



# Wilson Avenue Business Corridor Report

April 2018 - Prepared by Nicholas MacDonald

## About

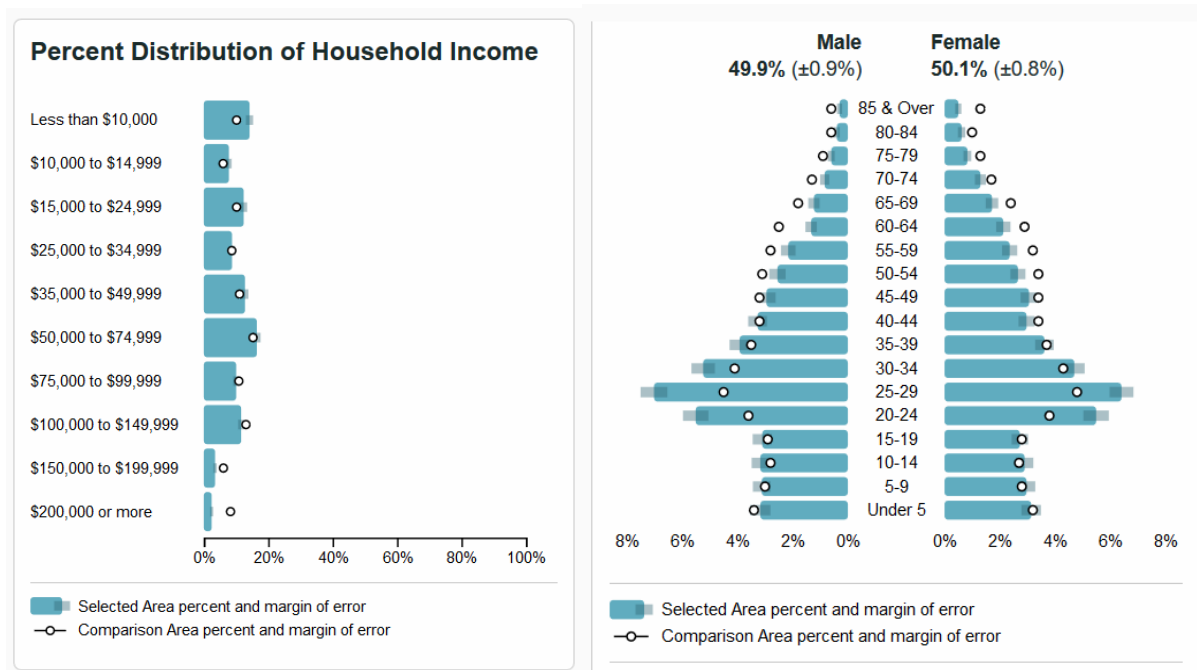
The purpose of this report is to advise the Economic Development Committee of Brooklyn Community Board 4 in the ongoing community planning process. The choice of examining Wilson Avenue was guided by community visioning activities, conversations with residents, and CB4 meetings.

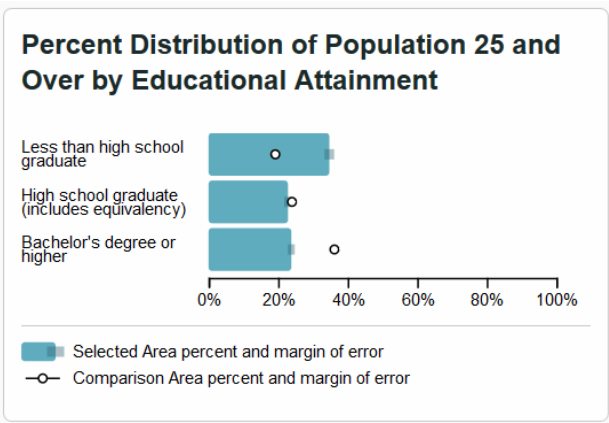
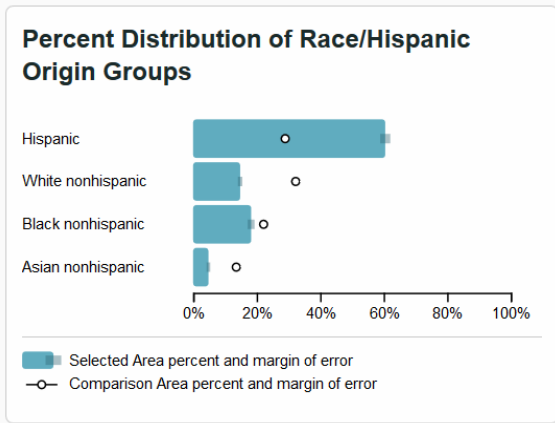
Commercial districts have a direct impact on the neighborhoods that they serve. They are more than where residents work, start small businesses, and shop; they are a source of identity and pride. The conditions of Wilson Avenue matter, as do the quality and types of businesses serving local residents.

