



EastTremont and 3rd Avenue

EXISTING STATIONS

# TREMONT

# TREMONT

## EMERGING COMMERCIAL CORRIDOR



### INTRODUCTION

#### SYNOPSIS

The Tremont Metro-North Station is located along the re-emerging East Tremont Avenue vibrant commercial corridor. While the corridor currently has extremely dynamic pockets of business activity, remnants from a turbulent past have left the corridor with erratic development patterns and haphazard streetscape amenities, ultimately creating a disjointed corridor which does not encourage additional development. Area stakeholders are currently working to form a Business Improvement District which will provide an opportunity to take a comprehensive look at the needs of the corridor and begin to address these gaps. This section examines the current pedestrian environment and recommends implementable solutions to create a successful corridor which supports access to current transit resources.

The Tremont Metro-North Station is located on Tremont Avenue between Park Avenue North and South. There are separate northbound and southbound entrances on the south side of the East Tremont Avenue overpass. Tremont is one of three “access stations” and we chose to focus on pedestrian access along the East Tremont Avenue commercial corridor.

#### HISTORY

The East Tremont neighborhood, generally bounded by East 183rd Street to the north, Crotona Avenue to east, the Cross-Bronx Expressway to the south and Webster Avenue to the west, has a complex history. Tremont’s growth was built around transit, with the former 3rd Avenue elevated rail line running through the heart of the neighborhood. Tremont Avenue was established as a commercial corridor that served the neighborhood early in its development. The neighborhood was also a center of civic activity, with Bronx Borough Hall located in Tremont Park (formerly named “Old Borough Hall” Park) from

1897 until 1969, at which time it was demolished. It functioned as the main Bronx Borough Hall until 1935, when its functions were consolidated into the Bronx Courthouse on the Grand Concourse.

With the development of the elevated rail line, immigrants poured into the neighborhood, oftentimes escaping the crowded tenements of the Lower East Side. Ethnic groups cycled through the neighborhood, mirroring larger demographic shifts in many other urban areas: first Italian and Irish immigrants, then Jewish, and after World War II, African Americans and Hispanics. Unfortunately, the latest phase of immigration, both in the Bronx and in many other inner cities, coincided with several decades of urban turmoil beginning in the latter 1960s. This period was prompted by the combination of several factors, including the continued loss of residents to suburban areas, the growing decline of US manufacturing jobs in urban areas, and the gradual shift of job opportunities to suburban communities. These changes in urban centers resulted in high unemployment, and little tax revenue to support public services like education, police and fire services, and public assistance.

In Tremont these larger societal shifts were compounded by two key events: (1) the construction of the Cross Bronx Expressway, and (2) the discontinuation of the 3rd Avenue Elevated Rail service. The Cross Bronx construction would last from 1948 to 1963 and cut through the heart of the neighborhood. Its route would displace thousands of residents and create a difficult divide in the tight knit community. During this same period continuing 3rd Avenue rail service to Manhattan was phased out, with Manhattan access completely ending in 1955, and in 1973 the remaining Bronx service was completely discontinued. These two events directly contributed to further decline in the neighborhood and to Tremont Avenue as many moved away or were





**FIGURE 1** | Entrance to Tremont station, intersection of East Tremont Avenue and Park Avenue.

## COMMUNITY CHARACTERISTICS | Tremont Study Area

### Metro-North Station Weekday Ridership (2011)



20 inbound passengers  
77 outbound passengers

### NYC Subway Station Daily Ridership (2012)\*

**D** Tremont Ave: 8,882 weekday | 10,412 weekend  
**B** 174-175th St: 4,706 weekday | 5,833 weekend

- The majority of local residents either walk or take public transportation to work; implementing street furniture and providing appropriate street lighting increase the safety of the neighborhood
- The high unemployment rate highlights the need for economic development; the recent rezoning of the area helps address this job shortage and increase local businesses

