



MURRAY HILL



QUEENS

Commercial District Needs Assessment



careers
businesses
neighborhoods



Asian American Federation



ABOUT MURRAY HILL

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 commercial corridors of **Northern Boulevard, 162nd Street, Depot Road, 149th Place, 150th Street, 41st Avenue** and **Barton Avenue** in **Murray Hill**, and was conducted in partnership with **Asian American Federation** between October 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.

Located in the northeast corner of Queens, Murray Hill is a unique destination for New Yorkers. Not to be confused with Murray Hill in Manhattan, it is bordered by Downtown Flushing, Whitestone, Auburndale, and East Flushing. Murray Hill is home to a variety of small businesses and offers a more suburban and serene residential environment compared to Downtown Flushing. Home to immigrant families from Korea, China, and other parts of Asia, the neighborhood's local businesses provide a mix of unique offerings that reflect the community's cultural diversity.

The areas now known as Flushing and Murray Hill were originally home to the Matinecock people until the arrival of Dutch settlers in the mid-1600s. The Dutch established a settlement called Vlissingen, which was later renamed Flushing when the English took control of the area. Once part of Flushing and home of prominent plant nurseries, Murray Hill started to experience residential development at the turn of the 20th century after the Long Island Rail Road (LIRR) provided easy access with the Murray Hill station. Historically home to Irish and Italian immigrants in the mid-20th century, Murray Hill welcomed new waves of immigrants from Asia as nearby Flushing grew into a hub for Asian American life in New York.

Murray Hill's commercial district is made up of three distinct areas: the Murray Hill LIRR station, the Broadway LIRR station, and the Northern Boulevard commercial corridor that connects these two nodes. Unofficially dubbed "Murray Hill Food Alley" among Korean residents, the immediate area surrounding the Murray Hill LIRR station offers a culinary treasure trove of authentic Korean cuisine enjoyed by locals and visitors alike. A short walk northeast is Northern Boulevard, the major thoroughfare and commercial backbone for the district, which is home to larger businesses, supermarkets, and franchises, mixed in with small family-owned shops. The less dense 162nd Street corridor offers a calmer shopping experience, where one can find tailors, printers, and wholesalers mixed in with cafes and restaurants.

Neighborhood Demographics

See more on page 16

Murray Hill is a neighborhood with a diverse and growing population of more than 48,000 residents. In this welcoming area for immigrants, residents are 59% Asian, 19% Hispanic/Latinx, 18% white, and 1% African American. Thanks to migration from other parts of Queens such as Flushing, Jackson Heights, and Woodside, the local Korean and Chinese populations have grown to make up 47% and 40% of the neighborhood's Asian population respectively. Murray Hill is a popular destination for many immigrant families, making the neighborhood's foreign-born population (63%) one of the highest percentages in New York City, which contributes to the individuality of its restaurants and shops. The neighborhood's median household income is \$51,782, lower than that of Queens (\$68,666) and New York City overall (\$63,998).

Future Opportunities

See more on page 5

With transportation connections from the LIRR and nearby 7 subway line, Murray Hill is a destination for people to visit from other parts of the New York metropolitan area and beyond. While merchants are still dealing with decreased revenue due to the COVID-19 pandemic, new businesses have been opening in the commercial district recently. Murray Hill Food Alley, in particular, has seen vacancies fill up faster than parts of Northern Boulevard and 162nd Street. In the past year, community events such as concerts and gatherings in the LIRR plaza and adjacent Barton Avenue Open Street have attracted new visitors to the Murray Hill Food Alley. Expanding on these activations to market the neighborhood's distinct character offers opportunities to increase business revenue. Additionally, investments in transportation improvements could improve foot traffic with residents and merchants expressing an interest in exploring microtransit options such as bike or scooter share programs to increase mobility within the neighborhood. With the close proximity to Flushing and the growing popularity of Korean culture, Murray Hill is poised to grow as a regional destination in the years ahead.

In This Report

Existing conditions, business data, and qualitative depictions of the neighborhood were gathered from more than **308 surveys** and various stakeholder meetings with neighborhood merchants, shoppers, workers, property owners, and residents.

Jump to...

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Murray Hill



▲ Points of Interest

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

Merchant & Business Groups

- Asian American Federation
- Korean American Nail Salon Association
- Murray Hill Merchant Association
- New York Korean Restaurant Association

▲ Notable Places



KEY FINDINGS & OPPORTUNITIES

Strengths

- ▶ Home to many Korean and diverse Asian small businesses that foster a sense of community and safety in the neighborhood
- ▶ Almost half of small businesses surveyed have an online presence and the number is growing, showing a willingness and desire to expand their digital marketing
- ▶ The neighborhood's proximity to Downtown Flushing has resulted in the concentration of supermarkets, spas, restaurants, bars, and other businesses that have Korean, Chinese, Thai, and other Asian owners, which attract shoppers from near and far
- ▶ The concentration of restaurants throughout the neighborhood, especially in the Murray Hill Food Alley, offers a diversity of culinary options and experiences
- ▶ The Murray Hill Merchants Association in the Murray Hill Food Alley and the New York Korean Restaurant Association on 162nd Street are active, interested in growing, have strong relationships in the community, and can serve as the base for wider merchant organizing in the neighborhood
- ▶ The large number of community-based organizations that serve the local immigrant communities and small businesses are a vital resource whose work can be built upon in future projects and programming
- ▶ LIRR stations at each end of the commercial district provide locals and visitors with transit access to the New York metropolitan area

