









ABOUT JAMAICA - HILLSIDE

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 Hillside Avenue and Jamaica Avenue in Jamaica-Hillside, and was conducted in partnership with BHALO between September 2024 and June 2025.

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

Jump to...

Key Findings	4-5
Business Inventory	6
What Merchants Say	7-8
Business Outlook	9-10
What Shoppers Say	8,10
Physical Environment	11
Data Appendix	12-15

Background

Located in Eastern Queens just east of Downtown Jamaica, the Hillside and Jamaica avenue corridors in the Hillside section of Jamaica serve as key commercial hubs that are home to a diverse mix of retail and industrial businesses. The many immigrant-owned restaurants, medical offices, financial institutions, and retail stores reflect the strong presence of South Asian, Caribbean, and Latin American communities. The neighborhood is bordered by Jamaica Estates and Holliswood to the north, Downtown Jamaica to the west, South Jamaica and Hollis to the south, and Hollis to the west.

Jamaica's name stems from the Lenape word "yamecah" meaning beaver in the language of the area's former Lenape inhabitants. Jamaica Avenue follows the path of an ancient trail that Native American tribes traversed to meet and trade animal skins and furs for wampum. After the British took control of the land from its previous Dutch colonists, Jamaica was named the county seat of the newly established Queens County in 1683. The area continued to serve as a center of trade, particularly produce, through the 1700s and 1800s, with the Brooklyn and Jamaica railroad arriving from Downtown Brooklyn in 1834. Further transportation improvements included the establishment of New York's first electrified streetcar line on Jamaica Avenue in 1886.

The development of Downtown Jamaica began in the early 20th century, with the extension of elevated transit lines and completion of the Long Island Rail Road's Jamaica Station. Between 1920 and 1940, Downtown Jamaica's commercial activity significantly expanded to include prominent department stores, supermarkets, and theaters. Nearby residential development followed this commercial growth, with the construction of Jamaica Estates in 1907 and Holliswood through the 1920s. Commercial activity continued to flow eastward from Downtown Jamaica along Jamaica and Hillside avenues, following the new suburban residential area and the extension of the F train to 179th Street and Hillside Avenue in 1950. Jamaica experienced white flight and disinvestment starting in the late 1960s, but new waves of immigrants continued revitalizing the area to keep it a bustling economic hub. Since the 1990s, the neighborhood has gone through numerous phases of rezonings, economic development, and urban renewal.

Hillside Avenue is home to a large Bangladeshi community and primarily serves local residents and commuters with take-out restaurants and professional, medical, and wellness services. Jamaica Avenue's commercial activity becomes more industrial and auto-oriented as it extends eastward from Downtown Jamaica, but boasts a similar range of services closer to the Downtown core.

Neighborhood Demographics

See more on page 12

The area surrounding Jamaica and Hillside avenues is home to 61,913 people. 42% are Asian, with the largest subgroups being Bangladeshi (44%) and Indian (30%). 23% of neighborhood residents are Black, 17% are Hispanic (primarily Puerto Rican, Dominican, Guatemalan, Colombian, and Ecuadorian), and 7% are white. 59% of residents are foreign-born, compared to 37% citywide. The median household income is \$73,381, compared to \$84,961 for Queens and \$79,713 citywide. Reflecting the area's more suburban feel, 43% of homes are owner-occupied, compared to 33% citywide.

