



FLATBUSH – DITMAS PARK BROOKLYN

Commercial District Needs Assessment



careers
businesses
neighborhoods



Flatbush Development Corporation



ABOUT FLATBUSH – DITMAS PARK

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 **Cortelyou Road, Newkirk Avenue, Foster Road, Coney Island Avenue, and Ocean Avenue** commercial corridors in **Flatbush – Ditmas Park**, and was conducted in partnership with the **Flatbush Development Corporation** between July and December 2018.

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 Central Brooklyn, Flatbush – Ditmas Park is a vibrant and diverse neighborhood with a strong sense of community. Many of the borough's most celebrated institutions – including Prospect Park, the Brooklyn Botanic Garden, Kings Theatre, and Brooklyn College – call the neighborhood home and offer numerous cultural and recreational opportunities. The built environment consists of a unique mix of multi-story apartment buildings interspersed with large, single-family homes, leading many to refer to the area as a “suburb in the city.” The neighborhood's southern edge is part of the Fiske Terrace–Midwood Park Historic District, best known for its Victorian-style mansions and tree-lined streets. The neighborhood is served by multiple public transportation options including the B and Q subway lines, which provide direct connections to Coney Island to the south and Downtown Brooklyn and Manhattan to the north.

The history of Flatbush – Ditmas Park is defined by reinvention. In the 17th century, the neighborhood transformed from a Dutch colonial settlement to an English territory before becoming a major battleground site in the American Revolution. In subsequent years, the area was an independent township until it was eventually incorporated into the City of New York in 1898. In the decades that followed, Flatbush – Ditmas Park experienced increased urbanization and integration with the city's subway system, which resulted in dramatic demographic and socioeconomic changes. Development slowed in the 1970s and 1980s, accompanied by rising crime, drug epidemics, and widespread disinvestment across the city, yet in recent decades community members have banded together to reestablish their neighborhood as an exciting place to live, work, and play. Today, a dedicated network of residents, merchants, property owners, and nonprofits is working collaboratively to reinvent the neighborhood once again, securing a future of equity and opportunity for all who call Flatbush – Ditmas Park home.

The commercial district is composed of several dynamic corridors, each with its own style. Cortelyou Road offers a thriving culinary scene with restaurants, bars, and a weekly farmers market that attracts locals and visitors alike. Newkirk Avenue and Foster Avenue contain a wide range of essential services that cater to the needs of the community—from pharmacies and florists to barbershops and banks. Situated between these two corridors is Newkirk Plaza, a bustling pedestrian hub for commerce and transit. To the west, Coney Island Avenue serves as the commercial heart of the neighborhood's South Asian migrant community and consists of businesses centered on light industry, professional services, and many South Asian bakeries and restaurants. To the east, Ocean Avenue provides a peaceful mix of residences, medical offices, and houses of worship.

Neighborhood Demographics

See more on page 12

Flatbush – Ditmas Park is a remarkably diverse community. Of the neighborhood's approximately 52,000 residents, 45% are foreign born (compared to 37% citywide), hailing predominately from the Caribbean, South Central Asia, and Eastern Europe. This diversity is reflected in the character of the businesses across the neighborhood, many of which are owned or operated by immigrant entrepreneurs who speak languages ranging from Haitian Creole to Urdu.

The community is strongly focused on family life, a value which is reinforced by the myriad educational institutions surrounding Flatbush – Ditmas Park; more than a dozen public and private schools, as well as Brooklyn College, are located within a mile of the neighborhood.

Future Opportunities

See more on page 5

Flatbush – Ditmas Park is well positioned to build upon its existing strengths over the coming years. New partnerships are being forged between local businesses and community-based organizations to overcome shared challenges, and a series of major investments in local institutions has brought a renewed sense of economic opportunity to the district. Combined, these efforts are helping a historic neighborhood create a prosperous future.

