



WOODHAVEN QUEENS

Commercial District Needs Assessment



careers
businesses
neighborhoods



Woodhaven BID



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 the **Jamaica Avenue** commercial corridor in **Woodhaven**, and was conducted in partnership with **Woodhaven BID** between October 2020 and June 2021.

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

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Located in the southwestern section of Queens, Woodhaven is a neighborhood filled with rich history and culture. Nature is a prominent aspect of the community, with the beautiful Forest Park located immediately north of the neighborhood. Woodhaven is bordered on the north by Park Lane South and Forest Park, on the east by Richmond Hill, on the south by Ozone Park and Atlantic Avenue, and on the west by the Cypress Hills neighborhood of Brooklyn.

Woodhaven was originally developed as a workers' village named Woodville in 1835. In 1853, the residents of Woodville agreed to change the name to Woodhaven, keeping the tree-oriented name that continues to reflect the greenery of the neighborhood today. Woodhaven has one of the largest tree populations in the borough and is known for its proximity to the Forest Park hiking trails. The district contains a mixture of urban and suburban land uses, with both low-density residential and commercial sections. It retains the small-town feel of bygone days and is home to people of many different ethnicities.

Jamaica Avenue, the neighborhood's main commercial corridor, is an east-west artery that bisects Woodhaven. On "the Avenue," as many refer to it, there are a significant number of small and locally owned businesses. Woodhaven is highly accessible and convenient by transit with several MTA local buses operating in the area, along with the J and Z subway lines which connect the neighborhood to Queens, Brooklyn, and Manhattan. These subway lines also connect to major hubs including the AirTrain that serves the John F. Kennedy International Airport, which is also approximately 15 minutes away by car.

Woodhaven is well known for its culture and history. Writers, artists, musicians, actors, and filmmakers have been drawn to and emerged from the area. Woodhaven has been called "one of the epicenters of NYC's metal landscape" due to a well-known heavy metal recording studio located in the neighborhood. The area also has a tattoo and piercing parlor run by women that were featured in the documentary *Feminine Ink*. Throughout the year, there are several events hosted by local community-based organizations that bring residents and businesses together. One of the many anticipated events of the year is the annual Wonderful Woodhaven Street Fair that takes place on Jamaica Avenue with live music and activities for children. This event is an opportunity to appreciate the diverse and varied backgrounds of Woodhaven residents.

Neighborhood Demographics

See more on pages 12-13

Woodhaven is ethnically diverse, with a majority of the population Hispanic or Latinx. The neighborhood also consists of a moderate number of African Americans, and a growing number of Asian Americans. The racial makeup of the neighborhood is 17% White, 6% African American, 17% Asian, 6% from other races. Hispanic or Latinx of any race makes up 54% of the population.

Most inhabitants are young to middle-aged adults, with 22% being between the ages of 0-17, 30% between 25-44, and 27% between 45-64. The percentage of college-aged (18-24) and elderly (65+) residents are 17% and 7%, respectively.

