Planning the Future of Downtown Flushing: Flushing River and Waterfront
WHO WE ARE

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In collaboration with: The MinKwon Center for Community Action
We are...
- An Urban Studies class collaborating with the MinKwon Center for Community Action
- A diverse student body invested in the future of Downtown Flushing, studying what new development will mean for the entire community.

Our goal is to promote awareness of redevelopment to community members, organizations, and others involved in or affected by the redevelopment process to ensure that all community members’ voices are heard.

Our Semester Research tasks:
- We conducted a study of the planning initiatives in Downtown Flushing to gather information about the area.
  - Toured the Flushing Waterfront
  - Met with the stakeholders
  - Worked side by side with the MinKwon Center Community Organizers
  - Conducted land-use, small business, and residential surveys
  - Researched in and out of the classroom, personally and in a group setting
  - Studied Research Methods
STUDY AREA
**Geographical History of the Flushing River**

The river flows through the **northern** part of central Queens into the **East River**. It is located in a **valley** that may have been a large riverbed before the last Ice Age that once divided Queens into an **Eastern** and **Western** half.

This map shows the Flushing River in 1891. The landscape here appears almost identical since the last Ice Age.

Source:
http://www.mazeartist.com/flushingriver.htm
The source of the Flushing River was once located in what is today known as Kew Gardens Hills. Many years ago the location was called the “Head of the Vleigh” (Dutch for “valley”) because it is where the Queens Valley began.

This is the Queens Valley Exchange where the Grand Central Expressway, the Van Wyck Expressway, Union Turnpike and the Jackie Robinson Parkway all cross paths. The source of the Flushing River is on the right. Source: http://www.mazeartist.com/flushingriver.htm

The area near the mouth of the creek became the site of the 1645 Dutch settlement named Vlissingen. It is said that the name Vlissingen means “salt meadow,” given as a nod to the waters of the Flushing Meadows.
THE POLITICAL HISTORY OF THE FLUSHING RIVER

• By dredging the Flushing River, Robert Moses and the 1939 World’s Fair fundamentally altered the look of the waterbed.

• To ease travel between the Western and Eastern part of Queens, the Flushing River was cut off from connecting bodies of water.

Post 1939 map of Queens.  
Source: http://macaulay.cuny.edu/eportfolios
The Political History of the Flushing River

- Before 1930, one could cross the Flushing River from Flushing to Willets Point in two ways: drawbridges and boats.

- Today, the Roosevelt Avenue Bridge and the Northern Boulevard Bridge serve this function.
  - However, walking over these bridges is not pedestrian friendly.

Lack of Roads and Infrastructure in Willets Point
Source: forgotten-ny.com
INDUSTRY ALONG THE FLUSHING RIVER

When Flushing was mainly a residential area, the river was used for recreation and transportation.

Flushing’s accessibility by rail and road, as well as the construction of the World’s Fair, drew manufacturers to the area in the mid 20th century.

Flushing River around 1890, south of Northern Boulevard. To the right is Wahnetah Boat Club. Credit: http://www.forgotten-ny.com/STREET%20SCENES/flushing/oldflushingriver.jpg
Industry Along the Flushing River

- The area around the Flushing River was re-zoned in 1998 to accommodate mixed and commercial land use.
- Today, the Flushing River waterfront is still home to some manufacturers.
- Concrete barges account for most of the traffic on the river.

The Flushing River at present. Just north of Northern Blvd., one can see concrete plants and their barges along the river. [Credit](http://www.forgetten-ny.com/STREET%20SCENES/flushing_river/42.flushriver3.jpg)
CURRENT CONDITIONS OF THE FLUSHING WATERFRONT

- Flushing River is polluted and gives off a foul smell.
- Few pedestrians seen on severely weathered sidewalks.

The view of the River itself is obstructed.
Traffic generally appears to be light or absent.