Challenges

- ▶ Vacant storefronts and poor street lighting create dark areas that are a safety concern for pedestrians
- ▶ Increasing anti-Asian hate crimes and a general uptick in crime is a serious concern for local merchants and residents
- ▶ Limited public transportation options for local travel within the neighborhood deters people from walking or exploring the area
- ▶ Businesses have had trouble recruiting workers with adequate skills, experience, and proficiency in local languages, especially in the restaurant and service industries
- ▶ Lack of parking deters some visitors from shopping in Murray Hill and causes them to shop in areas where parking is more available
- ▶ Limited English service in many businesses makes it more challenging for visitors to find and shop at local establishments
- ▶ Rising rent is a challenge for local merchants and causing an alarming loss of legacy businesses
- ▶ Some restaurants use their outdoor dining space as storage and fail to maintain the structures





Northern Boulevard



Concert at Barton Avenue Open Street



LIRR Station Plaza



Murray Hill Playground

Opportunities

- ▶ Increase collaboration between merchants associations and local organizations through networking, mixers, and shared events and programming
- ▶ Leverage the rising popularity of Korean culture, including food, media, and other products, to attract visitors and expand the base of consumers
- ▶ Brand the neighborhood as “Koreatown” and establish it as a regional destination through district marketing campaigns and placemaking initiatives
- ▶ Launch an intensive merchant organizing campaign to take advantage of the willingness of merchants to collaborate and build their leadership so they can support programs promoting the commercial district
- ▶ Build upon merchants’ expanded use of digital platforms during the COVID-19 pandemic to offer digital marketing workshops and one-on-one technical support
- ▶ Plan more community events to bring diverse local communities together and improve perceptions of safety
- ▶ Connect limited English proficiency businesses with training, resources, and workforce development programs to help address the shortage of skilled and experienced workers
- ▶ Host neighborhood cleanups and beautification events that involve residents and small businesses to improve the streetscape environment
- ▶ Provide one-on-one support to merchants to ensure they have access to City and nonprofit resources in multiple languages including commercial lease support, regulatory compliance, licensing, and participation in City programs such as Open Restaurants