	STUDY AREA <sup>1,2</sup>	THE BRONX	NEW YORK CITY
Hispanic	65%	53%	29%
Per Capita Income	\$13,789	\$17,992	\$31,417
Renter Occupied Units	88%	79%	68%
Housing Units with No Access to a Vehicle	53%	59%	56%
With Access to One Vehicle	5%	30%	31%
Take Public Transit or Walk to Work	70%	64%	67%
Population Density (per square mile)	60,296	32,536	21.6%
Unemployment Rate (2010)	16%	12%	11%
<b>TOTAL POPULATION</b>	<b>77,660</b>	<b>1,365,725</b>	<b>8,336,697</b>

<sup>1</sup> The study area is based on select Census tracts within a 1/2 mile radius of the Tremont station

<sup>2</sup> United States Bureau of the Census, 2006-2010 American community Survey 5-Year Estimates

\* MTA Subway Ridership, 2012. [http://www.mta.info/nycct/facts/ridership/#chart\\_s](http://www.mta.info/nycct/facts/ridership/#chart_s)



**FIGURE 2** | View from 3rd Avenue (circa 1900) looking west across East Tremont Avenue.

Source: @ The Museum of the City of New York

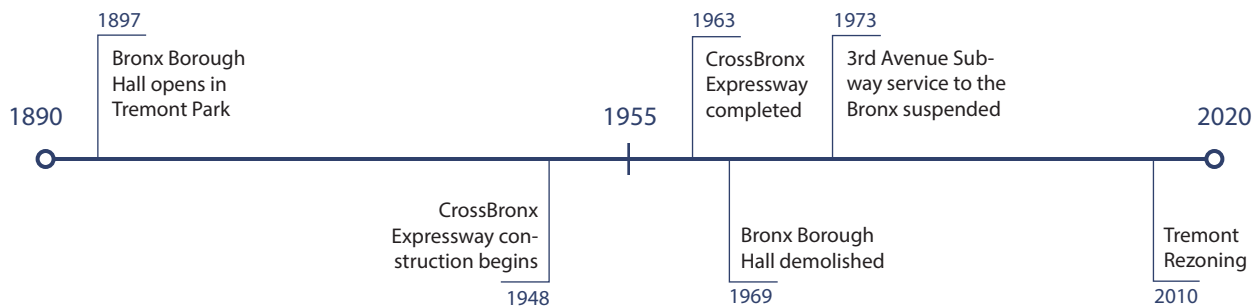
displaced during construction associated with the Cross Bronx, and remaining residents were disconnected from the means to access job opportunities outside their neighborhood when the 3rd Avenue El was demolished. During this period, the economic vitality of the neighborhood, and the Tremont Avenue retail corridor, suffered greatly. This period of crisis and turmoil in the neighborhood has only recently begun to stabilize.

### AREA CHARACTERISTICS

This history is significant because it demonstrates the interdependence between the neighborhood and its infrastructure, clearly demonstrating that the stability and health of a neighborhood is deeply connected to the accessibility and quality of transportation assets. Their fortunes rise and fall together. As the community has stabilized in the last decade, the importance of the re-establishing the Tremont Avenue corridor as a means to re-connect to other transit options, other job opportunities and other neighborhoods is paramount to a sustained recovery. In addition to the vibrant commercial corridor

along Tremont Avenue, the neighborhood currently benefits from the following assets:

- The **Metro-North rail station** located on East Tremont Avenue which provides commuter rail service along the Harlem Metro North line, and provides access to Manhattan to the south, and to the north, access to stations as far north as Dutchess County, including Mount Vernon and White Plains.
- Access to the **B/D subway lines** at Tremont Avenue and the Grand Concourse and to the #4 line at either Jerome Avenue and 176th Street or Burnside Avenue. The B/D station is approximately a quarter mile from the Metro North Station, and either #4 station is approximately a half mile away.
- Entrances to the **Cross Bronx Expressway** which are accessible through Webster, 3rd and Arthur Avenues. The expressway generates peak hour traffic along the Tremont Avenue corridor.