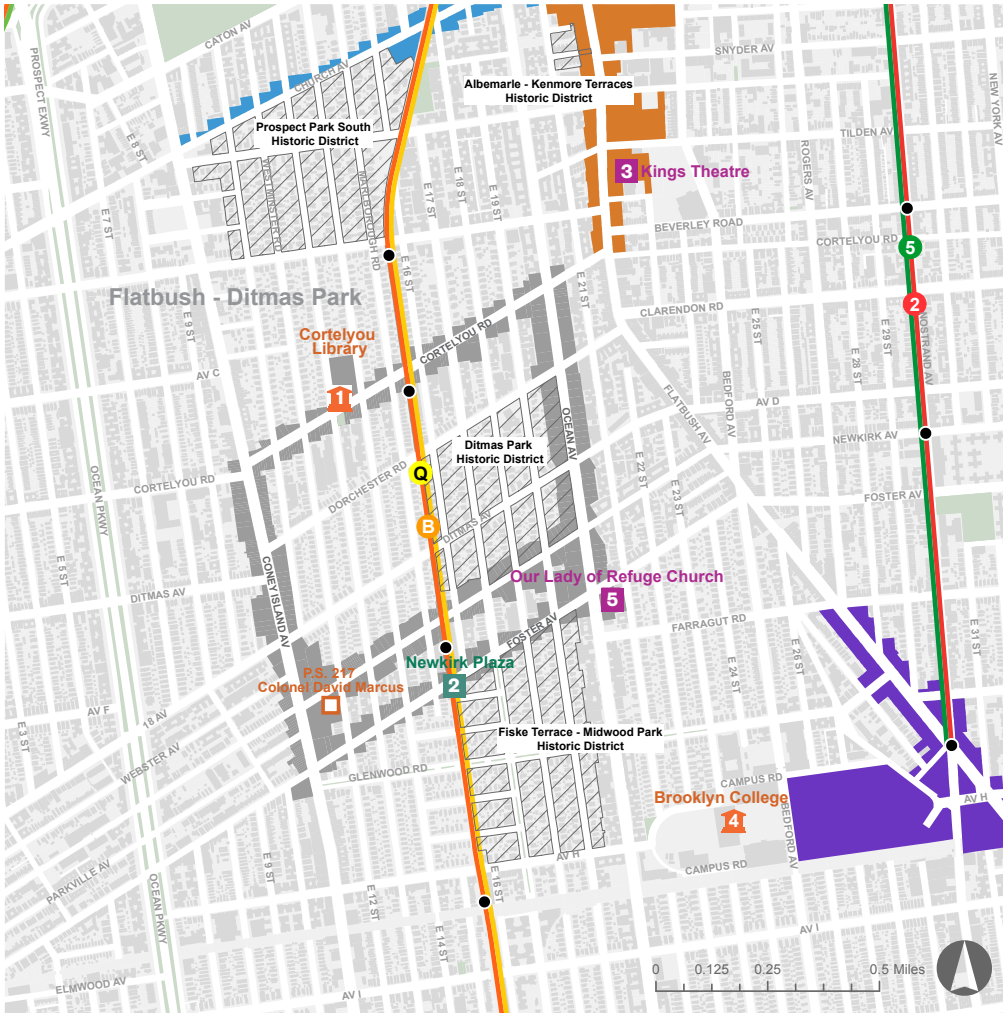
In This Report

Existing conditions, business data, and qualitative depictions of the neighborhood were gathered from more than **594 surveys** and various stakeholder meetings with neighborhood merchants, shoppers, workers, property owners, and residents.

Jump to...

Key Findings	4-5
Business Inventory	6
What Merchants Say	7-8
Business Outlook	9-10
What Shoppers Say	8, 10
Physical Environment	11
Data Appendix	12-14

Flatbush – Ditmas Park



▲ Points of Interest

- Assessed Commercial Corridors
- Church Avenue Business Improvement District
- Flatbush Avenue Business Improvement District
- Flatbush – Nostrand Junction Business Improvement District
- Historic Districts
- Historic Institutions
- Public Spaces
- Public Facilities

Neighborhood Events

- Cortelyou at Twilight
- Eat & Shop Your Heart Out Cortelyou
- Flatbush Frolic
- Summer on Cortelyou

Merchant & Business Groups

- Cortelyou Road Merchants Association (CoRMA)
- Council of Peoples Organization (COPO)
- Newkirk Plaza Merchants Association

◀ Notable Places



Cortelyou Library



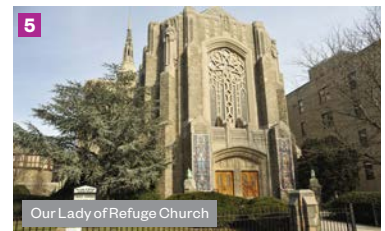
Newkirk Plaza



Kings Theatre



Brooklyn College



Our Lady of Refuge Church

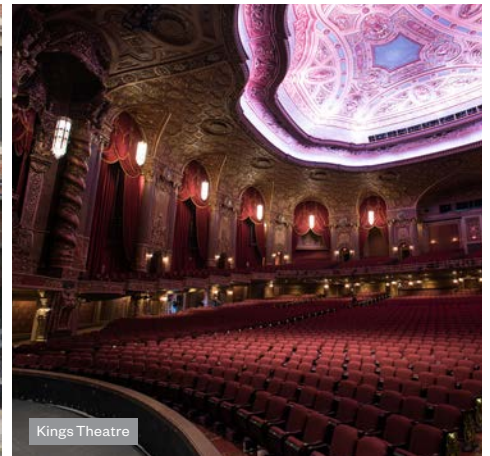
KEY FINDINGS & OPPORTUNITIES

Strengths

- ▶ The commercial district is within walking distance from major cultural and recreational attractions, including Prospect Park, Kings Theatre, and the Brooklyn College Performing Arts Center
- ▶ Express and local transportation options – including the B and Q subway lines – offer easy access to Manhattan, Downtown Brooklyn, and Coney Island
- ▶ Victorian architecture and tree-lined residential streets add to the historic and peaceful quality of the neighborhood
- ▶ Nearly 70% of consumers access the commercial district on foot, creating a lively and sociable environment
- ▶ Diverse merchant community reflects the cultures of Africa, the Caribbean, South Central Asia, and Latin America
- ▶ Proximity to more than a dozen educational institutions enablesthe neighborhood to attract and retain a wide range of residents and contributes to a family-oriented atmosphere

