



Main Street - Flushing Station



DOWNTOWN FLUSHING QUEENS

Commercial District Needs Assessment



careers
businesses
neighborhoods



Downtown Flushing Transit Hub BID
Greater Flushing Chamber of Commerce



ABOUT DOWNTOWN FLUSHING



The Neighborhood 360° program was created by the **NYC Department of Small Business Services** to identify, develop, and launch commercial revitalization projects in partnership with local stakeholders. Through proactive planning and targeted investments, Neighborhood 360° supports projects that strengthen and revitalize the streets, small businesses, and community-based organizations that anchor New York City neighborhoods.

The Neighborhood 360° **Commercial District Needs Assessment (CDNA)** highlights a neighborhood's existing business landscape and consumer characteristics. This CDNA features **Main Street, Roosevelt Avenue, Northern Boulevard, Union Street, 39th Avenue, and College Point Boulevard** commercial corridors in **Downtown Flushing**, and was conducted in partnership with the **Greater Flushing Chamber of Commerce** and the **Downtown Flushing Transit Hub Business Improvement District** between January and June 2016.

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 **315 surveys** and numerous interviews and workshops with neighborhood merchants, shoppers, workers, community leaders, property owners, and residents.

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Background

Downtown Flushing is a one-of-a-kind destination where residents and visitors alike can experience an international blend of cultures, cuisines, and shops within a bustling central business district. Situated off the Flushing Creek in northeast Queens, Downtown Flushing's location gives it several competitive advantages that have fueled its rapid growth as a commercial hub. The district is served by the Downtown Flushing Transit Hub Business Improvement District (BID) and is made accessible by several modes of transportation including the 7 subway line, the Long Island Rail Road, NYC Select Bus Service, and the Whitestone, Van Wyck, and Long Island Expressways.

Once a rural Dutch farming settlement, modern day Downtown Flushing is an active, 24/7 district. The neighborhood consists of a mix of mid-rise and new high-rise buildings that house a rich variety of Asian restaurants, professional services, offices, apartments, and light industrial uses. The volume of pedestrians, vehicles, and businesses contributes to a crowded network of streets and sidewalks that are trademark characteristics of the neighborhood.

On any given trip to Downtown Flushing, visitors can conveniently shop, dine, and access professional services from unique businesses and entrepreneurs from around the world. Main Street and Roosevelt Avenue form the district's commercial crossroads, with a dense and eclectic mix of Chinese small businesses, national retailers, and financial institutions. Closer to Flushing Creek, College Point Boulevard is characterized by home furnishing wholesalers and warehouses despite the recent introduction of new mixed-use shopping centers. Union Street is ever-evolving and has traditionally been identified as a center of the Korean American community in Queens which has extended eastward over time along Northern Boulevard. These streets are also home to many of the neighborhood's historical, entertainment, and cultural venues like the Quaker Meeting House, the Flushing Armory, Flushing Town Hall, and the former RKO Keith's Theater.

Neighborhood Demographics

See more on page 13

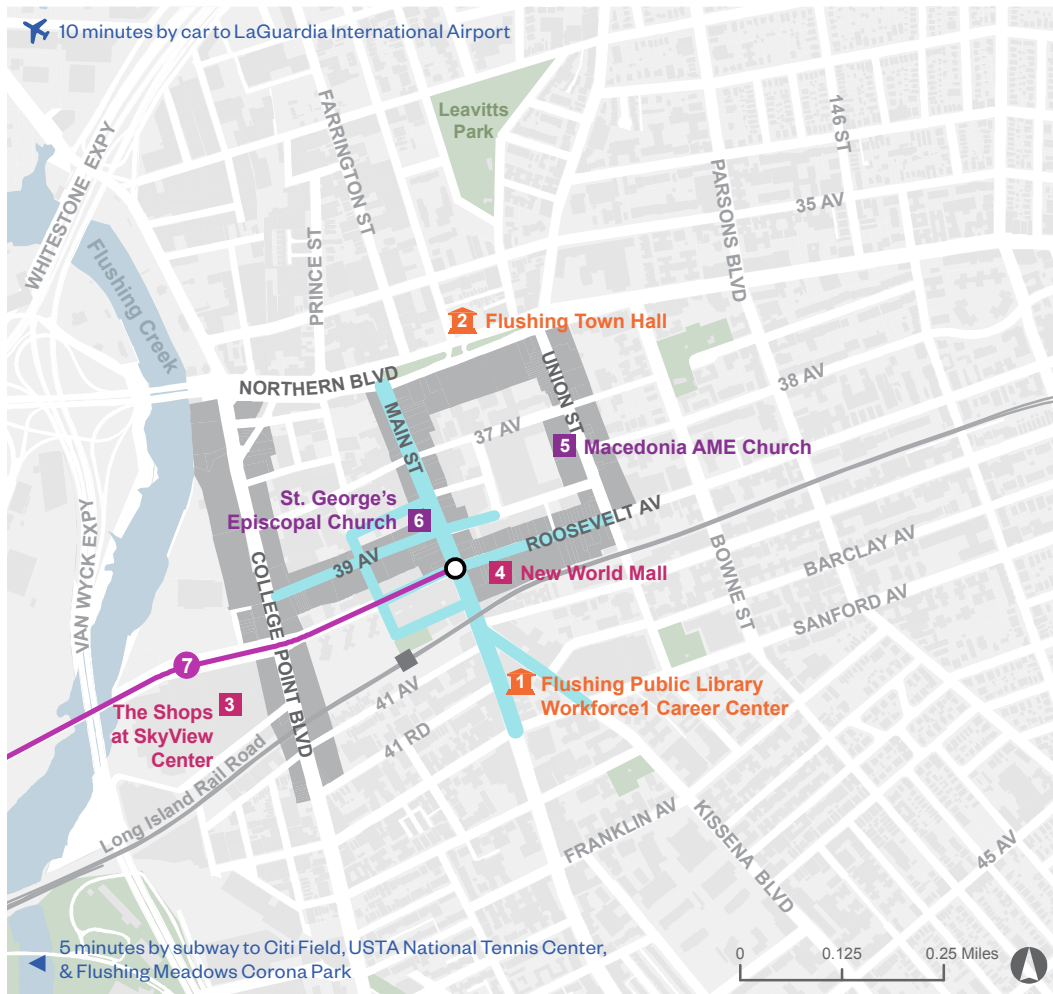
Greater Flushing is a densely inhabited neighborhood with a diverse and growing population of more than 68,000 residents that reflects its cosmopolitan mix of merchants, businesses, and cultural attractions. While historically home to a wide array of immigrant communities, the neighborhood is currently comprised of 67% Asian residents. The Chinese and Korean communities represent approximately 70% and 12% of the Asian population respectively. Flushing remains a popular destination for many Asian immigrant families, making the neighborhood's foreign population (71%) one of the highest in New York City.

