



MOTT HAVEN

THE BRONX

Commercial District Needs Assessment



NYC
Small Business
Services

careers
businesses
neighborhoods



The New Bronx Chamber of Commerce



ABOUT MOTT HAVEN

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 **3rd Avenue, Alexander Avenue, Brook Avenue, Bruckner Boulevard, Canal Place, E. 132nd Street, E. 134th Street, E. 136th Street, E. 137th Street, E. 138th Street, Lincoln Avenue, Rider Avenue, St. Anns Avenue, and Willis Avenue in Mott Haven**, and was conducted in partnership with the **New Bronx Chamber of Commerce** between November 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 **441 surveys** and various stakeholder meetings with neighborhood merchants, shoppers, workers, property owners, and residents.

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Background

Mott Haven is a neighborhood rich with culture, character, and a commitment to community preservation. Bordered by Melrose, Port Morris, and Hunts Point, Mott Haven is located along the Harlem River with primary commercial corridors located on 138th Street, Bruckner Boulevard, and additional side streets. Situated between two of New York City's busiest retail corridors — 125th Street in Harlem and the Hub in Melrose — Mott Haven has been the historic home for many first-generation immigrant communities dating back to the early founding of the Bronx.

Previously countryside, the neighborhood now known as Mott Haven was developed as a thriving industrial area in the 1830s by Jordan L. Mott, who went on to build residential buildings for workers, including the area along and around Alexander Avenue, which now forms much of the Mott Haven Historic District. From the 1950s to the 1970s, an economic crisis depleted much of the area's commercial and housing stock as banks and the real estate industry withdrew investment from the South Bronx on a historically unprecedented scale. The neighborhood experienced significant loss of population and resources, which led to rampant arson, severe infrastructure damage, and deterioration of the community's built and environmental landscape.

Despite these challenges, Mott Haven residents persevered and worked to preserve their homes and community. The area is rich in cultural history, particularly in influential music and dance styles such as jazz, Latin jazz, salsa, and hip-hop. Following the disinvestment of the 1970s, a new generation of local leaders and organizations helped organize and form grassroots groups to help with community-based recovery and renewal efforts. Mott Haven has since undergone several land use changes and has experienced significant public and private investments for redevelopment in the area. The neighborhood's industrial past continues to influence the business activity to this day, allowing for a variety of uses such as automotive and warehouse businesses, as other buildings are also repurposed for residential and retail uses.

With close proximity to Manhattan, robust transportation access, and active community and business organizations, this area of the South Bronx is well positioned for continued growth while retaining the community's culture and traditions.

Neighborhood Demographics

See more on page 12

Home to a population of more than 41,000, Mott Haven's residents identify as 68% Hispanic/Latinx, 27% African American, 3% white, and 2% some other race. 29% of residents are foreign-born, with the majority coming from the Dominican Republic and Central America, in addition to a small but growing West African immigrant population. Spanish and English are the most common languages spoken in the area.

Future Opportunities

See more on page 5

Mott Haven is experiencing positive change thanks to the work of numerous community organizations. Historically a low-density neighborhood with a mix of light industrial and residential uses, Mott Haven is quickly developing. A dozen new mixed-income residential towers are currently being built, mostly in the southwestern corner along the Harlem River and next to the bridges that connect to Manhattan. The projected population increase in the next few years will provide an opportunity for the neighborhood's businesses to capture a new market. These new public and private investments will continue to bring opportunity to the neighborhood and its residents. As merchant organizing continues on each commercial corridor, it is important that these corridors work together to ensure that the neighborhood can retain the existing community and culture while also developing opportunities for new business growth.

Mott Haven



▲ Points of Interest

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

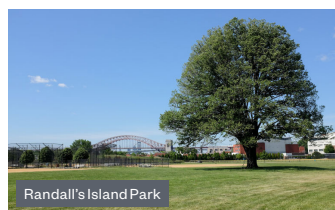
Merchant & Business Groups

- Mott Haven Merchants Association
- Port Morris Local Development Corporation
- South Bronx Alliance
- South Bronx Overall Economic Development Corporation
- South Bronx Unite
- The New Bronx Chamber of Commerce
- Third Avenue BID

Neighborhood Events

- 1 Bronx Pride Festival
- 40th Precinct Halloween Fest
- Alexander Avenue Open Street & Salsa Saturdays
- Big Bronx Sancochazo
- Big Gay Bronx Brunch
- Community Days of Action
- WinterFest at Graham Triangle

▲ Notable Places



KEY FINDINGS & OPPORTUNITIES

Strengths

- ▶ Robust public transportation network provides access to the neighborhood's commercial district via subway, bus, car, and Citi Bike
- ▶ Diverse, long-standing community of small businesses, many run by immigrant entrepreneurs, enhances the character of the neighborhood
- ▶ Affordable and diverse retail and dining options offer culturally appropriate products and services and are supported by a committed local customer base
- ▶ Rich cultural and ethnic identity, evident in the vibrant local street life, public art, and the neighborhood's musical history
- ▶ Relatively low commercial vacancy rate, varied building floor plans, and affordable rents allow for retail variety and provide opportunities for business growth
- ▶ Committed community and faith-based organizations have a track record of delivering community services and workforce development to local residents
- ▶ Relatively low building density and wide sidewalks, particularly on 138th Street, present a pleasant pedestrian experience and opportunities for merchants to provide outdoor shopping and dining experiences
- ▶ Home to multiple playgrounds and open spaces, including St. Mary's Park, which offer accessible green and play space for the neighborhood's residents and visitors

