Brooklyn
<b>\$63,998</b>	New York City

### Pop. Below Poverty Line

<b>13%</b>	Homecrest
<b>16%</b>	Brooklyn
<b>18%</b>	New York City

## Employment

### Population in Labor Force

<b>60%</b>	Homecrest
<b>64%</b>	Brooklyn
<b>64%</b>	New York City

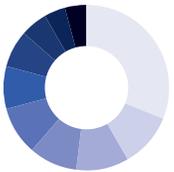
### Unemployment\*

<b>5.3%</b>	Homecrest
<b>6.2%</b>	Brooklyn
<b>6.3%</b>	New York City

\*Note: As of May 2022, the unemployment rate is 5.8% for Brooklyn and 5.7% for New York City (NYSDOL); updated neighborhood-level data for Sunset Park is not available.

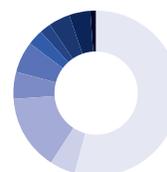
## Local Jobs and Employment

### Local Residents' Employment



Educational Services, Health Care, Social Assistance	30%
Professional, Scientific, & Technical Services	10%
Retail Trade	10%
Finance, Insurance, Real Estate	9%
Accommodation, Food Services, Arts, & Entertainment	9%
Transportation, Warehousing, Utilities	8%
Construction	7%
Other Services	5%
Public Administration	4%
Manufacturing	4%