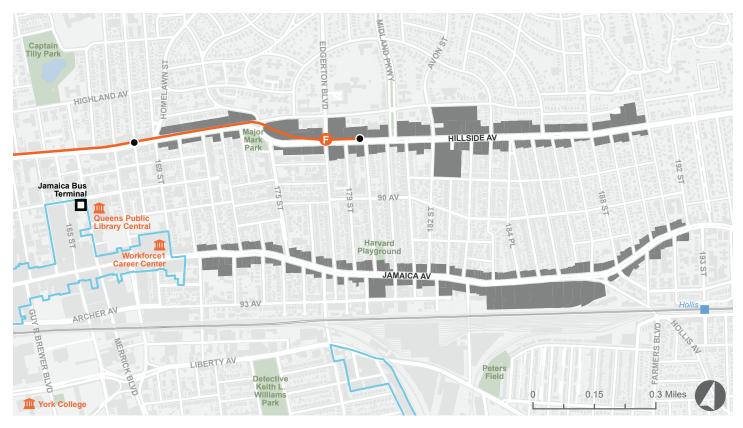
Future Opportunities

See more on page 5

The Jamaica Neighborhood Plan from the NYC Department of City Planning is expected to create more than 12,000 new homes in the neighborhood in the next 15 years. Improved storefront design, streetscape improvements, enhanced public safety, and better public space management, along with the expected population growth, can all help create a more attractive and thriving business environment. Expanding business support programs and strengthening local partnerships will further boost the area's economic vitality. Beyond zoning changes, the Jamaica Neighborhood Plan will also include strategic investments to enhance infrastructure, transit access, open space, and more.

NEIGHBORHOOD CONTEXT

Jamaica - Hillside



▲ Points of Interest

Assessed Commercial Corridors

Bus Terminal

Long Island Rail Road Station

Parks & Public Spaces

Business Improvement District

111 Public Facilities

Merchant & Business Groups

 $Bangladeshi\ American\ Business\ Society\ of\ Hillside\ Avenue\ (BABSHA)$

Bangladeshi Humanitarian and Leadership Outreach (BHALO)

Downtown Jamaica Partnership

Greater Jamaica Development Corporation

Jamaica Community Partnership

Jamaica Senior Center

Project New Yorker

▲ Notable Places







KEY FINDINGS & OPPORTUNITIES

Strengths

- ➤ The commercial corridors of Hillside and Jamaica avenues are home to a diverse range of businesses, including medical offices, restaurants, coffee shops, and retail stores; many businesses serve niche markets within the multicultural community, offering goods and services tailored to local residents
- ► The commercial corridors benefit from consistent pedestrian activity due to their proximity to major transit hubs; the presence of the E, F, and J subway lines, LIRR, JFK AirTrain, multiple MTA and NICE bus routes, and nearby major roadways makes this area a key commercial and commuter hub
- Many storefronts have clear signage, proper lighting, and well-maintained façades, contributing to an inviting commercial district; some businesses also span multiple storefronts, enhancing their visibility and accessibility
- Certain blocks feature benches, tree pits, and pedestrianfriendly sidewalks, making them more accessible for shoppers and commuters and enhancing the overall walkability of the corridor
- Merchants associations and local development organizations support small businesses through networking opportunities, grants, and advocacy efforts; many businesses also engage directly with their customer base, fostering loyalty and repeat shoppers

Challenges

- Several storefronts remain vacant or under construction, particularly along certain sections of Hillside Avenue, creating gaps in commercial activity, reducing foot traffic, and making certain areas feel underdeveloped
- While many businesses maintain clean storefronts, some vacant buildings have visible graffiti and neglected signage, diminishing the overall streetscape quality; in certain cases, awnings and windows appear aged or unkempt, affecting the visual appeal of the district
- ➤ Some blocks lack street furniture such as benches, litter baskets, and bike racks, which could improve the overall pedestrian experience; additionally, some sidewalks have visible cracks and uneven surfaces, posing accessibility concerns
- Scattered garbage and overflowing litter baskets are present in certain areas, particularly near high foot traffic zones; a lack of sufficient trash receptacles contributes to waste accumulation, affecting cleanliness and perceptions

















Opportunities

- Encourage pop-up shops, temporary vendors, or community markets to activate vacant storefronts and help increase commercial activity
- ► Partner with property owners to attract new businesses to vacant storefronts and help emerging entrepreneurs grow
- Design murals and public art projects on storefront gates and underutilized façades to enhance the visual appeal of the corridor
- ► Install new street furniture including benches, lighting, and planters to create a more inviting pedestrian environment and increase foot traffic
- Work with merchants to enhance storefront signage consistency to help create a more cohesive look along the corridors
- Launch community beautification and education campaigns, streetscape sanitation programs, and install additional litter baskets to reduce littering issues
- Engage business owners and community members to encourage participation in an "Adopt-a-Block" program to keep storefronts clean and well-maintained

- Launch merchant organizing efforts to foster stronger collaboration among businesses
- Partner with law enforcement and community organizations to enhance street lighting and safety patrols in areas that are less active, especially at night
- Launch a Night Market or evening business promotions to encourage more commercial activity beyond daytime hours
- Host public events in open spaces, plazas, and other community gathering areas to foster social interaction and community engagement between residents and merchants