This report describes the physical, business, and demographic characteristics of Wilson Avenue.

## Neighborhood Demographic and Economics Indicators

2016 ACS and Census Tract Projections





**Land Use**

The blocks surrounding Wilson Avenue is characterized by predominantly residential land uses, including low-density residential uses such as one-to-six unit family buildings. Large multi-family elevator buildings are clustered in the NYCHA development in the middle. Wilson Avenue is a key corridor for commercial activity providing retail and services for the surrounding neighborhoods. It is dominated by small locally-owned businesses, except for a few chain restaurants concentrated around the Myrtle Ave intersection.

The pedestrian experience of the business corridor suffers from several disruptions in continuity. In addition to the Hope Gardens NYCHA development there are also several schools located along the corridor contributing to its discontinuity. There is also one park and one block that is only residential. On two blocks there are non-facing residential developments with open views of backyards that contribute negatively to the appearance of the corridor while not contributing “eyes on the street.”

**Transportation Access**

Transportations options are generally excellent for Wilson Avenue. Either end of the corridor is served by subway stations, the Wilson L stop at the Eastern end and two blocks from the intersection of Wilson Avenue and Myrtle Avenue is services by the M and L trains. The area is well served by buses with the B60, B52, B38, and B26 routes running both along the corridor and crossing it.

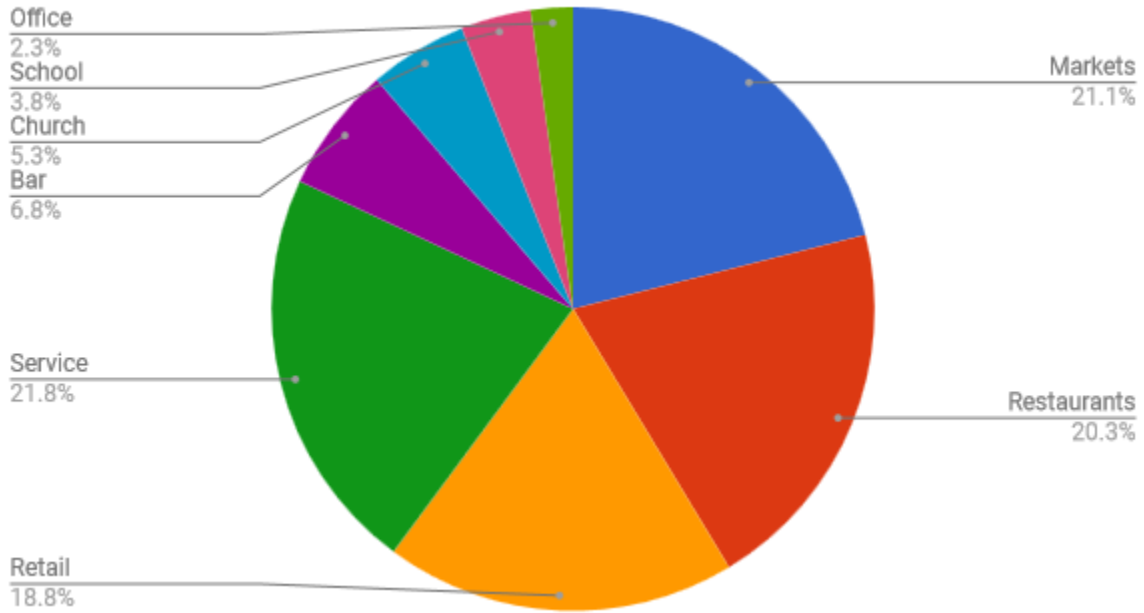
On street parking is abundant in surrounding area but the area lacks any substantial parking lots that larger businesses might consider when moving to the area. The sidewalks are all paved and in good condition but places to stop and rest outside of the park are few and far between. For bikers, there is no bicycle lane on Wilson Avenue and bike racks are limited in number making bicycle access the least desirable of the transit options for accessing the corridor.