Challenges

- ▶ Inconsistent coordination and communication between government agencies and local community organizations causes reluctance among merchants to participate in initiatives designed to support the commercial district
- ▶ Long-standing businesses face challenges in adapting and growing to better serve a diverse customer base and would benefit from integrating technology and new marketing initiatives
- ▶ Inconsistent hours, including late morning opening and early evening closing, for many institutions and retail businesses reduces nighttime foot traffic and can lead to negative perceptions of safety
- ▶ Increasing public safety concerns negatively impact the experience of both merchants and shoppers
- ▶ Litter, animal waste, and insufficient sanitation along the commercial corridors and in open spaces result in an unpleasant streetscape
- ▶ Public spaces lack sufficient amenities to meet people's needs for resting, sitting, eating, and socializing
- ▶ Aging building stock along with a high proportion of storefronts in need of physical improvement make it difficult to attract a mix of commercial tenants
- ▶ High traffic intersections and darkly lit corridors, particularly under the Major Deegan Expressway, create street safety challenges for pedestrians



138th Street Storefronts



Salsa Saturdays on Alexander Avenue



Make Space for the Arts Mural



Automotive Businesses on St. Ann's Avenue



138th Street Storefronts



Alexander Avenue Storefronts



Cypress Avenue Storefronts



St. Ann's Avenue Storefronts

Opportunities

- ▶ Celebrate the neighborhood's unique culture and diversity through community events that encourage residents and visitors to support local businesses
- ▶ Maintain clean sidewalks and public spaces along the commercial corridors and encourage community participation in beautification efforts
- ▶ Connect merchants to local law enforcement to grow awareness of crime prevention practices and alleviate concerns regarding public safety
- ▶ Install and improve lighting on key commercial corridors to address safety concerns and make the corridors more inviting to pedestrians at night
- ▶ Advocate for an equitable approach to housing development and support services that addresses the multiple crises of houseless residents, mental health, and substance abuse, which impact the health of the neighborhood and its commercial corridors
- ▶ Support merchant organizing efforts and increase communication between businesses, residents, and City agencies
- ▶ Develop wayfinding materials along with print and digital guides to direct employees, residents, and visitors to local retail and restaurant options
- ▶ Increase and improve tourism opportunities by embracing existing public art and creating opportunities for the growing local artist community
- ▶ Create a district marketing strategy that unites the Hub, 138th Street, and Bruckner Boulevard commercial corridors with coordinated placemaking and events
- ▶ Ensure the pedestrian safety plans and related funding commitments negotiated as part of the neighborhood jail investment plan are implemented equitably across the neighborhood
- ▶ Explore options to develop a community-based organization or business improvement district (BID) with a focus on serving small businesses and improving the public realm on the commercial corridors
- ▶ Provide marketing support and opportunities to existing small businesses to increase their reach and highlight unique local offerings