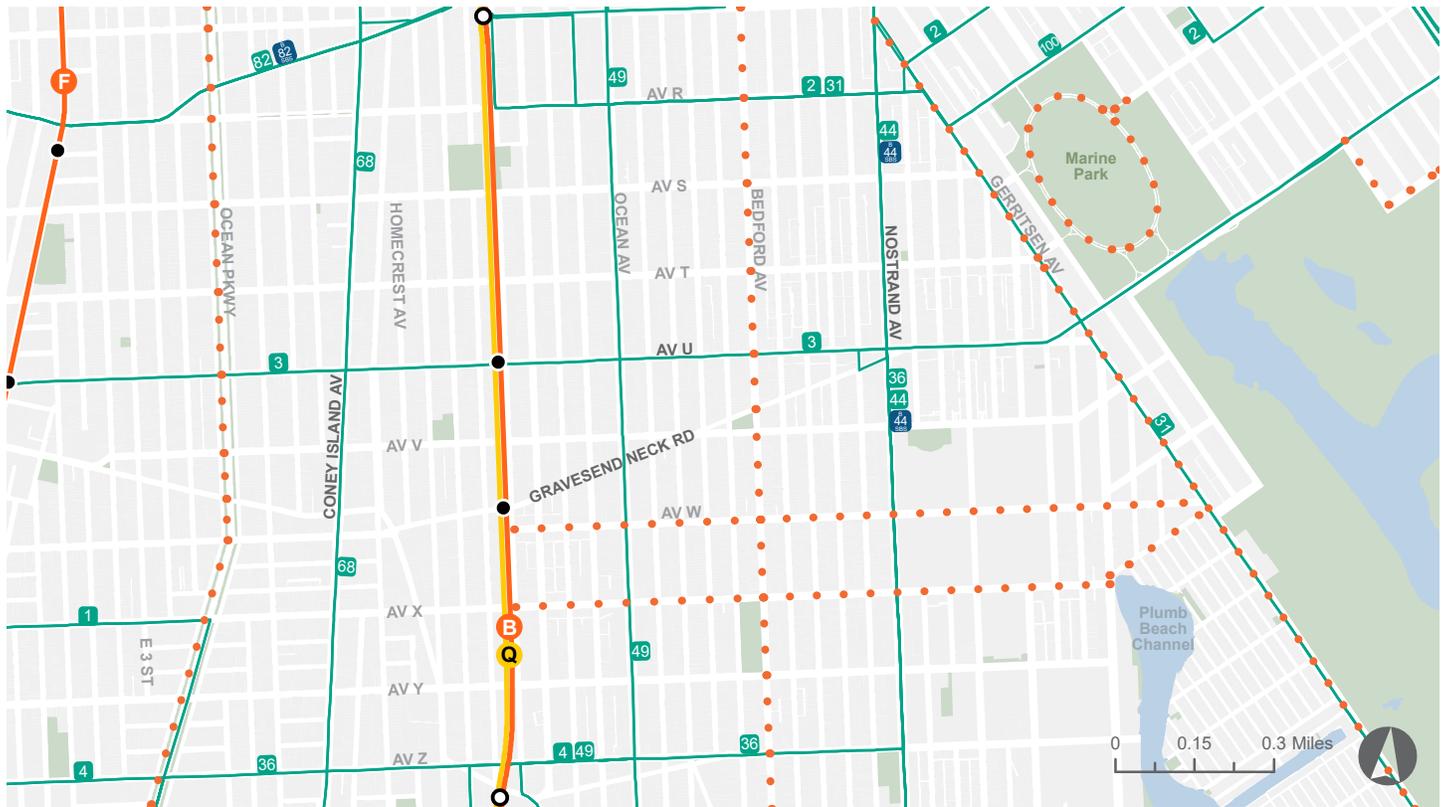
### Jobs Located in Homecrest



Educational Services, Health Care, Social Assistance	52%
Professional, Scientific, & Technical Services	5%
Retail Trade	14%
Finance, Insurance, Real Estate	5%
Accommodation, Food Services, Arts, & Entertainment	6%
Transportation, Warehousing, Utilities	3%
Construction	2%
Other Services	4%
Public Administration	4%
Manufacturing	1%

# DATA APPENDIX

## Homecrest Transportation



### ▲ Homecrest Transportation

— Bus Routes

... Bicycle Lanes

— NYC Subway

#### Average Monthly Bus Ridership (2021)

<b>102,769</b>	B1
<b>9,019</b>	B2
<b>74,274</b>	B3
<b>11,848</b>	B31
<b>97,550</b>	B44 Local/SBS
<b>80,775</b>	B36
<b>54,089</b>	B49
<b>77,471</b>	B68
<b>86,411</b>	B82 Local/SBS
<b>28,357</b>	B100

#### Average Weekday Subway Ridership (2021)

<b>3,698</b>	Q	Avenue U
<b>2,077</b>	Q	Neck Road
<b>1,864</b>	F	Kings Highway
<b>10,331</b>	B Q	Kings Highway

#### Average Daily Vehicular Traffic (2019)

<b>9,928</b>	Avenue U between Ocean Parkway and Ocean Avenue
<b>9,068</b>	Avenue U between Ocean and Nostrand avenues
<b>10,573</b>	Avenue U between Nostrand and Gerritsen avenues
<b>2,053</b>	Gravesend Neck Road between Ocean Parkway and Sheepshead Bay Road
<b>3,998</b>	Gravesend Neck Road between Sheepshead Bay Road and East 22nd Street
<b>20,654</b>	Coney Island Avenue between avenues P and U
<b>26,041</b>	Coney Island Avenue between avenues U and Z

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

## Recent SBS Neighborhood Investments

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▶ *Commercial Revitalization, Avenue NYC* multi-year grant of \$300,000 awarded to Brooklyn Alliance, 2021-2024.

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## Existing Plans & Studies

*Zoning for Coastal Flood Resiliency*, NYC Department of City Planning, 2021.

*Homecrest Rezoning*, NYC Department of City Planning, 2006.

## Sources

ESRI and Consumer Expenditure Surveys, Bureau of Labor Statistics. 2022 ESRI Retail Demand Outlook.

Metropolitan Transportation Authority, 2021. Average Weekday Subway Ridership and Average Monthly Bus Ridership.

NYS Department of Labor. May 2022. 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 2021. Business Improvement Districts Trends Report.

U.S. Census Bureau. 2019. OnTheMap Application. Longitudinal-Employer Household Dynamics Program.

U.S. Census Bureau. American Community Survey, 2019 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates, using NYC Population FactFinder. Homecrest Census Tracts: 392, 632, 572, 580, 394, 566, 568, 570, 574, 576, 578, 592, 594.02, 594.03, 582, 584, 586, 594.04, 638.

Photo Credits: © NYC & Company: Will Steacy. Wikimedia Commons: Charlie Smith, Jim Henderson, Tdorante10, GK tramrunner RU, NYC. Brooklyn Alliance. NYC SBS: Andrew Marcus, Eduardo Carmelo Dañobeytia.

## **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 Homecrest Commercial District Needs Assessment:

Brooklyn Borough President Antonio Reynoso  
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