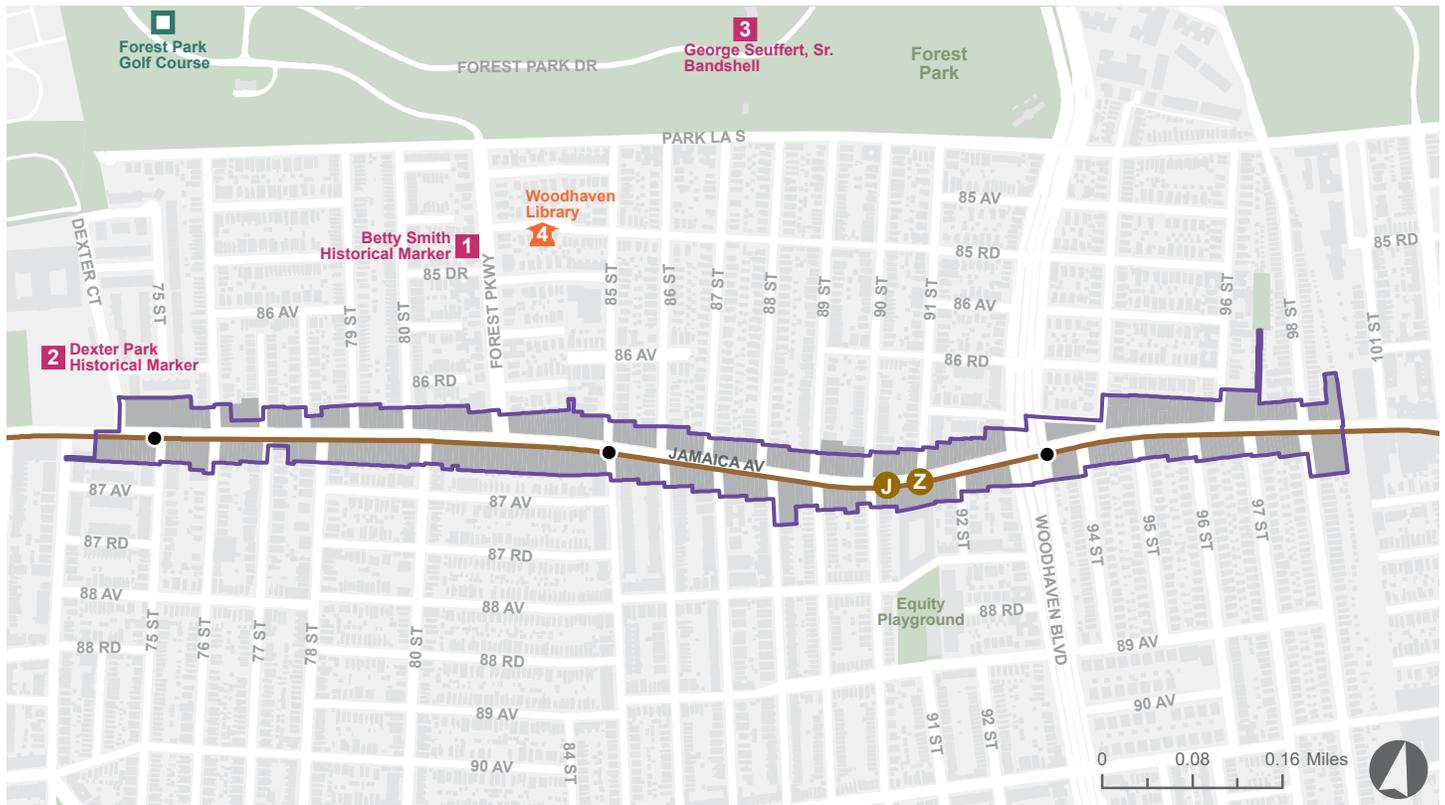
Future Opportunities

See more on pages 4-5

Woodhaven continues to attract new residents and businesses. Although many of the businesses on Jamaica Avenue are long-standing, with some in business for more than 100 years, there have been some new vacancies on the corridor due to the financial impact that COVID-19 has had on the small business community.

Woodhaven continues to grow while preserving its historical and cultural essence. Exciting new projects, in partnership with local community-based organizations and City agencies (like the Open Culture program, street fairs, Weekend Walks, and other beautification projects) will open the avenue to cultural and social events that will engage the community and increase foot traffic. In this tight-knit neighborhood, community-based organizations, residents, and elected officials continuously work together to create opportunities to help the commercial district grow stronger and more economically resilient.

Woodhaven



▲ Points of Interest

- Assessed Commercial Corridors
- Parks and Public Spaces
- Arts & Cultural Destinations
- Woodhaven BID
- Public Facilities

Neighborhood Events

- Make Music Woodhaven
- Spring Fest
- Weekend Walks
- Wonderful Woodhaven Street Fair
- Woodhaven BID Annual Tree Lighting

Merchant & Business Groups

- Friends of Forest Park
- Greater Woodhaven Development Corporation
- Queens Chamber of Commerce
- Woodhaven BID
- Woodhaven Cultural & Historical Society
- Woodhaven Residents' Block Association

▲ Notable Places



KEY FINDINGS & OPPORTUNITIES

Strengths

- ▶ Home to one of the largest tree populations in Queens with close proximity to the hiking trails of Forest Park, making nature a prominent community asset
- ▶ Long-established businesses and long-standing residents make the neighborhood a tight-knit community with a small-town feel
- ▶ Culturally diverse neighborhood with businesses and residents originating from various backgrounds and ethnicities
- ▶ Easily accessible neighborhood with multiple modes of transportation, including the J and Z trains, and multiple bus routes
- ▶ Active and engaged community organizations contribute to collaborative efforts within the community by promoting small businesses and the unique character of the neighborhood
- ▶ Strong sense of history and culture fostered through local landmarks, including garden apartments near Forest Park, a local newspaper that has covered the neighborhood since 1909, a century-old landmark carousel, and a historic cemetery that dates back to the 1700s

Challenges

- ▶ High commercial rents apply pressure to local small businesses, causing some to relocate to more affordable neighborhoods
- ▶ An increase in crime and vandalism in the area has added to safety concerns on Jamaica Avenue from both residents and business owners
- ▶ Limited availability of healthy food options, full-service restaurants, and clothing stores has led many residents to shop outside the neighborhood
- ▶ A perceived lack of public parking on Jamaica Avenue discourages consumers who drive to patronize local businesses
- ▶ Changes in storefront and labor regulations add strain to businesses as they struggle to comply and keep up with rapidly evolving information
- ▶ Illegal dumping is prevalent along the corridor, contributing to overflowing litter baskets
- ▶ Increase in online shopping has put local businesses at a disadvantage as some small business owners find it difficult to keep up with evolving marketing and business trends
- ▶ Insufficient access to capital makes it more difficult for mom-and-pop shops to maintain and invest in their business