Future Opportunities

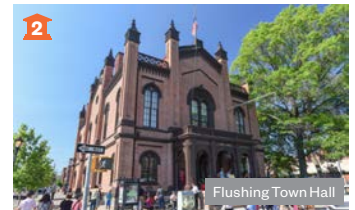
See more on page 5

With the **heaviest foot traffic** outside of Manhattan, Downtown Flushing is already a **regional destination** with **20+ public transportation options**, and multicultural dining and services. Its proximity to the **USTA Billie Jean King National Tennis Center, Citi Field, Flushing Meadows Corona Park**, and both **LaGuardia** and **JFK International Airports** make Downtown Flushing a renowned center of entertainment and commerce. Signs of ongoing development and the subsequent congestion and competition associated with rapid growth are visible across the district. Dedicated support of the needs of Downtown Flushing's burgeoning small business community can help harness this momentum and improve the overall quality of life of the neighborhood.

Downtown Flushing



Notable Places



Points of Interest

- Assessed Commercial Corridors
- Public Facilities
- Business Improvement District (BID)
- Shopping Centers
- Arts & Cultural Destinations

Neighborhood Events



Merchant & Business Groups

- Asian Americans for Equality (AAFE)
- Downtown Flushing Transit Hub Business Improvement District (BID)
- Flushing Chinese Business Association
- Flushing Willets Point Corona Local Development Corporation
- Greater Flushing Chamber of Commerce
- Renaissance Economic Development Corporation
- Union Street Business Association

KEY FINDINGS & OPPORTUNITIES

Strengths

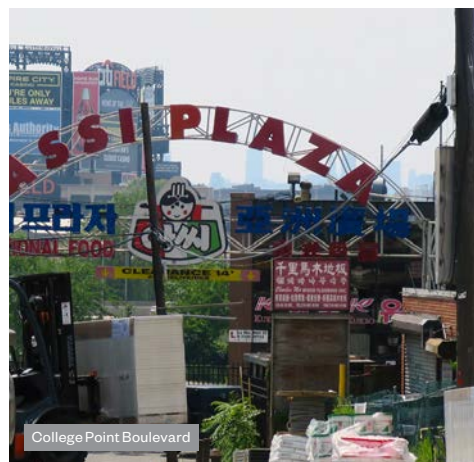
- ▶ Accessible transportation hub that attracts visitors from all over NYC, the region, and the world
- ▶ High concentration of national commercial banks and other financial institutions
- ▶ Cluster of arts and cultural institutions that are active in the community
- ▶ Premier destination for authentic Asian cuisines and goods
- ▶ Rich history of multicultural diversity and religious tolerance tracing back to the Flushing Remonstrance of 1657
- ▶ Dedicated community-based organizations delivering high quality maintenance, marketing, events, and business support district-wide
- ▶ Active upper floor uses with a wealth of healthcare and professional services that complement local shops and restaurants
- ▶ Nearly 100% commercial storefront occupancy rate
- ▶ Safe, 24/7 central business district with high foot traffic throughout the day and night

Challenges

- ▶ Overextended infrastructure needs upgrades to better support the growing central business district
- ▶ High volume of street garbage and litter requires additional maintenance
- ▶ Perception of limited affordable parking options
- ▶ Merchants experience language and cultural barriers to accessing business support programs and navigating government regulations
- ▶ Limited affordable commercial spaces due to high occupancy rates
- ▶ Small businesses face competition from national retail chains
- ▶ High levels of pedestrian and vehicular traffic congestion coupled with limited open space amplify quality of life concerns (air quality, noise pollution)



