



# OCEAN HILL- WEEKSVILLE BROOKLYN

Commercial District Needs Assessment



careers  
businesses  
neighborhoods



Bridge Street Development Corporation



# ABOUT OCEAN HILL-WEEKSVILLE



The Neighborhood 360° program was created by the **NYC Department of Small Business Services** to identify, develop, and launch commercial revitalization projects in partnership with local stakeholders. Through proactive planning and targeted investments, Neighborhood 360° supports projects that strengthen and revitalize the streets, small businesses, and community-based organizations that anchor New York City neighborhoods.

The Neighborhood 360° **Commercial District Needs Assessment (CDNA)** highlights a neighborhood's existing business landscape and consumer characteristics.

This CDNA features the commercial corridors of **Broadway, Ralph Avenue, Rockaway Avenue, and Fulton Street** in **Ocean Hill-Weeksville**, and was conducted in partnership with **Bridge Street Development Corporation** between September 2023 and June 2024.

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.

## In This Report

Existing conditions, business data, and qualitative depictions of the neighborhood were gathered from more than **465 surveys** and various stakeholder meetings with neighborhood merchants, shoppers, workers, property owners, and residents.

*Jump to...*

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## Background

Located in Central Brooklyn, Ocean Hill-Weeksville is home to a rich history of Black self-determination and economic mobility. Overlapping with the area historically known as Weeksville, present-day Ocean Hill is bordered by the neighborhoods of Bedford-Stuyvesant, Crown Heights, Bushwick, East New York, and Brownsville.

Founded in 1838 by African American dockworker James Weeks, Weeksville quickly became one of the country's largest free Black communities after New York State legally abolished slavery. Weeksville provided refuge from oppression and violence for Black people seeking political, economic, and cultural independence, including during the Manhattan Draft Riots of 1863. While much of the original neighborhood was lost to redevelopment in subsequent decades, the community's notable history re-emerged in the late 1960s after Brooklyn professor James Hurley rediscovered the historic Hunterfly Road Houses.

To the north of Weeksville, Ocean Hill was home to primarily Jewish immigrants from Europe in the late 19th and early 20th centuries before attracting a predominately Black and Puerto Rican population in the 1960s. Accordingly, many of the neighborhood's historic synagogue buildings have since been transformed into churches. In 1967, Ocean Hill became the epicenter of an experimental public school project led by community residents. Following years of disinvestment and the New York City blackout of 1977, the neighborhood sustained significant damage and destruction. In response, new investments and revitalization initiatives were launched, yet residents of Ocean Hill-Weeksville currently face additional pressures as neighborhood demographics change.

Today, Ocean Hill's commercial district is defined by four primary commercial corridors, Ralph Avenue, Rockaway Avenue, Broadway, and Fulton Street, each with longstanding small businesses that provide a mixture of food offerings, beauty services, and retail to the neighborhood. Encompassing multiple bus routes and bordered by the Broadway Junction transit hub and East New York Long Island Railroad Station, the area is easily accessible to residents, commuters, and shoppers.

## Neighborhood Demographics

See more on page 13

With a population of just under 100,000 residents, Ocean Hill remains a majority Black (61%) and Latinx (19%) neighborhood. The area also has a significant foreign-born population, with 26% of residents predominately hailing from Latin America and the Caribbean. However, since 2010, Ocean Hill-Weeksville has experienced an 11% increase in white residents and a 16% decrease in Black residents, amplifying concerns that longstanding residents and businesses will be priced out of the neighborhood. With a median household income of \$58,735, 25% of the population currently lives below the poverty line, higher than that of Brooklyn (19%), and New York City (17%).

## Future Opportunities

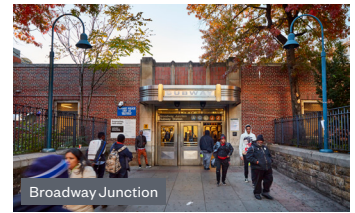
See more on page 5

In recent years, Ocean Hill has benefited from an influx of affordable residential developments such as the Prospect Plaza Apartments, which was notably the first multi-family affordable housing site in the country to achieve Active Design Verified recognition, a program that promotes resident health and wellbeing. In 2023 the city committed \$95 million to improving pedestrian safety and enhancing transit connections at Broadway Junction. Ocean Hill-Weeksville is also home to several community-based organizations that continue to advocate for neighborhood recognition and revitalization, including the Weeksville Heritage Center and the Ocean Hill-Brownsville Coalition of Young Professionals. With new public and private investments and a coalition of active community members, Ocean Hill-Weeksville will continue to provide opportunities for small businesses and entrepreneurs to thrive.

## Ocean Hill-Weeksville



### ◀ Notable Places



Broadway Junction



Weeksville Heritage Center



Phoenix Community Garden



Saratoga Library



Saratoga Park

### ▲ Points of Interest

- Assessed Commercial Corridors
- Parks and Public Spaces
- Public Facilities
- Arts & Cultural Destinations
- Business Improvement Districts

### Community Groups

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>CAMBA</li> <li>The Campaign Against Hunger</li> <li>Digital Girl</li> <li>HousingPlus Solutions</li> <li>Hull Street Block Association</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Neighbors Together</li> <li>Ocean Hill-Brownsville Coalition of Young Professionals</li> <li>Rapha Art Life Center</li> <li>Urban Strategies</li> </ul> |
|--|--|