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: MURRAY HILL

Business Inventory

502

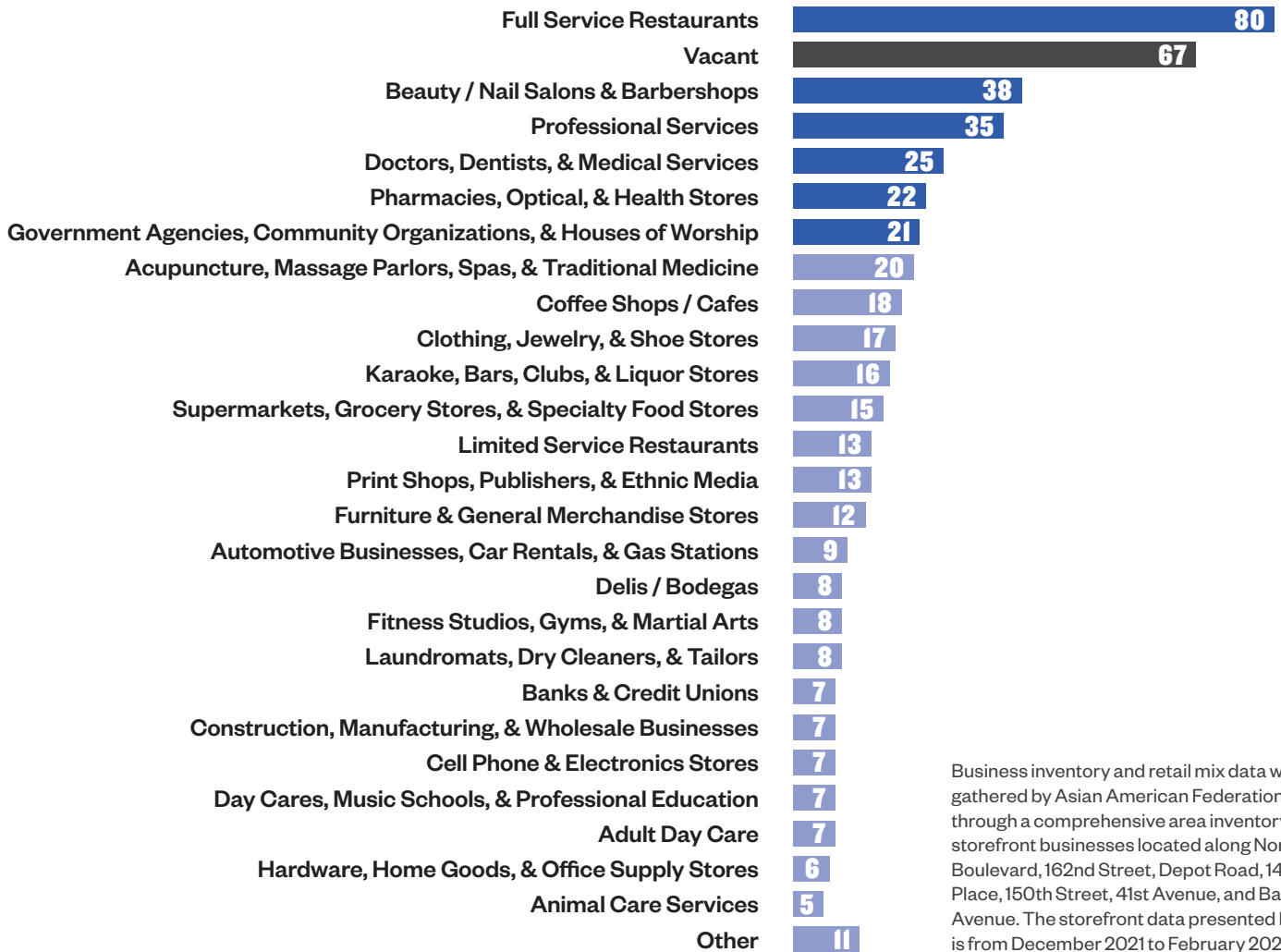
Total Number of Storefronts

13.3%

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

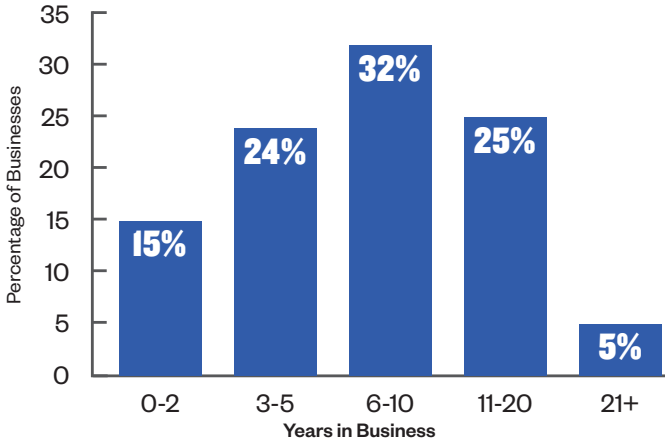


Business inventory and retail mix data were gathered by Asian American Federation through a comprehensive area inventory of storefront businesses located along Northern Boulevard, 162nd Street, Depot Road, 149th Place, 150th Street, 41st Avenue, and Barton Avenue. The storefront data presented here is from December 2021 to February 2022.



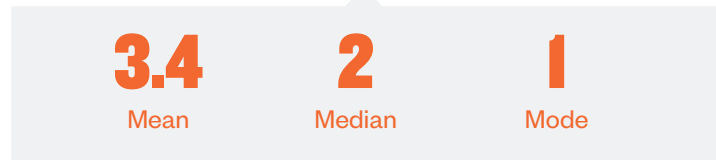
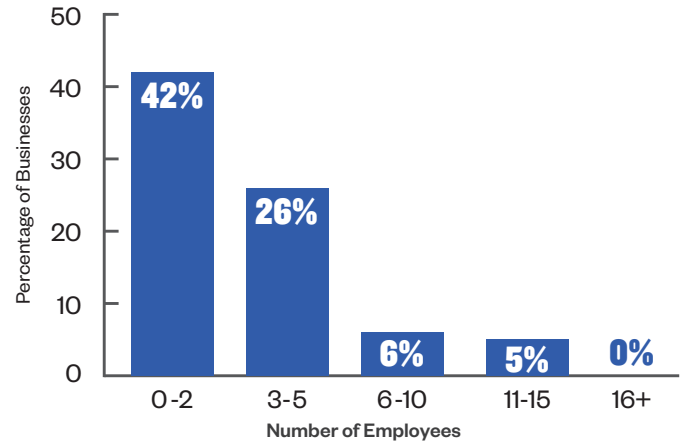
What We've Heard from Murray Hill Merchants

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?



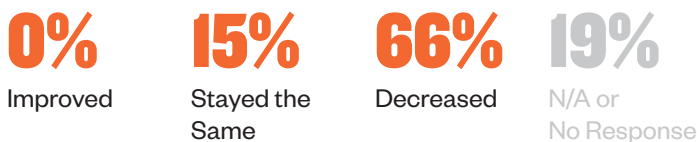
Are you a minority or woman-owned business?



Does your business currently use social media?



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



Source: Based on 111 merchant surveys conducted by Asian American Federation in Spring 2022.

BUSINESS LANDSCAPE

Murray Hill Food Alley

Business Inventory

88

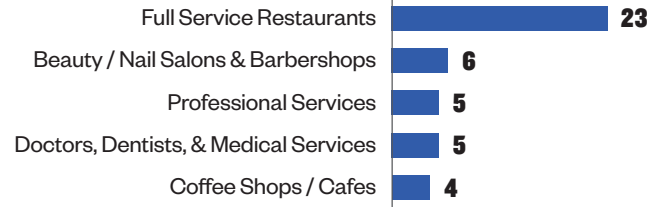
Total Storefronts

16%

Storefront Vacancy



Most Common Businesses



Storefront Conditions

34%

Poor

51%

Average

15%

Good

Northern Boulevard

Business Inventory

246

Total Storefronts

12%

Storefront Vacancy



Most Common Businesses



Storefront Conditions

21%

Poor

40%

Average

39%

Good

162nd Street

Business Inventory

168

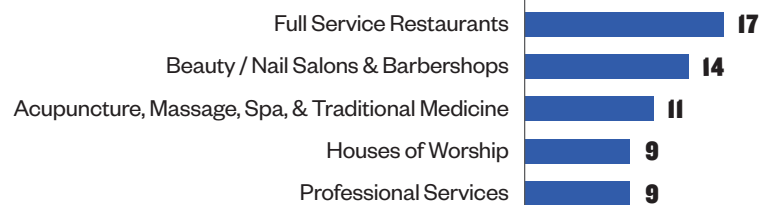
Total Storefronts

14%

Storefront Vacancy



Most Common Businesses



Storefront Conditions

43%

Poor

38%

Average

20%

Good

What We've Heard from Murray Hill Merchants

What do you like about the commercial district?