Challenges

- ▶ Merchants and residents are concerned about the pace of gentrification and the possibility of displacement
- ▶ The commercial district lacks plazas and green spaces, leaving community members with limited options for socializing and gathering in public
- ▶ Insufficient trash management throughout the commercial district detracts from the attractiveness of local businesses and the quality of the public realm
- ▶ Many storefronts and commercial building façades are in poor condition and could benefit from new investments and repairs
- ▶ Merchants struggle to navigate and comply with NYC regulations, resulting in fines and penalties for their businesses
- ▶ Newkirk Plaza suffers from underinvestment despite its position as a hub for commerce and transit in the neighborhood





Lt. Federico Narvaez Tot Lot



Cortelyou Road Weekend Walk



Flatbush Food Co-op



Ocean Parkway Bike Lane

Opportunities

- ▶ Transform Newkirk Plaza into a dynamic hub for commerce and transit through sustained sanitation and beautification efforts
- ▶ Attract in-demand businesses to diversify and strengthen the commercial composition of the district
- ▶ Strengthen new and existing merchant associations to help businesses collectively advocate for resources that support economic opportunity
- ▶ Create non-traditional public spaces that activate the streetscape and foster new connections throughout the community
- ▶ Organize street fairs and other neighborhood events to strengthen ties between residents and business
- ▶ Develop a comprehensive sanitation strategy with input from local stakeholders to improve the attractiveness of the commercial district
- ▶ Provide multi-lingual business development workshops to support a diverse base of merchants
- ▶ Implement a wayfinding program to direct visitors from nearby attractions towards local businesses

What's Next?

To address these key findings and opportunities, Avenue NYC Grants have been awarded by SBS to nonprofit organizations.

For more information, visit: nyc.gov/avenuenyc

BUSINESS LANDSCAPE

Business Inventory

348

Total Number of Storefronts

7.2%

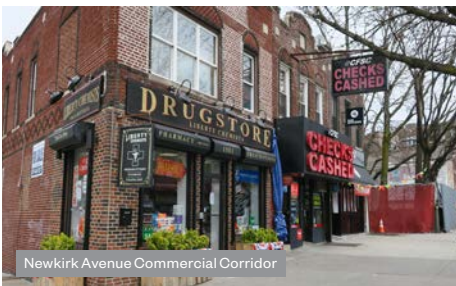
Storefront Vacancy*

* Note: In 2018, New York City's 75 Business Improvement Districts reported an average ground floor vacancy rate of 8.9% and a median ground floor vacancy rate of 7.3% (SBS BIDs Trends Report, 2018).

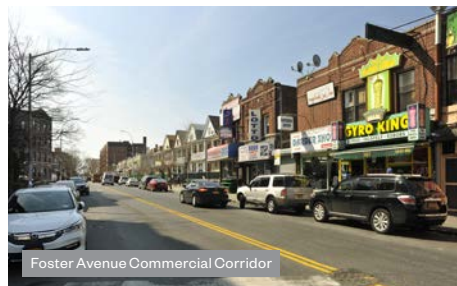
Storefront & Retail Mix



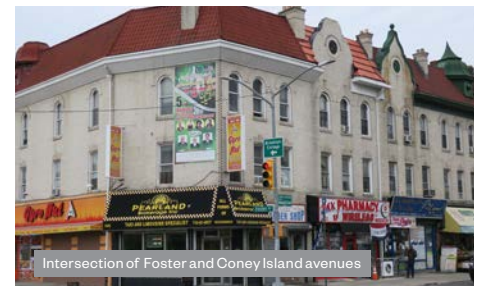
Business inventory and retail mix data were gathered by Flatbush Development Corporation through a comprehensive area inventory of storefront businesses located along Cortelyou Road, Newkirk Road Avenue, Foster Avenue, Coney Island Avenue, Ocean Avenue, and within Newkirk Plaza (Fall 2018).



Newkirk Avenue Commercial Corridor



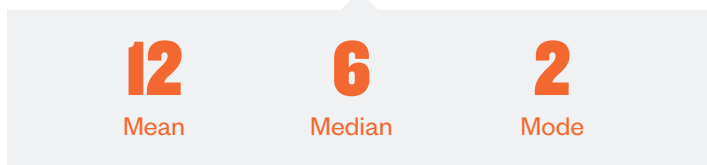
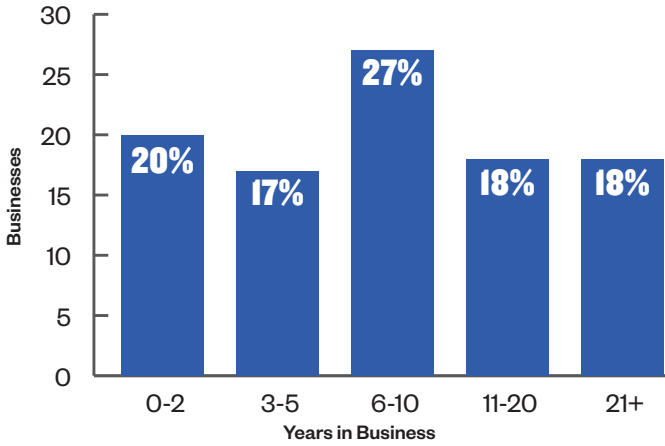
Foster Avenue Commercial Corridor



Intersection of Foster and Coney Island avenues

What We've Heard from Flatbush – Ditmas Park Merchants

How many years have you been in business here?

