

Flushing West Public Event: Presentation + Roundtable Discussions
Saturday, September 12, 2015
P.S. 20, 12:00 – 3:00 PM

NOTES FROM FLIP CHARTS:

HOUSING

Overall Summary:

- **Issue Priorities:** Senior housing, deeper affordability levels, more effective housing quality enforcement, tenant/owner education of rights, responsibilities, and tools
- **Vision/Goal Priorities:** preserve diversity that makes Flushing; relieve housing unaffordability and overcrowding; prevent displacement of residents from the community; improve quality of life
- **New items:**
 - High demand for senior housing and long waiting list, and need to streamline process + status update
 - Presence of scams / offers to place higher on the waiting list for cash
 - Lack of awareness on 311 as a tool; residents are discouraged from using because of lack of trust in enforcement; not enough incentive for landlords to actually fix problems
 - Illegal subdivisions—people renting out dining rooms, basements; often for undocumented immigrants with no protections; need for tenant’s rights training for immigrants
 - Housing is needed for these working immigrants, but they don’t often have a documented income; resort to cash-only, no lease rooms
 - Need more outreach on incentives available for landlords to preserve affordability of existing apartments
 - Need for better understanding of how AMI works and how HPD uses it; what are HPD’s tools to address affordability

Table 1

- Seniors are disadvantaged
- Priorities? Supply of senior housing (seniors usually don’t even qualify for affordable housing)
- Preference for senior housing? Studio or one bedroom. And more units!
- Streamlining senior housing application process (first come first serve. Updates on status of application)
- Stories of some people offering higher placement on the list for money (scams?)
- Garbage, pests, insects, rodents. Landlords do not take the responsibility due to lack of enforcement. Lack of effective enforcement – after complaint and inspection, how often does re-inspection happen?
- Barriers to using 311 – lack of awareness of its reporting system + language access support
- Housing waitlist is too long

Table 2

- Priorities:
 - High rent -> affordability
 - Overcrowding. Rapid population increase
 - Illegal subdivision of dwelling units
 - Lack of oversight and enforcement
- Other issues:
 - Parking
- Need spaces for seniors - overcrowding at senior centers
- More governmental oversight of the quality of senior centers

Table 3

- Is there enough infrastructure to support additional housing given that the area is already overcrowded?
- Any way to make more of the existing housing stock affordable?
- 50/50 affordable/market rate
- Lower AMIs and deeper affordability
- Environmental concerns (Flushing West is a polluted area)
- The trade-off between Housing or open space on city-owned land

Table 4

- Overcrowded and overpriced
- Provide more affordable housing options for lower-income workers that are single (Age 20s-30s)

Table 5

- Informal rental market (no lease, cash-based)
- High demand for housing
- Tenant rights education for new immigrants
- More affordable units: single/one bedroom
- Senior housing

Table 6

- Develop more affordable housing (one bedrooms/2 bedrooms)
- Lower rent
- Job training
- Youth centers

Youth and Senior Services

Table 1

- Bowne Park – storage for volunteer cleanup?

- Lack of senior center in Bowne area (identified existing centers)
- Expand ESL (Korean)

Table 2

- Need more summer jobs here!
- Extend child care service – needed beyond 5pm/6pm
- More governmental oversight and quality of senior centers (from Housing discussion)

Table 3

- More ESL programs needed
- Expand after school programs (expand or create access)
- More arts programs needed
- Community needs good resource for access of programs
- Expand N.O.R.C. program to Flushing
- Mental health services – better access needed!

Table 4

- P.S. 120 needs after school programs
- Need better resource for community to access services (directory, locations)
- More youth programs in Bland Houses; space needed

Table 5

- More mental health services needed and better access (Department of Health)
- Outreach to isolated seniors to promote mental health services
- Supportive services for seniors in new affordable and senior housing
- Opportunity to engage youth in ecology of local community (outreach to youth) and obtain school credit
- Provide incentives to engage youth
- Youth jobs and internships

Table 6

- Funding concerns
- Limited seats
- Flushing Creek – clean up

Immigrant Services

Table 1

Biggest challenges for immigrants

- Protection and help for immigrants with pending status or refugees
- Availability of resources for immigrants: financial, legal services, social safety net (food stamps, etc.)