"Convenience and large Korean community."

"Delicious food options."

"Safe, people are nice, everything is close."

"There is a wide range of women's clothing."

"Variety, quality, authenticity, value."

"A lot of Asian cuisines, delicious!"

"Diversity - all different kinds of people."

"Being next to major road like Northern Boulevard has the potential for business to grow."

"Concentration of businesses with easy access and convenient parking."

"Presence of merchants association and assistance it provides. Weekend events held with cooperation among neighborhood merchants."

What makes the Murray Hill commercial district unique?

"Food! The environment here is so unique."

"High concentration of Korean businesses. I don't think anywhere else in the US would have such representation of Korean businesses."

"A variety of shopping and affordable options."

"A lot of Asian supermarkets and grocery stores in the area."

"I love the popularity and prosperity of the business district, and the culture makes the neighborhood unique."

"Restaurants!"

"Peaceful."

"Quiet atmosphere due to being away from Northern Boulevard."

BUSINESS LANDSCAPE

What We've Heard from Murray Hill Merchants and Shoppers

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

"I hope we can have more organizing activities and events for immigrant business owners to network and grow solidarity."

"I would like to see the outdoor dining areas (some used as storage) removed so that it does not hinder foot traffic and to allow more parking."

"Cleaner streets."

"Make a directory or map of local businesses."

"More economic support for small businesses."

"Improve transportation."

"More parking."

What changes need to occur in Murray Hill to attract more visitors/shoppers?

	% Merchant Response	% Consumer Response
▶ Safety	53%	41%
▶ Community events	26%	35%
▶ Landscaping/beautification	22%	37%
▶ Sanitation, street cleaning	22%	42%
▶ Transportation improvements	22%	32%
▶ More open space	16%	27%
▶ Street lighting	14%	21%
▶ Merchant collaboration	9%	16%
▶ Storefront improvements	5%	33%
▶ Graffiti removal	4%	9%
▶ Other	4%	9%

Source: Based on 111 merchant surveys and 145 consumer surveys conducted by Asian American Federation from October 2021 to June 2022.