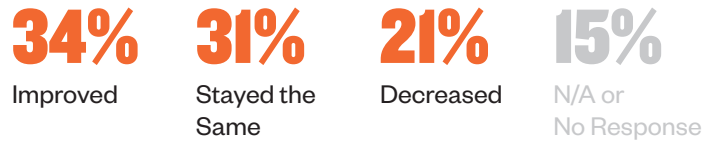


*Note: The mean is the average of all responses, the median is the middle number when all responses are arranged in ascending order, and the mode is the most common response.

Do you own or rent your property?



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



In the coming year, do you plan to expand, stay, relocate, or close?



What changes need to occur in Flatbush – Ditmas Park to attract more visitors/shoppers?

	% Merchant Responses
▶ Landscaping/beautification	17%
▶ Sanitation	15%
▶ Community events	14%
▶ Merchant collaboration	12%
▶ Parking	12%
▶ Safety	11%
▶ Storefront improvements	11%
▶ Street lighting	7%
▶ Other	1%

What kinds of resources would help you grow your business?

	% Merchant Responses
▶ Marketing support	25%
▶ Space improvements	16%
▶ Access to financing	13%
▶ New equipment	10%
▶ Assistance with regulatory compliance	9%
▶ Lease support	9%
▶ Training for staff	9%
▶ Legal services	5%
▶ Other services	4%

Source: Based on 68 merchant surveys conducted by the Flatbush Development Corporation in Fall 2018.

BUSINESS LANDSCAPE

What We've Heard from Flatbush – Ditmas Park Merchants

What makes this commercial district unique?

"Its safety and diversity."

"Newkirk Plaza. It's one of the oldest outdoor malls in America."

"The people in this district are very welcoming and come together in times of need."

"It's easily accessible via public transit."

"The history of the neighborhood."

What would you say are the most pressing needs of businesses on this corridor?

"Our businesses get too many fines and rents keep increasing!"

"Cleaning and landscaping could go a long way."

"More marketing and advertisement could help us bring in new customers."

"Extra resources for Newkirk Plaza!"

"Add more signage to direct shoppers around the neighborhood."

What We've Heard from Flatbush – Ditmas Park Shoppers

What do you like about the commercial corridor?

"It's safe and family friendly."

"We have fresh and affordable fruits and vegetables."

"Neighborhood events like Flatbush Frolic bring the whole community together."

"We have so many types of stores."

"The architecture is beautiful."

What changes would you suggest to improve the commercial district for residents, pedestrians, and shoppers?

"Install public bathrooms!"

"Clean up Newkirk Plaza and the area around it."

"More parks and better playgrounds for our kids."

"Bring in new businesses. Some bookstores and banks would be great."

"Better subway service on weekends could bring in more customers."

"Storefront improvements and extra sanitation would make our businesses more attractive."

Flatbush – Ditmas Park Retail Opportunity

<p>Residents spend</p> <p>\$2.36B</p> <p>each year in goods and services</p>	<p>Local businesses make</p> <p>\$1.58B</p> <p>each year in retail sales</p>	<p>Every year,</p> <p>\$774M</p> <p>is spent outside the neighborhood</p>
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Retail Leakage & Surplus

← Surplus \$0 Leakage →



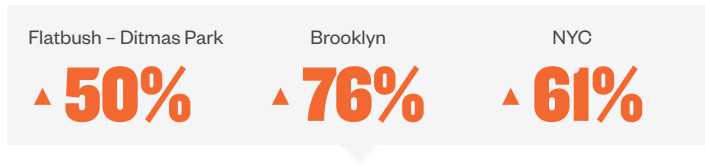
Retail leakage and surplus is the difference between estimated spending by local residents on retail goods and estimated sales by local retail businesses. Retail **leakage** occurs when consumer demand exceeds retail supply in a designated trade area. On the chart, a positive value indicates leakage 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, January 2019.

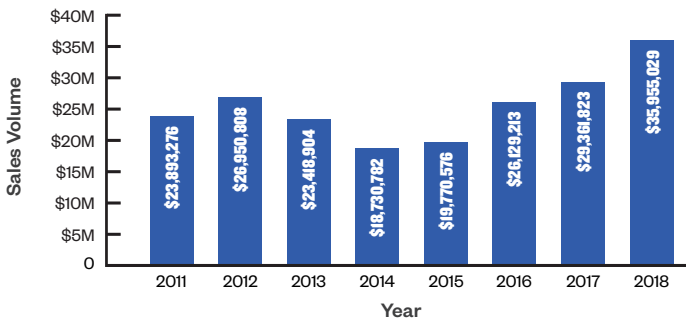
BUSINESS OUTLOOK

Business Trends

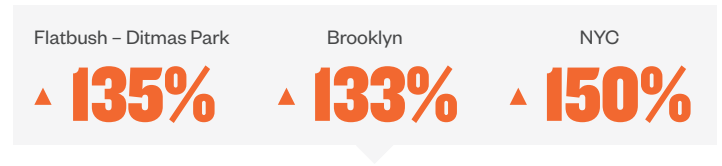
Change in Total Business Sales, 2011 - 2018