Volunteer Clean-Up Day



Planter on Jamaica Avenue



Woodhaven Holiday Lights



Equity Playground

Opportunities

- ▶ Attract new and diverse businesses to fill vacant storefronts that meet the neighborhood’s demand for healthy food options, restaurants, and clothing stores
- ▶ Use existing open spaces to add new streetscape amenities, including benches, wayfinding, and greenery
- ▶ Improve street and sidewalk cleanliness with supplemental sanitation services to make the neighborhood more pleasant for shoppers and pedestrians
- ▶ Invest in a storefront improvement program to help small businesses with the replacement of awnings and financing for other exterior renovations
- ▶ Prioritize COVID-19 commercial revitalization activities by deploying actionable strategies that will enhance the economic recovery and long-term resiliency of the commercial district
- ▶ Create social media and digital marketing programs to help small businesses on Jamaica Avenue attract more customers and increase exposure in nearby neighborhoods
- ▶ Conduct more art and cultural events on the corridor to drive community engagement
- ▶ Explore new grant opportunities from both City agencies and the private sector to support small businesses and the community
- ▶ Facilitate more collaboration between City agencies and community-based organizations to help businesses navigate the City’s COVID-19 recovery resources

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: WOODHAVEN

Business Inventory

353

Total Number of Storefronts

7.65%

Storefront Vacancy*

* Note: In 2020, New York City's 76 Business Improvement Districts reported an average ground floor vacancy rate of 11.3% and median ground floor vacancy rate of 10.9% (SBS BIDs Trends Report, FY2020).

Storefront & Retail Mix

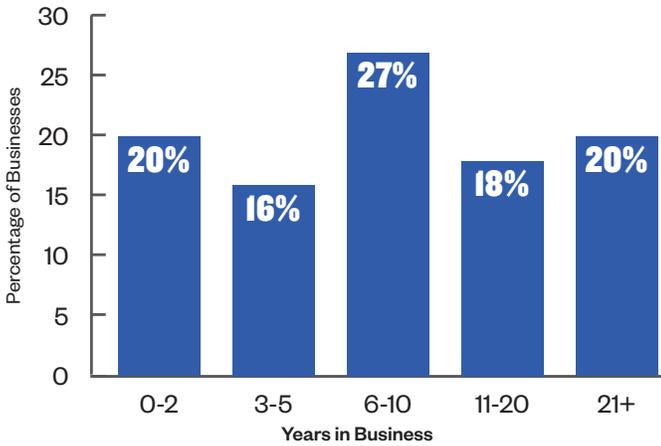


Business inventory and retail mix data were gathered by Woodhaven BID through a comprehensive area inventory of storefront businesses located along Jamaica Avenue. Due to the rapidly changing retail landscape during the COVID-19 pandemic, Woodhaven BID conducted two business inventories, one in Fall 2020 and one in June 2021, to document changes in storefront activity. The storefront data presented here is from June 2021. In Woodhaven, the storefront vacancy rate was 11.33% in December 2020 and 7.65% in June 2021.

***The data and findings presented in this report were gathered during the COVID-19 pandemic.** The economic impact of the COVID-19 outbreak has negatively affected 90% of small business owners nationally. Across New York City, total business sales declined by 39% and median business sales declined by 28% from March 2020 to March 2021. With the exception of grocery stores and pharmacies, spending in all other retail categories declined significantly during the pandemic. During this time, business activity in Woodhaven was paused for an extended period, causing rapid shifts in business strategies and major changes in local consumer shopping habits. As of June 2021, federal, state, and city resources have been and continue to be developed to support businesses during this extremely challenging time, yet many businesses continue to struggle or remain closed. SBS and community partners are working to develop new programs to support businesses and help the Woodhaven commercial district recover from this crisis.

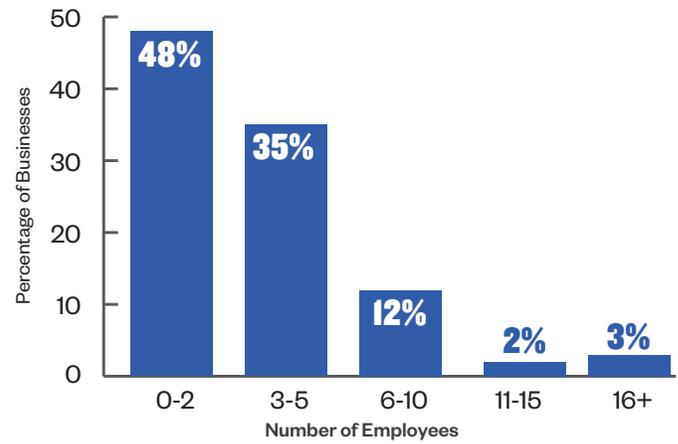
What We've Heard from Woodhaven Merchants

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?



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



Have you taken any of the following measures to cover revenue decreases during the COVID-19 pandemic?

Measure	% Merchant Responses
Applied for federal assistance (i.e. SBA Economic Injury Disaster Loan or Paycheck Protection Program)	58%
Used personal savings	52%
Made a claim for business interruption insurance	15%
Applied for other loan	10%
Drawn down cash reserves	8%
Applied for a grant (public or private)	3%
Used a line of credit	3%
Other	12%

What are the 3 biggest challenges facing your business?