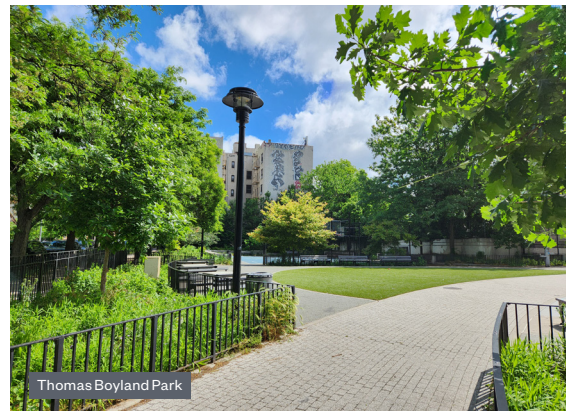
# KEY FINDINGS & OPPORTUNITIES

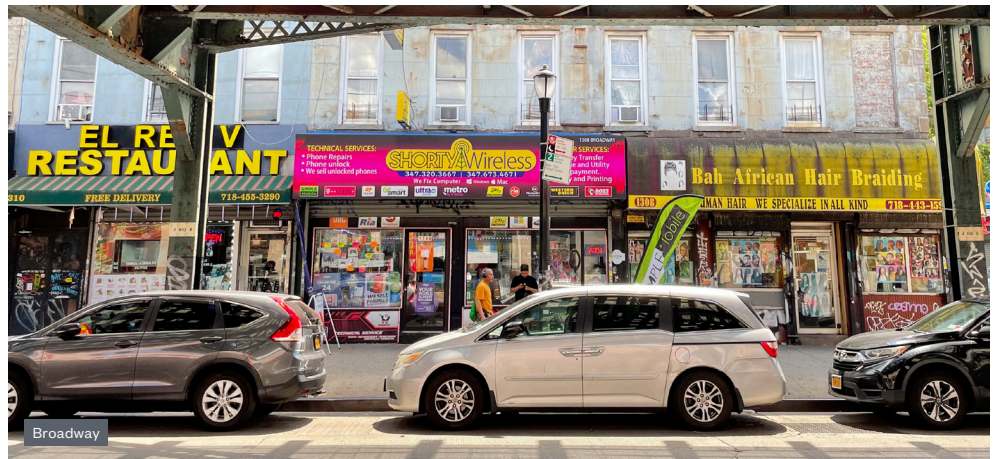
## Strengths

- ▶ Active religious and civic organizations carry on a rich history of community self-determination and economic justice initiatives
- ▶ Many longstanding small businesses survived the pandemic and continue to serve the community
- ▶ Central geographic location and ample public transportation options make Ocean Hill-Weeksville easily accessible to the rest of Brooklyn
- ▶ More than half of businesses in Ocean Hill-Weeksville identify as minority or woman-owned, reflecting the diversity of the neighborhood
- ▶ Growing residential developments bring new customers to the area's small businesses
- ▶ Cultural institutions like the Weeksville Heritage Center attract visitors to the community

## Challenges

- ▶ Increasing commercial rents make it hard to recruit and retain small businesses
- ▶ Insufficient street lighting, particularly under the elevated train on Broadway, contributes to poor perceptions of safety at night
- ▶ High vacancy rates and poor storefront conditions create gaps in retail continuity and unpleasant conditions for shoppers
- ▶ Commercial corridors are prone to illegal dumping, graffiti, and issues related to garbage collection
- ▶ A substantial number of businesses do not have a website or a digital presence
- ▶ A lack of public seating, greenery, and other features related to accessibility and comfort prevent shoppers from spending more time on commercial corridors
- ▶ Limited options for healthy food, supermarkets, and sit-down restaurants drive residents to shop elsewhere
- ▶ The absence of banks throughout the commercial district limits access to financing and economic opportunity





## Opportunities

- ▶ Collaborate with local institutions to support merchants with resources including M/WBE certification
- ▶ Form local merchants associations and train leaders to build capacity, pool resources, and develop short and long-term commercial revitalization strategies
- ▶ Work with merchants to host community events that celebrate the neighborhood's history and draw increased foot traffic to the commercial district
- ▶ Build new landscaping and beautification initiatives that address the neighborhood's lack of greenery, seating, lighting, and public art installations
- ▶ Launch a district marketing and branding campaign to unify the commercial corridors and attract new shoppers
- ▶ Coordinate with city agencies to address illegal dumping, graffiti, and trash collection issues
- ▶ Develop a business attraction plan to fill vacant storefronts and meet local consumer demand for resources such as healthy food options and brick-and-mortar banks
- ▶ Partner with merchants and community-based organizations to engage the community's youth through arts and culture programming and employment opportunities

### Want to Learn More?

SBS offers a range of grant programs to help community-based organizations strengthen and revitalize commercial districts.

For more information, visit: [nyc.gov/neighborhoods](http://nyc.gov/neighborhoods)