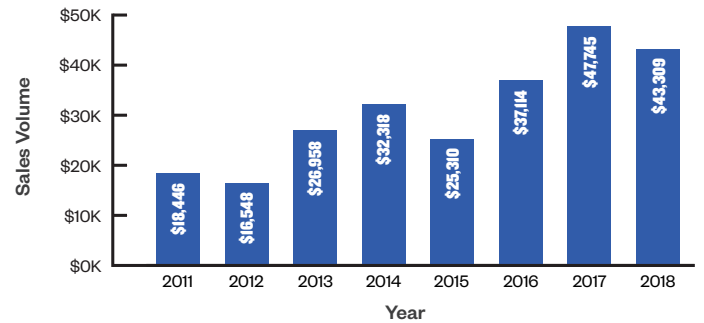
Flatbush - Ditmas Park Total Business Sales



Change in Median Sales by Business, 2011 - 2018








Flatbush - Ditmas Park Median Sales by Business



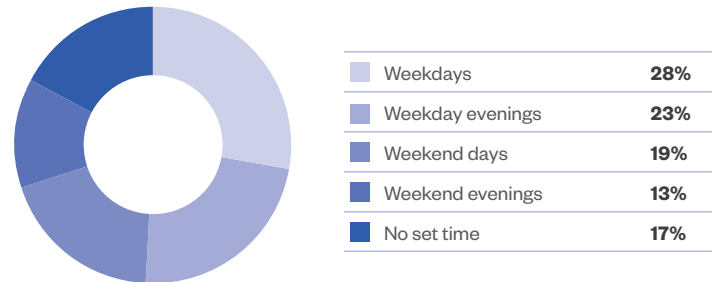
Source: Division of Tax Policy, NYC Department of Finance

What We've Heard from Shoppers

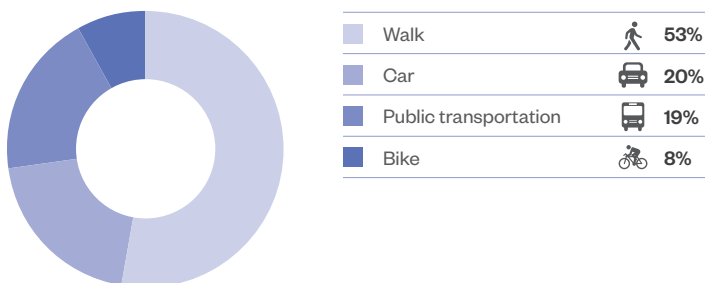
What additional types of businesses would you like to see in Flatbush - Ditmas Park?

- ▶ Restaurants 
- ▶ Bookstores 
- ▶ Gyms and fitness studios 
- ▶ Bakeries 
- ▶ Banks 

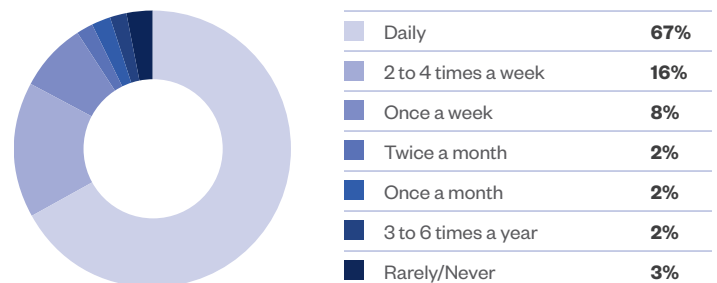
When do you usually shop in Flatbush - Ditmas Park?



How do you usually get to Flatbush - Ditmas Park?



How often do you shop in Flatbush - Ditmas Park?



Source: Based on 526 consumer surveys conducted by the Flatbush Development Corporation in Fall 2018.

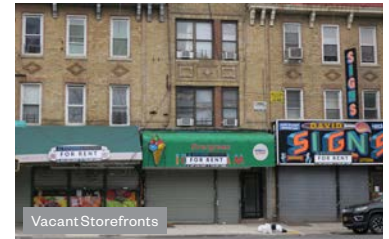
Storefront Vacancies



An analysis of 348 storefronts along Cortelyou Road, Newkirk Avenue, Foster Avenue, Coney Island Avenue, and Ocean Avenue revealed that 39% of storefronts are in poor condition, 32% are in average condition, and 29% are in good condition.

Streetscape Observations

- ▶ Newkirk Plaza — a major hub for commerce and transit — serves as an invaluable public space and could benefit from additional investments in sanitation and beautification.
- ▶ Street and sidewalk conditions vary throughout the district. Faded markings and cracked pavement create hazards in several locations.
- ▶ Less than one third of storefronts throughout the district are in good condition. Coney Island Avenue and Newkirk Plaza both have a concentration of storefronts in need of improvement.
- ▶ Tree pits are abundant but unmaintained and suffer from broken guards, overgrown weeds, and buildups of litter.
- ▶ Insufficient trash management throughout the district detracts from the quality of the public realm, especially along Coney Island Avenue.
- ▶ Metered and unmetered parking is available throughout most of the district.
- ▶ High storefront occupancy rates support connectivity and continuity along commercial corridors, especially along Cortelyou Road and Coney Island Avenue.



