

1 | The North Shore Context

The North Shore study area stretches the five-mile length of the Kill Van Kull waterfront from St. George to Howland Hook and extends one mile inland to Forest Avenue. The area is unique in the diversity of its population, the history of its built environment, and the vigor of its working waterfront.

By the beginning of the 20th century, the North Shore had already become fairly densely populated. The area is twice as dense as the rest of Staten Island, and similar to densities found in some outer borough neighborhoods. The local landscape has a rich mix of natural, cultural, and industrial histories, and includes the most diverse range of development found in the borough.

The study area includes approximately 179,000 residents with a population including African-Americans, Hispanics, and whites, with each group comprising slightly more than 30 percent of the total. There is also a small but significant Asian population at 7 percent. The area has seen immigration from countries such as Mexico, Sri Lanka, Albania, Trinidad, Liberia, and the Philippines, among others. While the study area includes neighborhoods of large, single family homes and income ranges are varied, the per capita income level is 12 percent lower than the borough average and 15 percent below the City's average.

Historically, the maritime industry has played a significant role in shaping the area's character - supporting a diverse range of businesses, resi-



Working waterfront and residential neighborhood in Mariner's Harbor

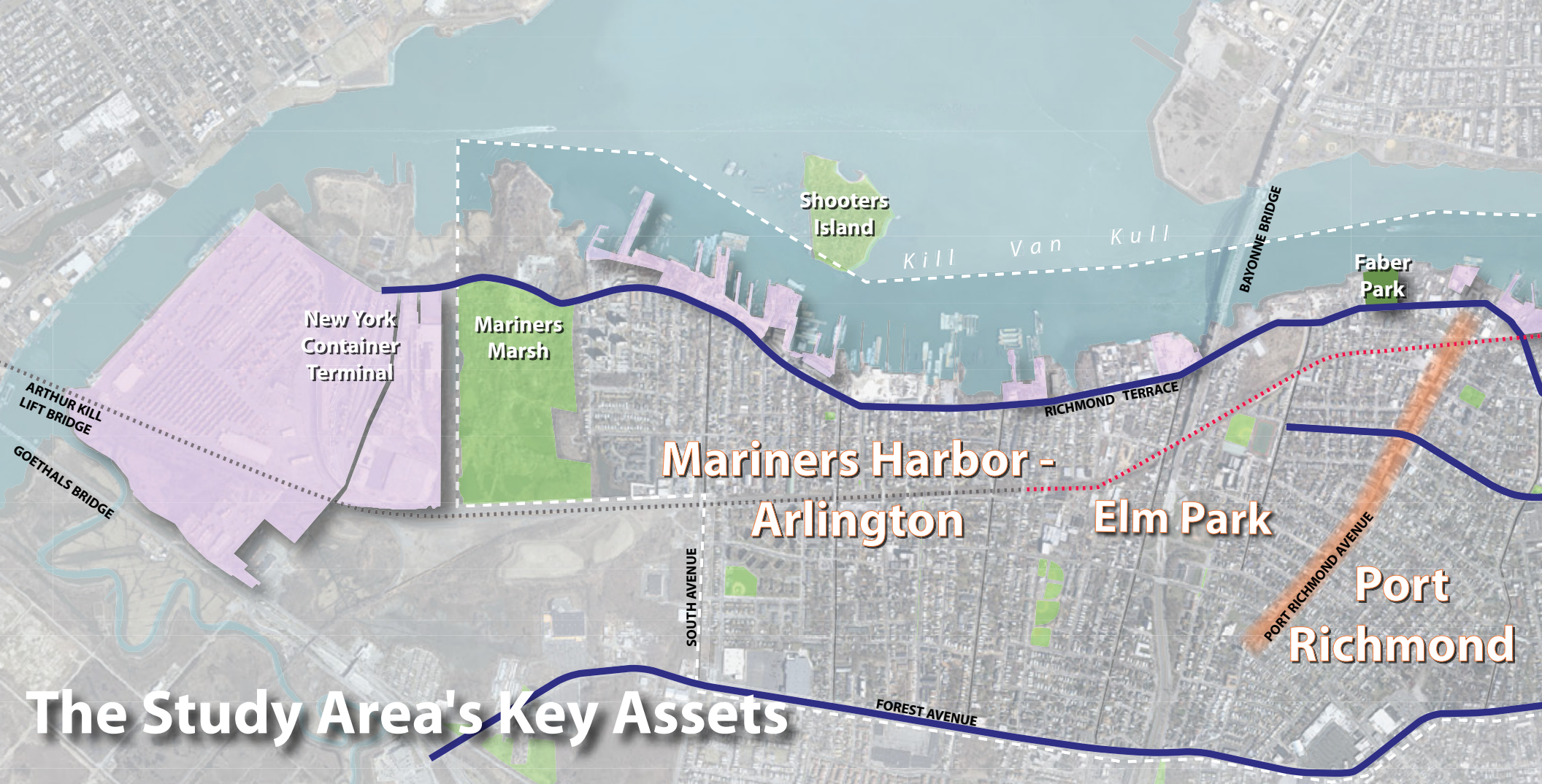
dents and building stock along the waterfront. The active waterfront and its many historic landmarks, including Sailors Snug Harbor, continue to celebrate deep-rooted and living connections between the harbor, North Shore communities, and Staten Island overall.