# BUSINESS LANDSCAPE: OCEAN HILL-WEEKSVILLE

## Business Inventory

**560**

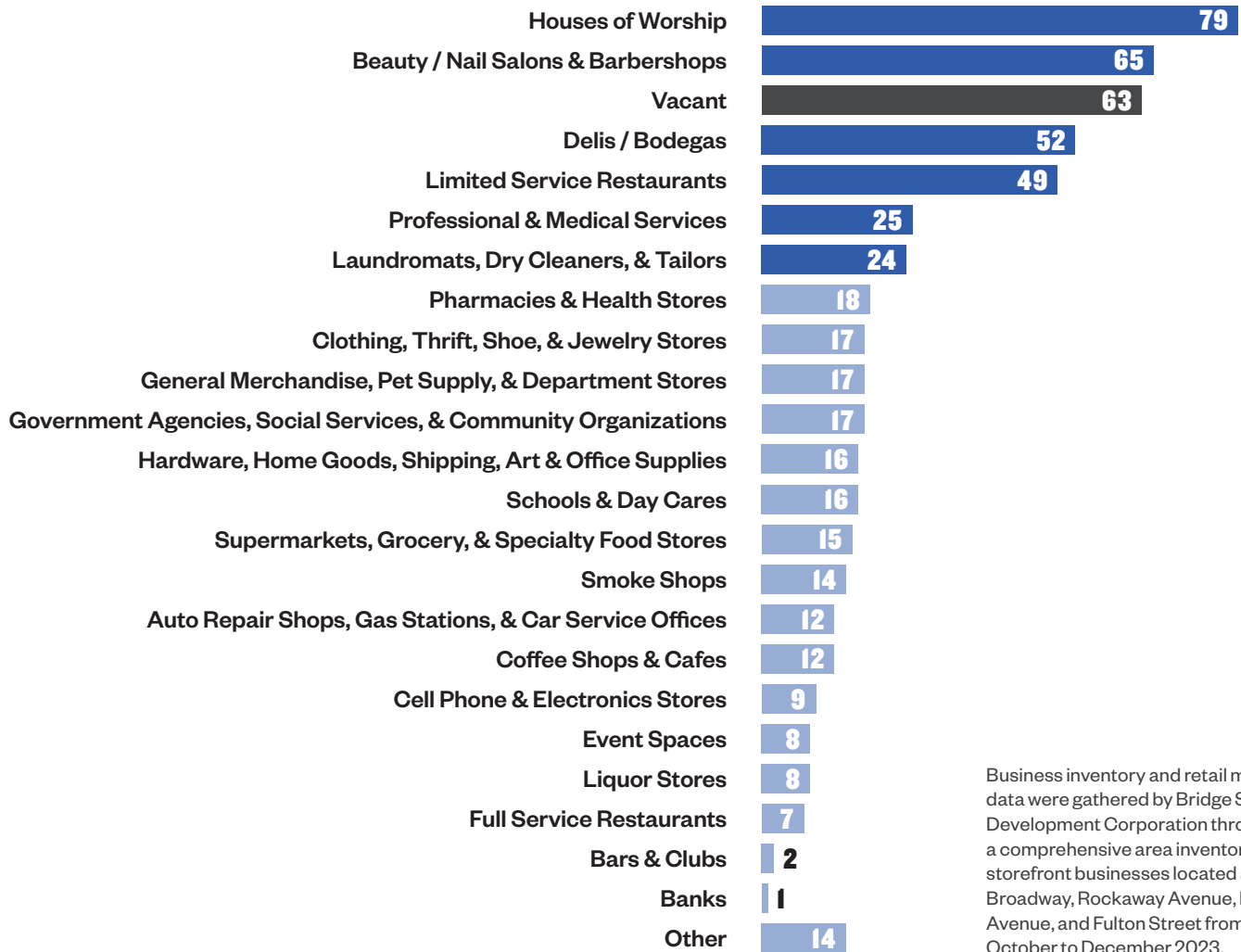
Total Number of Storefronts

**11.3%**

Storefront Vacancy\*

\*Note: As of June 2024, New York City's 75 Business Improvement Districts have an average storefront vacancy rate of 12.8% and median storefront vacancy rate of 11.8% (LiveXYZ).

## Storefront & Retail Mix

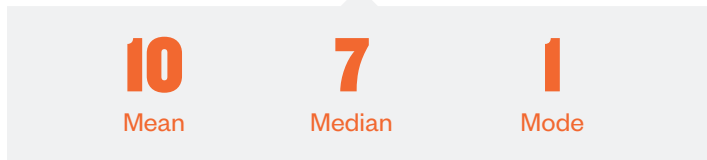
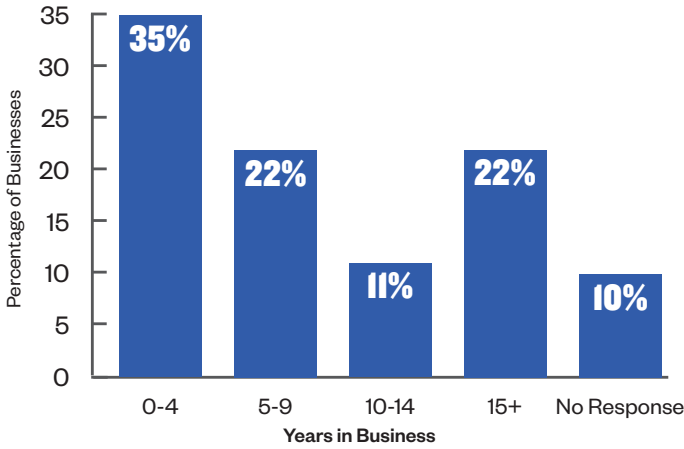


Business inventory and retail mix data were gathered by Bridge Street Development Corporation through a comprehensive area inventory of storefront businesses located along Broadway, Rockaway Avenue, Ralph Avenue, and Fulton Street from October to December 2023.



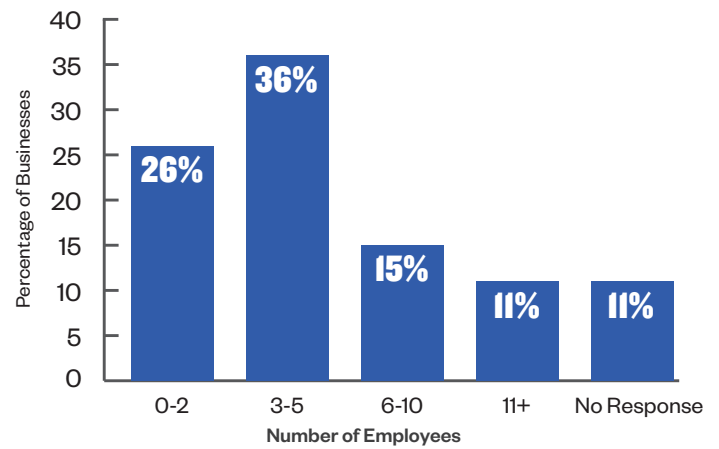
# What We've Heard from Ocean Hill-Weeksville Merchants

## 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.

## How many full-time employees do you have?



## Do you own or rent your property?



## Are you a minority or woman-owned business?



## Does your business currently have a website?



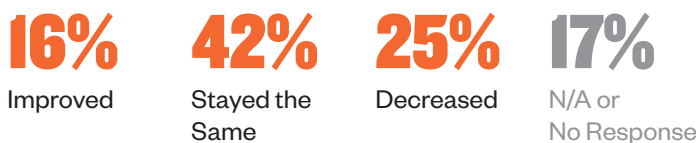
## Does your business currently use social media?



## What kinds of resources would help you grow your business?

Resource	% Merchant Responses
▶ Marketing Support	40%
▶ Access to Financing	39%
▶ Space Improvements	32%
▶ New Equipment	25%
▶ Lease Support	20%
▶ Regulatory Compliance Assistance	17%
▶ Legal Services	14%
▶ Training for Staff	11%
▶ Other	5%

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



Source: Based on 149 merchant surveys conducted by Bridge Street Development Corporation in Fall 2023 and Winter 2024.

# BUSINESS LANDSCAPE: OCEAN HILL-WEEKSVILLE

## What We've Heard from Ocean Hill-Weeksville Merchants and Shoppers

### What do you like about the commercial district?

- "It has lots of stores and restaurants."
- "It's right by the A train station."
- "The people are so warm and loving; the community always comes together."
- "It's a melting pot."
- "It is a space for Black and Brown businesses."
- "The residents are resourceful and have deep knowledges about the neighborhood history. They are helpful and care about the small businesses."

### What makes the commercial district unique?

- "The brownstones, the history."
- "The merchants are community-oriented and work together."
- "It is diverse and has many businesses. Public transportation is easily available."
- "Everyone pretty much knows each other. It's a community."
- "Culture, people, food, and communal relationships."
- "The many mom and pop shops."
- "Lots of the same customers for years."