Challenge	% Merchant Responses
Low foot traffic	68%
Government regulations/fines	65%
Commercial rent/lease	45%
Access to loans/credit/finance	40%
Electric/water/utility bills	34%
Storefront improvements	27%
Crime/safety	26%
Lack of parking/transit	20%
Other	13%

Source: Based on 147 merchant surveys conducted by Woodhaven BID in Fall 2020 and Winter 2021.

BUSINESS LANDSCAPE

What We've Heard from Woodhaven Merchants

What do you like about the commercial district? What makes it unique?

"Overall, it's a calm neighborhood and accessible to transportation."

"Quiet, clean and friendly."

"I like it because it's home and I love the diversity in the neighborhood."

"It's a very diverse, hardworking neighborhood."

"I love the people and the sense of community."

What kinds of improvements on your street could help you stabilize and grow your business?

"Government regulations to ease up on restaurants."

"Graffiti removal and sanitation."

"Anything that would attract more foot traffic."

"Better parking for customers."

"Beautification projects."

What We've Heard from Woodhaven Shoppers

What do you like about the commercial district? What makes this neighborhood unique?

"What I like about this district is how it is a real community. You go to stores and people know who you are and people know who your families are. We all really look out for each other."

"You can get almost anything you need without going far and the store owners who live in the neighborhood are really customer oriented."

"Great people, tons of activity, easy access via subway."

"There is a lot of variety and convenience within the neighborhood."

"It has a diverse and friendly character, with a small town feel."

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

"I would like to see supermarkets that offer more organic quality food."

"Gyms and yoga studios."

"More clothing stores and a wider variety of restaurant options."

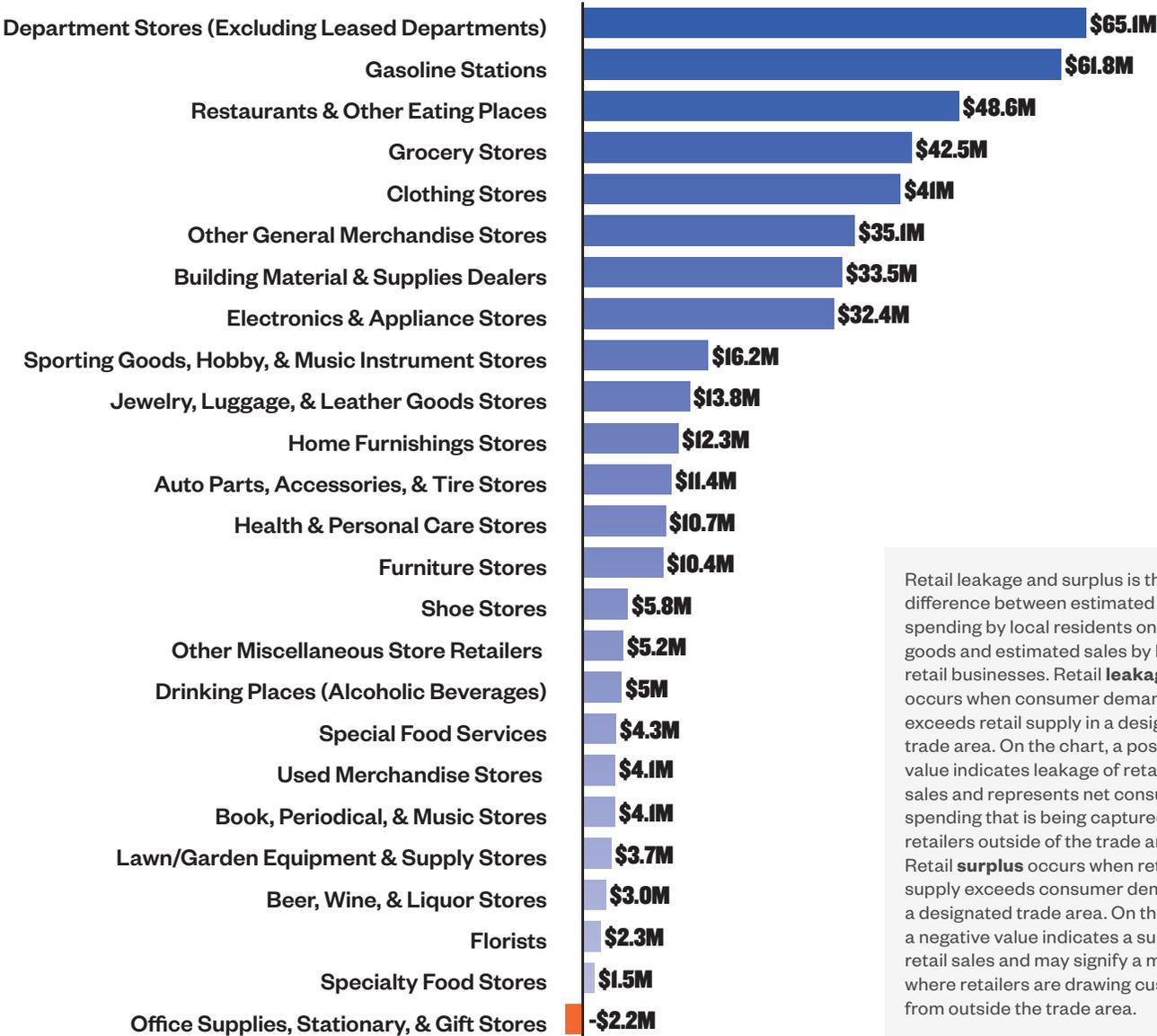
"A book store, a coffee shop."