DATA APPENDIX

Study Area Boundaries

■ Assessed Commercial Corridors

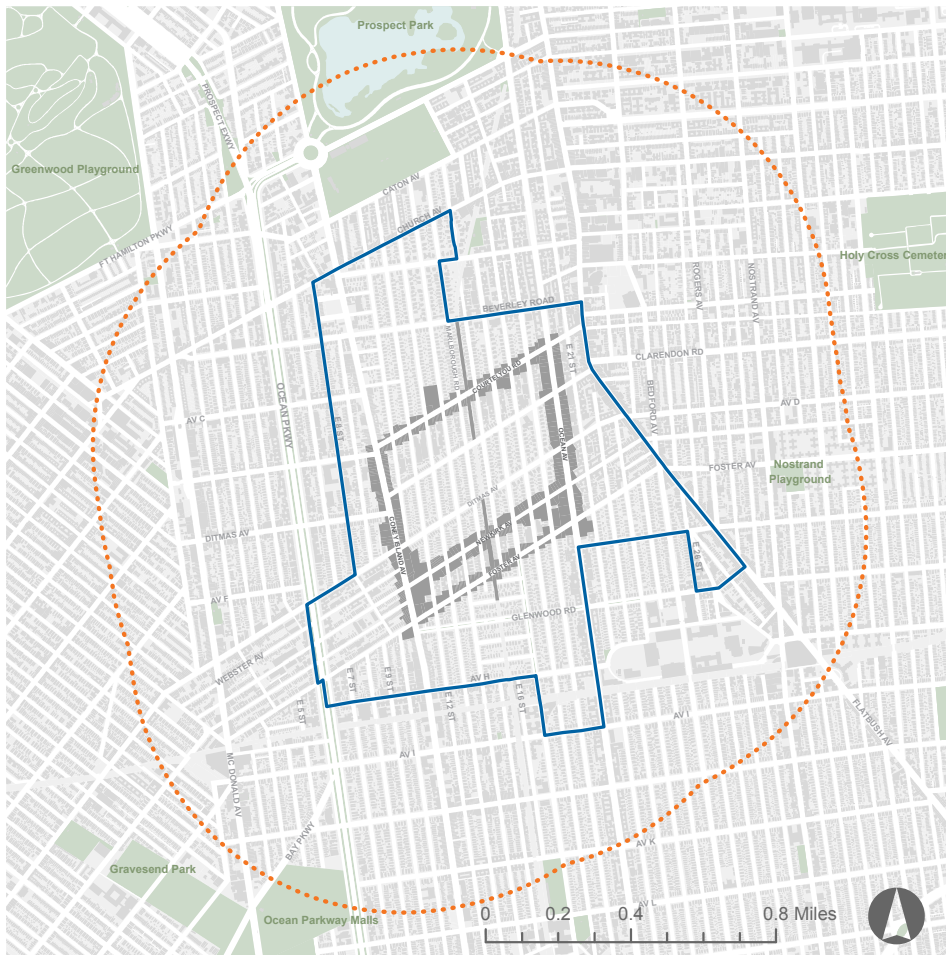
Primary data on Flatbush – Ditmas Park storefront businesses presented on pg. 6-8 was gathered along Cortelyou Road, Newkirk Avenue, and Foster Avenue between Coney Island and Ocean avenues, and Coney Island Avenue and Ocean Avenue between Cortelyou Road and Foster Avenue.

— Flatbush – Ditmas Park Context Area

Demographic and employment data on pg. 12-13 correspond to the Flatbush – Ditmas Park neighborhood context area.

... Trade Area

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



Area Demographics

Total Population

52,801	Flatbush – Ditmas Park
2,606,852	Brooklyn
8,461,961	New York City

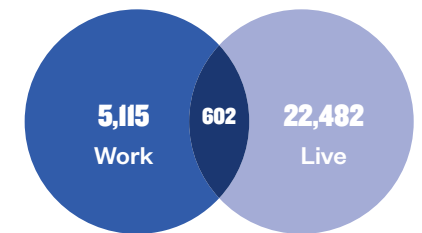
Population Density (per square mile)

61,515	Flatbush – Ditmas Park
37,510	Brooklyn
27,986	New York City

Average Household Size

2.87	Flatbush – Ditmas Park
2.73	Brooklyn
2.65	New York City

Commuting Patterns



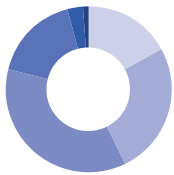
5,115	Work in Flatbush – Ditmas Park, live elsewhere
602	Live & Work in Flatbush – Ditmas Park
22,482	Live in Flatbush – Ditmas Park, work elsewhere

Car Ownership

44%	Flatbush – Ditmas Park
44%	Brooklyn
45%	New York City

Area Demographics

Race/Background



	Flatbush - Ditmas Park	BK	NYC
Hispanic or Latino (of any race)	17%	19%	29%
White alone	26%	36%	32%
Black or African American alone	36%	31%	22%
Asian alone	17%	12%	14%
Two or more races	3%	2%	2%
Some other race alone	1%	0%	1%
American Indian and Alaska Native alone	0%	0%	0%
Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander	0%	0%	0%