### What changes need to occur to attract more visitors/shoppers?

	% Merchant Response	% Consumer Response
▶ Safety	42%	48%
▶ Landscaping/Beautification	36%	53%
▶ Sanitation	35%	52%
▶ Community Events	34%	42%
▶ Storefront Improvements	23%	29%
▶ Graffiti Removal	21%	20%
▶ Street Lighting	21%	34%
▶ Merchant Collaboration	19%	22%
▶ More Open Space	17%	29%
▶ Transportation Improvements	12%	20%
▶ Other	9%	9%

### What changes would you like to see to improve the commercial district?

- "More outreach to promote locally owned small businesses."
- "Clean up subway stations around the neighborhood and make the avenues more green."
- "Affordable rents for aspiring businesses."
- "Clean signage, a community newsletter or online platform with all businesses included."
- "Better streetlights, police & community relations."
- "Make things more family friendly."

Source: Based on 149 merchant surveys and 316 consumer surveys conducted by Bridge Street Development Corporation in Fall 2023 and Winter 2024.



## Ocean Hill-Weeksville Retail Demand

Residents spent

**\$3.62B**

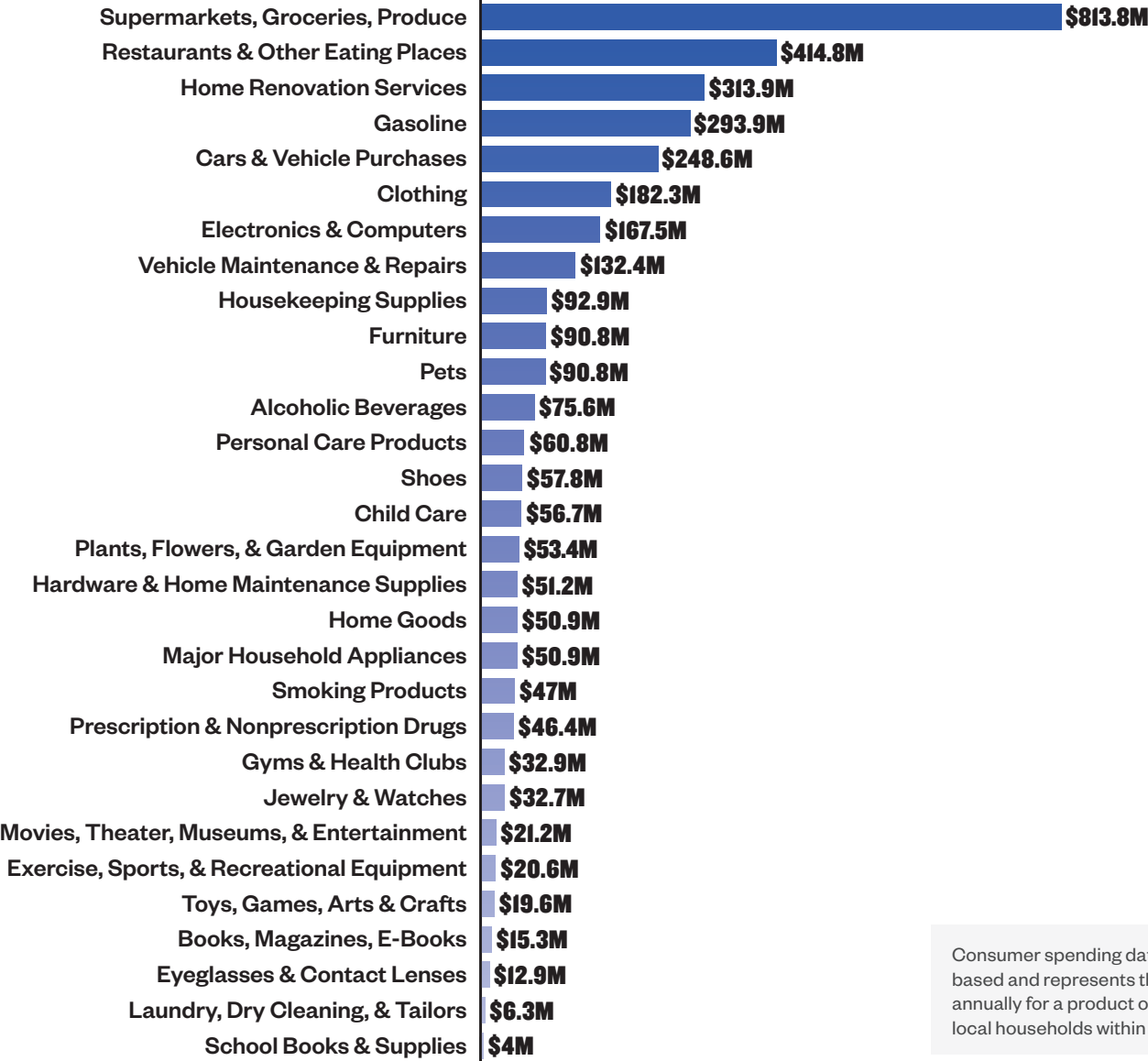
on retail goods and services in 2024

Residents will spend

**\$4.24B**

each year on retail goods and services by 2029

### 2024 Consumer Spending



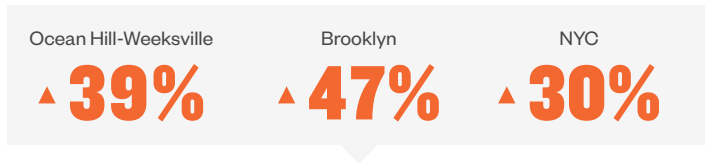
Consumer spending data is household-based and represents the amount spent annually for a product or service by all local households within the trade area.

Source: Esri forecasts for 2024 and 2029; Consumer Spending data are derived from the 2021 and 2022 Consumer Expenditure Surveys, Bureau of Labor Statistics.