- Lack of language access: where to learn English (sometimes don't have time to go to classes); how the information is provided (in hospitals, etc.)
- Sharing information
- Limited services for people with undocumented status

How can city work better with immigrant population?

- Korean local media: press/newspaper, radio, TV, advertisement (recurrent, long-term, and regularly)
- Work with local community centers and organizations: Korean associations, Korean community center, community leaders; Korean churches are an especially important target for outreach for Korean immigrant population
- Expand services beyond documented status/citizenship

Table 2

How can NYC work better with your community? Biggest challenges?

- 311 app should be in several different languages
- Language and written interpretation
- Use local newspaper to share important communication to community (ethnic newspaper/media)
- Communicate events in real time and notify community in advance
- Word of mouth
- Local organization (Chinese American Council)
- WeChat (Chinese WhatsApp)

Table 3

Challenges:

- Language barriers – need ESL programs for jobs, unfamiliar with how the agency works
- Culture normal adjustment
- Lack of access to affordable housing – immigrant status issue

Services that NYC can provide?

- Language access, especially for NYPD and SBS

Ways to share information?

- Have a table on the street distributing information
- Local staff/offices – library, church to set up info shop

Table 4

Challenges

- Language barrier – written and interpretation

- Undocumented rely on informal housing – cash only, no lease, illegal divisions; how to ensure housing quality but not evict tenants? How to provide housing for undocumented immigrants? (from Housing discussions)

Ways to distribute information?

- Poster at subway station
- Mobile app
- Meetings/public hearings
- Educate the people about immigrant rights

Table 5

Biggest issues/challenges

- Language access: communication, relationship with NYPD (police citation), bureaucracy
- Lack of services in community to learn English for adults
 - Waiting list is too long. Demand is greater than the number of services provided
- People don't want immigrants to struggle with integration as much as immigrants did in the past generations

Best way to provide information to immigrants:

- Churches, community institutions, community groups
- Ethic press! Radio and newspapers
- Some immigrants don't know how to use internet/social media; may be harder for old people
- TV may no longer be the major media to learn a language and get information
- Notice of public hearings – should be advertised better in the immigrant communities that they affect

Table 6

Biggest issues/challenges

- Resources for people with disabilities (often immigrant community not proactive on this issue)
- Language/access to information: events, available resources
- Website with different languages
- Access to libraries
- People may not know about services that are available to them

How do you get information?

- Non-profits
- Word of mouth
- Newspaper!
- Internet

- Issue with how the word gets out
- Best way to provide info: ethnic media already in place in native language (local newspaper)
- Immigrant work during the week -> employers could be source of information

Health and Placemaking

Table 1

Where do you go for health services and opportunities?

- H-Mart for food
- Family doctor close to home
- Specialist – Long Island, no local options for liver specialist (Hepatocirrhosis), but the bus takes 80 minutes to get to there and there is no ambulance service
- Elmhurst hospital: quality okay, can take months, **accepts HHC**, language issues, NY Presbyterian. Too expensive, can't go without status
- Korean community uses newspapers for information on health services and goes where is advertised.
- Korean specific clinics can get overwhelmed
- Lack of knowledge about local available services
- Many pain doctors (physical therapy and drugs) around Flushing in response to long wait for doctors
- Other opportunity/issues: YMCA, Parks, issues with too many people on sidewalk, poor air quality

Table 2

Where are health services?

- Doctor: Local / private (Queens Crossing) – relatively quick waits and time for scheduling appointments if not urgent is 3-4 weeks

Health opportunities

- Bodhi – gym and health (Northern and Prince)
- Corona Park – Al Oerter Rec Center
- Outdoor rec – Corona and Kissena Parks (no preference)
- Mental health services: issues of depression, social isolation, economic pressures and stress due to cost of housing; Asian cultures less likely to discuss mental health and bottle it up

Table 3

- Health issues may be specific to certain neighborhoods, not because of the people but because of the opportunity and environment!