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: JAMAICA - HILLSIDE

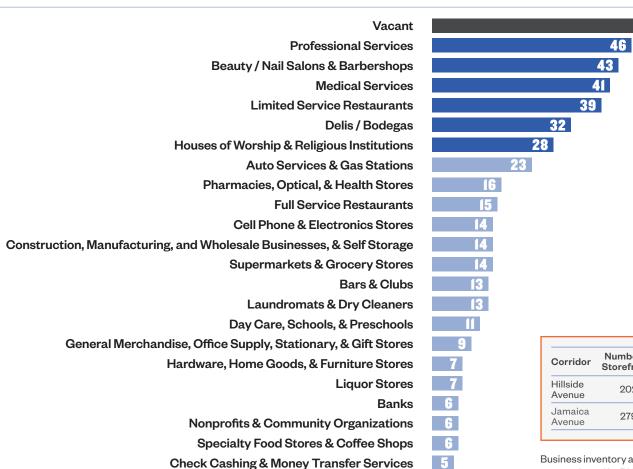
Business Inventory

Total Number of Storefronts

Storefront Vacancy*

*Note: As of June 2025, New York City's commercial corridors have an average storefront vacancy rate of 12.1% and median storefront vacancy rate of 10.9% (LiveXYZ).

Storefront & Retail Mix



Corridor	Number of Storefronts	Vacancy Rate
Hillside Avenue	202	6.9%
Jamaica Avenue	279	16.1%

59

Business inventory and retail mix data were gathered by BHALO through a comprehensive area inventory of storefront businesses located along Hillside and Jamaica avenues from October to December 2024.





Clothing Stores

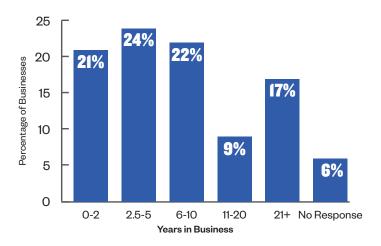
Other

Hotel/Event Spaces

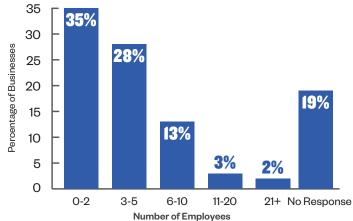


What We've Heard from Jamaica - Hillside Merchants

How many years have you been in business here?



How many full-time employees do you have?



Median

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

Mean

Median

Mode

Do you own or rent your property?

Rent

No Response

Are you a minority or woman-owned business?

No Response

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

Improved

Stayed the Same

Decreased

No Response

Does your business currently have an online presence?

	% Merchant Responses
Website and Social Media	36%
➤ Website Only	14%
➤ Social Media Only	21%
None	24%
➤ No Response	5%

Are you interested in joining a merchants association?

Yes

No Response



BUSINESS LANDSCAPE: JAMAICA - HILLSIDE

What We've Heard from Jamaica - Hillside Merchants and Shoppers

What do you like about the commercial district?

"It's a working class neighborhood, people have been loyal. It's a transit hub and there's a lot of foot traffic."

"It's like the United Nations, you find people from all over the world."

"A wide array of businesses, from retail shops and restaurants to professional services. This diversity caters to the multicultural population of Queens."

"South Asian hub. Has all cultural necessities and large sense of community."

"The diversity. It's very walkable, no need for a car. Lots of transportation nearby. It's a good place to raise a family, not much for nightlife though."

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

% Merchant

% Consumer

	Response	Response
► Safety	66%	66%
Sanitation	42 %	58%
Landscaping/Beautification	35%	57%
Transportation Improvements	35%	33%
Street Lighting	24%	56%
Community Events	17%	52%
Merchant Collaboration	16%	26%
Storefront Improvements	14%	60%
► Other	12%	11%
► More Open Space	7%	52%
► Graffiti Removal	6%	23%

What makes the Jamaica - Hillside commercial district unique?

"Feels like I never left Bangladesh."

"There are many Bengalis which makes me feel a sense of belonging. The location is very convenient too as it is close to different boroughs, LI, and airport."

"Convenient location, accessibility to grocery, multiple food chains, mosques, doctors, pharmacies, shopping locations, nearby park."