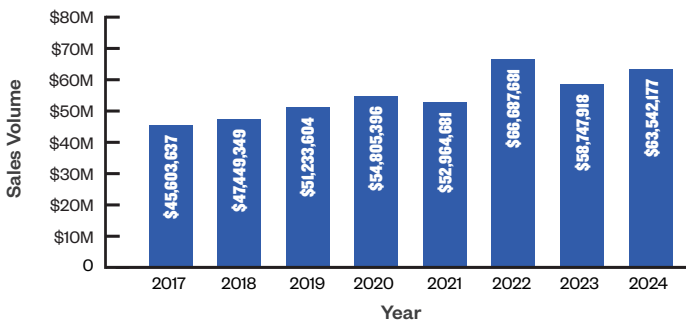
# BUSINESS OUTLOOK

## Business Trends

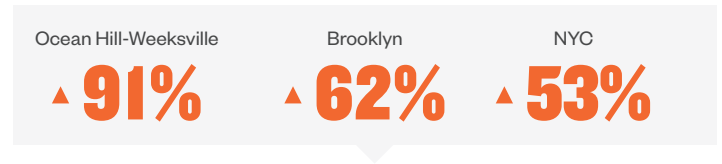
Change in Total Business Sales, 2017-2024



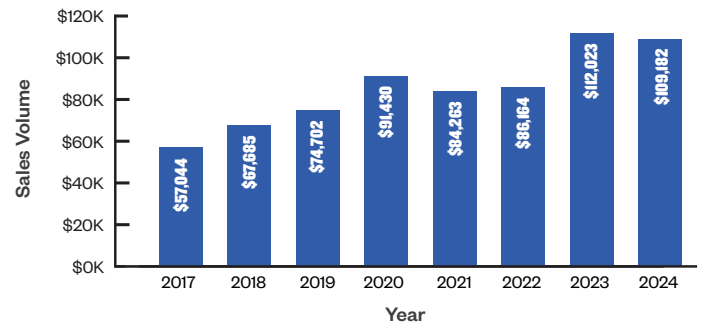
Ocean Hill-Weeksville Total Business Sales



Change in Median Sales by Business, 2017-2024



Ocean Hill-Weeksville Median Sales by Business



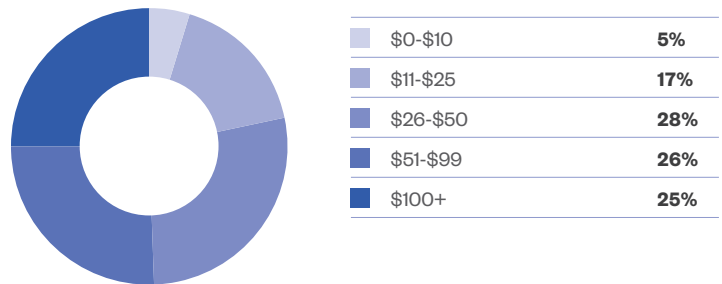
\*Year 2024 reflects data gathered up until March 2024. Source: Division of Tax Policy, NYC Department of Finance

## What We've Heard from Shoppers

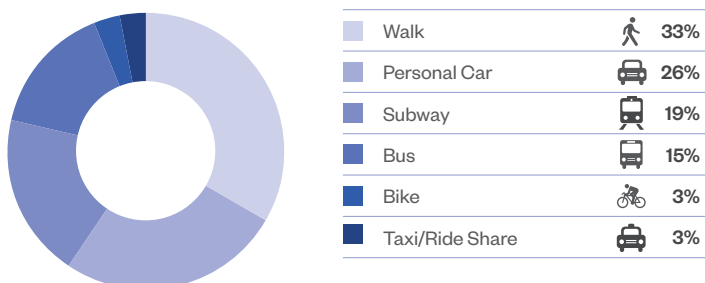
### What additional types of businesses would you like to see in Ocean Hill-Weeksville?

- ▶ Organic Markets & Healthy Food Options
- ▶ A Variety of Restaurants
- ▶ Family & Child-oriented Recreation Spaces
- ▶ Clothing Stores
- ▶ Big Box Stores & Wholesale Retailers
- ▶ Banks & Credit Unions

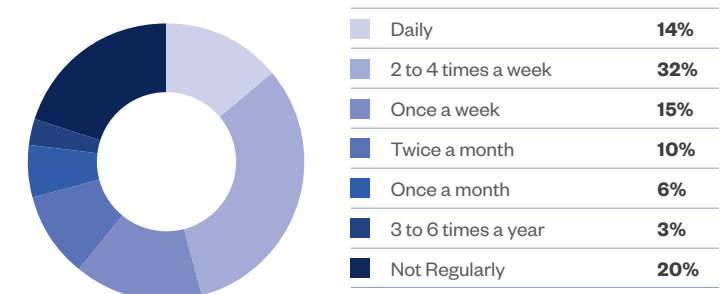
### How much do you typically spend when you shop in Ocean Hill-Weeksville?