- Overall, the area is in a state of disrepair.
THE WATERFRONT: 39-08 JANET PLACE

- Deserted lot used as a dumping ground
- Currently owned by LED Development Group
- Adjacent to various auto repair shops and construction sites
KEY STAKEHOLDERS

- New York City EDC
- Department of City Planning
- Flushing Willets Point LDC
- New York City Councilmember Peter Koo
- Community Board 7
- Asian Americans for Equality, Inc.
- MinKwon Center for Community Action
1. **Flushing Commons**

- Municipal Lot 1 will become **Flushing Commons**, a mixed retail, residential, and commercial development.
- **Parking** for 1,600 cars will also be provided.
- It will accommodate the new location of the **YMCA**, and feature a **town square** with water fountains and greenery.
2. Willets Point

The plan for Willets Point calls for the construction of a new 61-acre neighborhood with:
- a convention center
- a hotel
- entertainment venues
- open space
- a public school
3. The Flushng Waterfront

Along with more housing opportunities and commercial possibilities, the proposed project would enable waterfront access.
THE FLUSHING-WILLETS POINT-CORONA LDC

- FWCLDC is an organization, comprised of both public and private stakeholders
- Aims for the planned development of areas including Flushing, Willets Point and Corona
- The recipient of a New York State Brownfield Opportunity Areas Grant (BOA).
FWCLDC’s Vision

- **Goals for waterfront:**
  - **Create link** to Downtown Flushing, Willets Point, and Corona
  - Environmental remediation and **clean up** of the waterfront
  - **Access** to the waterfront + preserving industrial uses of waterfront

- Long term development that is conducive to **affordable housing** and senior housing units

- **Transportation Improvements**
  - Renovation of LIRR station
GOALS FOR CONSULTANT

- Development of the BOA/Nomination Master Plan
  - Comprehensive study of the BOA and the following:
    - Existing info and land ownership
    - Indexing of buildings and historically significant sites
    - Current transportation, traffic, parking, infrastructure,
    - Sites on waterfront for potential development
  - Outreach to community
    - Shared vision of redevelopment
An artist's rendering of the Riverfront Flushing development as seen from Willets Point.
VISION 2020

- A comprehensive plan of New York City to develop the waterfronts in all five boroughs.
- Released by the Department of City Planning
- It will be put into effect in the following three years and expected to conclude in the next ten years.
- Different agencies and patrons will be responsible for the funding and the design of the development.
GOALS OF VISION 2020

1. Expand public access to the waterfront
2. Develop attractions and support public recreation on and near waterfront
3. Encourage economic activity that pertains to the waterfront
4. Improve water quality
5. Restore degraded natural waterfront areas
6. Enhance the public experience of the waterfront
7. Enforce governmental regulation of the waterfront
8. Pursue strategies to defend against climate change and sea level rise
VISION 2020: REACH 11

- Flushing River will become a great attraction for its enhanced Blue Network and vitality.

- There will be publicly accessible spaces along the shoreline.

- Recreational boating may be a possibility.

- The City’s goal for the waterfront is to construct mixed-use development.
Downtown Flushing Resident Survey Findings
### Table 1hh
Demographic Characteristics of Resident Survey Respondents
Total Survey Respondents N= 151

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Race</th>
<th>148</th>
<th>Asian Ethnicity</th>
<th>104</th>
<th>English Speaking Ability</th>
<th>140</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Asian</td>
<td>74%</td>
<td>Chinese</td>
<td>54%</td>
<td>Not at all</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Latino</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>Korean</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>A little</td>
<td>34%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>Asian Indian</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>Fluently</td>
<td>51%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>Taiwanese</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>Filipino</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age Category</th>
<th>141</th>
<th>Household Income</th>
<th>134</th>
<th>Industry of Employment</th>
<th>142</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>&lt; 18 years</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>10k or less</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>Service</td>
<td>23%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18-21 years</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>10K-20K</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>Professional</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22-34 years</td>
<td>34%</td>
<td>20K-25K</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>Retail</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35-49 years</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>25K-30K</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>Food Service</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50-61 years</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>30K-35K</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>Construction</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>62+ years</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>35K-40K</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>40K-50K</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>Manufacturing</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>50K-60K</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>Other Sector</td>
<td>29%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>60K or more</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>Unemployed/Retired</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Immigrant Status</th>
<th>144</th>
<th>Years in the United States</th>
<th>144</th>
<th>Average Household Size</th>
<th>3.36</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>US Citizen</td>
<td>65%</td>
<td>3 or less</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Permanent Resident</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>4-7 years</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Survey Language | 151 | | | |
|-----------------|-----| | | |
| English         | 60% | 8-11 years | 15% | | |
| Chinese         | 28% | 12-15 years | 11% | | |
| Korean          | 11% | 16+ years | 48% | | |
| Spanish         | 1%  |  | | | |
REASONS SURVEYED RESIDENT RESPONDENTS MOVED TO FLUSHING