"The people are friendly and nice, it is multicultural and there are many groups living here. It's a good testament of true American diversity."

"All the deshi stuff my family needs can be found here."

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

"More community events with safety instructions. Better street lighting, more businesses."

"More family-oriented activities would be good for the neighborhood. Better recreation in parks and not just an open field. Bringing back movie theaters, bowling, etc. and not just restaurants."

"More local art installations and music events would make the area even more vibrant. Also, increased police presence at night would help improve safety."

"The neighborhood needs to be clean for people to walk and shop conveniently. Street vendors should have a designated area."

"More parking options, better public seating areas, and support for Black-owned businesses through grants and promotions."

BUSINESS OUTLOOK

Jamaica - Hillside Retail Demand

Residents spent

\$1.19B

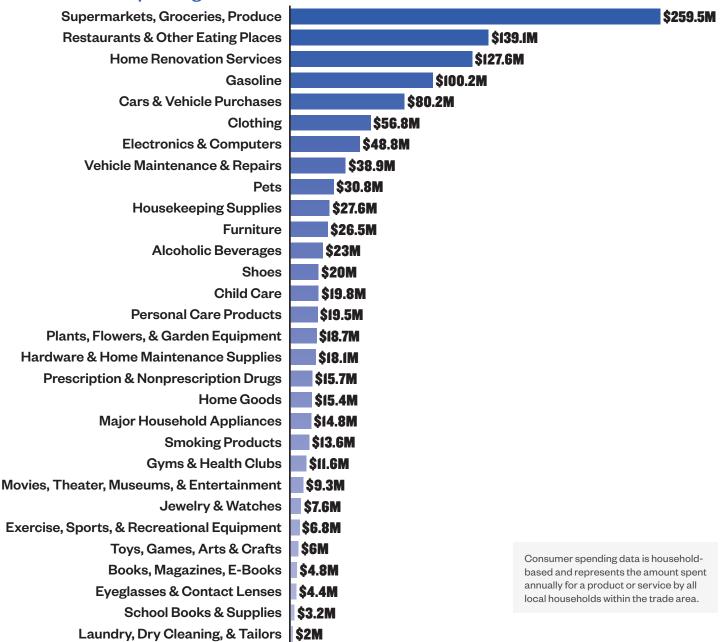
on retail goods and services in 2025

Residents will spend

\$1.35B

each year on retail goods and services by 2030

2025 Consumer Spending



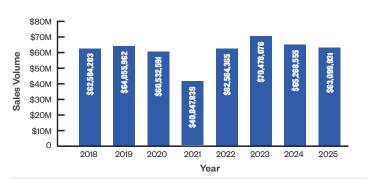
BUSINESS OUTLOOK

Business Trends

Change in Total Business Sales, 2018-2025



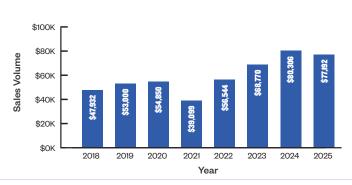
Jamaica - Hillside Total Business Sales



Change in Median Sales by Business, 2018-2025



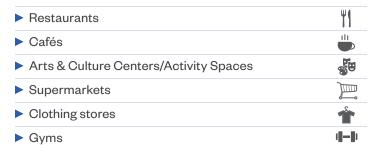
Jamaica - Hillside Median Sales by Business



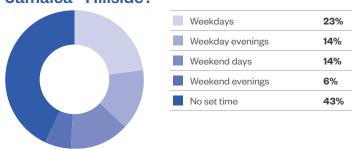
^{*}Year 2025 reflects data gathered up until March 2025. Source: Division of Tax Policy, NYC Department of Finance

What We've Heard from Shoppers

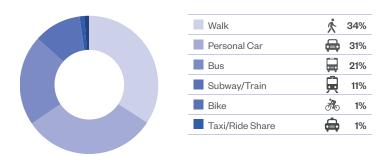
What additional types of businesses would you like to see in Jamaica - Hillside?



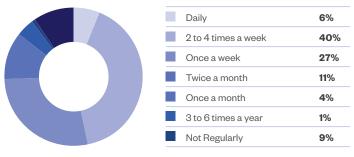
When do you usually shop in Jamaica - Hillside?