Main Street & Roosevelt Avenue



College Point Boulevard



Union Street



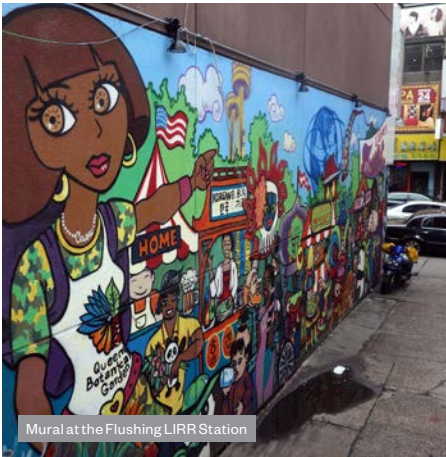
39th Avenue Storefronts



Workforce Career Center at the Flushing Public Library



Flushing Freedom Mile Signage on Northern Boulevard



Mural at the Flushing LIRR Station



Flushing Street Festival / Block Party

Opportunities

- ▶ Reactivate the kiosk in front of the Flushing Public Library to provide enhanced district wayfinding and visitor services
- ▶ Establish a formal Flushing tourism program that leverages the district's entertainment venues, hotels, restaurants, transit, and other key assets
- ▶ Invest in additional sanitation and streetscape beautification services to actively address illegal garbage disposal, graffiti, litter, and sidewalk oil stains
- ▶ Repurpose underutilized public and private spaces through arts and cultural programming
- ▶ Support business growth and consumer safety by connecting local businesses and entrepreneurs to available services that are accessible in different languages and entry points
- ▶ Build upon local marketing campaigns and events that promote the unique merchants and vibrant character of the district
- ▶ Expand the services and capacity of the Downtown Flushing Transit Hub BID and other community-based organizations

What's Next?

To address these key findings and opportunities, Neighborhood 360° Grants will be made available by SBS to non-profit organizations.

For more information, visit: nyc.gov/neighborhood360

BUSINESS LANDSCAPE: DOWNTOWN FLUSHING

Business Inventory

371

Total Number of Storefronts

1.1%

Storefront Vacancy*

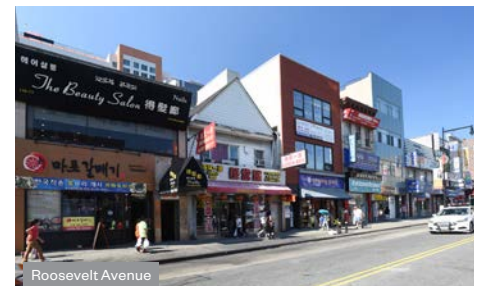
*Note: In 2015, New York City's 69 Business Improvement Districts reported an average ground floor vacancy rate of 8.3% and median ground floor vacancy rate of 5.6% (SBS BIDs Trends Report, 2015).

Storefront & Retail Mix



Downtown Flushing is a bustling central business district that attracts merchants, workers, and shoppers from NYC and beyond. While known for its authentic Asian dining, Flushing is also a center of professional services and home to **60+ commercial banks** district-wide.

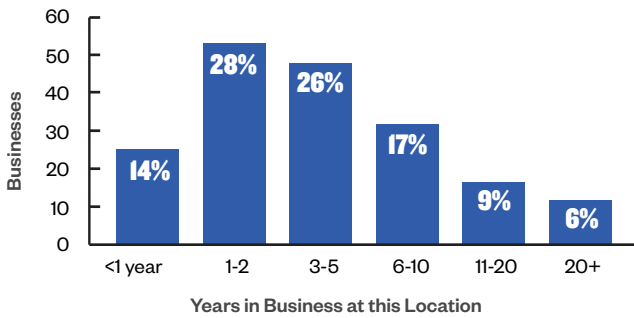
Business inventory and retail mix data were gathered by the Downtown Flushing BID and Greater Flushing Chamber of Commerce through a comprehensive inventory of ground floor and street-facing storefronts located along Main Street, Roosevelt Avenue, Northern Boulevard, Union Street, 39th Avenue, and College Point Boulevard, excluding colocated, basement, and/or above ground-floor businesses (January–June 2016).



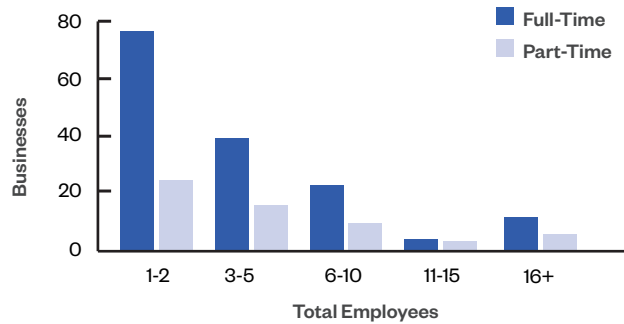
What We've Heard from Downtown Flushing Merchants

How many years have you been in business here?

Many Flushing “mom & pop” businesses relocate to different storefronts within the district as new shopping centers and spaces become available. While some businesses report to have been in their current location for a year or less, they may have been operating in Flushing for much longer.



How many employees do you have?



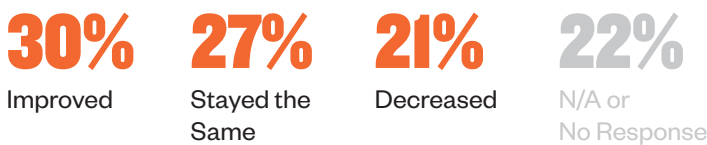
Do you own or rent your property?



What are the biggest challenges facing your business?

Challenge	% Merchant Responses
Commercial rent / lease	14%
Lack of parking / transit	12%
Traffic & pedestrian congestion	8%
Labor costs	8%
Marketing / advertising costs	8%

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



What kinds of resources would help you grow your business?

Resource	% Merchant Responses
Marketing support	33%
Space improvements	22%
Financing	12%
Training for staff	12%
New equipment	11%
Legal/lease support	6%
Assistance with regulatory compliance	4%

Source: Based on 215 merchant surveys conducted by the Downtown Flushing BID and Greater Flushing Chamber of Commerce in Winter - Spring 2016.

BUSINESS LANDSCAPE: DOWNTOWN FLUSHING

What We've Heard from Downtown Flushing Merchants

What can we change to improve Flushing?

Parking	24%	More open space	5%
Sanitation	20%	Storefront improvements	4%
Transit improvements	15%	More community events	4%
Safety	14%	Other	2%
Better streetscape	11%		

What languages do you speak?