### Business composition

The district is almost entirely locally owned small businesses with a lack of any anchor businesses or particular industries defining the area. The exception to this rule is at the intersection of Myrtle Avenue where several national restaurant chains are located nearby.

The composition of the corridor is diverse as detailed in the chart below.

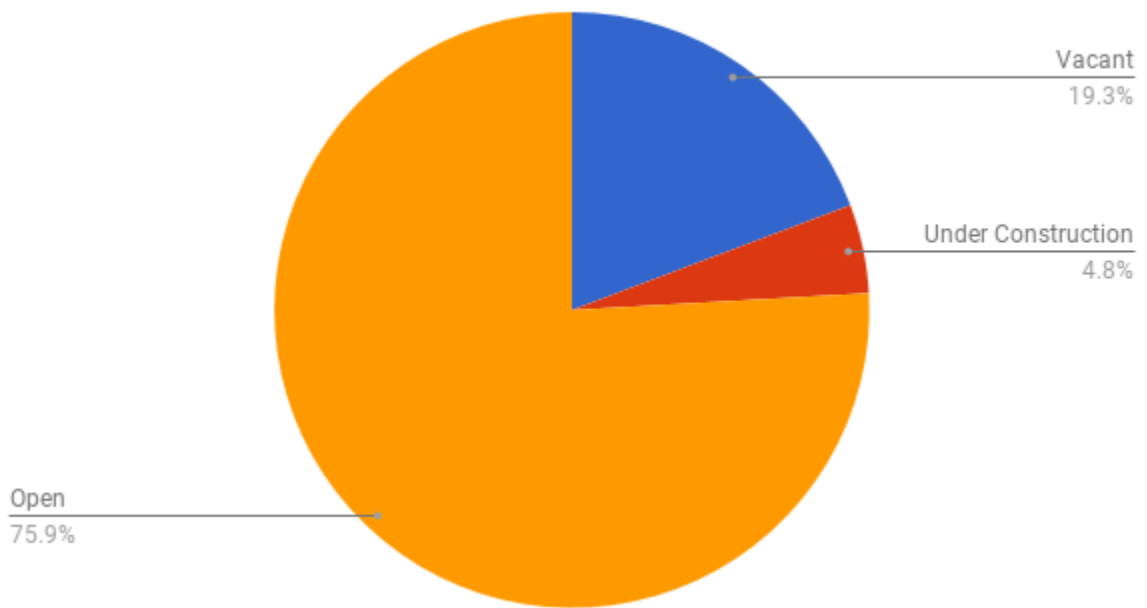
Business Type



## Vacancies and Construction

The vacancy rate for Wilson Avenue is significantly higher than the 7% median vacancy rate self-reported data from the 72 Business Improvement Districts in NYC.<sup>1</sup> This is not unusual, with several districts reporting rates upwards of 20% in SoHo and 18.4% on Bleecker Street. The trend since 2015 has been increasing vacancy rates.<sup>2</sup>