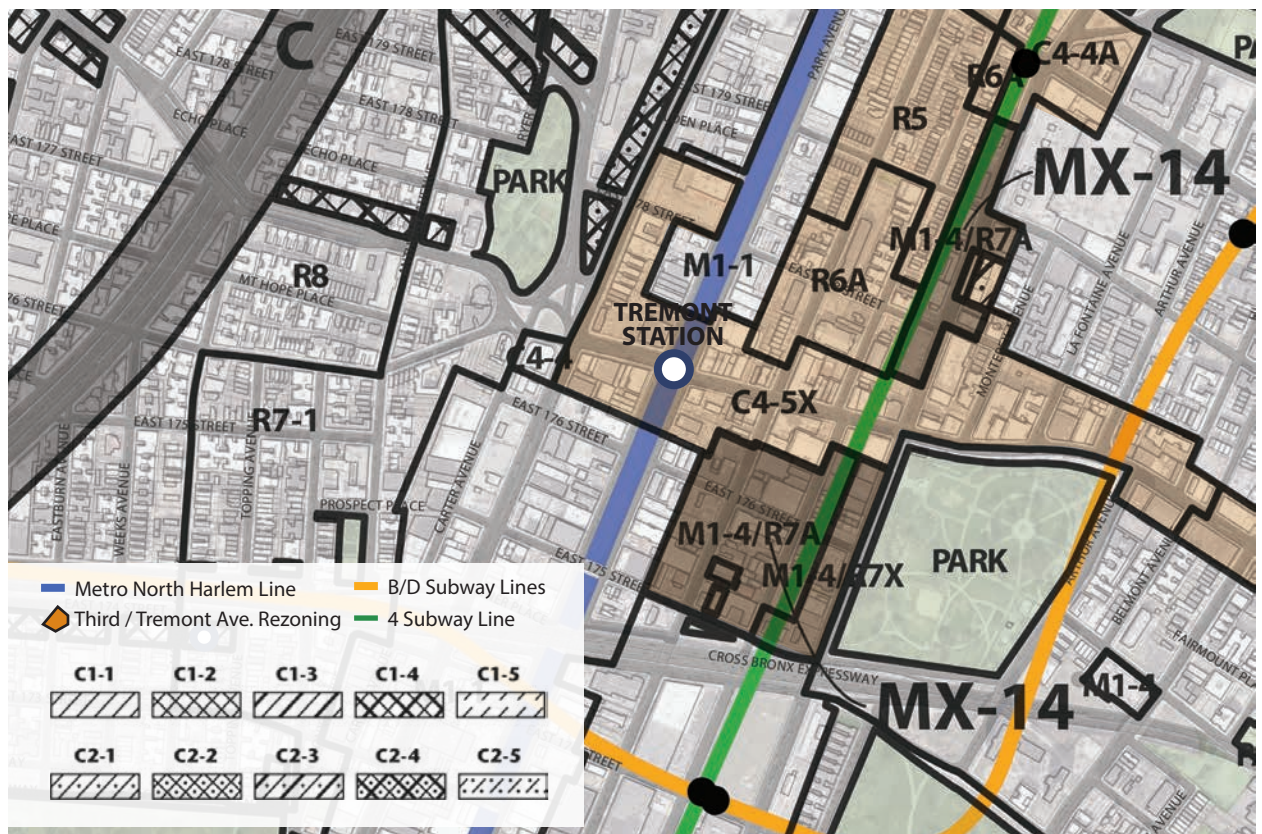
**FIGURE 3** | Tremont Neighborhood timeline.