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

BUSINESS LANDSCAPE: MOTT HAVEN

Business Inventory

396

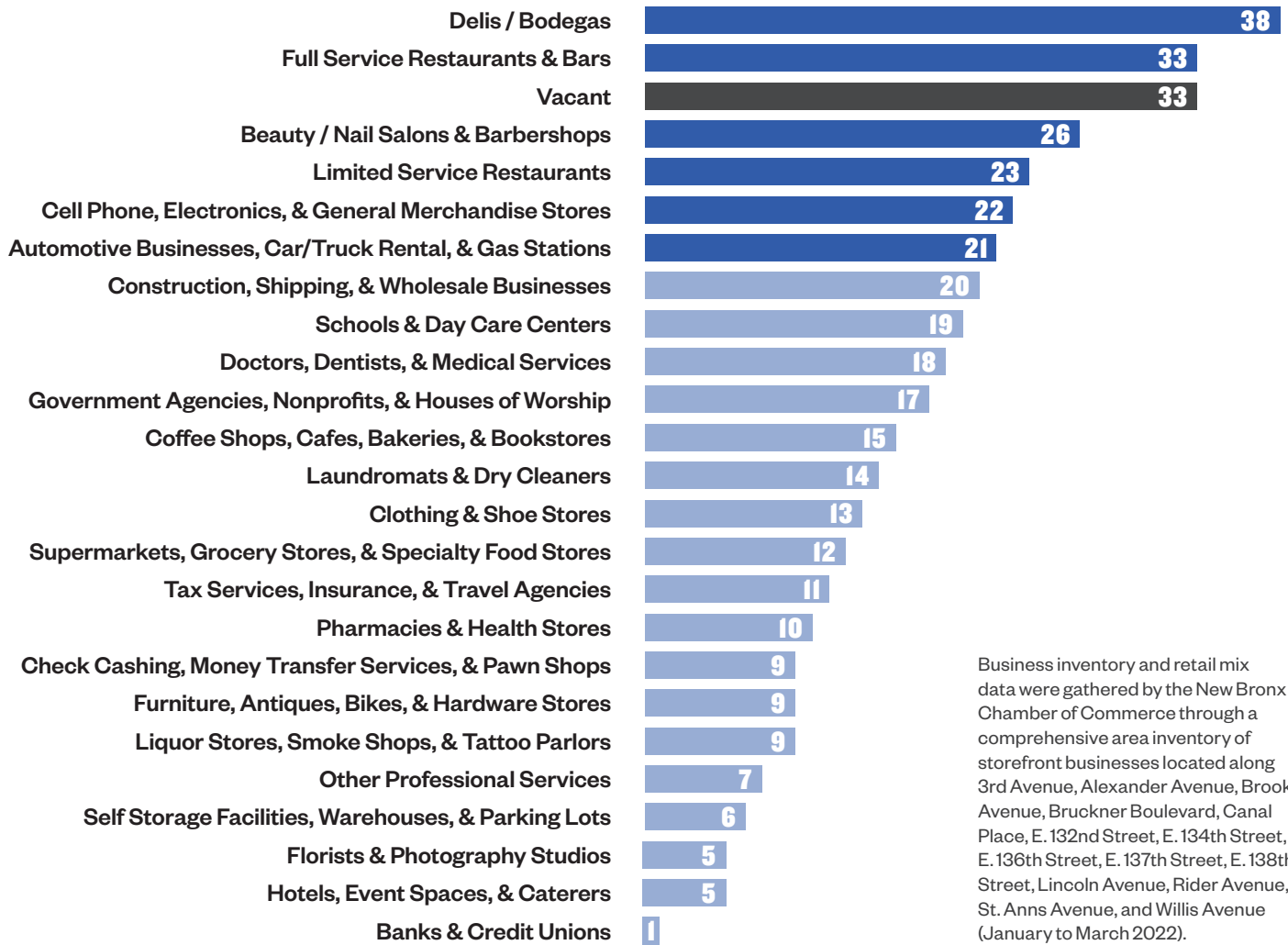
Total Number of Storefronts

8.3%

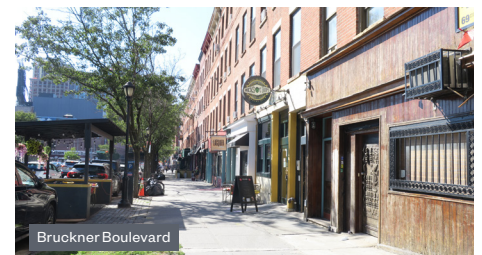
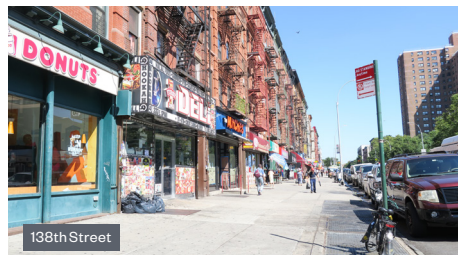
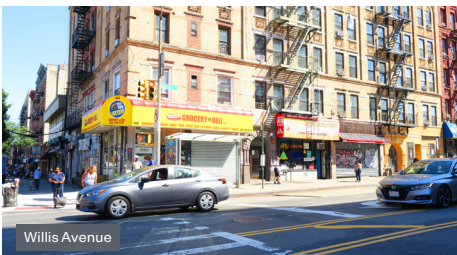
Storefront Vacancy*

*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

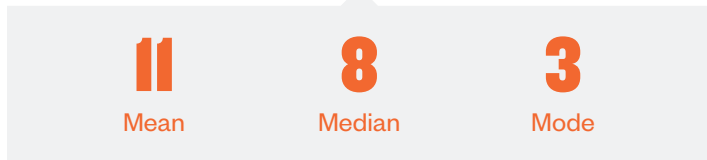
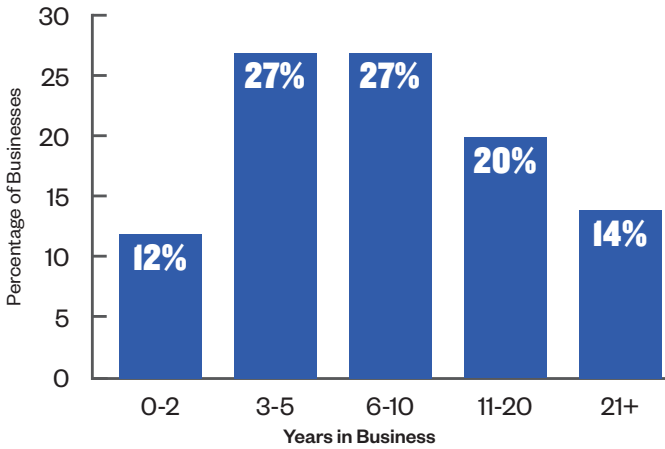


Business inventory and retail mix data were gathered by the New Bronx Chamber of Commerce through a comprehensive area inventory of storefront businesses located along 3rd Avenue, Alexander Avenue, Brook Avenue, Bruckner Boulevard, Canal Place, E. 132nd Street, E. 134th Street, E. 136th Street, E. 137th Street, E. 138th Street, Lincoln Avenue, Rider Avenue, St. Anns Avenue, and Willis Avenue (January to March 2022).



