

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report presents a vision for a resurgent East New York, Brooklyn, with opportunities for thousands of new mixed-income housing units, jobs and services based on a collaborative planning effort led by the Department of City Planning, together with community residents, local organizations, and fellow public agencies. This study recommends changes to transform East New York's key transit corridors into vibrant, safe streets offering new housing and retail, and develop a regional center at Broadway Junction providing jobs and opportunities for economic development.

The Sustainable Communities East New York planning initiative was funded under a regional planning grant awarded by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development to the New York-Connecticut Sustainable Communities Consortium, a collection of governmental and planning organizations in partnership to support the development of livable communities and growth centers around the region's most extensive commuter rail network. As outlined in *Housing New York*, creating housing and job opportunities in proximity to transit is a key goal as New York City seeks to remain affordable for current residents and accommodate a growing population while

fostering sustainable neighborhoods and economic opportunity. East New York was chosen for this study based on its rich transit infrastructure, including a regional rail line, five subway lines and numerous bus routes, which provides the foundation for future transit-oriented development and the further growth of this community.

This initiative was supported by and complements the ongoing work by public agencies including the Department of Transportation (DOT), the Economic Development Corporation (EDC), and agencies of the Metropolitan Transportation Authority (MTA), as well as community-based organizations, including the Cypress Hills Local Development Corporation which is conducting a NYS Brownfield Opportunity Areas Program (BOA) study to evaluate vacant or underutilized strategic sites for redevelopment. The BOA study and this study share the goals of capitalizing on existing transit infrastructure to bring new housing and job opportunities to this underserved community.

Intensive community visioning sessions with residents and other local stakeholders elicited the following planning goals for East New York.

## Planning Goals:

- Facilitate new housing opportunities, including affordable housing
- Improve access to fresh food and retail services
- Enhance the physical environment
- Facilitate job creation and improve access to job centers
- Incorporate sustainability into neighborhood efforts

## RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the results of analysis and community outreach, this report recommends the following:

### **Promote new, mixed-income housing and mixed-use development along key transit corridors**

Provide opportunities for thousands of new housing units as well as for jobs on vacant or underutilized sites along key transit corridors in East New York. Atlantic Avenue offers the greatest potential for higher-density, mixed-use development with several large strategic sites. New housing and neighborhood stores could also be supported by the existing transit lines along Pitkin Avenue and Fulton Street. A wide range of resources, including housing subsidies and zoning mechanisms, could ensure that this new housing would be affordable to households at a range of income levels.

### **Cultivate a dense, mixed-use, job-intensive, regional destination at Broadway Junction**

The East New York MTA Long Island Railroad (LIRR) station, inter-connecting subway stations and numerous bus lines make Broadway Junction one of the most highly transit-accessible locations in the city and region, comparable to Downtown Brooklyn, Jamaica and other central locations. This presents a unique opportunity to advance the community's wishes for mixed-use development, including shopping and entertainment, educational facilities, cultural centers, government institutions, other commercial uses, and mixed-income housing. While significant challenges exist to establishing a center of activity in this highly underutilized area

encumbered by infrastructure, collaborative efforts by City Planning, the MTA, and EDC, among other public and private partners, would bring to fruition the vision for regional-scale development which would provide a wide range of benefits for residents in the adjoining neighborhoods and the city as a whole.

### **Build on neighborhood strengths to preserve longstanding residential neighborhoods and promote contextual infill development**

The area's existing rowhouses and small apartment buildings, located on the residential side streets between the neighborhood's retail corridors, have been a source of stability for East New York. Contextual zoning would promote the retention of this housing stock and ensure that new infill development complements the existing built residential character.

### **Encourage economic development opportunities to support job growth**

New housing and growth in East New York's residential population would expand the local customer base and create opportunities for new stores and other commercial ventures. DCP would work with the Department of Small Business Services to support new and existing businesses as the demand for local services such as grocery stores, banks and restaurants is projected to increase. In addition, the industrially-zoned area to the west of the study area presents opportunities for more intensive industrial and commercial activity. Activating underutilized sites, with a focus on strategic sites at the periphery of this area, and encouraging job-intensive uses would support existing work by EDC to encourage increased economic activity and make jobs more accessible to residents of the adjoining neighborhoods.