- The growing **Bathgate Industrial Business Zone** which is located south of East Tremont Avenue generally between Washington Avenue and Anthony Avenue, extending south beyond the Cross Bronx Expressway. It is administered by the South Bronx Overall Economic Development Organization (SoBRO) and it employs approximately 3,000 employees.
- A robust network of bus transportation including a new **Select Bus Service (SBS)** along Webster Avenue. When the 3rd Avenue elevated rail ceased service completely in 1973, transit service was replaced by a series of bus lines that now include the Bx40/Bx42, Bx36, Bx41, Bx15/Bx55. Select Bus Service on the BX41 along Webster Avenue began in the spring of 2013.
- **Tremont Park** is a 15-acre open space and recreation area once part of the larger Crotona Park to the south, prior to the development of the Cross Bronx Expressway. It occupies the entire southern side of Tremont Avenue between 3rd and Arthur Avenue.
- In 2010, portions of the corridor were rezoned as part of the 3rd Avenue/Tremont Avenue re-

zoning which aimed to facilitate increased development potential along the Tremont Avenue commercial shopping corridor. The current zoning allows for flexibility in terms of building mixes, as one could build a significant purely commercial building, or a mix of residential and commercial uses. In order to unify the corridor and improve walkability, new developments facing Tremont Avenue now have minimum and maximum height limits to ensure a sense of enclosure for the pedestrian realm, as well as ground floor commercial and transparency requirements to help ensure the corridor is populated by vibrant and active uses. This zoning allows for substantial growth along the corridor and the access solutions identified in this section are complimentary to its salient features (see Figure 4).

East Tremont Avenue has long served as a commercial corridor which provides goods and services to the surrounding community. As development patterns and transportation options have changed, gaps along the corridor have materialized. This has created an inconsistent and uncomfortable pedestrian environment which discourages healthy resi-



**FIGURE 4** | Rezoning of Tremont Avenue (shown in blue) from C4-4 to C45X. The rezoning increased the development potential of the Downtown of Tremont.





### Land Uses

- One and Two Family Homes
- Multi-Family Walkups
- Multi-family Elevator buildings
- Mixed Com/Residential Buildings
- Commercial Buildings
- Institutional Buildings
- Manufacturing Buildings
- Transportation/Utility Buildings
- Park/Open Space
- Parking Lots
- Vacant Land

### Transportation

- Metro North Harlem Line
- B/D Subway Lines
- Bus Routes
- 4 Subway Line

### Notable Land Uses Features:

- ① Manufacturing and institutional uses east of Webster Avenue and along Carter Avenue
- ② Several commercial buildings along Webster Avenue north of Tremont Avenue, and along Tremont Ave east of Park Ave (Tremont Commercial Corridor)
- ③ Residential and Mixed Commercial/Residential uses west of Webster Avenue



dential and commercial growth along the corridor. Pedestrian routes no longer support efficient inter-modal transit connections, resulting in undesirable commutes. As a result, the corridor feels disjointed and does not provide a sense of place for its users.

## CHALLENGES & RECOMMENDATIONS

Some of these challenges include:

- **Sidewalks** are often not wide enough, which restricts pedestrian flow. There is limited room for a dedicated strip to accommodate amenities like street trees and street lamps. Uses which add tremendous value to the pedestrian realm, such as sidewalk cafés, are largely infeasible.
- There is a critical **lack of lighting** along the entire corridor, contributing to the perception of the area as unsafe. This discourages patrons from spending time on the corridor after dark, which in turn forces businesses to close in the evening. With these ground floor uses closing, the ambient light and pedestrian activity associated with them disappears, reinforcing this perception.
- There are **inactive ground floor uses** and blank walls scattered throughout corridor. This limits walkability, reduces the continuity of ground floor commercial uses (and thereby continuous shopping experience), reduces ambient lighting at night and limits the potential of shop-keepers or store patrons to keep their 'eyes on the street'.
- A **lack of street furniture**, such as bus shelters and benches, discourages users from lingering on the corridor or using mass transit.
- **Tremont Park** is located on a steep grade as it approaches 3rd Avenue. This causes its amenities, namely its lighting, to be distanced from the street, creating an uncomfortable pedestrian experience at night along the park's edge. The comfort station at the corner of 3rd Avenue and East Tremont is inactive and the grand steps on 3rd Avenue south of Tremont lead to an empty space where the former Bronx Borough Hall existed until 1969.
- **Densities** along the corridor are not built to capacity, reducing the number of residents or employees that live or work in the community who will walk to shops, amenities and transit resources. Greater densities and a larger variety



**FIGURE 5** | Tremont Park, intersection of East Tremont and Monterey Avenues. The steep grade of the park (left) and blank street walls (right) are challenges for the community.