Where is health care?

- Local doc, but many folks don't have a doc and instead utilize E.R.
- No urgent care in downtown Flushing
- Charles P. Wang Clinic* check name of clinics – 1 exists, 1 is opening
- 18-20% of businesses in downtown Flushing are health related! – heard off-hand. Member of group mentioned he had heard that in another session during that day (possibly SBS?) – if true, I think the implication is that there are many health related businesses, but not necessarily the desired services (i.e. many “pain doctors”, but not enough family doctors)
- Hospital: without legal status -> go to Elmhurst
- No organic options at markets in downtown Flushing – but good prices at markets
- Queens Botanical Garden -> aside from large parks, not many green spaces
- Downtown Flushing feels polluted
- Asphalt plant contributing to pollution
- Inadequate sanitation
- Issue with private refuse pick-up for businesses

Table 4

- Diabetes/Hypertension/Asthma in Flushing is better than the City average, but issues of social isolation and depression in observation (I misunderstood- the data doesn't completely bear (bare?) this out, but it has been something that the Health Dept. has heard through the various sessions they have attended.

Where are health care services?

- Queens Crossing (regional draw) for family doctors
- NY Pres - Queens
- Not currently an urgent care option, but would be convenient
- Walk in clinic in Forest Hills a good model (adult/children)
- Some docs are poor quality
- In general, no language barrier

How do you get around?

- Pedestrian issue: bad smells and garbage
- Not much use of waterfront for walking
- No bike riding
- Sometimes shop for groceries at SkyView Parc
- Come to Flushing for services more than food

Table 5

- Connection between health and place

- Diabetes: 5.6% in Flushing, 10.2% in NYC
- Hypertension: 21% in Flushing, 29% in NYC
- Priority in waterfront access: active and passive

Where do people go for healthcare?

- Doctor's office on Franklin Ave, second story office – primary care; referrals may be local
- Is urgent care available? Pop-ups not readily available

What allows you to move more and eat better?

- Kissena Park, users tend to be aging, 50+
- Some folks do bike to park, most biking is happening in parks not the streets
- People coming to Flushing may drive and park at SkyView (free 3 hours!)
- Local groceries > chains
- More groceries to buy -> shop at larger groceries less -> smaller, local places

Table 6

Where do people go for health care?

- Choose urgent care (along Northern Blvd) for convenience over quality
- Not aware of any urgent care within study area
- Hospital on Main Street, NY Pres. In Queens is better than Flushing
- Some community centers provide health services – haven't noticed mental health specifically
- Doctor's offices in Flushing are super busy
 - Better off making appointments elsewhere -> 10 mile radius approximately
 - Despite many doctors in Flushing, wait times are a deterrent to making appointments
 - Health care time and convenience are getting worse – perhaps not only a local problem

What are the health opportunities?

- Kids -> park
 - Types of activities vary
 - Not many organized sports
 - Not many intramural teams observed
- Seniors walk to park
- Sometimes Corona Park feels “back turned” to Flushing due to buildings (except for pool)

Jobs and Businesses

Table 1

- Business owners don't have information about City services that can help them
- Many businesses are closing because of high rent and replaced with chain stores and restaurants (e.g., Northern Boulevard)

- Significant corridor/anchors:
 - Union Market for groceries (Northern Blvd and Union)
 - H-Mart (Bowne and Northern Blvd)
 - More Korean places east of downtown
 - Target in Sky View Parc
- Would be good to have signage in English from 7 station to public facilities
- Downtown shifting to more Chinese businesses and fewer Korean businesses