Murray Hill Retail Demand

Residents spend

\$1.37B

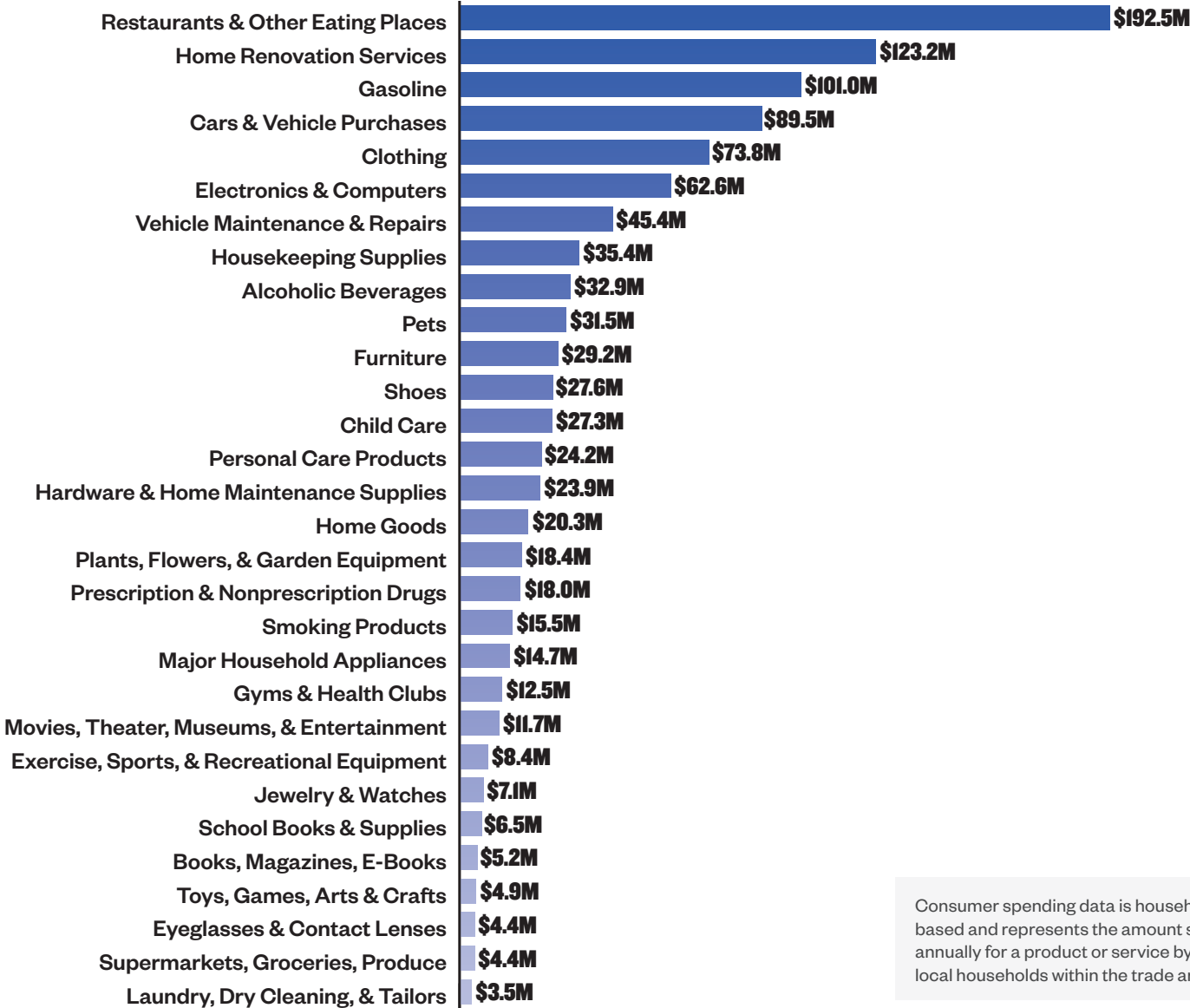
each year on retail goods and services

Residents will spend

\$1.59B

each year on retail goods and services by 2027

2022 Consumer Spending



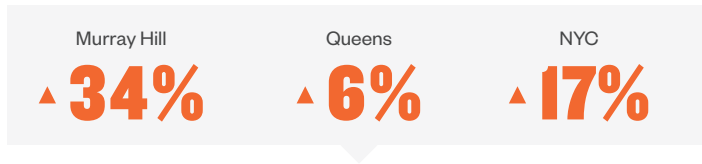
Consumer spending data is household-based and represents the amount spent annually for a product or service by all local households within the trade area.

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

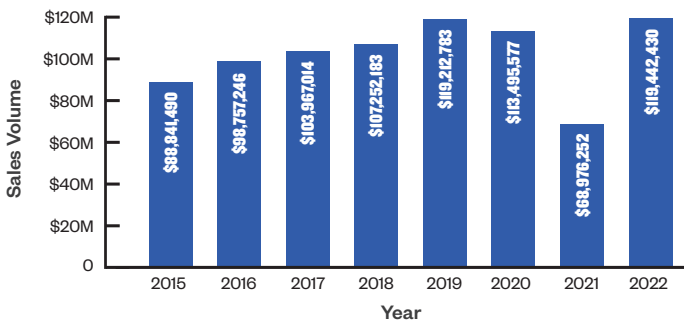
BUSINESS OUTLOOK

Business Trends

Change in Total Business Sales, 2015-2022



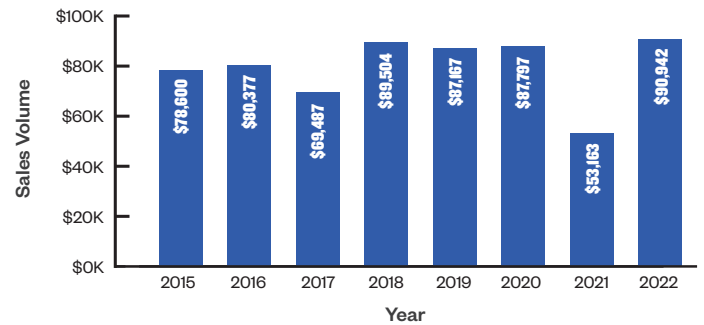
Murray Hill Total Business Sales*



Change in Median Sales by Business, 2015-2022








Murray Hill Median Sales by Business*



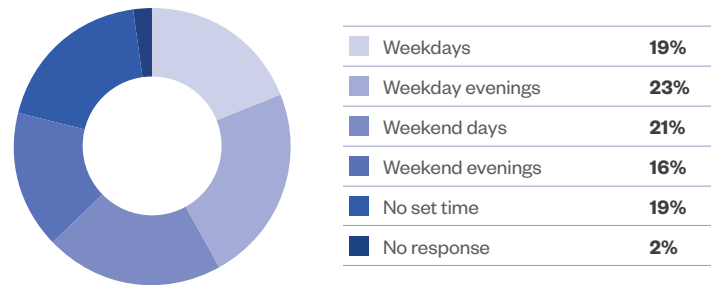
*Year 2022 reflects data gathered up until March 2022. Source: Division of Tax Policy, NYC Department of Finance

What We've Heard from Shoppers

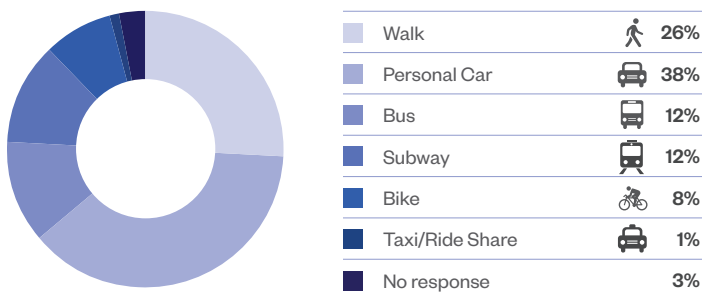
What additional types of businesses would you like to see in Murray Hill?