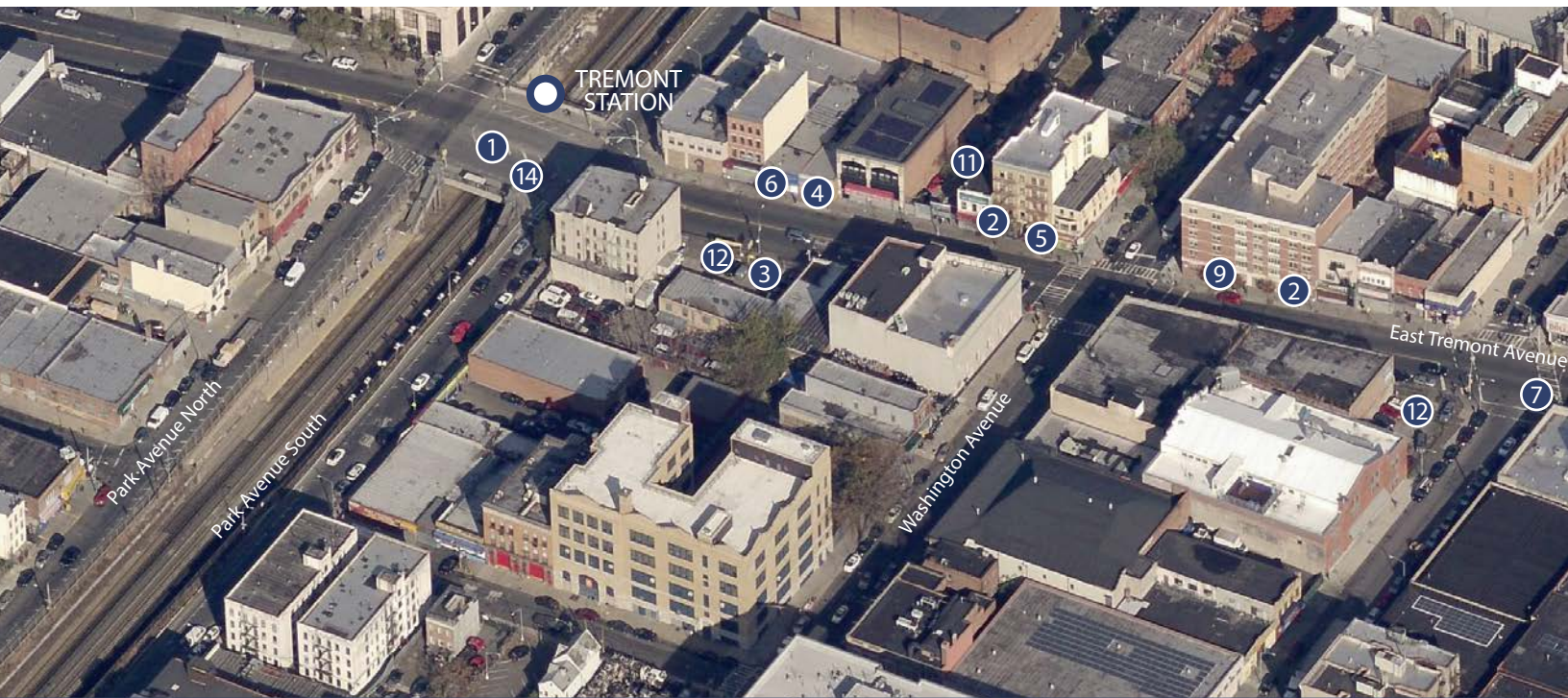


### Figure 6 | Streetscape Recommendations

- 1 Space is marked by striping, but does not seem to serve any function. Could be used as a compliment to station uses.
- 2 Where street trees are provided, the locations are often sporadic and trees vary in size. Continuity should be improved.
- 3 Several blocks have no street trees along the entire frontage. Plant trees at regular intervals, with adequate tree pits.
- 4 Incorporate bus amenities where appropriate.
- 5 Widen clear path on sidewalk to minimum of 10 feet for pedestrians where vehicular right of way permits.
- 6 Clear sidewalk of store merchandise to provide adequate clear paths.
- 7 Create well-defined crosswalks to ensure pedestrian safety.
- 8 Repurpose structure at northwest corner of Tremont Park as a food kiosk or similar active use.
- 9 Eliminate blank walls, and tenant ground floors with active uses which provide ample amounts of transparency.
- 10 Explore locating a civic or amusement use in the former Borough Hall site to promote activity and increase safety.
- 11 Support re-development of lower scaled properties (pursuant to recent rezoning) to create more continuous scale of building while maintaining historic fabric.
- 12 Vacant lots or parking lots fronting the street are especially disruptive of street wall continuity.
- 13 Provide additional street lamps. Explore themed lamps and banners to contribute to a destination feel.
- 14 Add supplemental lighting along Tremont Park and Metro-North Station as these areas lack ambient light produced by buildings.

FIGURE 6 | Tremont Avenue, between Park Avenue and Arthur Avenues.

Source: Pictometry





of shops and services within the neighborhood will promote its walkability and vehicle dependency will be reduced.

- There is **no signage** along the corridor to identify transit resources, the Industrial Business Zone, Tremont Park or the corridor itself. This does not support transit connections or create a sense of place along the corridor.