Table 2

- Significant corridors/anchors:
 - Main St.
 - Roosevelt Ave.
 - Sky View Parc (free parking but heavy traffic)
 - Macy's
 - Shopping Center at 20th Avenue and Van Wyck – better to drive there
- If driving, many residents only come downtown if it is essential because of traffic/parking
- Jetro – a restaurant depot in College Point has parking, it's convenient, but downtown Flushing's lack of parking keeps people away
- Food stands on sidewalk makes sidewalks even more crowded (e.g., Main Street)
- From businesses perspective, more foot traffic is good, but sidewalk is overcrowded
- Need bathroom in 7 Subway station

Table 3

- Significant corridors/anchors:
 - Roosevelt Ave. is heavily used
 - Flushing Town Hall an anchor (Moth Radio, music, art shows, kids and school groups/workshops)
- People who drive typically park new Sky View Parc
- Flushing could use more cultural and arts spaces
- End-point of 7 Train is an anchor for people who don't drive
- Houses of worship also have events
- Cars vs. transit changes decisions about whether to come downtown – this is also a class issue
- Korean and Chinese businesses that cannot be found elsewhere are a significant draw
- How does rezoning affect businesses in Flushing West?
- Concern that small, local businesses will be displaced by chains and larger developments

Table 4

- Significant corridors/anchors:
 - Main Street
 - Roosevelt Ave.
 - 41st Street (bakery)
 - 40th (restaurants)
 - Union

- Flushing Library
- Sheraton
- Queens Crossing / Sky View Parc
- Too crowded downtown; not enough parking
- Come for doctor, accountant and professional services, but not shopping
- Flushing is easier for recent immigrants because of the community, but many eventually move away because it is too crowded
- Small Business Owner Night hosted by Department of Buildings in Kew Gardens not known but is of interest
- Business owners currently talk to customs broker or attorney for business questions

Table 5

- Significant corridors/anchor:
 - SkyView for parking
 - 7 train stop
 - Flushing Library (very busy and open late)
 - Restaurants (open 24 hours)
 - Prince and 40th
- Would be helpful to have English on signs for people who don't speak Mandarin/Korean
- Chinese community draws people to retail
- Prices tend to be lower in Flushing
- Restaurants are a huge draw to downtown Flushing
- Tourism should be strengthened (e.g. US Open, NY Mets) not enough linkages to draw people (trolley service to create connection?)
- Can SBS help when businesses close because of permits/inspections?
- Could there be a program to be more proactive and offer more support?

Table 6

- Significant corridors/anchor:
 - Hub is very crowded
 - Public Library
 - Macy's
- People make decisions about where to shop based on parking availability
- Traffic tickets are given for stopping to pick people up – bad for the business community
- Some people prefer to buy groceries online rather than deal with crowd
- Maybe Park and Ride lots with shuttle into Flushing for people coming from Tri-State region
- Garbage detracts from businesses/shopping; would like to see more street clean-up

Table 1

- Affordable housing
- Preserve existing businesses
- Need for parks, playgrounds and open space
- Flushing Creek – water quality
- Improve sidewalk conditions

Table 2

- Consider impact of large scale developments which could exacerbate congestion issues - pedestrians and cars
- Access to the waterfront
- Flushing Creek – water quality

Table 3

- Waterfront as a publicly accessible area
- Wider walkways along the waterfront
- Art and Music
- Need for affordable housing. Consider impacts of adding more housing units to an already congested area.
- Amendable to smaller housing
- Fewer big box stores
- Smaller building footprints, mix of uses
- Preserve and allow for small mom and pop businesses

Table 4

- Cleaner, less-congested sidewalks
- Publicly accessible waterfront with emphasis on cleaning up Flushing Creek
- Generous walkways, public open space, parks along the waterfront
- Active retail uses – small and medium size establishments
- Retail that can serve the many visitors (Hotels)

Table 5

- Publicly accessible waterfront with wide walkways
- Light and air issues on narrow streets with large developments
- Smaller, better-connected building forms with active retail uses on the ground floors

Table 6

- Heavy manufacturing adjacent to potential new developments is undesirable

- Access to the waterfront
- Congestion on streets