- ▶ Restaurants 
- ▶ Clothing stores 
- ▶ Supermarkets & grocery stores 
- ▶ Shopping mall 
- ▶ Bars 

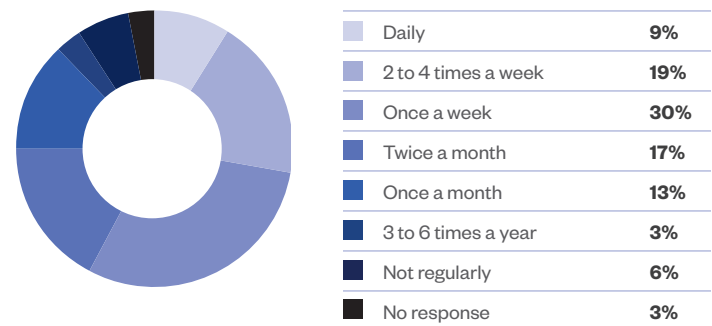
When do you usually shop in Murray Hill?



How do you usually travel to Murray Hill?

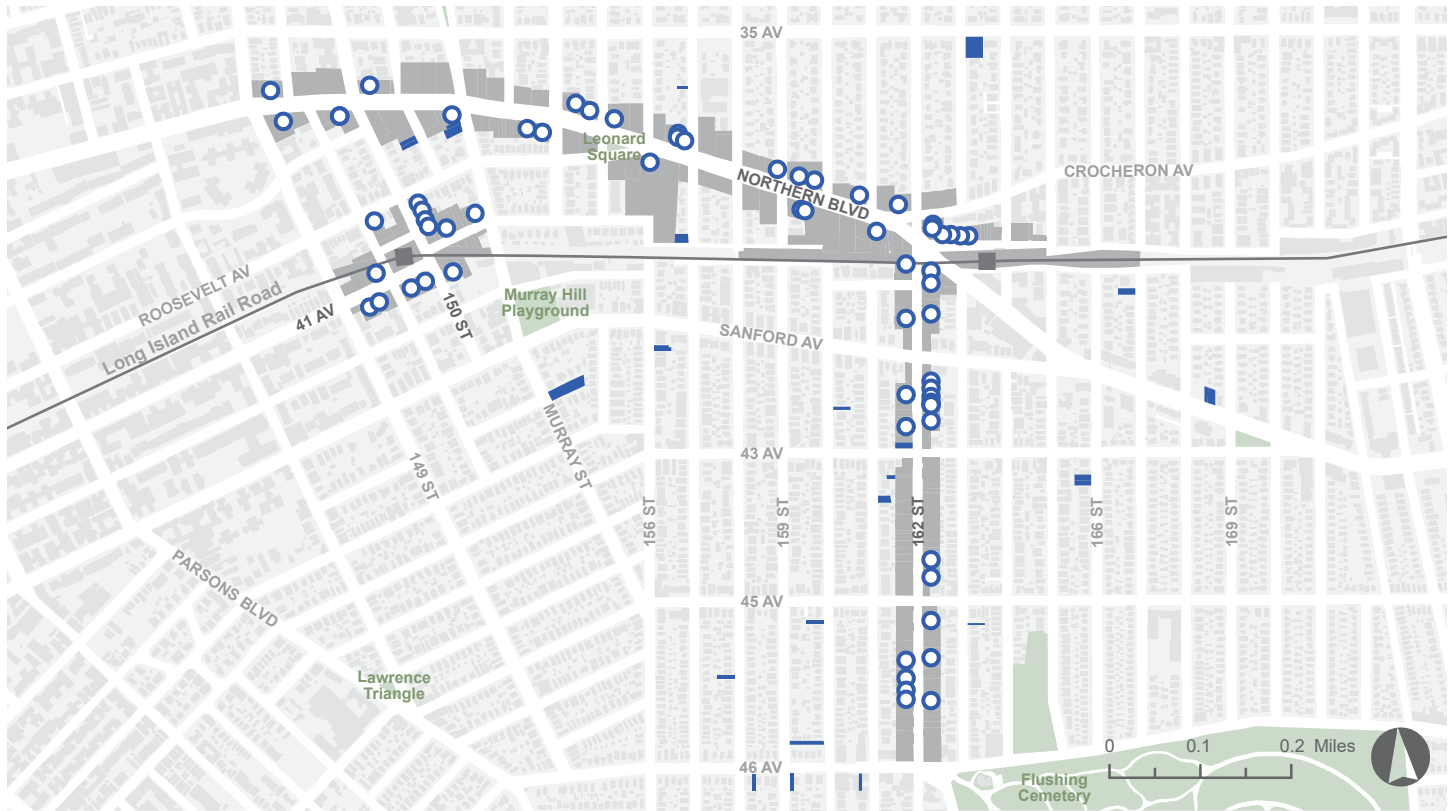


How often do you shop in Murray Hill?



Source: Based on 145 consumer surveys conducted by Asian American Federation from October 2021 to June 2022.