- **Current ridership** at the Tremont Metro-North station is one of the lowest in the system for full time stations, with less than one hundred total weekday boardings recorded in 2012. Currently only twenty-eight (12 inbound, 16 outbound) trains stop at the station daily, which equates to a train arrival generally every half-hour during peak times and up to two hours between arrivals the rest of the day. The stations low ridership does not justify increases in service. The entrance itself, while located in the middle of the commercial corridor, lacks connecting signage and specifically real time travel information for pedestrians along the corridor.

Despite these challenges, the recent rezoning of the corridor-paired with the ongoing effort of the Tremont Business and Community Organization—present an opportunity to revitalize the corridor with a multi-faceted approach. The 3rd Avenue/Tremont Avenue rezoning provides an opportunity to capitalize on new density potential. Current land uses on

East Tremont Avenue include a mix of two to six story commercial, community facility, and residential uses. The new C4-5X zoning permits a wide range of commercial, residential and community facility uses. The zoning mandates a predictable building form with street walls and height limits up to a relatively high density. As sites develop taking advantage of the new regulations additional streetscape improvements will compliment it and accommodate the increased pedestrian traffic. More residents walking to corridor amenities and transit resources would result in a decreased dependency on automobile usage, and reduce existing congestion.

The Tremont Business and Community Organization formed as non-profit organization to organize area merchants with the goal of forming a Business Improvement District (BID). A Tremont BID has the potential to help provide services such as streetscape improvements, sanitation, maintenance, security and marketing for the neighborhood. The BIDs could also provide stability attractive to developers, create consistent neighborhood themes that aid in placemaking, and draw new businesses to strengthen the corridor.

These two efforts are complimentary, and with the simultaneous approach can be of significant benefit to the East Tremont Corridor. Through this study the Department of City Planning worked closely with the Tremont Avenue Business Improvement District planning committee to maximize the impact of this





EXISTING CONDITIONS



EXISTING CONDITIONS



FIGURE 7 | Existing Conditions, northwest along East Tremont Avenue, half a block east of Tremont Station.