How do you usually travel to Jamaica - Hillside?



How often do you shop in Jamaica - Hillside?



PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

Storefront Vacancies



■ Vacant Lots

O Vacant Storefronts

Parks & Open Spaces

An analysis of 202 storefronts along Hillside Avenue revealed that 24% of storefronts are in poor condition, 34% are in average condition, and 42% are in good condition. An analysis of 278 storefronts along Jamaica Avenue revealed that 41% of storefronts are in poor condition, 33% are in average condition, and 26% are in good condition.

Streetscape Observations

- ➤ Sidewalks and crosswalks are generally in good condition near transit hubs, Jamaica Estates, and Holliswood, ensuring safe and accessible pathways; cracks, uneven pavement, and other hazardous sidewalk conditions are more prevalent further away from these locations, posing risks to pedestrians
- ▶ Benches, streetlights, and trash bins are present near transit hubs, contributing to pedestrian comfort and cleanliness, but these amenities are unavailable further away from the transit hubs
- ➤ Some blocks feature well-maintained greenery, enhancing the streetscape and providing shade
- Vacant storefronts and building façades are often affected by graffiti, impacting the area's visual appeal
- Additional street furniture, murals, and other aesthetic improvements could further enrich the urban environment
- There is potential to introduce more trees, planters, and small plazas to provide more gathering space for shoppers and improve air quality







DATA APPENDIX

Study Area Boundaries

Assessed Commercial Corridors

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

▶ Hillside Avenue between 169th and 191st streets

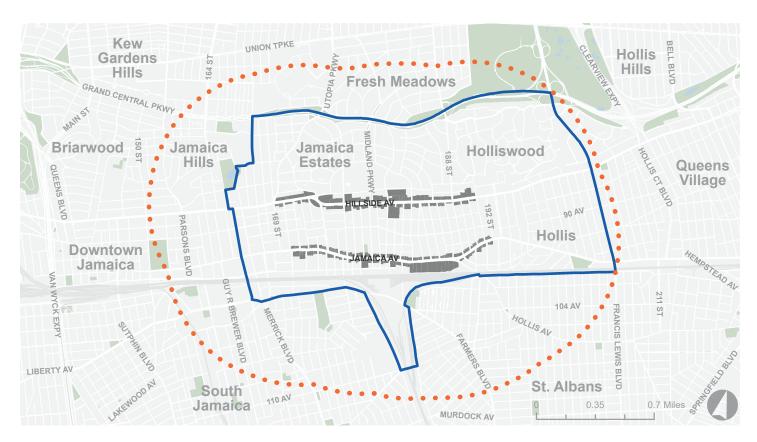
▶ Jamaica Avenue between 170th and 192nd streets

Jamaica - Hillside Context Area

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

· · · Trade Area

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



Area Demographics

Total Population

01,313	Jamaica - Hillside
2,330,124	Queens
8.516.202	New York City

Population Density (per square mile)

27,351	Jamaica - Hillside
21,335	Queens
28,165	New York City

Average Household Size

2.95	Jamaica - Hillside
2.77	Queens
2.51	New York City

Car Ownership

61.7%	Jamaica - Hillside
63%	Queens
45.1%	New York City

Commuting Patterns



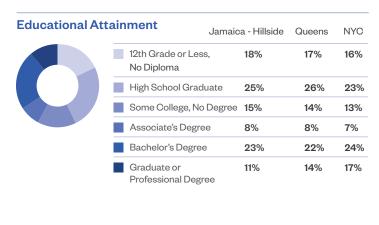
12,911	Work in Jamaica - Hillside,
	live elsewhere



Live in Jamaica - Hillside, work elsewhere

Area Demographics

Race/Background Jamaica - Hillside NYC Queens Hispanic or Latino 17% 28% 28% White alone 7% 24% 31% Black or African 23% 17% 21% American alone Asian alone 42% 26% 15% Two or more races 6% 4% 3% Some other race alone **2**% 1% 0% American Indian and 0% Alaska Native alone 0% Native Hawaiian and 0% 0% Other Pacific Islander



Population Age

	Jamaica - Hillside	Queens	NYC
Under 5 Years	6%	6%	6%
5-14 Years	11%	11%	11%
15-24 Years	12%	11%	11%
25-44 Years	26%	29%	31%
45-64 Years	27%	27%	25%
65+ Years	19%	17%	16%