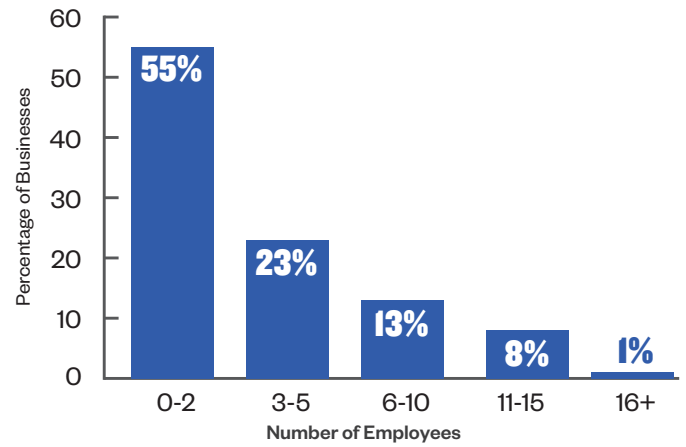
What We've Heard from Mott Haven Merchants

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?



Does your business currently have a website?



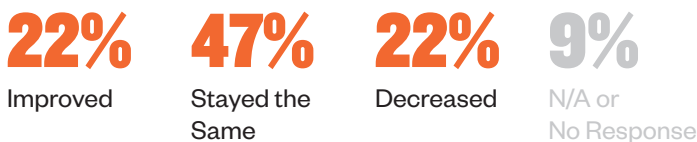
Are you a minority or woman-owned business?



Does your business currently use social media?



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



Source: Based on 148 merchant surveys conducted by the New Bronx Chamber of Commerce in Winter and Spring 2022.

BUSINESS LANDSCAPE

What We've Heard from Mott Haven Merchants & Shoppers

What makes the Mott Haven commercial district unique?

- "Community organizations really care about the people and will do whatever they can to build up the neighborhood."
- "All businesses are run by people living within the community. Investing in these businesses invests DIRECTLY into this community."
- "It is authentic, has great spirit, great potential to evolve and keep its character."
- "The history, the mix of businesses, the multicultural community."
- "Everyone here is so committed to community."

What do you like about the commercial district?

- "The people here care about the small businesses."
- "The food options. You have everything here."
- "Neighbors that have your back. There's an extended family feel."
- "Easy to get around in this area. I can walk and get anything I need."
- "It feels like the heart of the Bronx."

What changes need to occur in Mott Haven to attract more visitors/shoppers?

	% Merchant Response	% Consumer Response
▶ Safety	92%	33%
▶ Sanitation, street cleaning	88%	44%
▶ Landscaping/beautification	60%	50%
▶ Street lighting	41%	25%
▶ Merchant collaboration	35%	15%
▶ Community events	26%	22%
▶ Storefront improvements	18%	21%
▶ More open space	10%	21%
▶ Transportation improvements	7%	17%
▶ Other	3%	2%
▶ Parking	1%	37%
▶ Graffiti removal	0%	12%

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

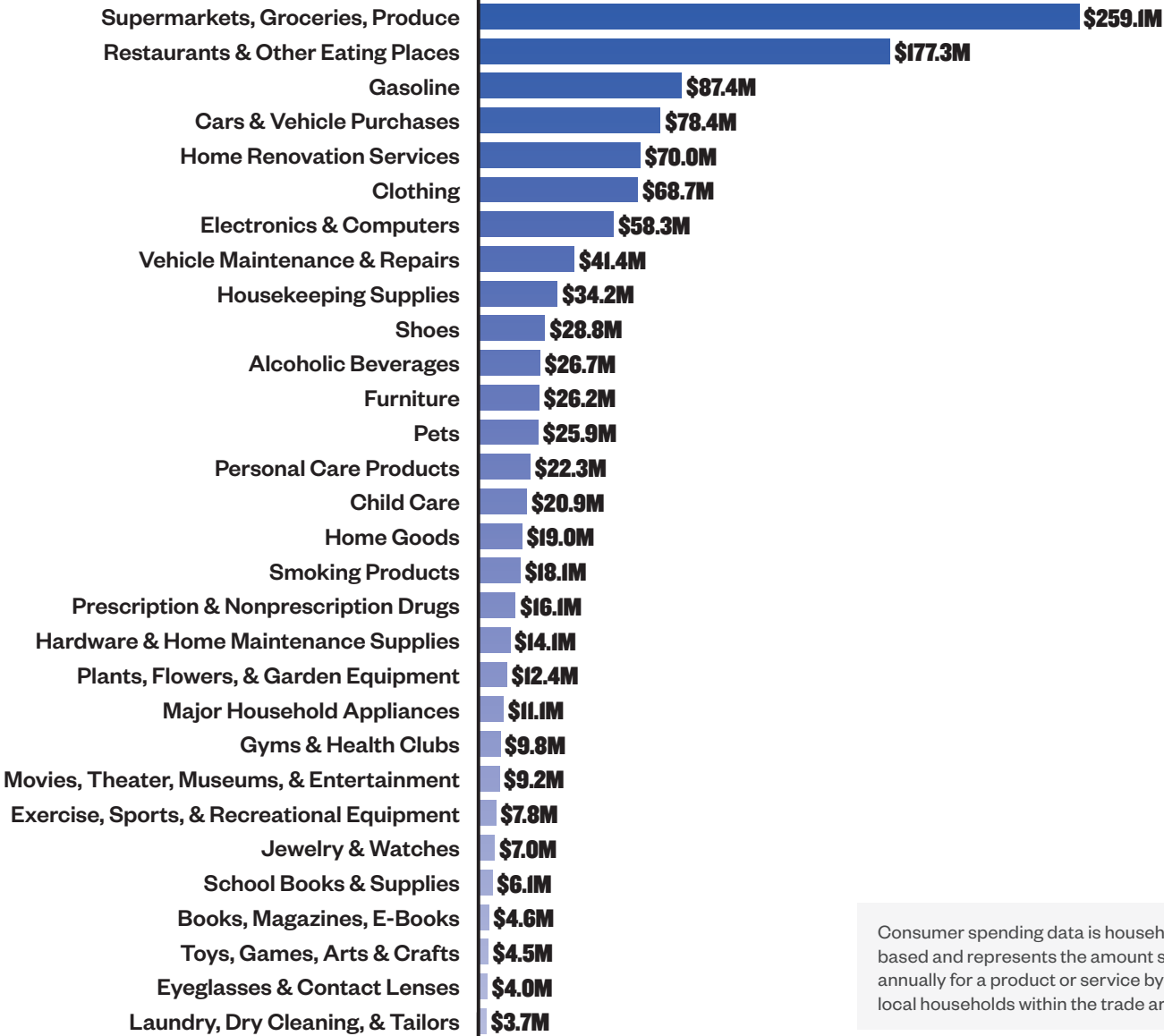
- "A community event page or monthly flyer informing locals on what's happening in the area."
- "Cleaner streets! Trash and dog poop pickup, better lighting, pocket parks/plantings."
- "Keep outdoor seating and events like Alexander Street closure to promote community get-togethers and kids events."
- "River access and more trees. We are so close to the water and yet it's cut off to us."
- "More bike lanes, better cleanup of streets and sidewalks, more unique businesses."
- "Green spaces, better traffic flow, street lights, better sanitation and sanitation education."