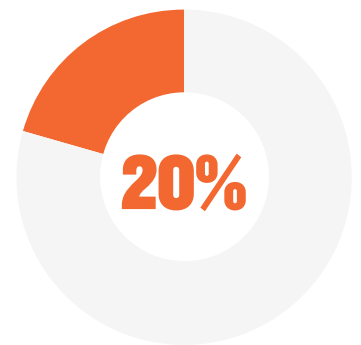
Where are your clients / shoppers from?



Local



Queens



Outside of Queens

BUSINESS OUTLOOK

Downtown Flushing Retail Opportunity

Residents spend

\$1.27B

each year in goods and services

Local businesses make

\$1.34B

each year in retail sales

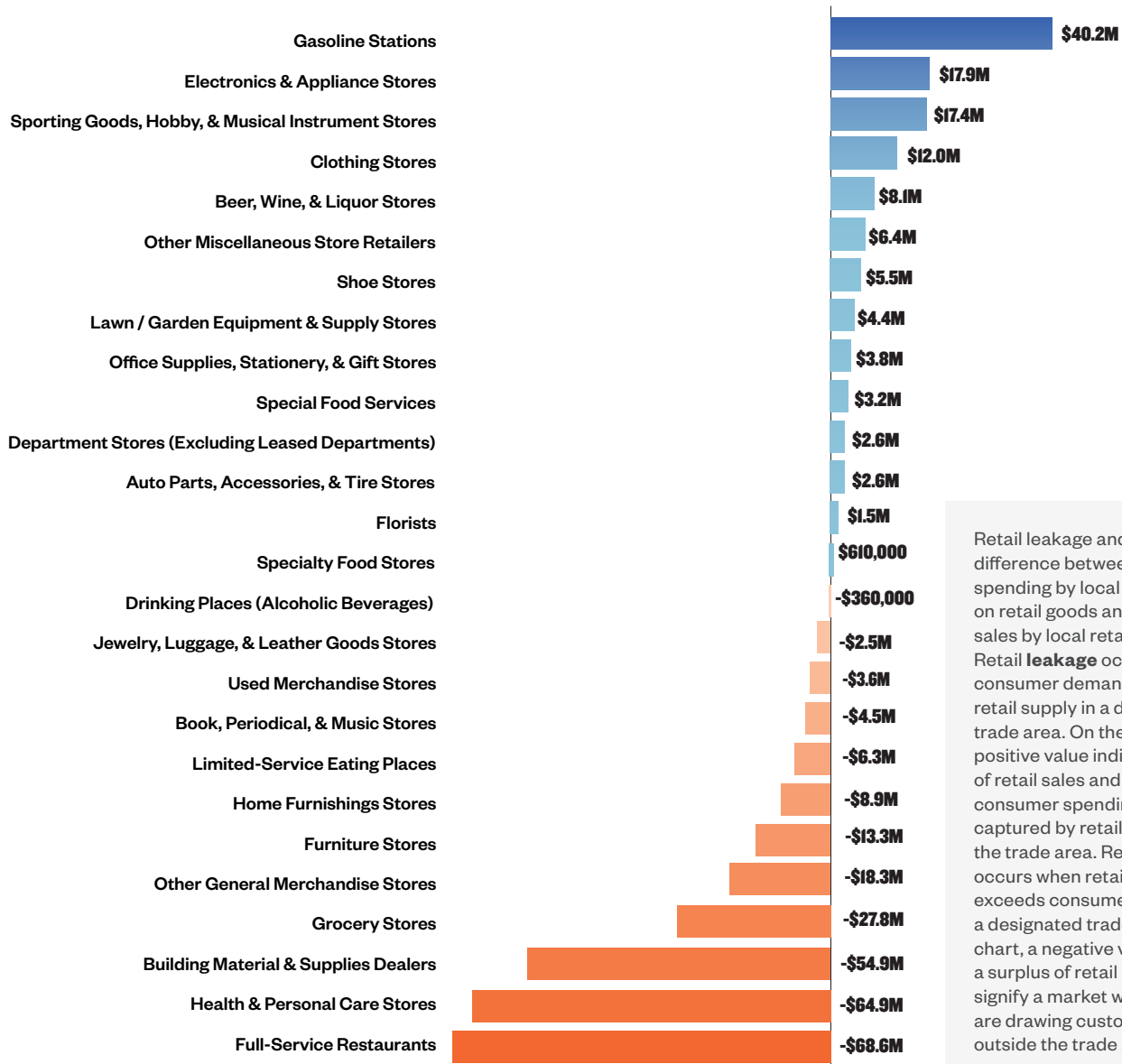
Every year, visitors spend

\$74.7M

in the neighborhood

Retail Leakage & Surplus

← Surplus \$0 Leakage →



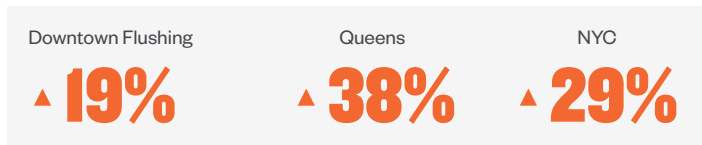
Retail leakage and surplus is the difference between estimated spending by local residents on retail goods and estimated sales by local retail businesses. Retail **leakage** occurs when consumer demand exceeds retail supply in a designated trade area. On the chart, a positive value indicates leakage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

Source: ESRI and Infogroup, August 2016.