Median Age		
41.6	Jamaica - Hillside	
40.4	Queens	
38	New York City	

Foreign-Born Population	
59%	Jamaica - Hillside
48%	Queens
37 %	New York City

Income

Median Household Income \$81,409 Jamaica - Hillside

• 1	
\$84,961	Queens
\$79,713	New York City

Pop. Below Poverty Line					
13%	Jamaica - Hillside				
12%	Queens				
17%	New York City				

Employment

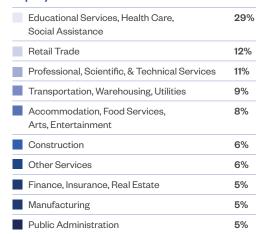
Population in Labor Force				
62 %	Jamaica - Hillside			
64%	Queens			
63%	New York City			

^{*}Note: As of April 2025, the unemployment rate is 4.1% for Queens and 4.6% for New York City (NYSDOL); updated neighborhood-level data for Jamaica Hillside is not available.

Local Jobs and Employment

Local Residents' Employment





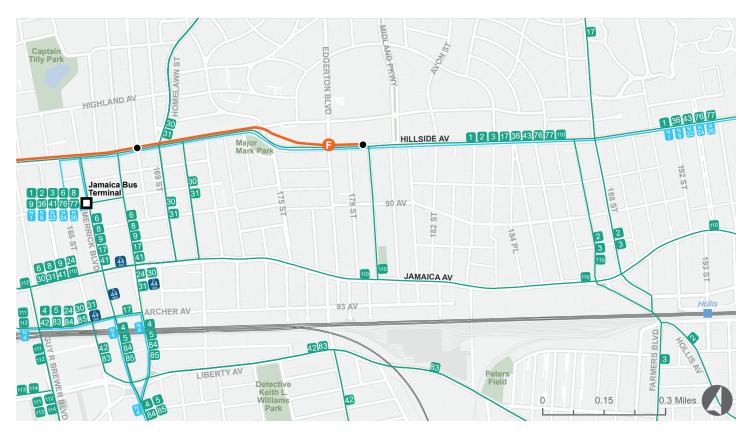
Jobs Located in Jamaica - Hillside



IJ	amaica - miliside	
	Educational Services, Health Care, Social Assistance	41%
	Retail Trade	14%
	Professional, Scientific, & Technical Services	2%
	Transportation, Warehousing, Utilities	1%
	Accommodation, Food Services, Arts, Entertainment	5%
	Construction	4%
	Other Services	3%
	Finance, Insurance, Real Estate	4%
	Manufacturing	1%
	Public Administration	15%

DATA APPENDIX

Jamaica - Hillside Transportation



▲ Jamaica - Hillside Transportation

▲ Oamaica - i iiiis	side Italisportation					
Bus Routes		Long Island Rai	Long Island Rail Road		NYC Subway	
Average Weekda	y Bus Ridership (2024	1)		Average Da	ily Vehicular Traffic (2024)	
12,503	Q44 SBS	4,397	Q41	22,353 Jamaica Avenue from Merrick Boulevard to 188th Street		
10,680	Q17	4,140	Q31	26,857 Hillside Avenue from Queens Boulevard to Francis Lewis Boulevard		
8,639	Q43	3,964	Q76			
7,283	Q111	3,881	Q110	Pedestrian Counts		
6,999	Q5	3,842	Q114	Hillside Avenue I	petween 169th and 170th streets	
6,470	Q8	3,762	Q2		Weekday Morning	
6,352	Q85	3,492	Q77		Weekday Afternoon	
6,224	Q30	3,152	Q112	Z,300	Weekend	
5,449	Q6	2,890	Q1	Average Weekday Subway Ridership		
5,448	Q83	2,789	Q84	(2024) 13,305 (Jamaica - 179 Street	
5,441	Q3	2,670	Q9		169 Street	
4,593	Q36	2,412	Q113		100 001001	
		_				

Recent SBS Neighborhood Investments

- Commercial Revitalization, Avenue NYC multi-year grant of \$300,000 awarded to BHALO, 2024-2027.
- Merchant Organizing grant of \$75,000 awarded to BHALO, 2023.
- Public Realm Grant, Commercial District Lighting Grant of \$100,000 awarded to Downtown Jamaica Partnership, 2023.
- Commercial Revitalization, Avenue NYC multi-year grant of \$300,000 awarded to Jamaica Center BID, 2018-2021.
- Downtown Jamaica Storefront Improvement Program, \$500,000 awarded in storefront improvement grants (funded by the NYC Economic Development Corporation) to 32 storefronts in Downtown Jamaica, 2017-2020.