Source: Based on 148 merchant surveys and 293 consumer surveys conducted by the New Bronx Chamber of Commerce in Winter and Spring 2022.

Mott Haven Retail Demand

<p>Residents spend</p> <h1 style="color: orange;">\$1.19B</h1> <p>each year on retail goods and services</p>	<p>Residents will spend</p> <h1 style="color: orange;">\$1.47B</h1> <p>each year on retail goods and services by 2027</p>
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2022 Consumer Spending



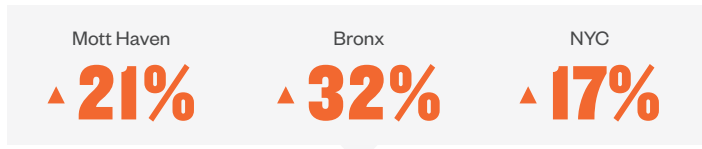
Consumer spending data is household-based and represents the amount spent annually for a product or service by all local households within the trade area.

Source: ESRI forecasts for 2022 and 2027; Consumer Spending data are derived from the 2018 and 2019 Consumer Expenditure Surveys, Bureau of Labor Statistics.

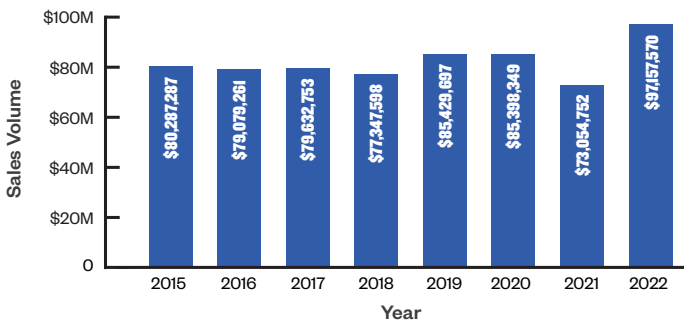
BUSINESS OUTLOOK

Business Trends

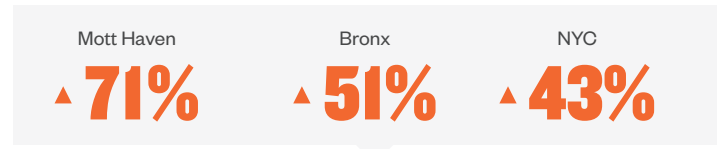
Change in Total Business Sales, 2015-2022



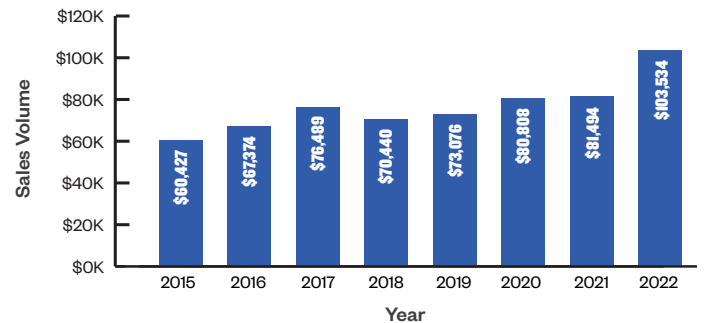
Mott Haven Total Business Sales



Change in Median Sales by Business, 2015-2022



Mott Haven Sales by Business



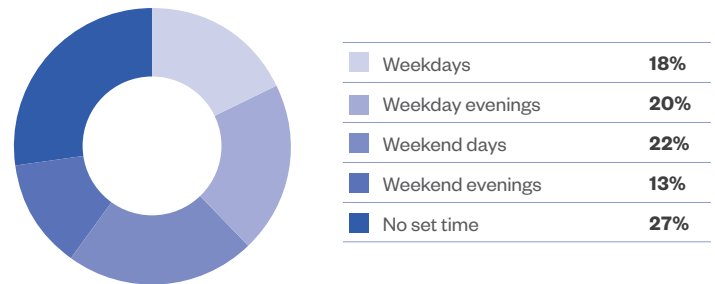
*Year 2022 reflects data gathered up until March 2022. Source: Division of Tax Policy, NYC Department of Finance.