Through the public engagement process, community stakeholders focused on the four key assets that continue to define the study area. These assets include the Kill Van Kull waterfront, the area's distinctive neighborhoods and town centers, its historic streets, and the former North Shore Railroad right-of-way. The consensus was that building upon and leveraging these assets will help to unlock the North Shore's significant potential and will provide North Shore residents, businesses, and visitors with quality jobs,

improved transportation connections, and needed services.



Visitors enjoy the North Shore Esplanade



The Study Area's Key Assets

Kill Van Kull Waterfront

- The Kill Van Kull is a major channel for commerce in the region and a hub for the region's maritime support services (barges, tugboats, and dry-dock ship repair facilities) with 2,200 employees who have an average salary of \$51,000.
- In 2005, the Mayor's Office designated major portions of the waterfront as an Industrial Ombudsman Area, a program designed to facilitate the health and retention of industrial businesses.
- Current public waterfront access points include the North Shore Esplanade, Snug Harbor, and Faber Park.
- Maritime and public uses comprise approximately two-thirds of the waterfront, with non-water dependent uses on the remaining third.

Neighborhood Centers

- Retail streets, including portions of Port Richmond Avenue, Jersey Street, Castleton Avenue, Forest Avenue, and Victory Boulevard have long served local communities.
- Street-front businesses and historic architecture differentiate these streets as walkable hubs, with mixed use buildings and storefront retail.
- While most of the North Shore consists of one- to two-family homes, more diverse options exist on and around neighborhood centers, including multi-family buildings with apartments above ground-floor retail spaces, and public housing.



Historic Street Grid

- The street network is a product of the area’s hilly topography, retired street-car lines, and historic neighborhoods.
- Most east-west travel in the study area occurs on three streets: Richmond Terrace, Castleton Avenue, and Forest Avenue.
- Most roads are narrow, two-lane corridors with historic buildings built up to the sidewalk.
- Motorists, bicyclists, transit services, and industrial businesses share the same road network.

Former North Shore Railroad Right-of-Way

- Running from St. George to the Arthur Kill, the North Shore Railroad served passengers from Staten Island and New Jersey through the 1950s and carried freight through the 1980s.
- The City owns portions of the right-of-way with Federal Transportation Authority oversight and provides easements to private businesses.
- Some portions are elevated, some at-grade, and others below-grade (see page 9).
- The Arthur Kill Railroad Lift Bridge was rebuilt and a portion of the rail line (west of Union Avenue) was reopened in 2005 for freight service to the New York Container Terminal, industrial properties, and for municipal services.

Challenges for North Shore Residents and Businesses

While North Shore residents are proud of their communities, they also face serious socio-economic and quality of life challenges (all statistics from US Census):

- The study area contains communities with some of the borough's highest poverty and unemployment rates:
 - In 2009, North Shore median household income was 15 percent lower than Staten Island overall (although twelve percent above the City-wide level) and North Shore per capita income was 12 percent lower than Staten Island overall.
 - In 2009, the unemployment rate for North Shore residents was 7.9 percent, higher than the borough-wide unemployment rate of 7.0 percent.
- North Shore residents have slightly lower educational attainment than Staten Island residents overall (18 percent are without high school diplomas versus 13 percent overall). They are also less likely to have post-secondary degrees than City-wide residents.
- Like the rest of Staten Island, the population of the North Shore is aging. Between 2000 and 2009, a slight drop in the share of the population under 18 (27 percent to 26 percent) was accompanied by a rise in the share of the population over 55 (19 percent to 21 percent).
- North Shore residents face some of the worst commute times in the country. Forty-three percent spend over 45 minutes traveling to work,

and a lack of sufficient options contributes to a low proportion (35 percent) of commuters using public transit west of St. George.

- Open space is scarce compared to the rest of Staten Island, particularly in St. George, Mariners Harbor—Arlington, and Port Richmond. Where neighborhood parks do exist, they do not provide connections to create a larger open space network, and waterfront access points generally lack amenities.
- While the industrial sector provides valuable jobs, many inactive sites pose environmental and development challenges. Multiple sites have been identified as contaminated.
- Because the North Shore is a waterfront community, many areas remain vulnerable to erosion and storm surges, which are predicted to worsen over time with climate change. Wakes from the active shipping channel cause further erosion to the Kill Van Kull shoreline.

Community Priorities

In the context of these challenges, the extensive community engagement process included a series of conversations about tradeoffs, including a facilitated budget exercise, which proposed a series of projects and gave participants limited funds to divide among their priorities. (For more information on the results of the game, please visit the project website found on the back cover.) From this work and ongoing input from local stakeholders, elected officials, and partner City and State agencies, a series of priorities emerged, including:

- **Transportation Solutions:** The need for better transportation connections for all users



The second open house included a budget exercise seeking to draw out community members' priorities

- **High Quality Jobs:** Both new job opportunities and the opportunity for local residents to access maritime and industrial jobs
- **Waterfront Access:** Improved views, parks, and pedestrian paths along the waterfront
- **Environmental Challenges:** The need to remediate brownfields and enforce environmental standards for existing and expanded industry
- **Infrastructure:** The need for stormwater drainage, sanitary sewers, traffic/road improvements, and schools should be reviewed for existing neighborhoods and all new developments
- **Short Term Actions:** Concrete changes in the near term
- **Neighborhood Centers:** Protect and revitalize the North Shore's historic mixed-use neighborhoods