### How do you usually travel to Ocean Hill-Weeksville?

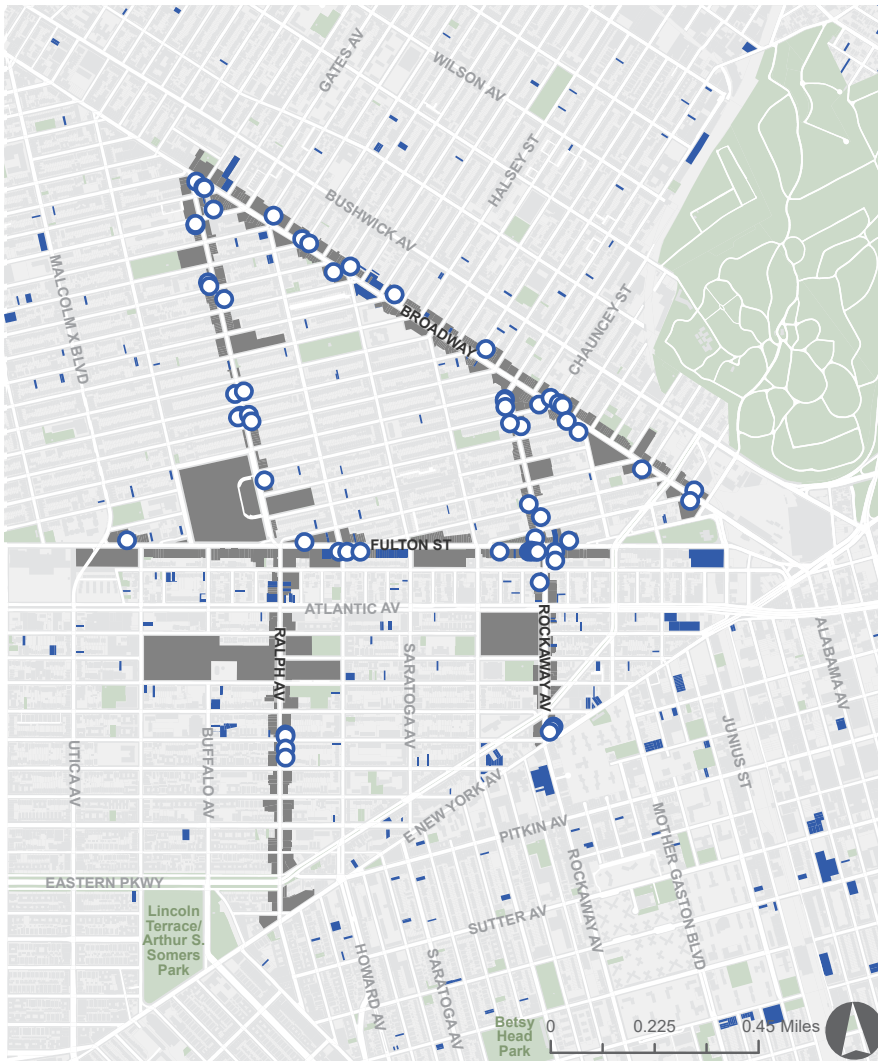


### How often do you shop in Ocean Hill-Weeksville?



Source: Based on 316 consumer surveys conducted by Bridge Street Development Corporation in Fall 2023 and Winter 2024.

## Storefront Vacancies

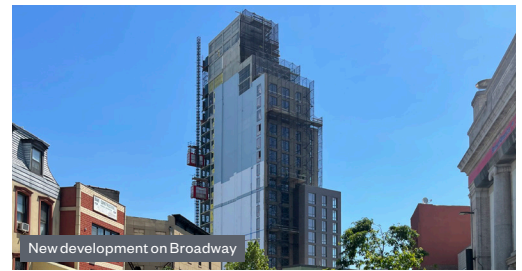


■ Vacant Lots     
 ○ Vacant Storefronts     
 ■ Parks & Open Spaces

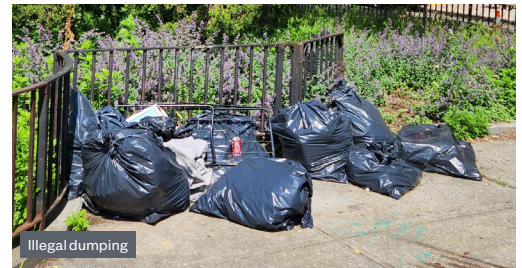
An analysis of 560 storefronts along Broadway, Ralph Avenue, Rockaway Avenue, and Fulton Street revealed that 19% of storefronts are in poor condition, 56% are in average condition, and 25% are in good condition.

## Streetscape Observations

- ▶ Fulton Street between Howard and Rockaway avenues suffers from the poorest storefront conditions
- ▶ The neighborhood's commercial corridors lack sufficient street lighting, public seating, and green spaces for community use
- ▶ Fulton Street and Broadway have high amounts of litter and could benefit from more frequent trash collection
- ▶ Broadway, Fulton Street, Ralph Avenue, and Rockaway Avenue each have distinct characters with little continuity between the corridors; public art installations could brighten the corridors and promote a cohesive district brand
- ▶ Unlike the other corridors, Broadway has a high concentration of storefronts with a variety of business types
- ▶ Broadway and Fulton Street face poor street conditions and a lack of pedestrian safety interventions



New development on Broadway



Illegal dumping



Scaffolding in front of businesses



Street vendors at Broadway Junction



Wide sidewalks on Fulton Street

# DATA APPENDIX

## Study Area Boundaries

### Assessed Commercial Corridors

Primary data on Ocean Hill-Weeksville storefront businesses presented on pg. 6-9 was gathered along the following commercial corridors:

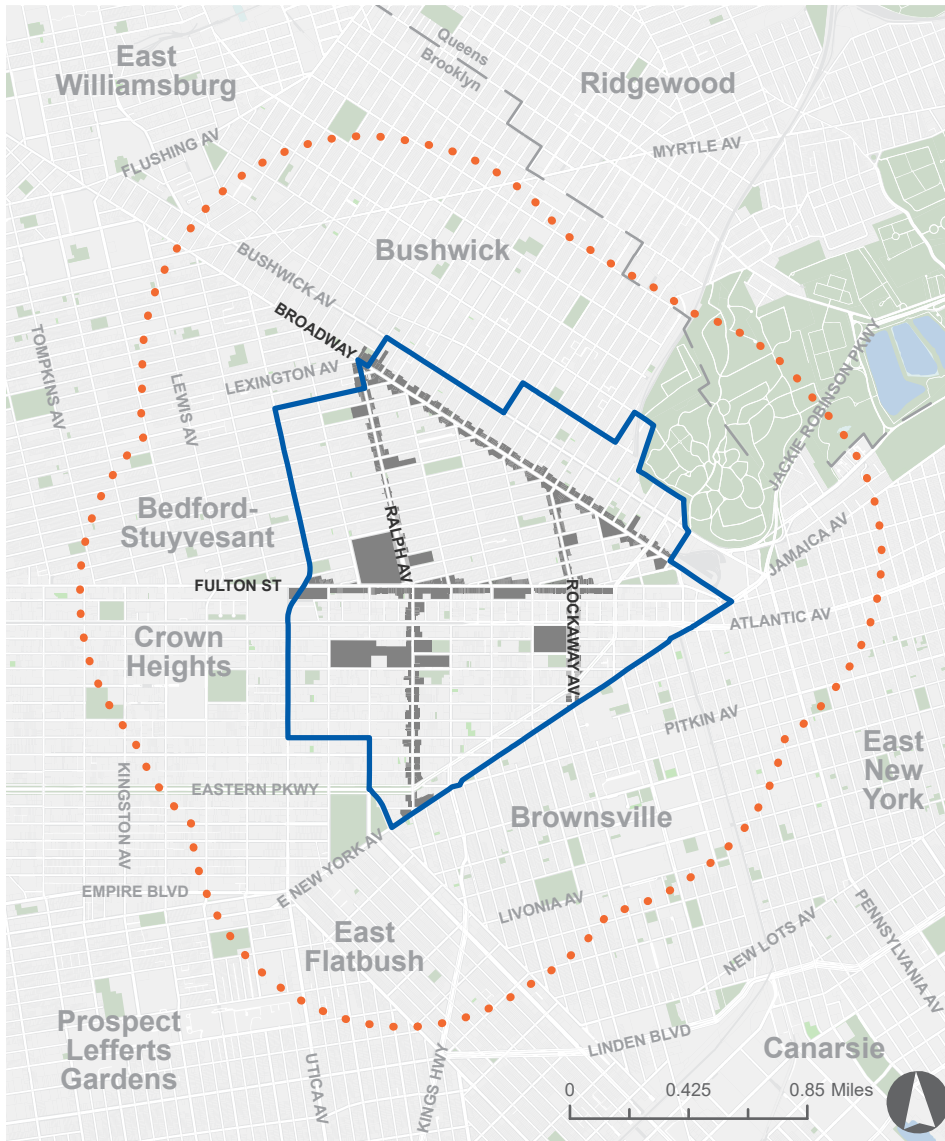
- ▶ Broadway between Lexington Avenue and Conway Street
- ▶ Ralph Avenue between Broadway and East New York Avenue
- ▶ Rockaway Avenue between Broadway and East New York Avenue
- ▶ Fulton Street between Utica Avenue and Mother Gaston Boulevard