What We've Heard from Shoppers

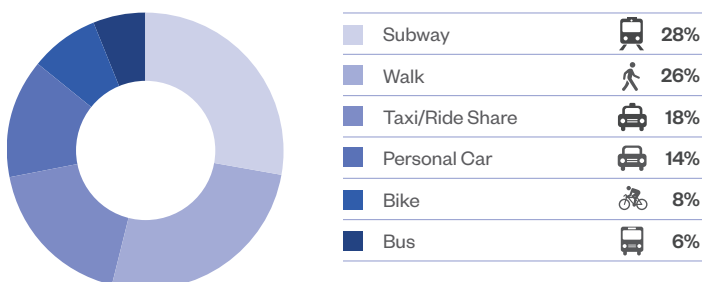
What additional types of businesses would you like to see in Mott Haven?

- ▶ Clothing stores & general retail 
- ▶ Supermarkets & grocery stores 
- ▶ Coffee shops & cafes 
- ▶ Restaurants 
- ▶ Entertainment & nightlife 
- ▶ Pharmacies 

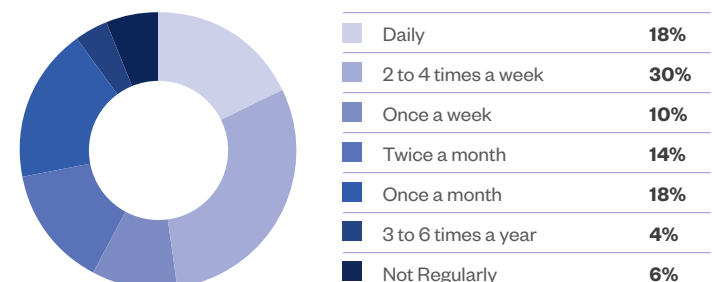
When do you usually shop in Mott Haven?



How do you usually travel to Mott Haven?

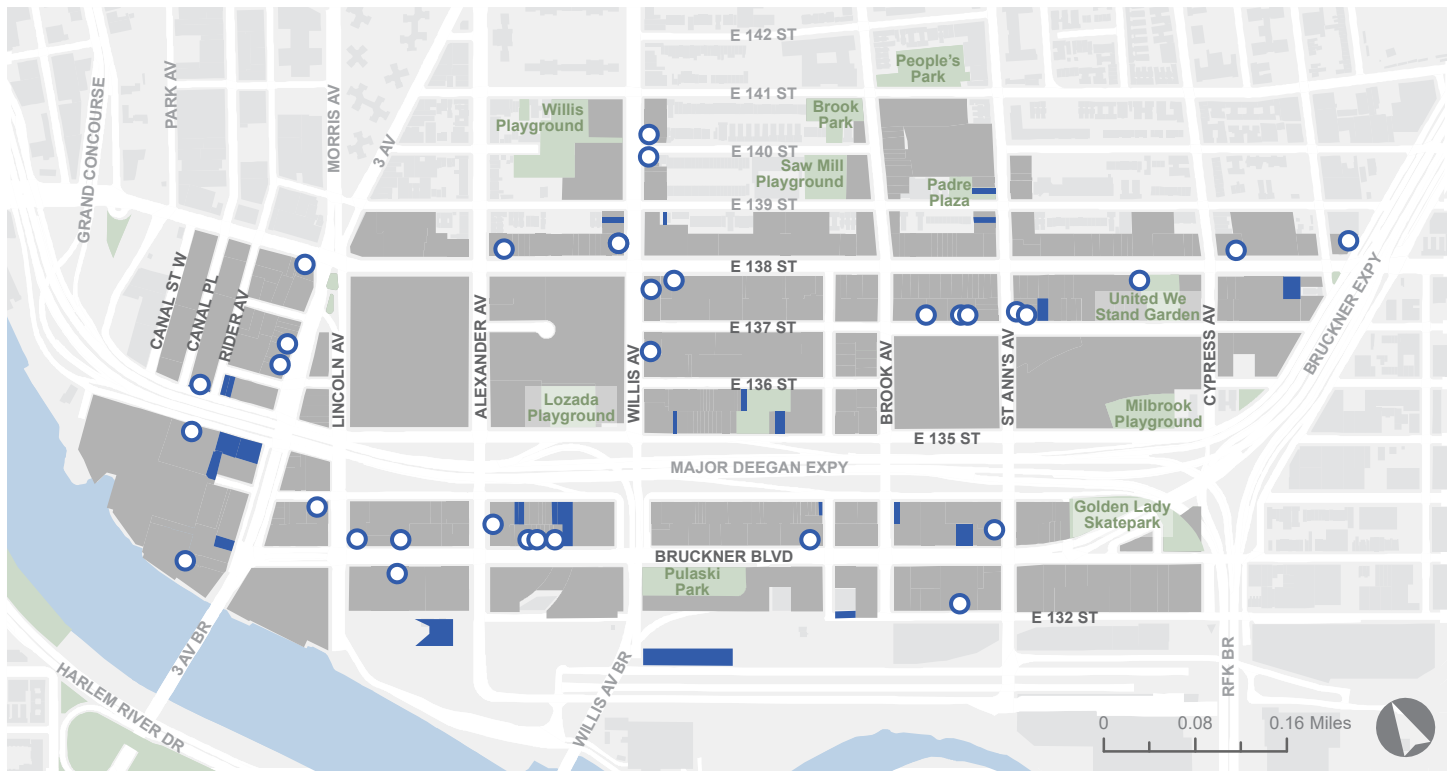


How often do you shop in Mott Haven?



