



WEST BRIGHTON STATEN ISLAND

Commercial District Needs Assessment



careers
businesses
neighborhoods



Staten Island Business Outreach Center



ABOUT WEST BRIGHTON



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 **Forest Avenue** and **Castleton Avenue** in Staten Island, and was conducted in partnership with **Staten Island Business Outreach Center** between December 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 **400 surveys** and various stakeholder meetings with neighborhood merchants, shoppers, workers, property owners, and residents.

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Background

West Brighton is bordered by Clove Lakes Park and Allison Pond Park, both popular spring migration spots for more than 220 bird species such as warblers, tanagers, and other songbirds. Nearby, key Staten Island landmarks such as the Snug Harbor Cultural Center and Botanical Garden - a tranquil haven showcasing art, nature, and culture - and the Staten Island Zoo are beloved destinations for families and wildlife enthusiasts.

An hour away from Lower Manhattan via the ferry or bus and connected to New Jersey via the Bayonne Bridge, West Brighton provides a pleasant living experience for its residents and offers a charming shopping experience on the commercial corridors.

West Brighton has a storied history dating back to its early settlement by Lenape Native American tribes and subsequent European colonization in the 17th century. It was home to many Native Americans whose remains have been found in the Fountain Cemetery located off Richmond Terrace. In the 17th century, Dutch and English settlers arrived in the region establishing farms and settlements. Called "Factoryville" throughout the 19th and early 20th centuries, the area flourished as a transportation hub and industrial center for textile and furniture manufacturing. The factories brought skilled workers and attracted wealthy residents. Many of the present-day Italian heritage businesses trace their roots to the Italian migration to Staten Island in the 20th century. The area's name transitioned to West New Brighton after the more affluent adjacent neighborhood and eventually to West Brighton in the 1930s. In the post-World War II era, the neighborhood experienced suburbanization as more affordable housing options became available in the area.

The decades of development and demographic evolution are reflected in the vibrancy of West Brighton's main commercial corridors of Forest Avenue and Castleton Avenue. The Forest Avenue Business Improvement District (BID) encompasses a portion of Forest Avenue, where local stakeholders strive to foster a thriving local economy by providing supplemental services, hosting special events, and overseeing and funding the maintenance, improvement, and promotion of the corridor using funds from a special assessment billed to property owners within the boundaries. Lined with specialty stores, financial institutions, and occasional residential buildings, locals can conveniently shop and dine from longstanding, multi-generational businesses on Forest Avenue. Castleton Avenue serves as a vital connection for the community of all ages and socioeconomic statuses, offering essential services, cultural attractions, places of worship, and streetwear options.