### **Enhance safety and connectivity with streetscape improvements**

By adding new sidewalks, curb extensions, traffic signals, street trees, benches, bus shelters and other amenities along major corridors, neighborhood safety and walkability for pedestrians and transit users would be enhanced. As a result of their collaboration on this study, and with funding from the City Council, DOT has begun making improvements to priority intersections along Atlantic Avenue, which is dangerous to cross and inhospitable to pedestrians walking or waiting for buses. At Broadway Junction, DOT is slated to construct improvements to pedestrian connectivity between the LIRR, subway and bus stations, as well as to the surrounding neighborhoods; in addition, further enhancements in the Industrial and Business Area would increase safety and strengthen that area's ability to attract and retain more businesses and jobs.

### **Support neighborhood sustainability through programs at the community level**

Local organizations in East New York as well as city agencies such as the Department of Parks and Recreation, the Department of Environmental Protection, the Department of Health, and the Department of Sanitation, are working to improve health and sustainability by promoting street tree plantings, green infrastructure, access to open spaces and green building practices. Enhancing connections to parks and open space, promoting active transportation, and improving access to healthy food can further support community wellness efforts.



## TURNING RECOMMENDATIONS INTO ACTION

Implementation of this study's recommendations would strengthen East New York as a livable, transit-oriented community, supporting its residents' vision of a complete neighborhood offering a range of housing options, including affordable housing, transportation, jobs and services in a healthy, clean and safe environment. This will require the combined effort of government agencies, elected officials, local residents, businesses, and community-based organizations. Some recommendations have already begun to be implemented as a result of this study.

### Key Next Steps:

- Implement streetscape and transportation improvements
- Develop and introduce for public review a rezoning plan to allow higher densities and a mix of uses along transit corridors and promote contextual development in primarily residential areas
- Promote redevelopment of key underutilized sites through coordinated public and private investment



*Left (photo): Cypress Hills Local Development Corporation celebrates the completion of a new affordable housing development  
Image: © Cypress Hills Local Development Corporation*

## Streetscape and Transportation Improvements

In addition to the previously mentioned streetscape improvements to Atlantic Avenue and around Broadway Junction currently underway by DOT, in the long-term, changes to the traffic flow and a reconstruction of Atlantic Avenue could make this corridor safer and more efficient for a variety of users including pedestrians, bikers, transit riders and drivers. Making transit stations in the area more accessible would allow more users to access these resources; measures could include improving the underpass at the LIRR station, opening additional entrances to the Broadway Junction station, adding bus stop shelters, improving wayfinding between stations, and installing ramps and elevators to make stations more accessible to those with limited mobility.

## Neighborhood Rezoning

The NYS Department of State has awarded a Step 3 BOA implementation grant to the Department of City Planning and the Cypress Hills Local Development Corporation (CHLDC), which would partially fund the development and completion of an area-wide rezoning to implement this study's recommendations for mixed-use growth along transit corridors, contextual zoning, and the redevelopment of strategic brownfield sites. City Planning recently worked with CHLDC to facilitate

the required rezoning to medium-density to allow the construction of the first mid-rise affordable housing development on Pitkin Avenue in many decades. This development will provide 60 units of much needed affordable housing as well as stores on the ground floor to help activate Pitkin Avenue's retail corridor and is an example of the type of development which would be enabled by a neighborhood-wide rezoning. Additionally, a grant from the New York-Connecticut Transit-Oriented Housing Incentive Fund, a joint project of the New York-Connecticut Sustainable Communities Consortium and the Local Initiatives Support Corporation, will help CHLDC advance a mixed-use development of retail and affordable rental housing.

## Economic Development

Redevelopment of strategic sites along Atlantic Avenue would be facilitated through an area-wide rezoning, and would bring new housing and economic activity to the corridor. Realization of the economic development potential envisioned for Broadway Junction would require concerted, long-term effort on the part of public agencies, elected officials, private enterprise, local community members and other stakeholders. This ambitious vision for Broadway Junction as a regional anchor and home to a variety of commercial and institutional destinations capitalizes on the existing transit assets to create enormous value for the surrounding community and the entire region.



*Right (photo):  
A safety median and high-visibility crosswalk  
have made this intersection at Atlantic Avenue  
and Warwick Street safer for pedestrians.*