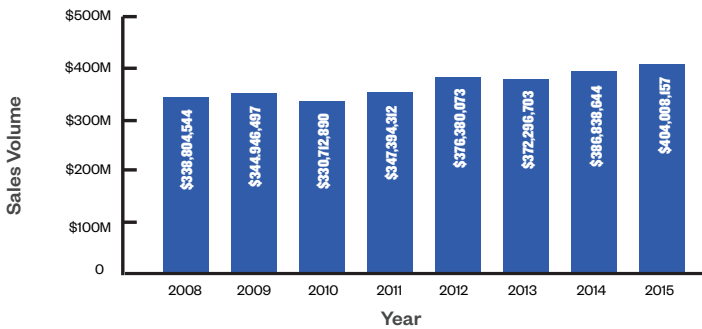
BUSINESS OUTLOOK

Business Trends

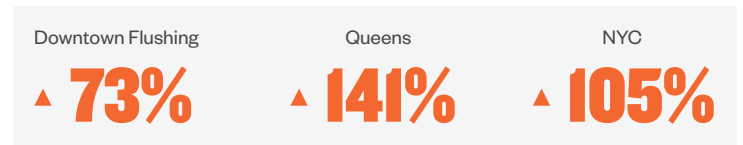
Change in Total Business Sales, 2008-2015



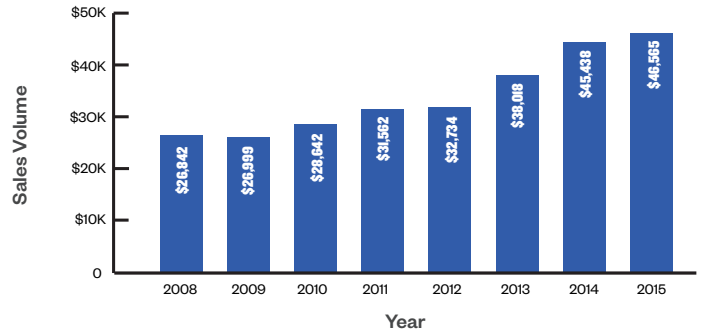
Downtown Flushing Total Business Sales



Change in Median Sales by Business, 2008-2015








Downtown Flushing Median Sales by Business



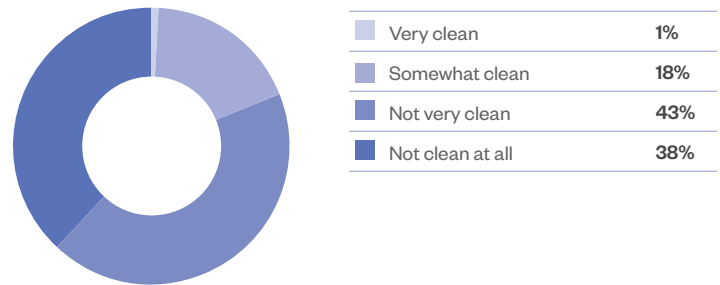
Source: Division of Tax Policy, NYC Department of Finance.

What We've Heard from Shoppers

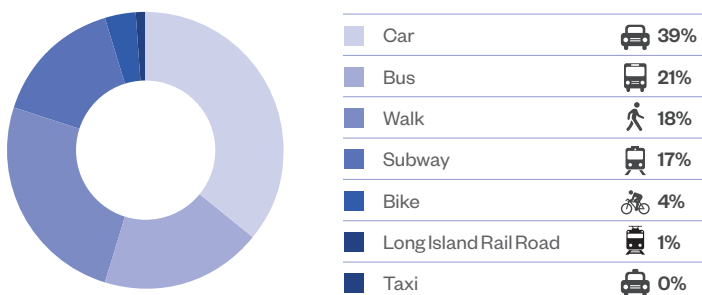
What additional businesses would you like to see in Flushing?

- ▶ Healthy food options 
- ▶ Theater, music, or entertainment venues 
- ▶ Art galleries 
- ▶ Book stores 
- ▶ Gyms 

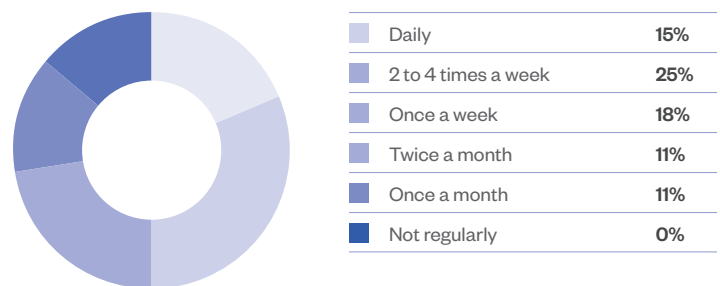
How would you rate the cleanliness of Downtown Flushing?



How do you usually travel to get to Flushing?