Neighborhood Demographics

See more on page 16

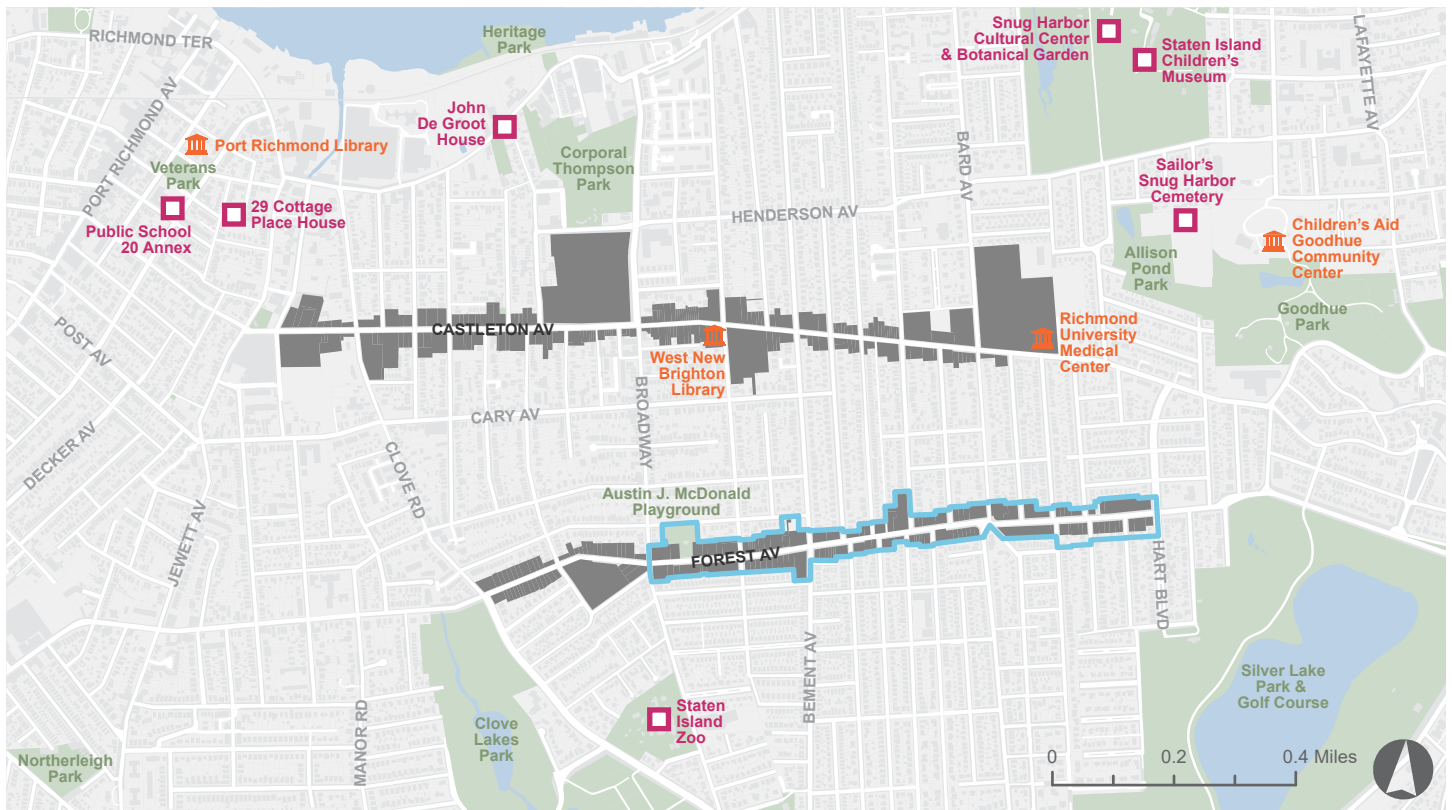
With a population of approximately 26,661 residents and encompassing an area of 1.8 square miles, West Brighton maintains a close-knit community feel. Its demographic mix includes a significant proportion of White (40%), Hispanic (30%), and African American (19%) residents, contributing to its vibrant and multicultural atmosphere. In recent decades, the cultural landscape of the community has experienced changes with the arrival of other ethnic groups, including Chinese, Indian, and Pakistani, who have also opened small businesses that cater not just to their own culture but also serve as neighborhood staples for all. West Brighton has a median household income of \$105,805, higher than New York City's \$76,607. 78% of residents own a car, higher than New York City's 45%.

Future Opportunities

See more on page 5

The NYC Housing Authority's Permanent Affordability Commitment Together (PACT) program, together with private investment and partnerships with religious organizations, launched \$100 million in capital improvements in public housing buildings in the neighborhood in 2024. This program will support 1,400 residents from 574 apartments spread across 14 buildings. Many long-standing businesses in West Brighton are looking to adapt to changing consumer preferences guided by these developments and with the support of the Forest Avenue BID. The BID's annual assessment enables it to deliver services, capital improvements, programming, and provide a collective voice to help inform city policies based on the unique local knowledge of West Brighton merchants. In addition, the Staten Island Business Outreach Center has initiated efforts to explore the creation or expansion of a BID across other sections of the neighborhood.