Storefront Vacancies



■ Vacant Lots

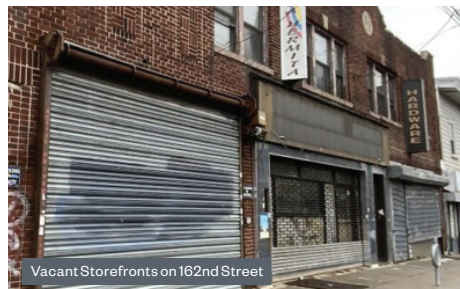
○ Vacant Storefronts

■ Parks & Open Spaces

An analysis of 503 storefronts along Barton Avenue, 149th Place, 150th Street, 41st Avenue, Northern Boulevard, and 162nd Street revealed that 30% of storefronts are in poor condition, 41% are in average condition, and 28% are in good condition.

Streetscape Observations

- ▶ Commercial corridors in the Murray Hill lack sufficient litter baskets, resulting in cups, bags, and other small items littering the streets.
- ▶ Double parking is a consistent issue that blocks pedestrian traffic, especially in the Murray Hill Food Alley and 162nd Street corridor.
- ▶ In the Murray Hill Food Alley, an awkward intersection of 150th Street and 41st Avenue between 41st and Roosevelt avenues lacks proper crosswalk marking and signage, and area merchants are concerned about the intersection as a safety hazard.
- ▶ There is a limited number of trees and greenery throughout the commercial district.
- ▶ There is a lack of benches throughout the commercial district.
- ▶ On 162nd Street there are sections of the corridor that lack sufficient street lighting and are poorly lit when businesses are closed in the evening.
- ▶ Shortage of parking in the area causes drivers to spend a long time looking for a spot; drivers have been observed circling the corridors looking for parking and some drive away without finding parking.
- ▶ Crowded conditions on sidewalks due to outdoor dining create difficult walking conditions for pedestrians in some sections of the commercial district.



PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

Public Space Study: LIRR Murray Hill Station Plaza

The Long Island Rail Road Murray Hill Station Plaza sits at the heart of the Murray Hill Food Alley. The station has depressed train tracks that run under the Plaza. The Plaza was renovated in 2020 to make it fully ADA accessible, including the installation of elevators and additional lighting. It sits adjacent to the Barton Avenue Open Street, which is managed in partnership with Asian American Federation and the Murray Hill Merchants Association. Barton Avenue Open Street and the LIRR Plaza both feature movable seats and tables. The Plaza provides space for seasonal events, such as musical and cultural performances, fitness programs, and other community events that activate and enhance the quality of the commercial district.



LIRR Murray Hill Station Plaza

What is your relationship to this space?

% User Responses

▶ Live in neighborhood	64%
▶ Visiting	25%
▶ Work in neighborhood	8%
▶ Small business owner	4%

What are the top 3 things you like best about the plaza?

% User Responses

▶ Accessible location and proximity to LIRR	44%
▶ Proximity to shops and restaurants	42%
▶ Outdoor seating and Open Restaurants	33%

How do you typically use this space?

% User Responses

▶ Socializing/meeting friends	56%
▶ Eating/drinking	48%
▶ Commuting/passing through	37%
▶ Exercising/playing games or sports	15%
▶ Family activities/events	10%
▶ Shopping	8%
▶ Other	6%
▶ Dog walking	4%

How often do you visit this plaza?

35%	52%	4%	10%
Daily	Weekly	Monthly	Rarely

When do you typically visit this space?

78%	22%	61%	39%
Day	Evening	Weekday	Weekend

Source: Based on 52 public space user surveys conducted by Asian American Federation in Spring 2022.

Public Space Study: LIRR Murray Hill Station Plaza



Autumn Fest 2021 - Jazz Concerts on Barton Avenue



Barton Avenue & LIRR Plaza seating



Plaza Activation



Asian American Federation at the LIRR Plaza

What are the top 3 changes/improvements you would like to see in this plaza?

	% User Responses
▶ Improved cleanliness and beautification	31%
▶ Improved safety	23%
▶ More/better seating and shade	13%

On a scale from 1 (low) to 5 (high), please rate your level of satisfaction with:

	Average Plaza User Responses
▶ Accessibility	4
▶ Attractiveness	4
▶ Cleanliness	3
▶ Lighting	3
▶ Overall safety	4
▶ Physical conditions/amenities	4
▶ Programs/events	3
▶ Vending	3

Source: Based on 52 public space user surveys conducted by Asian American Federation in Spring 2022.

DATA APPENDIX

Study Area Boundaries

Assessed Commercial Corridors

Primary data on Murray Hill storefront businesses presented on pg. 6-8 was gathered along the following commercial corridors:

- ▶ Northern Boulevard from 149th to 165th streets
- ▶ 162nd Street from Northern Boulevard to 46th Avenue
- ▶ Depot Road from Northern Boulevard to 164th Street
- ▶ 149th Place from Roosevelt to Barclay avenues
- ▶ 150th Street from Northern Boulevard to 41st Avenue
- ▶ 41st Avenue from Murray to 149th streets
- ▶ Barton Avenue from 149th to 150th places

Murray Hill Area

Demographic and employment data on pg. 16-17 represents the population within the Murray Hill neighborhood context area.

Trade Area

Consumer spending data on pg. 11 corresponds to the 0.75 mile trade area.