### Building Status



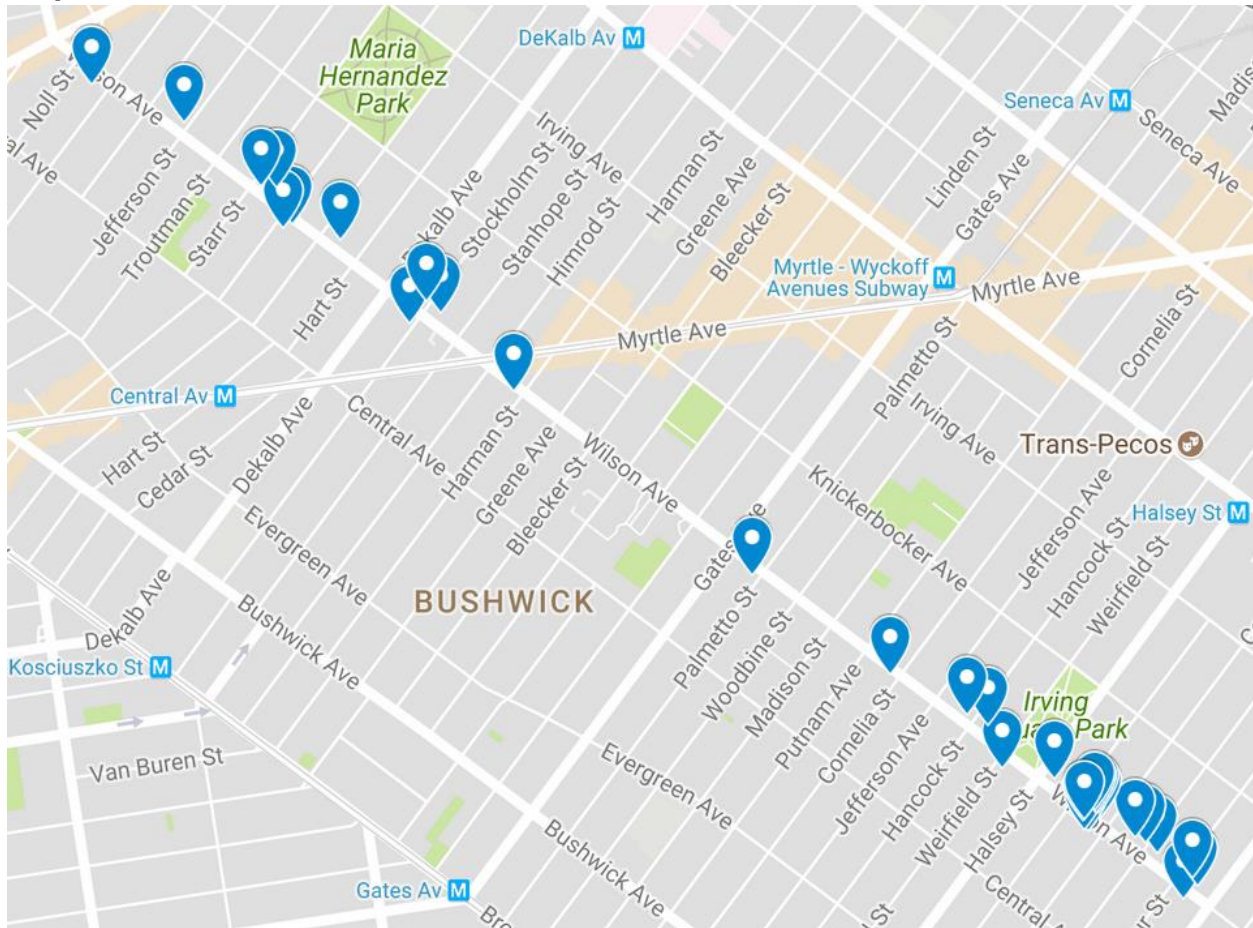
#### Other considerations:

- Height was not a significant factor in vacancies (3 vs. 2.84), but was significant for new construction (3.2 vs. 2.84).
- Vacancy locations tended towards the middle of the block, with only one corner location vacancy.
- Vacancies are concentrated on the East end of the corridor (See map)

<sup>1</sup> <http://www1.nyc.gov/assets/sbs/downloads/pdf/neighborhoods/fy17-bid-trends-report.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> <https://citylimits.org/2017/12/05/diagnosing-nycs-vacant-storefront-problem/>

## Map of Vacancies



### Façade and physical characteristics

The average facade along the Wilson Avenue Corridor is 3.6 which indicates a generally well kept appearance (see scale below). However, vacant properties are significantly different with an average score of 2.3 indicating that the average vacancy is in a state of disrepair.