West Brighton



▲ Points of Interest

- Assessed Commercial Corridors
- Parks & Public Spaces
- Notable Places
- Business Improvement District
- Public Facilities

▲ Notable Places



Neighborhood Events

- Castleton Avenue Block Party
- Castleton Avenue School's Out for Summer
- Forest Avenue BID Holiday Stroll
- Forest Avenue BID Spring Stroll
- Forest Avenue St. Patrick's Day Parade
- Memorial Day Parade

Merchant & Business Groups

- Castleton Avenue Merchants Organization
- Forest Avenue BID
- Forest Regional Residents' Civic Association (FRRCA)

KEY FINDINGS & OPPORTUNITIES

Strengths

- ▶ Home to many long-standing small businesses that survived the pandemic and continue to thrive today
- ▶ Strong sense of community with many religious and nonprofit organizations serving both the needs of businesses and residents
- ▶ There is a strong connection between merchants and local residents with relationships extending beyond stores
- ▶ Snug Harbor Cultural Center and Botanical Garden and Allison Pond Park serve as public space retreats for residents and visitors
- ▶ Newer waves of immigration have brought new business ideas and flavors to the neighborhood, adding to the diversity of local dining and shopping options
- ▶ A good mix of professional businesses and services in the area ensures that locals' needs can be taken care of in the neighborhood

Challenges

- ▶ Relationships and connections between NYCHA residents and other local stakeholders are not always as strong as they could be
- ▶ Commercial corridors are prone to illegal dumping, graffiti, and issues related to garbage collection
- ▶ Insufficient street lighting across the corridors contributes to poor perceptions of safety at night
- ▶ Long-standing businesses need to adapt to changing consumer preferences of younger generations and more diverse clientele
- ▶ A lack of public seating, greenery, and other features related to pedestrian accessibility and comfort prevent shoppers from spending more time on the commercial corridors
- ▶ High storefront vacancy rate on Castleton Avenue (14.4%) disrupts retail continuity and the shopping experience on the corridor





Castleton Avenue Open Streets



La Canasta Deli



Goodwill Barber Shop



Castleton Avenue

Opportunities

- ▶ Improve the streetscape and enhance the pedestrian experience, including around crosswalks, sidewalks, and street furniture
- ▶ Invest in green infrastructure, landscaping, and corridor beautification
- ▶ Work with public agencies and private partners to increase public transportation connectivity and explore more direct bus routes
- ▶ Leverage the strong network of community groups to grow local merchants associations and work with the Forest Avenue BID to develop projects aimed to build capacity and pool resources
- ▶ Engage merchants and residents to enhance quality of life by hosting more community events that celebrate the neighborhood’s history and draw increased foot traffic to the commercial district
- ▶ Coordinate with city agencies to address illegal dumping, graffiti, and trash collection issues
- ▶ Attract new businesses to fill vacant storefronts and respond to unmet consumer demand

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

BUSINESS LANDSCAPE: WEST BRIGHTON

Business Inventory

293

Total Number of Storefronts

11.9%

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%.

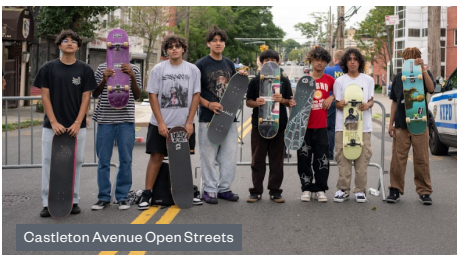
Storefront & Retail Mix



West Brighton Storefront Vacancy by Corridor

- ▶ Castleton Avenue 14.4%
- ▶ Forest Avenue 9.7%

Business inventory and retail mix data were gathered by Staten Island Business Outreach Center through a comprehensive area inventory of storefront businesses located along Forest Avenue and Castleton Avenue from October to December 2023.