Woodhaven Retail Opportunity

<p>Residents spend</p> <p>\$1.05B</p> <p>each year in goods and services</p>	<p>Local businesses make</p> <p>\$432M</p> <p>each year in retail sales</p>	<p>Each year,</p> <p>\$631M</p> <p>is spent outside the neighborhood</p>
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Retail Leakage & Surplus

← Surplus \$0 Leakage →



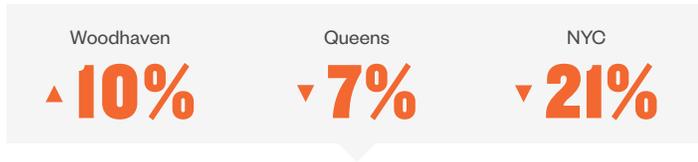
Retail leakage and surplus is the difference between estimated spending by local residents on retail goods and estimated sales by local retail businesses. Retail **leakage** occurs when consumer demand exceeds retail supply in a designated trade area. On the chart, a positive value indicates leakage of retail sales and represents net consumer spending that is being captured by retailers outside of the trade area. Retail **surplus** occurs when retail supply exceeds consumer demand in a designated trade area. On the chart, a negative value indicates a surplus of retail sales and may signify a market where retailers are drawing customers from outside the trade area.

Source: ESRI and Data Axle, 2021

BUSINESS OUTLOOK

Business Trends

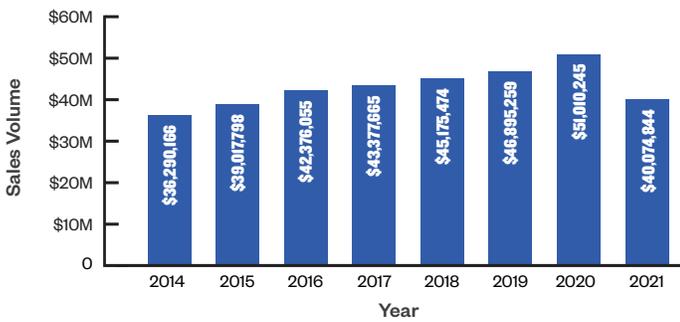
Change in Total Business Sales, 2014-2021



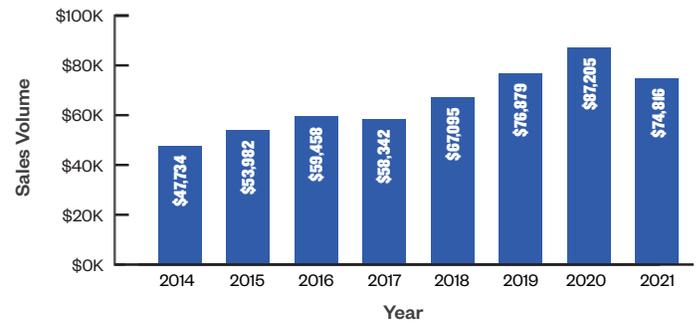
Change in Median Sales by Business, 2014-2021



Woodhaven Total Business Sales



Woodhaven Sales by Business



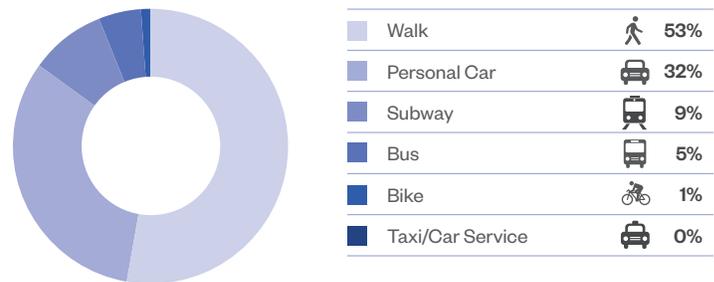
Year 2021 reflects data gathered up until March 2021. Source: Division of Tax Policy, NYC Department of Finance

What We've Heard from Shoppers

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

- ▶ Clothing stores 
- ▶ Restaurants 
- ▶ Coffee shops/cafés 
- ▶ Gyms/fitness studios 
- ▶ Supermarkets 

How do you usually get to Woodhaven?



Compared to your shopping activity in person before COVID-19, are you spending more, the same amount, or less in stores now?