Educational Attainment



	Flatbush - Ditmas Park	BK	NYC
12th Grade or Less, No Diploma	19%	20%	19%
High School Graduate	24%	26%	24%
Some College, No Degree	13%	14%	14%
Associate's Degree	7%	6%	7%
Bachelor's Degree	22%	21%	21%
Graduate or Professional Degree	15%	13%	15%

Population Age



	Flatbush - Ditmas Park	BK	NYC
Under 5 Years	9%	7%	6%
5-14 Years	13%	13%	11%
15-24 Years	12%	13%	13%
25-44 Years	32%	32%	32%
45-64 Years	22%	23%	25%
65+ Years	12%	12%	13%

Median Age

34.5	Flatbush - Ditmas Park
34.5	Brooklyn
35.9	New York City

Foreign-Born Population

45%	Flatbush - Ditmas Park
37%	Brooklyn
37%	New York City

Income

Median Household Income

\$49,871	Flatbush - Ditmas Park
\$50,640	Brooklyn
\$55,191	New York City

Pop. Below Poverty Line

21%	Flatbush - Ditmas Park
23%	Brooklyn
20%	New York City

Employment

Population in Labor Force

63%	Flatbush - Ditmas Park
64%	Brooklyn
64%	New York City

Unemployment*

8.3%	Flatbush - Ditmas Park
9.0%	Brooklyn
8.6%	New York City

*Note: Unemployment figures are based on data from 2012-2016. As of December 2018, the unemployment rate is 4% for Brooklyn and 3.9% for New York City (NYS DOL); updated neighborhood-level data for Flatbush - Ditmas Park is not available.

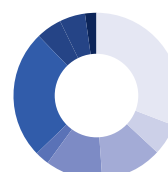
Local Jobs and Employment

Local Residents' Employment



Educational Services, Health Care, Social Assistance	32%
Accommodation, Food Services, Arts, Entertainment	11%
Other Services	10%
Retail Trade	10%
Professional, Scientific, Technical Services	9%
Transportation, Warehousing, Utilities	8%
Finance, Insurance, Real Estate	7%
Construction	5%
Manufacturing	4%
Public Administration	4%

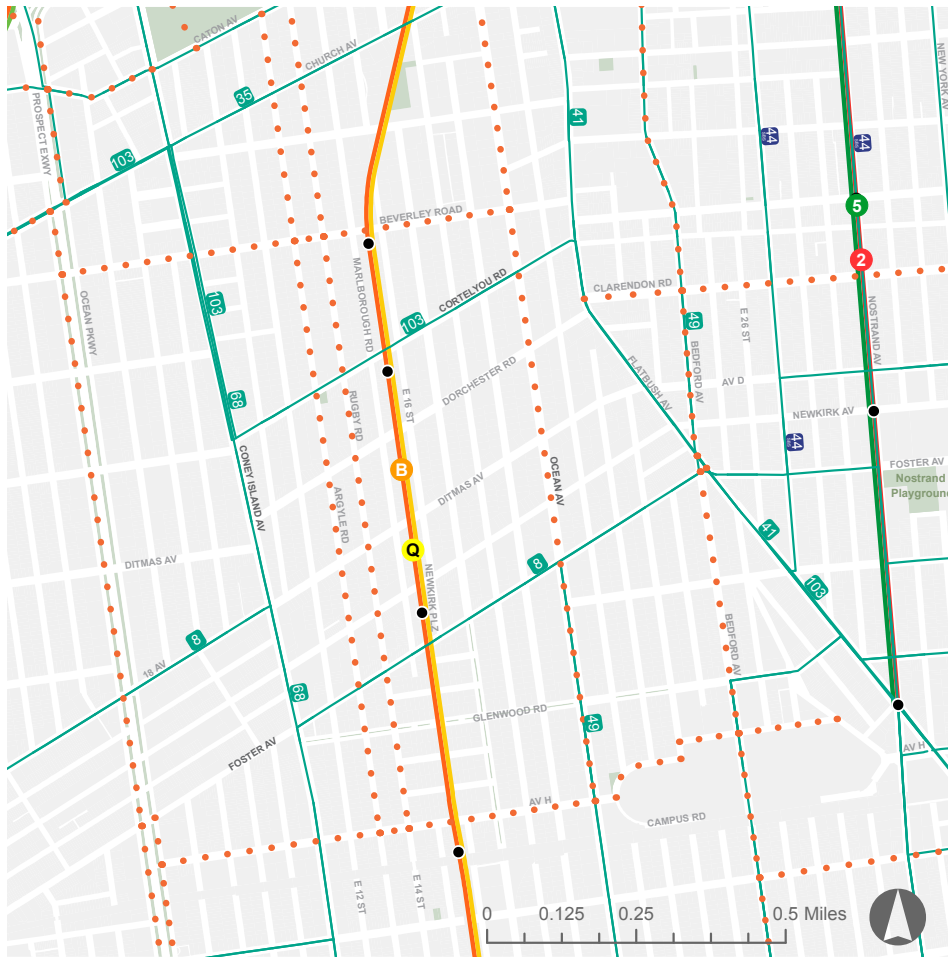
Jobs Located in Flatbush - Ditmas Park



Educational Services, Health Care, Social Assistance	31%
Accommodation, Food Services, Arts, Entertainment	6%
Other Services	12%
Retail Trade	11%
Professional, Scientific, Technical Services	3%
Transportation, Warehousing, Utilities	25%
Finance, Insurance, Real Estate	5%
Construction	5%
Manufacturing	0%
Public Administration	2%