### Ocean Hill-Weeksville Context Area

Demographic and employment data on pg. 12-13 represents the population within the Ocean Hill-Weeksville neighborhood context area.

### Trade Area

Consumer spending data on pg. 9 corresponds to the 0.75 mile trade area.



## Area Demographics

### Total Population

<b>99,924</b>	Ocean Hill-Weeksville
<b>2,679,620</b>	Brooklyn
<b>8,622,467</b>	New York City

### Population Density (per square mile)

<b>59,070</b>	Ocean Hill-Weeksville
<b>38,557</b>	Brooklyn
<b>28,517</b>	New York City

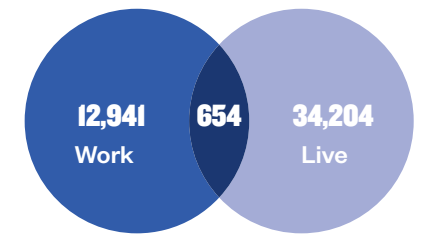
### Average Household Size

<b>2.46</b>	Ocean Hill-Weeksville
<b>2.64</b>	Brooklyn
<b>2.56</b>	New York City

### Car Ownership

<b>35.5%</b>	Ocean Hill-Weeksville
<b>44.7%</b>	Brooklyn
<b>45.3%</b>	New York City

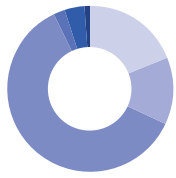
### Commuting Patterns



<b>12,941</b>	Work in Ocean Hill-Weeksville, live elsewhere
<b>654</b>	Live & Work in Ocean Hill-Weeksville
<b>34,204</b>	Live in Ocean Hill-Weeksville, work elsewhere

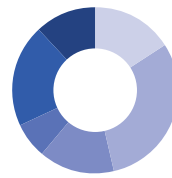
# Area Demographics

## Race/Background



	Ocean Hill-Weeksville	Brooklyn	NYC
Hispanic or Latino (of any race)	19%	19%	29%
White alone	13%	36%	31%
Black or African American alone	61%	28%	21%
Asian alone	2%	12%	14%
Two or more races	4%	4%	3%
Some other race alone	1%	1%	1%
American Indian and Alaska Native alone	0%	0%	0%
Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander	0%	0%	0%

## Educational Attainment



	Ocean Hill-Weeksville	Brooklyn	NYC
12th Grade or Less, No Diploma	16%	16%	17%
High School Graduate	31%	25%	23%
Some College, No Degree	14%	12%	13%
Associate's Degree	7%	6%	7%
Bachelor's Degree	20%	24%	23%
Graduate or Professional Degree	12%	16%	17%

## Population Age



	Ocean Hill-Weeksville	Brooklyn	NYC
Under 5 Years	6%	7%	6%
5-14 Years	10%	12%	11%
15-24 Years	13%	11%	12%
25-44 Years	35%	32%	31%
45-64 Years	23%	23%	25%
65+ Years	12%	15%	16%

## Median Age

<b>34.4</b>	Ocean Hill-Weeksville
<b>35.9</b>	Brooklyn
<b>37.5</b>	New York City

## Foreign-Born Population

<b>26%</b>	Ocean Hill-Weeksville
<b>35%</b>	Brooklyn
<b>36%</b>	New York City

## Income

### Median Household Income

<b>\$58,735</b>	Ocean Hill-Weeksville
<b>\$74,692</b>	Brooklyn
<b>\$76,607</b>	New York City

### Pop. Below Poverty Line

<b>25%</b>	Ocean Hill-Weeksville
<b>19%</b>	Brooklyn
<b>17%</b>	New York City

## Employment

### Population in Labor Force

<b>61%</b>	Ocean Hill-Weeksville
<b>64%</b>	Brooklyn
<b>63%</b>	New York City

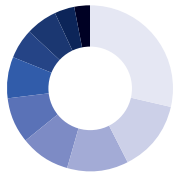
### Unemployment\*

<b>7.8%</b>	Ocean Hill-Weeksville
<b>7.3%</b>	Brooklyn
<b>7.6%</b>	New York City

\*Note: As of May 2024, the unemployment rate is 5.2% for Brooklyn and 4.9% for New York City (NYSDOL); updated neighborhood-level data for Ocean Hill-Weeksville is not available.