Source: Based on 293 consumer surveys conducted by the New Bronx Chamber of Commerce in Winter and Spring 2022.

Storefront Vacancies

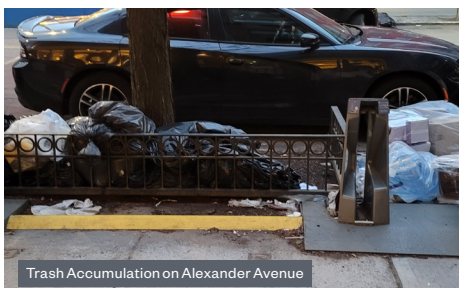


- Vacant Lots
- Vacant Storefronts
- Parks & Open Spaces

An analysis of 396 storefronts along 3rd Avenue, Alexander Avenue, Brook Avenue, Bruckner Boulevard, Canal Place, E. 132nd Street, E. 134th Street, E. 136th Street, E. 137th Street, E. 138th Street, Lincoln Avenue, Rider Avenue, St. Anns Avenue, and Willis Avenue revealed that 32% of storefronts are in poor condition, 38% are in average condition, and 30% are in good condition.

Streetscape Observations

- ▶ Poor street and sidewalk conditions exist across the commercial district, with many intersections lacking clear pedestrian crossings.
- ▶ High vehicle speeds, especially around the on and off ramps to the bridges and highways, create an unsafe environment for pedestrians.
- ▶ The Major Deegan Expressway creates a distinct barrier between the rapidly developing Harlem River waterfront area and the rest of the neighborhood.
- ▶ Litter and overflowing trash cans create a public health and walking hazard, particularly along 138th Street and adjacent side streets.
- ▶ Many outdoor dining structures, especially along 138th Street, are poorly maintained and contribute to sanitation issues.
- ▶ The area around Canal Street is prone to flooding, leading to pedestrian accessibility issues.
- ▶ Greenery is limited and inconsistent throughout the neighborhood, with some corridors lacking tree pits and plantings, while others have broken or missing tree guards.
- ▶ Many streets lack sufficient lighting at night, particularly 134th Street from Lincoln Avenue to Willis Avenue and the area around the Cypress Avenue subway station, leading to a poor sense of safety.



Trash Accumulation on Alexander Avenue



Dumping under the Bruckner Expressway



Trash Accumulation on Alexander Avenue

DATA APPENDIX

Study Area Boundaries

Assessed Commercial Corridors

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

- ▶ E. 138th St from Canal St W. to Bruckner Expressway
- ▶ E. 137 St from Willis Avenue to Bruckner Expressway
- ▶ E. 136 St from Willis to Brook avenues
- ▶ Canal St W. from E. 135th to E. 138th streets
- ▶ Canal Place from E. 135th to E. 138th streets
- ▶ Rider Avenue from E. 135th to 138th streets
- ▶ 3rd Avenue from Bruckner Blvd to E. 138th St
- ▶ Lincoln Avenue from E 132nd to E. 138th streets
- ▶ Alexander Avenue from E 132nd to E. 138th streets
- ▶ Willis Avenue from E. 132nd to E. 141st streets
- ▶ Brook Avenue from E. 132nd to E. 141st streets
- ▶ St Ann's Avenue from E. 132nd to E. 140th streets
- ▶ Cypress Avenue from E. 132nd to E. 138th streets
- ▶ Bruckner Blvd from 3rd Avenue to Bruckner Expressway

Mott Haven Context Area

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

Trade Area

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



Area Demographics

Total Population

41,437	Mott Haven
1,435,068	Bronx
8,419,316	New York City

Population Density (per square mile)

33,417	Mott Haven
33,711	Bronx
27,845	New York City

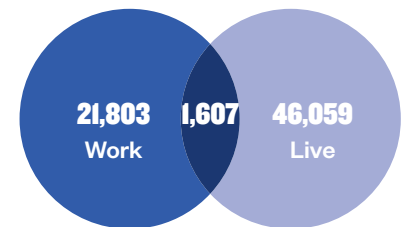
Average Household Size

2.66	Mott Haven
2.76	Bronx
2.60	New York City

Car Ownership

22.4%	Mott Haven
41.0%	Bronx
45.4%	New York City

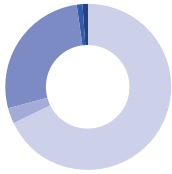
Commuting Patterns



21,803	Work in Mott Haven, live elsewhere
1,607	Live & Work in Mott Haven
46,059	Live in Mott Haven and work elsewhere