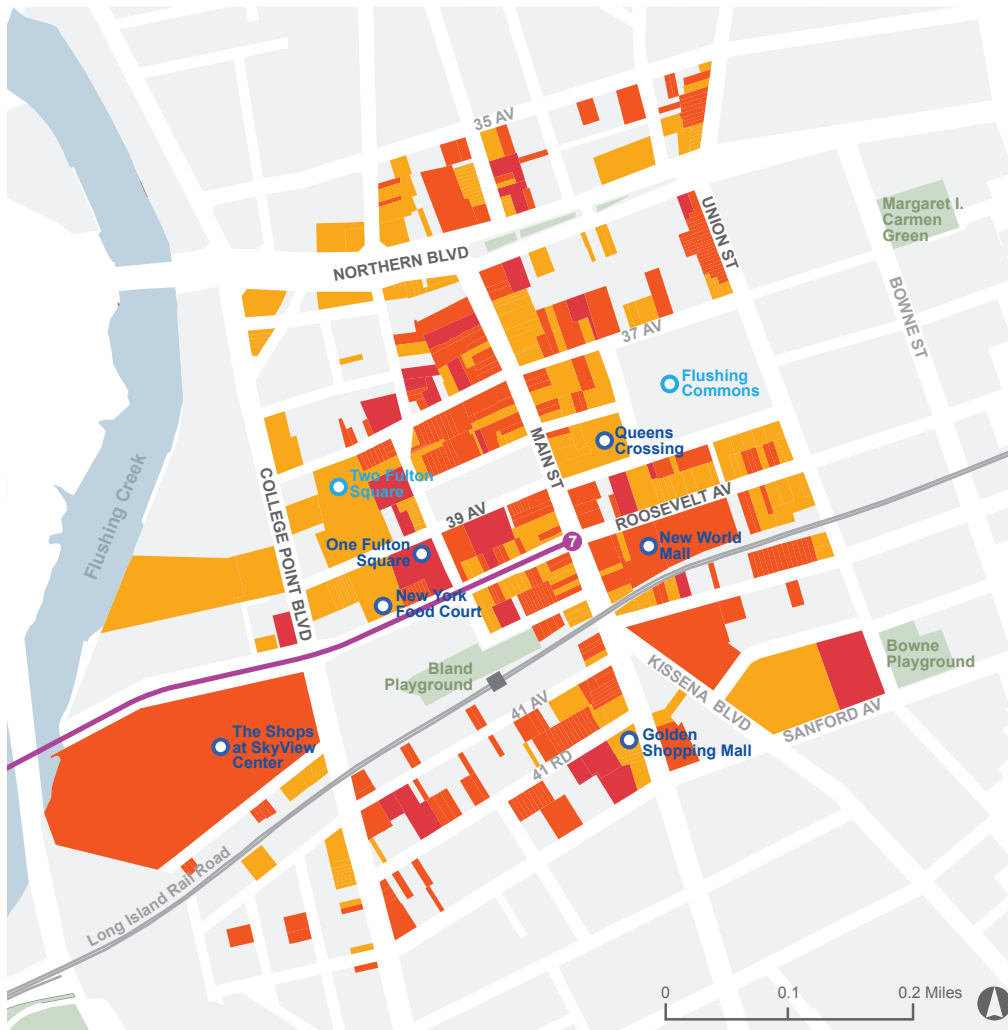
How often do you visit Flushing?



Source: Based on 100 consumer surveys conducted by the Downtown Flushing BID and Greater Flushing Chamber of Commerce in Winter - Spring 2016.

PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

Commercial Density



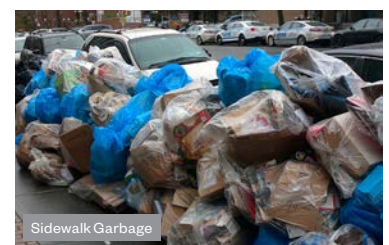
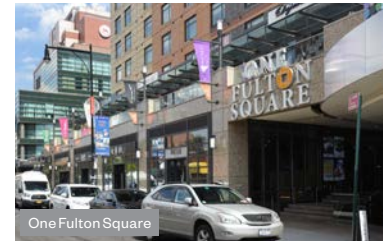
- < 2 Floors
- 2 - 7 Floors
- 7+ Floors

- Multi-Level Shopping Centers
- Current & Planned Developments

Streetscape Observations

- ▶ Storefront conditions vary from store to store. New businesses generally have better quality signage.
- ▶ Illegal disposal of residential and commercial garbage coupled with high volumes of pedestrians cause litter to pile up on nearly every street.
- ▶ Many broken curbs due to heavy pedestrian traffic and truck loading.
- ▶ Traffic markers are worn down and require new paint and renovation.
- ▶ Graffiti is frequently seen tagged on construction sites and storefront gates.
- ▶ Existing street furniture is not well-maintained and adds to the unsightliness of certain sidewalks.

Shopping Centers



DATA APPENDIX

Study Area Boundaries

■ Assessed Commercial Corridors

Primary data on Downtown Flushing storefront businesses presented on pg. 6-8 was gathered along Main Street, Roosevelt Avenue, Northern Boulevard, Union Street, 39th Avenue, and College Point Boulevard commercial corridors.

— Downtown Flushing Context Area

Demographic and employment data on pg. 12-13 correspond to the Downtown Flushing neighborhood context area.

... Trade Area

Retail opportunity, leakage, and surplus data on pg. 9 corresponds to the 0.75 mile trade area.



Area Demographics

Total Population

68,902	Downtown Flushing
2,256,400	Queens
8,268,999	New York City

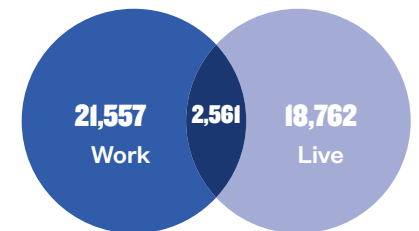
Population Density (per square mile)

50,663	Downtown Flushing
20,701	Queens
27,027	New York City

Average Household Size

2.6	Downtown Flushing
2.9	Queens
2.6	New York City

Commuting Patterns



21,557 Work in Downtown Flushing, live elsewhere

2,561 Live & Work in Downtown Flushing

18,762 Live in Downtown Flushing, work elsewhere

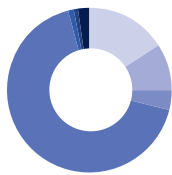
Car Ownership

43%	Downtown Flushing
63%	Queens
45%	New York City

DATA APPENDIX

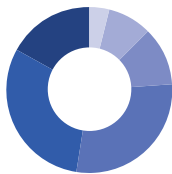
Area Demographics

Race / Background



	Downtown Flushing	QN	NYC
Hispanic or Latino (of any race)	16%	28%	29%
White alone	9%	27%	33%
Black or African American alone	4%	18%	23%
Asian alone	67%	24%	13%
Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander	0%	0%	0%
American Indian and Alaska Native alone	1%	0%	0%
Some other race alone	1%	2%	1%
Two or more races	2%	2%	1%