**Figure 7 Existing Conditions**

- ① Uneven street wall along Tremont Avenue
- ② Inconsistent building typology and design
- ③ Few streetscape amenities
- ④ Inactive ground uses and limited transparency
- ⑤ Little transportation signage, awnings, and window displays
- ⑥ Unkept and uneven sidewalks



**FIGURE 8** | Potential improvements, northwest along East Tremont Avenue, half a block east of Tremont Station.

**Figure 8 Potential Improvements**

- ① Develop strong street wall along both sides of Tremont Avenue
- ② Incorporate existing buildings to create visual interest between old and new buildings
- ③ Add street trees and street lamps at regular intervals
- ④ Promote active ground uses, ample transparency; limit size of residential lobbies and community facility uses
- ⑤ Coordinate signage, awnings, and window displays; add street banners along corridor
- ⑥ Improve and extend sidewalk width where vehicular right of way permits
- ⑦ Add street furniture like bus shelters and benches



study. The results of this approach are described in the following section.

Our recommendations are focused on the pedestrian environment along the East Tremont Avenue commercial corridor. A streetscape inventory was performed using several site visits and coordination with local business owners who confirmed and helped to identify deficiencies along the corridor. As a result of this effort, a number of persistent issues, opportunities and constraints were found throughout the corridor (see Figure 8).

Our analysis focused on the section of East Tremont Avenue from Park Avenue to Arthur Avenue. This stretch of East Tremont Avenue includes the Tremont Metro-North Station and then continuing east to Arthur Avenue where Tremont Park is located on the south side. It was chosen as a typical section of the corridor as it contains a variety of land uses and development types, including a number of underdeveloped parcels.

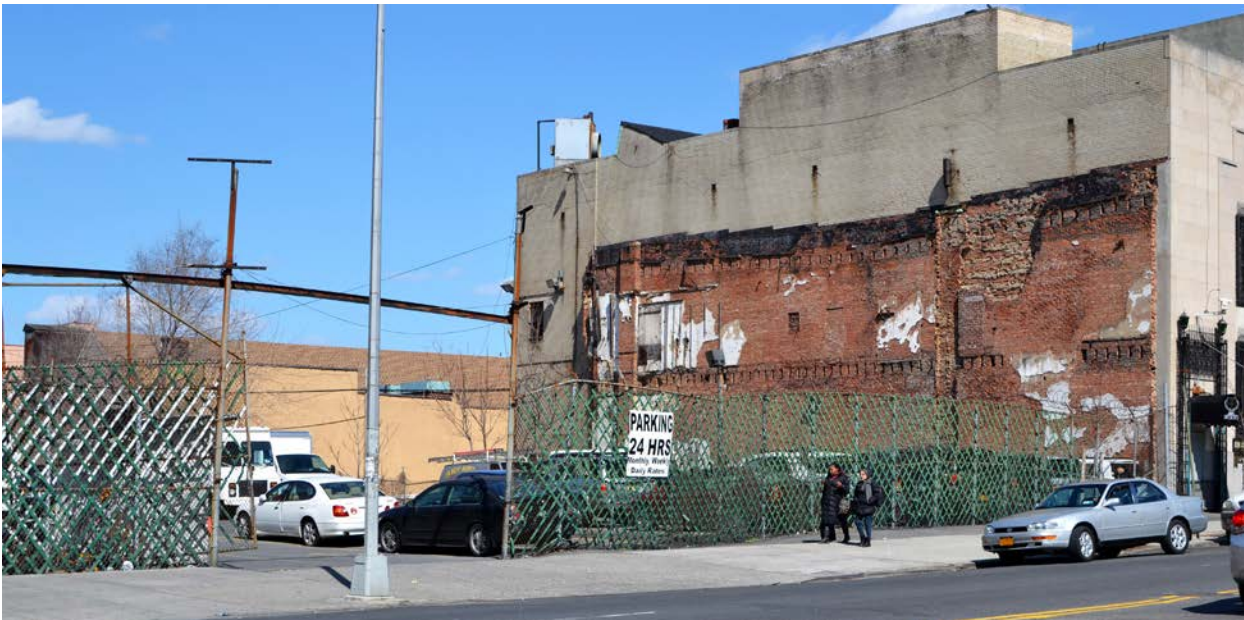
The principles described in *Section 1: Strategies for Walkability*, were applied to identify the gaps along the corridor. These principles were explained to stakeholders in the community during the process in order to emphasize their importance and serve as a model during the streetscape inventory.