Current & Planned Developments

Jamaica Neighborhood Plan

The Jamaica Neighborhood Plan will provide a vision for the future of the neighborhood. The proposal would update zoning to help Jamaica grow and thrive, with up to 12,000 new homes — including around 4,000 permanently income-restricted affordable homes — in a 230-block area of Jamaica. These changes would also create more opportunities for businesses, bringing new jobs to residents and economic growth to the area. Beyond these zoning changes, the plan would include strategic investments to enhance infrastructure, transit access, open space, and more.

Hillside Avenue, Springfield Boulevard to Queens Boulevard Bus Priority and Safety Improvements

NYC DOT is proposing bus priority and safety improvements on Hillside Avenue in Queens from Springfield Boulevard to Queens Boulevard. This project aims to improve bus service and reliability for 210,000 daily bus riders on routes along Hillside Avenue. This corridor was identified as a priority in the Connecting to the Core report, NYC Streets Plan, Queens Bus Network Redesign, and is a Vision Zero priority corridor.

NYC Department of Transportation Eastern Queens E-Scooter Share

NYC DOT recently announced the arrival of e-scooter share in Eastern Queens. The program covers Community Districts 7, 8, 11, and 12, and approximately 20 square miles, from Flushing and Auburndale in the north, to Rochdale Village and Springfield Gardens in the south. The program provides critical connections to major transportation and commercial hubs for roughly 600,000 residents.

Existing Plans & Studies

Jamaica Neighborhood Plan (In Progress), NYC Department of City Planning, 2025.

Hillside Avenue Bus Priority Improvements, NYC Department of Transportation, 2025.

Jamaica/Hollis Neighborhood Profile, NYU Furman Center, 2025.

Jamaica NOW Neighborhood Action Plan, NYC Economic Development Corporation, 2015.

The Jamaica Plan, NYC Department of City Planning, 2007.

Sources

 $ESRI\,and\,Consumer\,Expenditure\,Surveys, Bureau\,of\,Labor\,Statistics.\,2025\,ESRI\,Retail\,Demand\,Outlook.$

Metropolitan Transportation Authority, 2024. Average Weekday Subway Ridership and Average Monthly Bus Ridership.

NYS Department of Labor. April 2025. Unemployment Rate Rankings by County.

NYS Department of Transportation. 2024 Annual Average Daily Traffic, using Traffic Data Viewer.

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

Live XYZ, NYC Storefront Data, June 2025. Average and median storefront vacancy rates were determined through an SBS analysis of each commercial corridor in New York City.

NYC Department of Transportation. 2025 Pedestrian Counts and Bicycle Ridership.

U.S. Census Bureau. 2022. On The Map Application. Longitudinal-Employer Household Dynamics Program.

 $U.S. Census \, Bureau. \, American \, Community \, Survey, 2019-2023 \, American \, Community \, Survey \, 5-Year \, Estimates, using \, NYC \, Population \, Fact Finder. \, Jamaica - Hillside \, Census \, Tracts: \, 444, 460, 462, 468, 470, 480, 482, 484, 478.02, 478.01, 476, 472, 466, 464, 458, 456, 454, 500$

 $Photo \ Credits: NYC \ Tourism: Lanna \ Apisukh. \ Wikimedia \ Commons: 49 and rewr, Harrison Leong, Lycheeberries, The \ Theory of Knowledge, Tdorante 10, Train 2104. \ BHALO: Asm Goni, Jumanah Rahman.$

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 Jamaica - Hillside Commercial District Needs Assessment:

Queens Borough President Donovan Richards
NYC Council Member Linda Lee
NYC Council Member James F. Gennaro
NYC Council Member Dr. Nantasha Williams
Queens Community Board 8
Queens Community Board 12
BHALO
Jamaica - Hillside Merchants

Jamaica - Hillside Shoppers and Residents