Population Age



	Downtown Flushing	QN	NYC
Under 5 Years	4%	6%	7%
5-14 Years	8%	11%	11%
15-24 Years	11%	13%	14%
25-44 Years	29%	30%	31%
45-64 Years	31%	26%	25%
65+ Years	17%	13%	12%

Income

Median Household Income

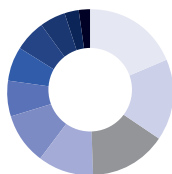
\$39,565	Downtown Flushing
\$57,001	Queens
\$52,259	New York City

Pop. Below Poverty Line

23%	Downtown Flushing
15%	Queens
20%	New York City

Local Jobs and Employment

Local Residents' Employment



Educational Services, Health Care, Social Assistance	19%
Accommodation, Food Services, Arts, Entertainment	16%
Other Services	15%
Retail Trade	11%
Professional, Scientific, & Technical Services	10%
Finance, Insurance, Real Estate	7%
Transportation, Warehousing, Utilities	7%
Construction	6%
Manufacturing	5%
Public Administration	3%
Information	2%

Educational Attainment



	Downtown Flushing	QN	NYC
12th Grade or Less, No Diploma	25%	20%	20%
High School Graduate	28%	27%	25%
Some College, No Degree	10%	15%	15%
Associate's Degree	10%	8%	6%
Bachelor's Degree	19%	19%	20%
Graduate or Professional Degree	8%	11%	14%

Median Age

43.3	Downtown Flushing
37.4	Queens
35.6	New York City

Foreign-Born Population

71%	Downtown Flushing
48%	Queens
37%	New York City

Employment

Population in Labor Force

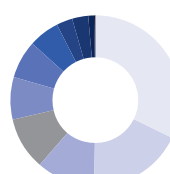
59%	Downtown Flushing
65%	Queens
63%	New York City

Unemployment Rate

8.9%	Downtown Flushing
9.9%	Queens
10.6%	New York City

*Note: The unemployment rate for Queens is at 4.4% and New York City is at 5.1%, as of June 2016 (NYSDDL); updated neighborhood-level data for Downtown Flushing is not available.

Jobs Located in Downtown Flushing



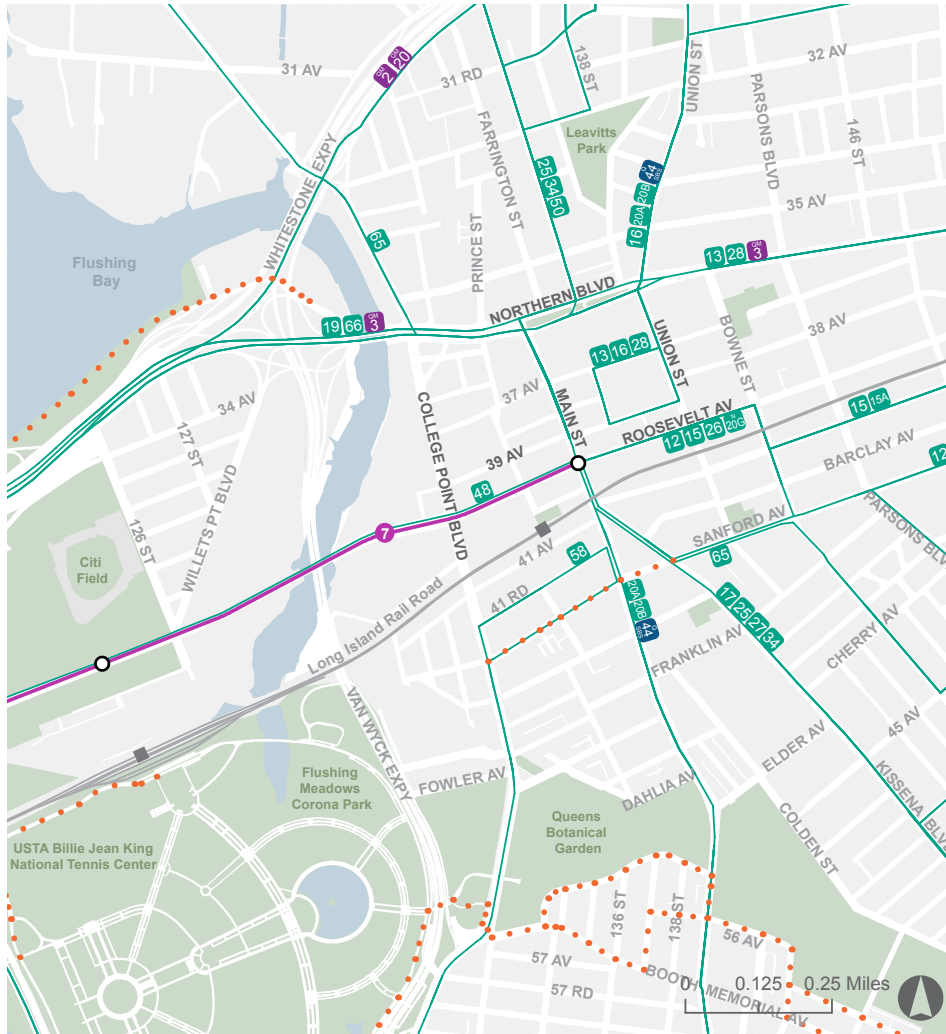
Educational Services, Health Care, Social Assistance	32%
Retail Trade	18%
Accommodation, Food Services, Arts, Entertainment	11%
Other Services	10%
Finance, Insurance, Real Estate	8%
Information	7%
Professional, Scientific, & Technical Services	6%
Construction	3%
Manufacturing	3%
Transportation, Warehousing, Utilities	1%
Public Administration	0.2%