DATA APPENDIX

Flatbush – Ditmas Park Transportation



Pedestrian Counts (2017)

Cortelyou Road between Argyle Road and Rugby Road

2,598 Weekday Morning (7 - 9 a.m.)

3,427 Weekday Afternoon (4 - 7 p.m.)

2,107 Weekend (12 - 2 p.m.)

MTA Annual Bus Ridership (2017)

5,997,980 B8

9,894,228 B35

8,113,663 B41

11,137,237 B44-SBS

3,573,281 B49

4,455,505 B68

4,342,063 B103

▲ Flatbush – Ditmas Park Transportation

— Bus Routes

— NYC Subway

••• Bicycle Lanes

Vehicular Traffic (2016)

9,425 Cortelyou Road (Coney Island Avenue and East 17th Street)

6,132 Dorchester Road (Coney Island and Flatbush avenues)

5,079 Newkirk Avenue (Coney Island and Flatbush avenues)

10,682 Foster Avenue (Ocean Parkway and Rugby Road)

16,524 Foster Avenue (Rugby Road and E. 17th Street)

8,805 Foster Avenue (East 17th Street and Flatbush Avenue)

20,681 Coney Island Avenue (Church and Ditmas avenues)

23,460 Coney Island Avenue (Ditmas Avenue and Avenue K)

17,560 Ocean Avenue (Caton Street and Ditmas Avenue)

19,752 Ocean Avenue (Ditmas Avenue and Avenue H)

Average Weekday Subway Ridership (2017)

3,329 Avenue H

3,267 Beverley Road

4,384 Beverly Road

17,186 Church Avenue

6,348 Cortelyou Road

20,691 Flatbush Avenue - Brooklyn College

7,600 Newkirk Avenue

10,728 Newkirk Plaza

Sources: MTA, 2017; NYC DOT, September 2017, Bi-Annual Pedestrian Counts; NYS DOT, 2015.

Recent SBS Investments in the Neighborhood

- ▶ *Commercial Revitalization*, Avenue NYC multi-year grant, awarded to Flatbush Development Corporation, 2018-2021.
- ▶ *Neighborhood 360° Fellowship*, Host Organization, awarded to the Church Avenue BID, 2019.
- ▶ *Business Attraction*, Avenue NYC grant of \$30,000 awarded to the Flatbush Nostrand Junction BID, 2018.
- ▶ *Cortelyou Road Outdoor Event Series*, Avenue NYC placemaking grant of \$30,000 awarded to Flatbush Development Corporation, 2018.
- ▶ *Cortelyou Road Outdoor Event Series*, Avenue NYC placemaking grant of \$30,000 awarded to Flatbush Development Corporation, 2017.
- ▶ *Neighborhood 360° Fellowship*, Host Organization, awarded to the Flatbush Nostrand Junction BID, 2017.
- ▶ *Cortelyou Road Outdoor Event Series*, Avenue NYC placemaking grant of \$25,000 awarded to Flatbush Development Corporation, 2016.
- ▶ *Neighborhood Challenge Grant* of \$100,000 awarded to Flatbush Nostrand Junction BID, 2016.
- ▶ *Cortelyou Road Outdoor Event Series*, Avenue NYC placemaking grant of \$25,000 awarded to Flatbush Development Corporation, 2015.
- ▶ *Merchant Organizing*, Avenue NYC grant of \$15,000 awarded to Flatbush Development Corporation, 2015.
- ▶ *Restore Church Avenue*, Avenue NYC façade improvement grant of \$30,000 awarded to Church Avenue BID, 2015.

Current & Planned Developments

1620 Cortelyou Road Rezoning

- ▶ A private rezoning application for a proposed mixed-use development with ground floor retail space and 85 residential units
- ▶ 25% of units designated as affordable
- ▶ Completion date: TBA

Crystal Towers

- ▶ Includes 123 affordable or subsidized residential units and an on-site supportive services center
- ▶ Scheduled for completion by June 2019

Lt. Federico Narvaez Tot Lot Reconstruction

- ▶ \$980,000 capital improvement project funded by the NYC Department of Parks and Recreation
- ▶ Includes new playground equipment, public furniture, greenery, and plumbing upgrades
- ▶ Scheduled for completion by April 2020

Sources

Esri and Infogroup, Inc. 2019 Retail MarketPlace.

Metropolitan Transportation Authority. 2017. Average Weekday Subway Ridership.

NYS Department of Labor. December 2018. Unemployment Rate Rankings by County.

NYS Department of Transportation. 2015 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 from the analysis, and the top 5% of filers from Manhattan and the top 1% of filers from the outer boroughs by sales were removed.

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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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