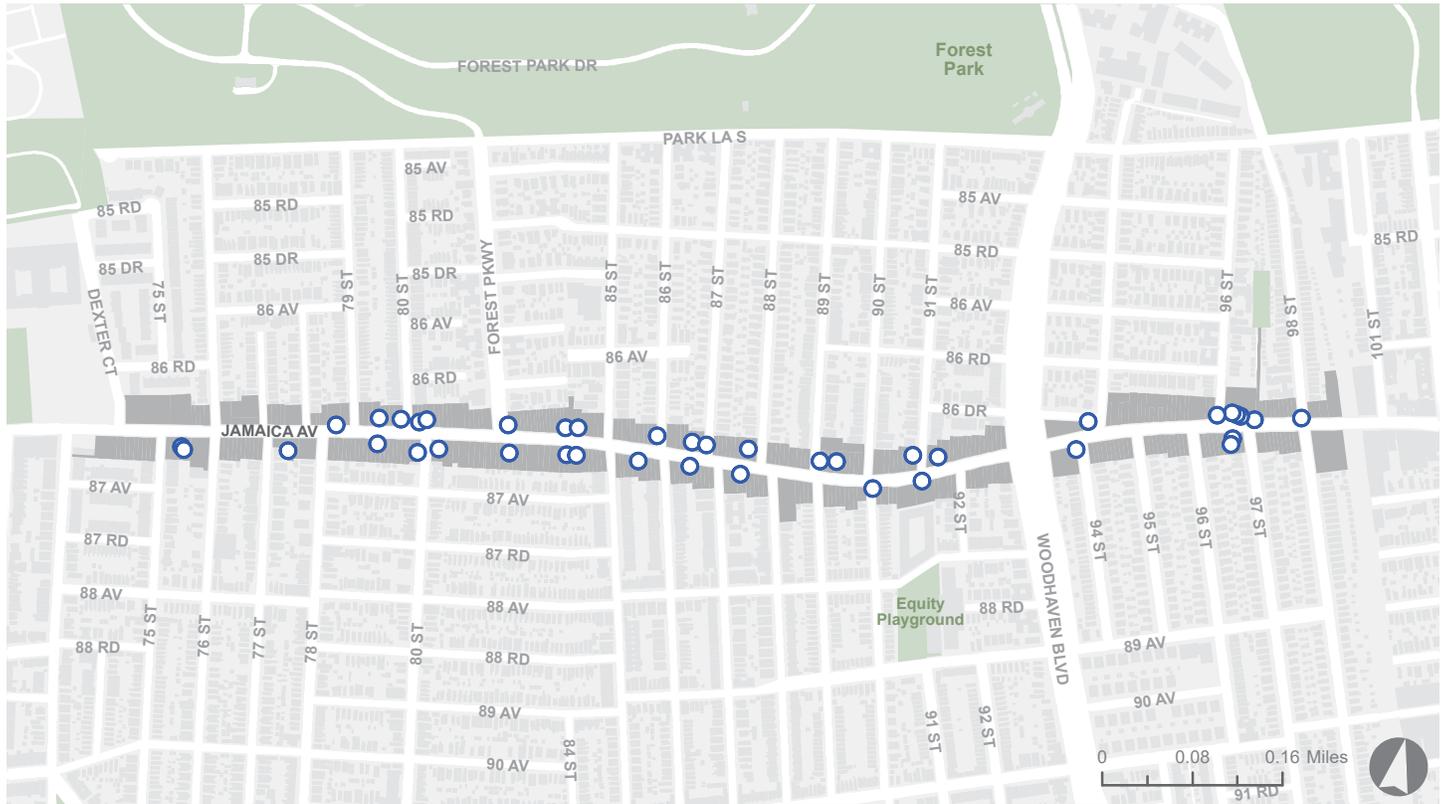


Compared to your online shopping activity before COVID-19, are you spending more, the same amount, or less in online purchases now?



Source: Based on 297 consumer surveys conducted by Woodhaven BID in Fall 2020 and Winter 2021.

Storefront Vacancies



○ Vacant Storefronts

■ Parks & Open Spaces

An analysis of 353 storefronts along Jamaica Avenue revealed that 41% of storefronts are in poor condition, 38% are in average condition, and 21% are in good condition.

Streetscape Observations

- ▶ An increase in graffiti, especially during COVID-19, has been one of the more significant challenges on the Jamaica Avenue corridor.
- ▶ Two large, long-standing abandoned properties from Dexter Court to 79th Street attract vandalism to the area, and contribute to negative perceptions of safety.
- ▶ Litter baskets are often overflowing with large household items and resident garbage, contributing to the accumulation of excess litter.
- ▶ Although there are overflowing litter baskets on the corners, the sidewalks are maintained by the Woodhaven BID sanitation team which keeps them clean even in the presence of illegal dumping.
- ▶ Sufficient street lighting all along the Jamaica Avenue commercial corridor contributes to a general feeling of safety in the evening.
- ▶ LinkNYC kiosks along Jamaica Avenue provide the community with up-to-date information on news, events, promotions, and more.



DATA APPENDIX

Study Area Boundaries

■ Assessed Commercial Corridors

Primary data on Woodhaven storefront businesses presented on pages 6-7 was gathered along Jamaica Avenue from Dexter Court to 101st Street.

■ Woodhaven Context Area

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

●●● Trade Area

Retail leakage, surplus, and retail opportunity on page 9 corresponds with the 0.75 mile trade area.