Castleton Avenue Open Streets



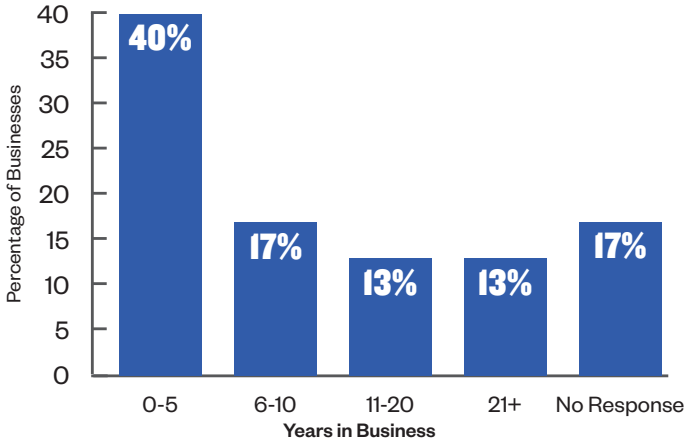
Kawaii Shop Sidewalk Activation on Forest Avenue



Happy Hour at Ho' Brah

What We've Heard from West Brighton Merchants

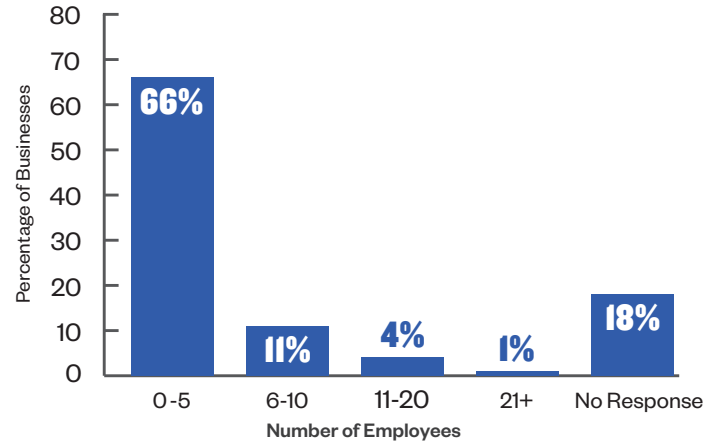
How many years have you been in business here?



11.4 Mean
6 Median
5 Mode

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?



4 Mean
2 Median
2 Mode

Do you own or rent your property?

72% Rent
15% Own
13% No Response

Does your business currently have a website?

70% Yes
25% No
5% No Response

Are you a minority or woman-owned business?

39% Yes
58% No
3% No Response

Does your business currently use social media?

73% Yes
19% No
8% No Response

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

23% Improved
48% Stayed the Same
17% Decreased
12% N/A or No Response



Source: Based on 120 merchant surveys conducted by Staten Island Business Outreach Center in Fall 2023 and Winter 2024.

BUSINESS LANDSCAPE: WEST BRIGHTON

What We've Heard from West Brighton Merchants and Shoppers

What do you like about the commercial district?

- "The neighborhood is the best. Customers are loyal."
- "The vast variety of food and services provided for the neighborhood in walking distance."
- "I love the small businesses and how they support one another. The feeling of community is special."
- "Hometown feeling and BID support."
- "Varied in businesses. Growing, improving, walkable."
- "It is close to everything. There are a lot of different people around and it is nice seeing that diversity."

What makes the West Brighton commercial district unique?

- "A strong sense of community unlike any other neighborhood in Staten Island."
- "Our proximity to Snug Harbor, the ferry, and Forest Avenue."
- "It's established, tight-knit, and supportive."
- "Everyone wins with a thriving local business district here: it stabilizes the neighborhood, brings the community together, creates local jobs, and it reduces traffic and travel by keeping shoppers local."
- "Longstanding businesses here have been assets to the community for over 100 years."
- "Feels like a nice hidden spot away from the craziness of Manhattan."

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

	% Merchant Response	% Consumer Response
▶ Safety	48%	35%
▶ Community Events	44%	12%
▶ Landscaping/Beautification	32%	22%
▶ Sanitation, Street Cleaning	24%	24%
▶ Street Lighting	23%	29%
▶ Merchant Collaboration	21%	16%
▶ Transportation Improvements	16%	40%
▶ Storefront Improvements	15%	20%
▶ More Open Space	8%	31%
▶ Other	8%	35%
▶ Graffiti Removal	7%	15%

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

- "Street redesign: more frequent crosswalks and bike lanes or at least bike arrows to mark safe routes."
- "Better public transportation and more parking."
- "Cleaner sidewalks, more garbage bins."
- "There are many vacancies, businesses that were at one time useful places to the community. Perhaps give incentives for different businesses to come back."
- "More green spaces."
- "Community events."
- "Please improve the lighting on the streets."