DATA APPENDIX

Downtown Flushing Transportation

▼ Downtown Flushing Transportation

— Bus Routes
 — NYC Subway
 ••• Bicycle Lanes
 — Long Island Rail Road



Bus Routes

20	MTA Bus Routes
I	Select Bus Service (SBS) Route Q44
I	Express Bus Route QM3

Average Weekday Subway Ridership (2015)

60,226 7 Flushing Main Street station

Annual MTA Bus Ridership (2015)

9.6M	Q58
8.9M	Q44
7.6M	Q27
5.5M	Q17
4.2M	Q20

Pedestrian Counts

Weekday Morning (7-9 a.m.)

3,485	Main Street between 37th Avenue and 38th Avenue
2,005	Prince Street between 37th Avenue and 38th Avenue
330	Roosevelt Avenue between Main Street and Union Street

Vehicular Traffic

48,757	Average daily vehicles on Northern Boulevard between College Point Boulevard and Parsons Boulevard (2014)
25,373	Average daily vehicles on Main Street between Roosevelt Avenue and Dahlia Avenue (2014)
22,882	Average daily vehicles on College Point Boulevard between Roosevelt Avenue and Fowler Avenue (2014)

Recent SBS Investments in the Neighborhood

- ▶ *Neighborhood 360° Fellowship Host Organization*, awarded to the Greater Flushing Chamber of Commerce, 2016.
- ▶ *BID Expansion Planning & Outreach*, Avenue NYC merchant organizing grant of \$20,000 awarded to Downtown Flushing Transit Hub Business Improvement District, 2015.
- ▶ *The Destination of Choice Food/Cuisine Marketing Campaign*, Avenue NYC placemaking grant of \$25,000 awarded to Downtown Flushing Transit Hub Business Improvement District, 2012.

Existing Plans & Studies

Flushing 2050 Community Building Initiative, Asian Americans For Equality, 2016 (in progress).

Flushing Waterfront Brownfield Opportunity Area (BOA) Study, Flushing Willets Point Corona Local Development Corporation and NYC Department of City Planning (in progress).

Flushing's Economy: Challenges and Opportunities, Asian Americans For Equality, 2013.

An Economic Snapshot of Flushing, Queens, New York State Comptroller, 2011.

Economic Development and the Economy of Flushing, Queens, NYS Comptroller, 2006.

Development Framework for Downtown Flushing, NYC Economic Development Corporation and NYC Department of City Planning, 2004.

Downtown Flushing Rezoning and Waterfront Access Plan, NYC Department of City Planning, 1998.

Sources

ESRI and Infogroup, Inc. August 2016 ESRI Retail MarketPlace Profile.

Infogroup, Inc. 2016. From ReferenceUSA database.

Metropolitan Transportation Authority. 2015. Average Weekday Subway Ridership and Annual Bus Ridership.

NYS Department of Labor. June 2016. Unemployment Rate Rankings by County.

NYS Department of Transportation. 2014 Annual Average Daily Traffic, using Traffic Data Viewer.

NYC Department of Finance, Division of Tax Policy, using data from NYS Department of Taxation and Finance. Business sales are reported by tax year, which runs from March 1st to February 28th. Sales data are compiled from sales tax returns, which are rolled up by tax filer within a year, excluding returns with negative sales amounts. For each year, each tax filer is reported according to the address listed on their latest return. Large outliers were removed.

NYC Department of Small Business Services. Fiscal Year 2015. Business Improvement Districts Trends Report.

NYC Department of Transportation. May 2016. Bi-Annual Pedestrian Counts.

U.S. Census Bureau. 2014. OnTheMap Application. Longitudinal-Employer Household Dynamics Program (LEHD). Commuting Pattern data is representative of LEHD Origin-Destination Employment Statistics for the second quarter of 2014. LEHD data is based on different administrative sources, primarily Unemployment Insurance (UI) earnings data and the Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages (QCEW), and other censuses/surveys. In this context, only the highest paying job that is held over two consecutive quarters by an individual worker is counted toward worker flows into, out of, and within the context area.

U.S. Census Bureau. American Community Survey, 2013 American Community Survey 4-Year Estimates, using NYC Census FactFinder. Flushing Neighborhood Tabulation Area.

Photo Credits: © Downtown Flushing Transit Hub Business Improvement District; Greater Flushing Chamber of Commerce; Ed Reed for the Office of Mayor Bill de Blasio; NYC & Company: Will Steacy; Ed / CC BY; Nick Normal / CC BY; NYC SBS: Andrew Marcus.



ABOUT SBS

The NYC Department of Small Business Services helps unlock economic potential and create economic security for all New Yorkers by connecting New Yorkers to good jobs, creating stronger businesses, and building a fairer economy in neighborhoods across the five boroughs.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

We would like to recognize and thank the following individuals and organizations for their contributions to the development of the Downtown Flushing Commercial District Needs Assessment:

Queens Borough President Melinda Katz
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Queens Community Board 7
Downtown Flushing Transit Hub Business Improvement District (BID)
Greater Flushing Chamber of Commerce
Asian Americans for Equality (AAFE)
Flushing Town Hall
Renaissance Economic Development Corporation
Queens Borough Public Library
Flushing Chinese Business Association
Union Street Business Association
Local Initiatives Support Corporation (LISC)
Downtown Flushing Merchants
Downtown Flushing Shoppers and Residents