Area Demographics

Total Population

37,092	Woodhaven
2,298,513	Queens
8,443,713	New York City

Population Density (per square mile)

38,759	Woodhaven
21,045	Queens
27,926	New York City

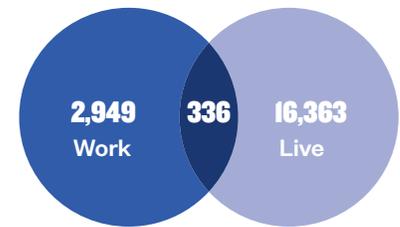
Average Household Size

3.62	Woodhaven
2.91	Queens
2.62	New York City

Car Ownership

67.6%	Woodhaven
63.2%	Queens
45.4%	New York City

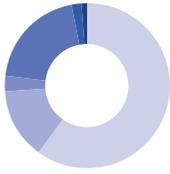
Commuting Patterns



2,949	Work in Woodhaven, live elsewhere
336	Live & Work in Woodhaven
16,363	Live in Woodhaven and work elsewhere

Area Demographics

Race/Background



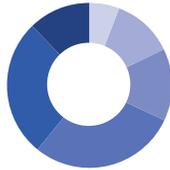
	Woodhaven	Queens	NYC
Hispanic or Latino (of any race)	60%	28%	29%
White alone	14%	25%	32%
Black or African American alone	3%	17%	22%
Asian alone	20%	25%	14%
Two or more races	2%	2%	2%
Some other race alone	1%	2%	1%
American Indian and Alaska Native alone	0%	0%	0%
Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander	0%	0%	0%

Educational Attainment



	Woodhaven	Queens	NYC
12th Grade or Less, No Diploma	24%	19%	18%
High School Graduate	30%	28%	24%
Some College, No Degree	16%	15%	14%
Associate's Degree	8%	8%	6%
Bachelor's Degree	16%	20%	22%
Graduate or Professional Degree	6%	12%	16%

Population Age



	Woodhaven	Queens	NYC
Under 5 Years	6%	6%	7%
5-14 Years	12%	11%	11%
15-24 Years	14%	11%	12%
25-44 Years	29%	30%	32%
45-64 Years	27%	27%	24%
65+ Years	12%	15%	14%

Median Age

37.0	Woodhaven
38.7	Queens
36.5	New York City

Foreign-Born Population

49%	Woodhaven
29%	Queens
37%	New York City

Income

Median Household Income

\$71,155	Woodhaven
\$64,987	Queens
\$60,762	New York City

Pop. Below Poverty Line

11%	Woodhaven
13%	Queens
19%	New York City

Employment

Population in Labor Force

65.5%	Woodhaven
67.1%	Queens
64%	New York City

Unemployment*

4.5%	Woodhaven
3.8%	Queens
6.9%	New York City

*Note: As of May 2021, the unemployment rate is 9.7% for Queens and 9.8% for New York City (NYSDOL); updated neighborhood-level data for Woodhaven is not available.

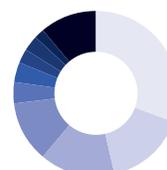
Local Jobs and Employment

Local Residents' Employment



Educational Services, Health Care, Social Assistance	21%
Accommodation, Food Services, Arts, & Entertainment	15%
Professional, Scientific, & Technical Services	11%
Retail Trade	9%
Transportation, Warehousing, Utilities	9%
Construction	8%
Finance, Insurance, Real Estate	6%
Manufacturing	5%
Public Administration	4%
Other Services	11%