Source: Based on 120 merchant surveys and 286 consumer surveys conducted by Staten Island Business Outreach Center in Fall 2023 and Winter 2024.

West Brighton Retail Demand

Residents spent

\$798M

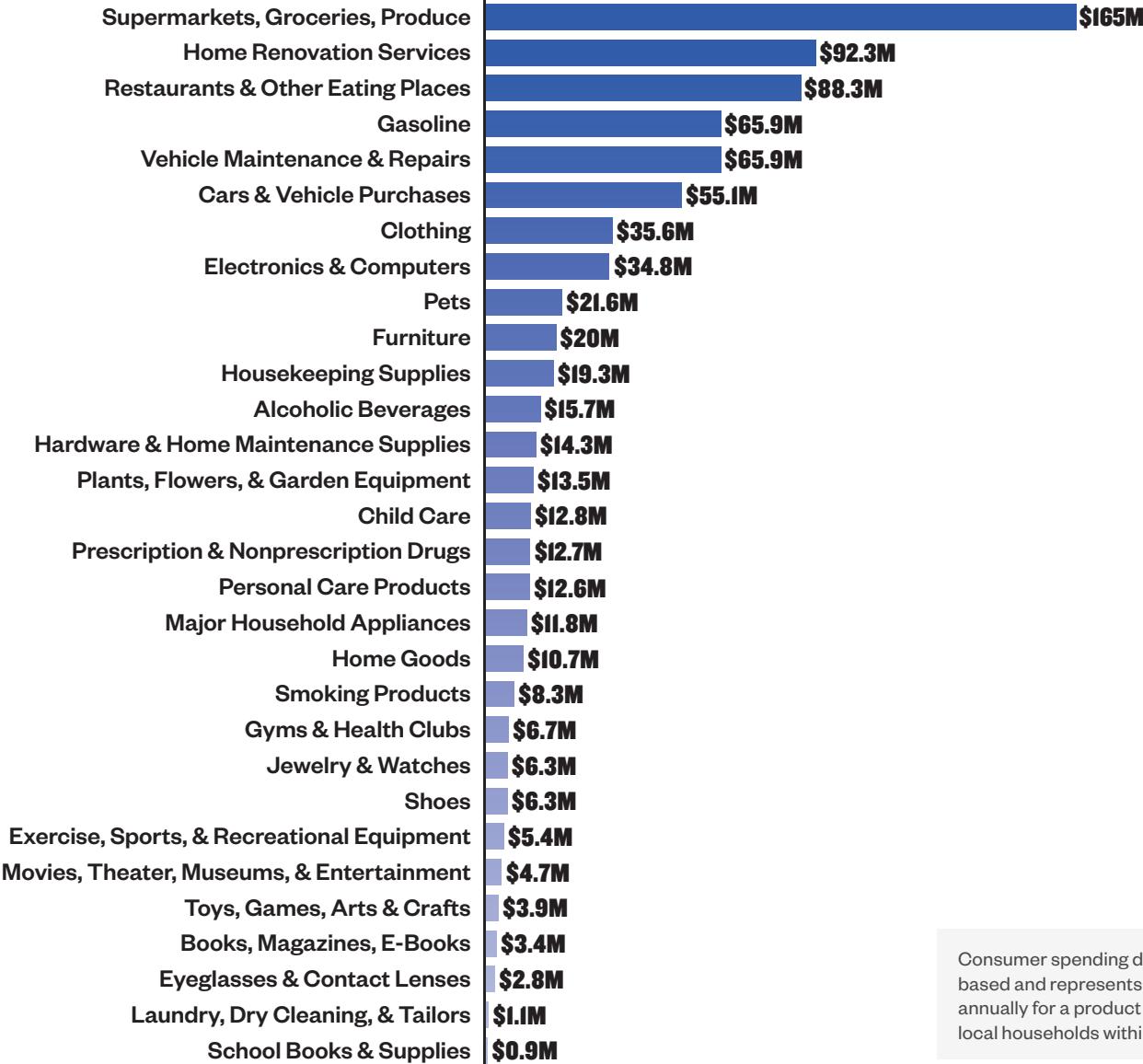
on retail goods and services in 2024

Residents will spend

\$920M

each year on retail goods and services by 2029

2024 Consumer Spending



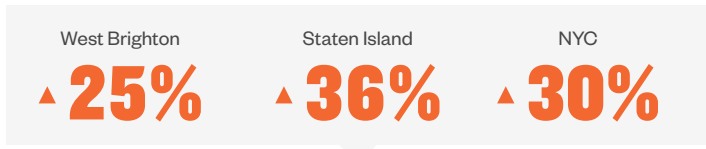
Consumer spending data is household-based and represents the amount spent annually for a product or service by all local households within the trade area.