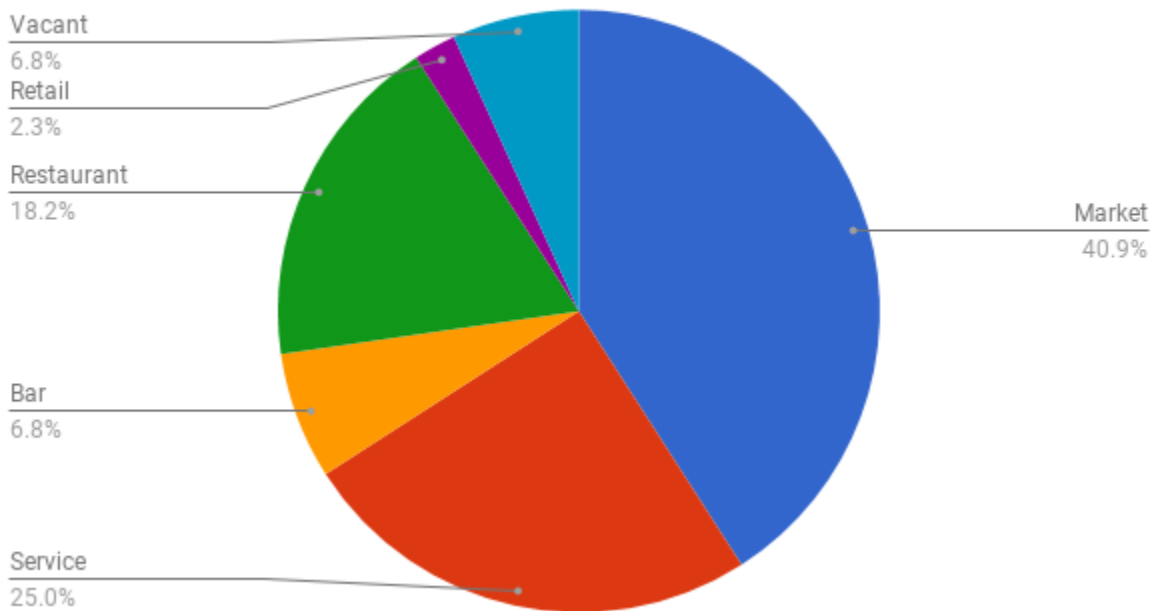
### Facade Appearance Scale:

Poor (1-2)	Average (3)	Excellent (4-5)
Damaged awning, faded and unclear signage, minimal visibility and transparency, protruding solid gates, and derelict door/framing, trash visible and unkept. (1 is three or more poor traits, 2 is two or less poor traits)	Mixed. One or two poor characteristics mixed with one or two good characteristics	Clear, aesthetically pleasing signage, hidden security gates, transparent windows, functional window and door framing, well maintained trash, paint/siding is clean. (4 is one-two excellent traits without any poor traits, 5 is 3 or more traits without any poor traits)

## Physical characteristics

26% of businesses are located on corners and all businesses are located on the first floor. Corners are the least likely to be vacant, with mid-block buildings making up the majority of vacancies. Streets are fairly well lined with trees but there are some gaps that could be improved. While Wilson Avenue is served by several bus lines there is only one covered stop for people to sit. Bike racks were also lacking, and in some instances were full of abandoned bikes rendering them useless.

### Corner Businesses



## Next Steps

The next step would be to directly engage with business owners and community members along Wilson Avenue with surveys and interviews. Identifying leaders will be crucial to the success of the businesses. An existing or new organization should be responsible for working with the businesses while also recruiting new businesses and investment to the area.

There are four primary recommendations that the data supports:

1. Rezoning to better connect the corridor.
2. Storefront beautification
3. More transportation infrastructure
4. Consider the creation of a Business Improvement District (Vacancies are high, so an interim volunteer organization may be a better fit)