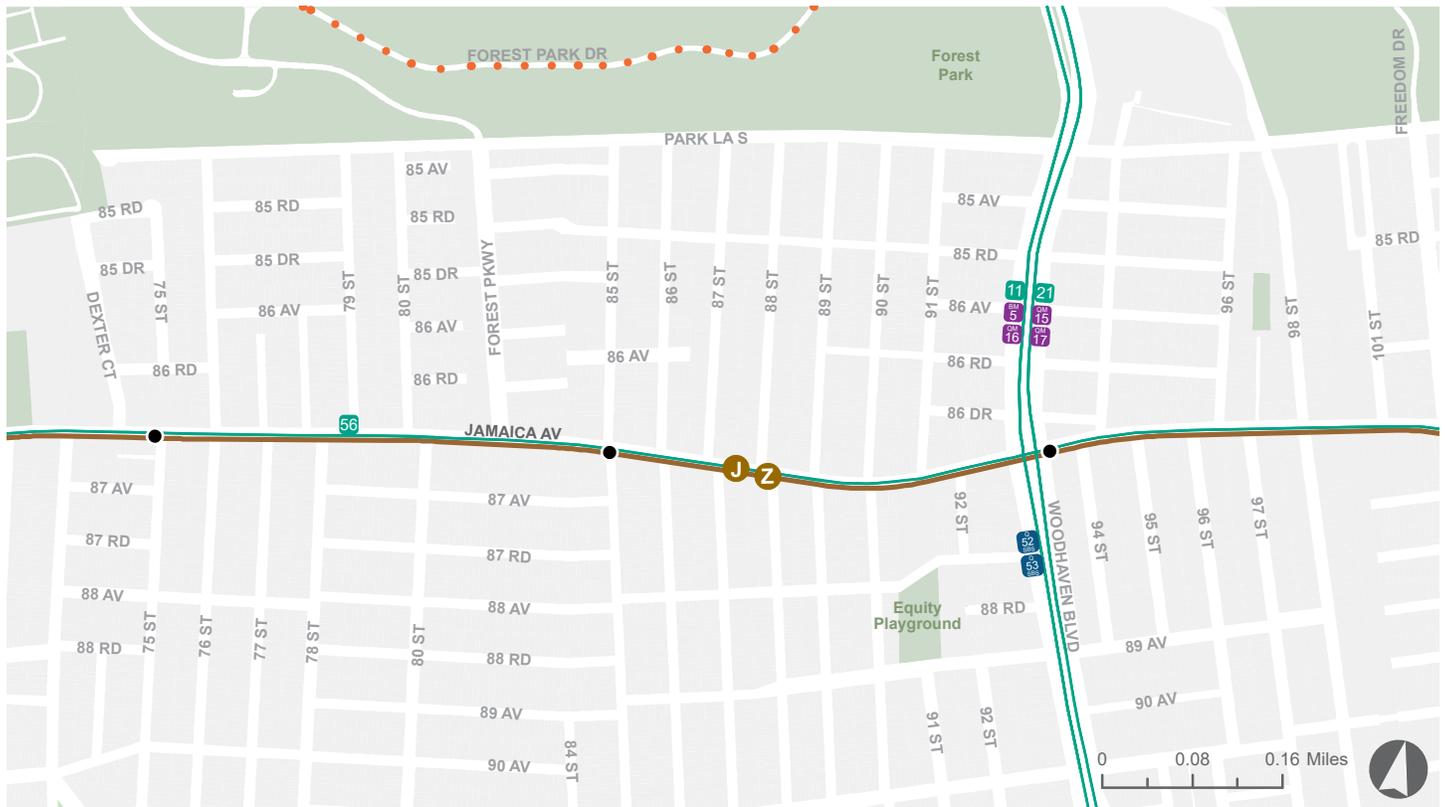
Jobs Located in Woodhaven



Educational Services, Health Care, Social Assistance	31%
Construction	16%
Retail Trade	15%
Accommodation, Food Services, Arts, & Entertainment	12%
Professional, Scientific, & Technical Services	4%
Transportation, Warehousing, Utilities	4%
Finance, Insurance, Real Estate	3%
Manufacturing	3%
Public Administration	2%
Other Services	11%

DATA APPENDIX

Woodhaven Transportation



▲ Woodhaven Transportation

— Bus Routes

••• Bicycle Lanes

— NYC Subway

MTA Annual Bus Ridership

2020	2019	
4,938	10,098	Q5
1,475	4,239	Q11
879	2,470	Q21
4,873	7,046	Q24
12,123	20,364	Q52/53
5,290	6,989	Q56
708	1,703	QM5
643	1,417	QM15
183	493	QM16
193	430	QM17

Average Weekday Subway Ridership

2020	2019	
1,661	3,573	J Z 75 St - Elderts Ln
1,747	3,669	J 85 St - Forest Pkwy
2,171	4,607	J Z Woodhaven Blvd

Vehicular Traffic

4,853 Jamaica Avenue from Eldert Lane to Woodhaven Boulevard

Source: MTA 2020; NYS DOT, 2018 Annual Average Daily Traffic data.

Recent SBS Neighborhood Investments

- ▶ *Commercial Revitalization*, Avenue NYC multi-year grant awarded to Woodhaven BID, 2020-2023.
 - ▶ *COVID-19 Commercial District Support*, Strategic Impact Grant of \$20,000 awarded to Woodhaven BID, 2021.
 - ▶ *Neighborhood 360° Fellows Host Organization*, awarded to Woodhaven BID, 2019-2020.
-

Sources

ESRI and Infogroup, Inc. 2021 ESRI Retail MarketPlace Profile.

Metropolitan Transportation Authority, 2019. Average Weekday Subway Ridership and Average Weekday Bus Ridership.

National Federation of Independent Business, April 9, 2020, <https://www.nfib.com/content/press-release/economy/70-percent-of-small-businesses-applied-for-ppp-loans-nearly-half-applied-for-eid/>

NYS Department of Labor. May 2021. 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 2020. Business Improvement Districts Trends Report.

U.S. Census Bureau. 2018. OnTheMap Application. Longitudinal-Employer Household Dynamics Program.

U.S. Census Bureau. American Community Survey, 2018 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates, using NYC Population FactFinder. Woodhaven Census Tracts: 2, 4, 10, 12, 14, 16, 18, 20, 22, 24, 28, 30.

Photo Credits: Jalen Vasquez Designs: Jalen Vasquez. Manhattan7arts: Oswaldo Garnica. Woodhaven BID: Katty Garces. Woodhaven Cultural & Historical Society: Ed Wendell.

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 Woodhaven Commercial District Needs Assessment:

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