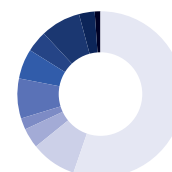
## Local Jobs and Employment

### Local Residents' Employment



Educational Services, Health Care, Social Assistance	29%
Professional, Scientific, & Technical Services	14%
Other Services	12%
Accommodation, Food Services, Arts, Entertainment	10%
Retail Trade	9%
Transportation, Warehousing, Utilities	8%
Finance, Insurance, Real Estate	6%
Public Administration	6%
Construction	4%
Manufacturing	3%

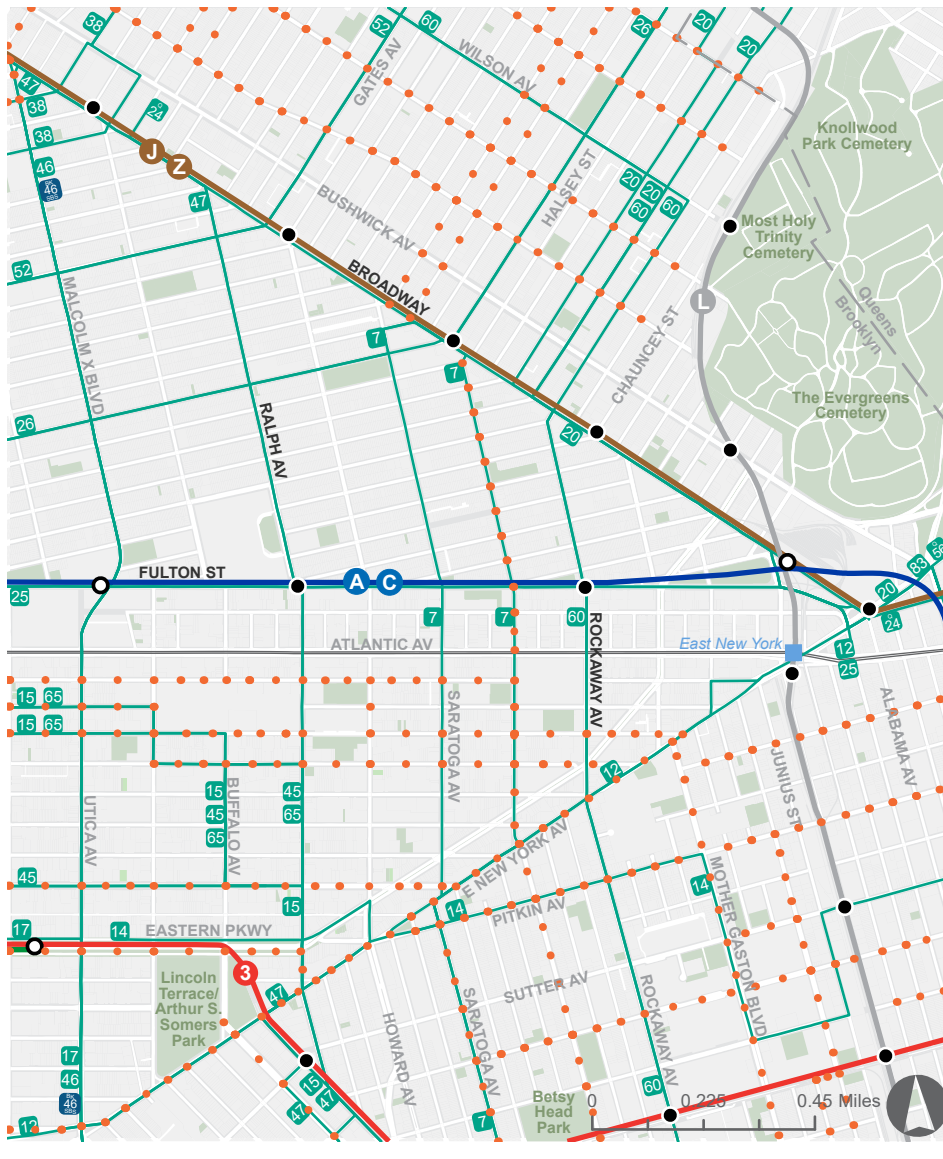
### Jobs Located in Ocean Hill-Weeksville



Educational Services, Health Care, Social Assistance	56%
Professional, Scientific, & Technical Services	9%
Other Services	4%
Accommodation, Food Services, Arts, Entertainment	2%
Retail Trade	8%
Transportation, Warehousing, Utilities	6%
Finance, Insurance, Real Estate	4%
Public Administration	8%
Construction	3%
Manufacturing	1%

# DATA APPENDIX

## Ocean Hill-Weeksville Transportation



### ▲ Ocean Hill-Weeksville Transportation



### Average Weekday Bus Ridership (2023)

<b>17,091</b>	B46
<b>8,630</b>	B15
<b>6,228</b>	B52
<b>6,222</b>	B12
<b>5,358</b>	B26
<b>5,116</b>	B47
<b>4,543</b>	B25
<b>3,573</b>	B20
<b>3,447</b>	B60
<b>3,004</b>	B7
<b>2,932</b>	B45
<b>2,875</b>	B14
<b>2,106</b>	B65

### Average Weekday Subway Ridership (2023)

<b>9,083</b>	<b>A C</b>	Utica Avenue
<b>4,905</b>	<b>A C L J Z</b>	Broadway Junction
<b>4,512</b>	<b>J Z</b>	Gates Avenue
<b>3,847</b>	<b>J</b>	Halsey Street
<b>3,433</b>	<b>C</b>	Rockaway Avenue
<b>3,356</b>	<b>A C</b>	Ralph Avenue
<b>1,895</b>	<b>J Z</b>	Chauncey Street

### Average Daily Vehicular Traffic (2023)

<b>11,893</b>	Broadway from Hooper Street to Truxton Street
<b>11,480</b>	Fulton Street from Malcolm X Boulevard to Eastern Parkway
<b>9,697</b>	Rockaway Avenue from Eastern Parkway to Broadway
<b>7,611</b>	Ralph Avenue from Eastern Parkway to Broadway

Source: MTA 2023; NYS DOT, 2023 Annual Average Daily Traffic data.

## Recent SBS Neighborhood Investments

- ▶ *Strategic Impact Grant*, single-year CDNA grant of \$80,000 awarded to Bridge Street Development Corporation, 2023-2024.
- ▶ *COVID-19 Commercial District Support*, Strategic Impact Grant of \$20,000 awarded to Bridge Street Development Corporation, 2021.

## Existing Plans & Studies

- Herkimer-Williams Rezoning Application*, Totem Brooklyn, 2024.
- Broadway Junction: A Vision for the Future*, NYC Economic Development Corporation, 2019.
- East New York Neighborhood Plan*, NYC Department of City Planning, 2016.
- Broadway Junction Technical Assistance Panels*, Urban Land Institute New York, 2014.
- Broadway Junction Transportation Study*, NYC Department of City Planning, 2008.

## Sources

- ESRI and Consumer Expenditure Surveys, Bureau of Labor Statistics. 2024 ESRI Retail Demand Outlook.
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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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