- Friends/Family live in the area
- Close to work
- Safe
- Affordable
- Other
- Communicate in my primary language
- Old neighborhood too expensive

0% 5% 10% 15% 20% 25% 30%
Resident Survey Respondents Observed Neighborhood Changes in Past Five Years

- Luxury Buildings: 34%
- Apartments no longer affordable: 32%
- Everyday goods more expensive: 31%
- Restaurants and Bars: 23%
- No changes: 12%
- Fewer stores I can afford: 9%
- Neighbors forced to move: 6%
- Other: 19%
Resident Survey Respondents Neighborhood Quality Concerns

- Parking: 48%
- Sanitation: 41%
- Street Beautification: 34%
- Housing Affordability: 34%
- Public Safety: 32%
- Traffic: 29%
- Public Transportation: 20%
- Open Space: 18%
- Job Creation: 17%
- Community Services: 12%
- Youth Center: 8%
- Other: 6%
Resident Survey Respondents' Awareness of Downtown Flushing Framework and Support for Waterfront Redevelopment

Aware of Downtown Flushing Framework
- No: 68%
- Yes: 25%
- Somewhat: 7%

Support Waterfront Redevelopment
- No: 10%
- Yes: 71%
- Somewhat: 19%
Resident Survey Respondents Vision for the Flushing Waterfront

- Park-Open Space: 71%
- Affordable Housing: 55%
- Jobs: 47%
- Pedestrian Path: 46%
- Childcare: 45%
- Senior Housing: 44%
- Community Space: 44%
- Senior Center: 42%
- Blue Path: 42%
- Public School: 41%
- Connect to Citifield: 38%
- Water Recreation: 38%
- Retail: 36%
- Ferry to Manhattan: 36%
- Condominiums: 35%
- Office: 31%
- Other: 10%
Small Business Survey Findings
Table 2
Demographic Characteristics of Small Business Survey Respondents
Total Survey Respondents = 98

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Asian Ethnicity</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Race</strong></td>
<td>98</td>
<td>Asian</td>
<td>97%</td>
<td>Chinese</td>
<td>66%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>White</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>Korean</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Latino</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>Taiwanese</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Other</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>English Speaking Ability</strong></td>
<td>95</td>
<td>Not at all</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>A little</td>
<td>66%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Fluently</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Business Position</strong></td>
<td>97</td>
<td>Owner/Manager</td>
<td>0.54</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Employee</td>
<td>0.46</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Business Climate</strong></td>
<td>85</td>
<td>Better</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Worse</td>
<td>55%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>About the same</td>
<td>39%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Average Number of Employees</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>4.7 employees</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Average Years of Business Operation</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>7.7 years</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Rents Business Location</strong></td>
<td>87</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>93%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Government-Sponsored Business Assistance</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>7%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Member of BID, Chamber of Commerce, Business Association</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>7%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Customer Base of Surveyed Small Businesses in Downtown Flushing

- Flushing: 55%
- New York City: 19%
- Suburbs: 13%
- Tourists: 8%
- Other: 5%
Small Business Survey Respondents' Awareness of the Downtown Flushing Framework

- No: 55%
- Somewhat: 30%
- Yes: 15%
Small Business Survey Respondents Vision for Flushing Waterfront
ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

CONTACT INFORMATION

- MinKwon Center for Community Action
  - A Korean American community organization that focuses on community organizing and advocacy, social services, civic participation, youth, and culture.
  - http://www.minkwon.org

- Queens College
  - Professor Tarry Hum at the Urban Studies Dept.

- NYC Economic Development Corp. (EDC)
  - http://www.downtownflushing.com

- NYC Dept. of City Planning (DCP)
  - Joy Chen, Flushing Planner at the Queens Office.

- The FWCLDC