Area Demographics

Total Population

48,007	Murray Hill
2,287,388	Queens
8,419,316	New York City

Population Density (per square mile)

31,907	Murray Hill
20,943	Queens
27,845	New York City

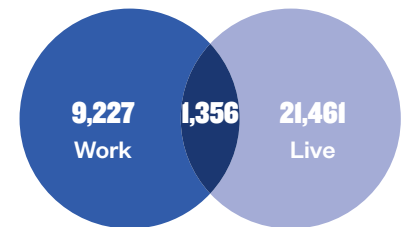
Average Household Size

2.96	Murray Hill
2.9	Queens
2.6	New York City

Car Ownership

65.4%	Murray Hill
63.3%	Queens
45.4%	New York City

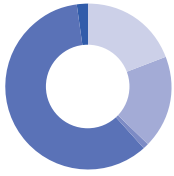
Commuting Patterns



9,227	Work in Murray Hill, live elsewhere
1,356	Live & Work in Murray Hill
21,461	Live in Murray Hill, work elsewhere

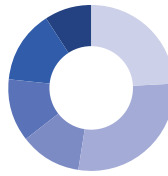
Area Demographics

Race/Background



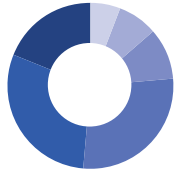
	Murray Hill	Queens	NYC
Hispanic or Latino (of any race)	19%	28%	29%
White alone	18%	25%	32%
Black or African American alone	1%	17%	22%
Asian alone	59%	25%	14%
Two or more races	2%	2%	2%
Some other race alone	0%	2%	1%
American Indian and Alaska Native alone	0%	0%	0%
Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander	0%	0%	0%

Educational Attainment



	Murray Hill	Queens	NYC
12th Grade or Less, No Diploma	24%	18%	18%
High School Graduate	28%	28%	24%
Some College, No Degree	12%	15%	14%
Associate's Degree	12%	8%	6%
Bachelor's Degree	14%	20%	22%
Graduate or Professional Degree	9%	12%	16%

Population Age



	Murray Hill	Queens	NYC
Under 5 Years	6%	6%	6%
5-14 Years	8%	11%	11%
15-24 Years	10%	11%	12%
25-44 Years	28%	30%	31%
45-64 Years	30%	27%	25%
65+ Years	19%	27%	15%

Median Age

43.9	Murray Hill
39	Queens
36.7	New York City

Foreign-Born Population

63%	Murray Hill
47%	Queens
37%	New York City

Income

Median Household Income

\$51,782	Murray Hill
\$68,666	Queens
\$63,998	New York City

Pop. Below Poverty Line

16%	Murray Hill
12%	Queens
18%	New York City

Employment

Population in Labor Force

57%	Murray Hill
64%	Queens
64%	New York City

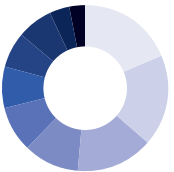
Unemployment*

4.7%	Murray Hill
5.6%	Queens
6.3%	New York City

*Note: As of May 2022, the unemployment rate is 5.4% for Queens and 5.7% for New York City (NYS DOL); updated neighborhood-level data for Murray Hill is not available.

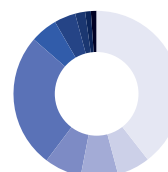
Local Jobs and Employment

Local Residents' Employment



Educational Services, Health Care, Social Assistance	19%
Other Services	18%
Accommodation, Food Services, Arts, & Entertainment	15%
Retail Trade	11%
Professional, Scientific, & Technical Services	9%
Finance, Insurance, Real Estate	8%
Construction	7%
Transportation, Warehousing, Utilities	7%
Manufacturing	4%
Public Administration	3%

Jobs Located in Murray Hill



Educational Services, Health Care, Social Assistance	38%
Other Services	6%
Accommodation, Food Services, Arts, & Entertainment	7%
Retail Trade	7%
Professional, Scientific, & Technical Services	25%
Finance, Insurance, Real Estate	5%
Construction	4%
Transportation, Warehousing, Utilities	2%
Manufacturing	1%
Public Administration	1%

DATA APPENDIX

Murray Hill Transportation



▲ Murray Hill Transportation

— Bus Routes

... Bicycle Lanes

++++ Long Island Rail Road

Average Monthly Bus Ridership (2021)

50,775	Q3
42,718	Q12
35,035	Q13
11,255	Q15
15,703	Q15A
4,367	Q26
111,291	Q27
40,325	Q28
110,204	Q65

Average Daily Vehicular Traffic (2019)

2,712	Murray Street from Barclay to 41st avenues
1,442	150th Street from Sanford Avenue to Northern Boulevard
748	149th Place from 41st Avenue to Barton Place
7,372	Ashton Road from Granny to Bartlett roads
2,933	163rd Street from 46th Avenue to Northern Boulevard

Pedestrian Counts (2021)

Northern Boulevard, 50' East of 161st Street

170	Weekday Morning
549	Weekday Afternoon
486	Weekend

Source: MTA 2021; NYS DOT, 2019 Annual Average Daily Traffic data, NYC DOT 2022.

Recent SBS Neighborhood Investments

▶ *Commercial Revitalization*, Avenue NYC multi-year grant of \$300,000 awarded to Asian American Federation, 2021-2024.

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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