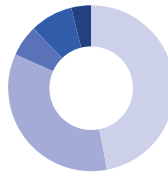
Area Demographics

Race/Background



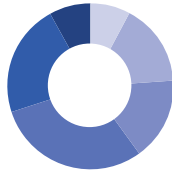
	Mott Haven	Bronx	NYC
Hispanic or Latino (of any race)	68%	56%	29%
White alone	3%	9%	32%
Black or African American alone	27%	29%	22%
Asian alone	0%	4%	14%
Two or more races	1%	1%	2%
Some other race alone	1%	1%	1%
American Indian and Alaska Native alone	0%	0%	0%
Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander	0%	0%	0%

Educational Attainment



	Mott Haven	Bronx	NYC
12th Grade or Less, No Diploma	39%	27%	18%
High School Graduate	29%	28%	24%
Some College, No Degree	17%	18%	14%
Associate's Degree	5%	7%	6%
Bachelor's Degree	7%	13%	22%
Graduate or Professional Degree	3%	7%	16%

Population Age



	Mott Haven	Bronx	NYC
Under 5 Years	8%	7%	6%
5-14 Years	16%	14%	11%
15-24 Years	16%	16%	12%
25-44 Years	30%	28%	31%
45-64 Years	22%	23%	25%
65+ Years	8%	12%	15%

Median Age

37.0	Mott Haven
34.2	Bronx
36.7	New York City

Foreign-Born Population

29%	Mott Haven
35%	Bronx
37%	New York City

Income

Median Household Income

\$21,511	Mott Haven
\$40,088	Bronx
\$63,998	New York City

Pop. Below Poverty Line

48%	Mott Haven
28%	Bronx
18%	New York City

Employment

Population in Labor Force

56%	Mott Haven
60%	Bronx
64%	New York City

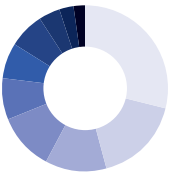
Unemployment*

12.2%	Mott Haven
10.0%	Bronx
6.3%	New York City

*Note: As of May 2022, the unemployment rate is 8.0% for the Bronx and 5.7% for New York City (NYSDOL); updated neighborhood-level data for Mott Haven is not available.

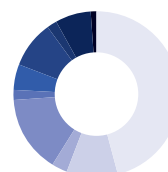
Local Jobs and Employment

Local Residents' Employment



Educational Services, Health Care, Social Assistance	29%
Accommodation, Food Services, Arts, & Entertainment	17%
Professional, Scientific, & Technical Services	12%
Retail Trade	11%
Other Services	8%
Finance, Insurance, Real Estate	7%
Transportation, Warehousing, Utilities	7%
Construction	4%
Public Administration	3%
Manufacturing	2%

Jobs Located in Mott Haven



Educational Services, Health Care, Social Assistance	46%
Accommodation, Food Services, Arts, & Entertainment	10%
Professional, Scientific, & Technical Services	3%
Retail Trade	15%
Other Services	2%
Finance, Insurance, Real Estate	5%
Transportation, Warehousing, Utilities	9%
Construction	2%
Public Administration	7%
Manufacturing	1%

DATA APPENDIX

Mott Haven Transportation



▲ Mott Haven Transportation

— Bus Routes

... Bicycle Lanes

— NYC Subway

Average Monthly Bus Ridership (2021)

114,809	Bx1
119,646	Bx2
140,358	Bx15
67,187	Bx17
107,410	Bx21
48,492	Bx32
16,045	Bx33

Average Weekday Subway Ridership (2021)

2,127	4 5	138th St.-Grand Concourse
4,326	6	3 Ave.-138th St.
3,350	6	Brook Ave.
1,718	6	Cypress Ave.

Average Daily Vehicular Traffic (2019)

19,281	Bruckner Boulevard from Third to Willis avenues
39,454	Bruckner Boulevard from Willis Avenue to E. 135th Street
10,889	E. 138th Street from Third to Willis avenues
13,136	E. 138th Street from Willis Avenue to Bruckner Boulevard
10,742	Willis Avenue from Bruckner Boulevard to E. 135th Street
12,744	Willis Avenue from E. 138th to E. 148th streets
2,442	Brook Avenue from E. 132nd to E. 138th streets
22,951	E. 135th Street from Willis to Lincoln avenues
36,397	Third Avenue from E. 138th Street to Bruckner Boulevard

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

Recent SBS Neighborhood Investments

- ▶ *Commercial Revitalization*, Avenue NYC multi-year grant of \$300,000 awarded to the New Bronx Chamber of Commerce, 2021-2024.
- ▶ *COVID-19 Commercial District Support*, Strategic Impact Grant of \$20,000 awarded to the New Bronx Chamber of Commerce, 2021.
- ▶ *Open Streets*, Grant of \$50,000 awarded to Third Avenue BID, 2021.
- ▶ *Neighborhood 360° Fellows Host Organization*, awarded to Renaissance Economic Development Corporation, 2018-2019.

Existing Plans & Studies

261 Walton Avenue Rezoning, NYC Department of City Planning, 2021.

Playground 134 Reconstruction, NYC Parks, 2021.

Park Haven Rezoning, NYC Department of City Planning and NYC Department of Housing Preservation and Development, 2018.

Special Harlem River Waterfront District Expansion, NYC Department of City Planning, 2017.

Sources

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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.

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