In addition to this analysis, Figures 7 and 8 depict the transformation along a sample stretch of Tremont Avenue if some of the potential improvements identified along the corridor were implemented.

Figure 7 shows the current state of East Tremont Avenue looking west from 3rd Avenue. Figure 8 identifies potential improvements that promote a vibrant pedestrian environment along East Tremont Avenue and displays the development potential of recent zoning changes.

*Recommendations:*

- Work with private developers to promote the development of vacant or underutilized sites along the corridor where new zoning requirements will create a stronger street wall and continuous pedestrian path along the corridor.
- Promote the incorporation of existing historical buildings, whenever viable, to create visual interest between new and old buildings. This maintains some of the history and highlights the unique character of the area.
- Add street trees and street lamps at regular intervals. This provides shade, a buffer from the vehicular pathway and a lit pathway at night.
- Continue to promote active ground floor uses with ample transparency and limit the size of residential lobbies and community facility uses. Additional eyes on the street increase safety and lighting. Commercial uses typically provide additional amenities, transparency and lighting. Explore doing this through enhanced commercial requirements.



**FIGURE 9** | Parking lot, Tremont. Underutilized lots and limited streetscape amenities are challenges for the neighborhood, and present opportunities for commercial, residential, and mixed-use redevelopment.

- Coordinate signage, awnings, and window displays. Add street banners to the full corridor. This establishes the theme of East Tremont Avenue, developing a sense of place. This could be coordinated through a BID.
- Improve and extend sidewalk width. This provides room for streetscape amenities and allows ample space for pedestrian flow.
- Add street furniture such as bus shelters and benches. These amenities encourage the use of transit and for shoppers to linger within the commercial corridor
- Redevelop the comfort station in Tremont Park at the corner of 3rd and Tremont Avenue to strengthen the intersection and park as an anchor for the corridor.
- Provide consistent neighborhood way-finding signs depicting contextual location to key area destinations, transportation options, and informational maps. This could be a future candidate for the WalkNYC DOT neighborhood signage program and could be coordinated through the proposed Tremont BID.

## CONCLUSION

East Tremont Avenue is poised to re-emerge as a vibrant neighborhood commercial corridor. The simultaneous effect of the rezoning combined with the formation of a business improvement district could spur new development, attract new businesses, and create a pedestrian environment which establishes a sense of place. As these improvements occur along East Tremont Avenue it will spur increases in transit ridership which will justify investments in additional service, generate additional pedestrian activity providing increased revenue for businesses, and attract preferred jobs into the IBZ. All of these in combination would attract new residents, employees and visitors to the Tremont neighborhood, and would underpin a vibrant, sustainable future.

## PRIORITY RECOMMENDATIONS SUMMARY

- Improve the walkability of the East Tremont Avenue Corridor from Southern Boulevard to Webster Avenue by implementing consistent streetscape improvements working in conjunction with the local business community and grassroots efforts.
- Capitalize on the recent 3rd Avenue/East Tremont Rezoning to strengthen East Tremont Avenue as a neighborhood retail corridor and promote additional residential density.
- Improve ridership on the Tremont Metro-North station through:
  - Enhancements to the surrounding retail corridor which generate additional activity
  - Streamlining connections to subway, bus and select bus service
  - Strengthening access to local employers and community amenities