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

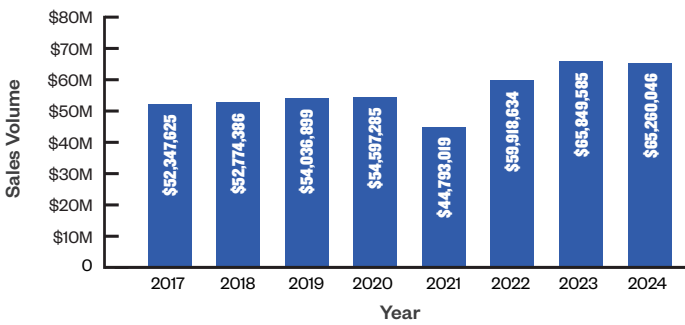
BUSINESS OUTLOOK

Business Trends

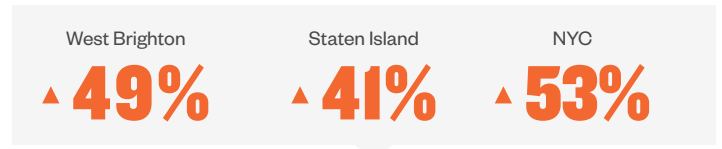
Change in Total Business Sales, 2017-2024



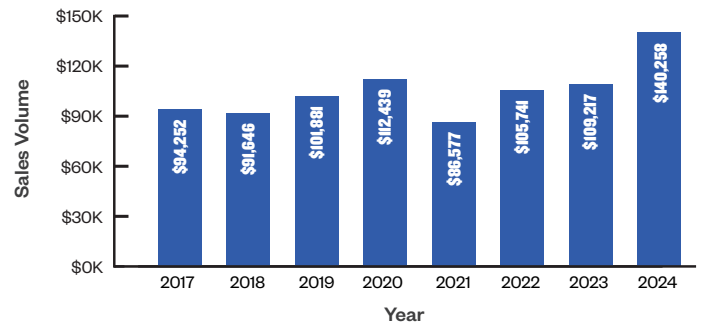
West Brighton Total Business Sales



Change in Median Sales by Business, 2017-2024



West Brighton Median Sales by Business



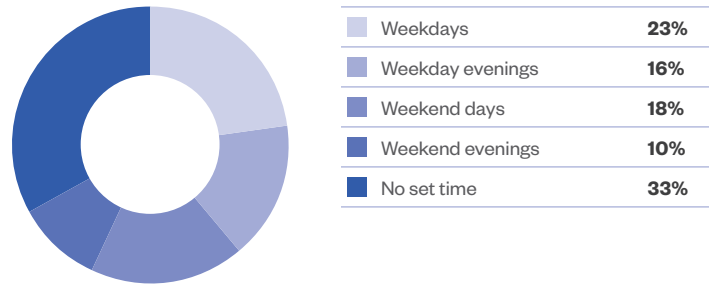
*Year 2024 reflects data gathered up until March 2024. Source: Division of Tax Policy, NYC Department of Finance

What We've Heard from Shoppers

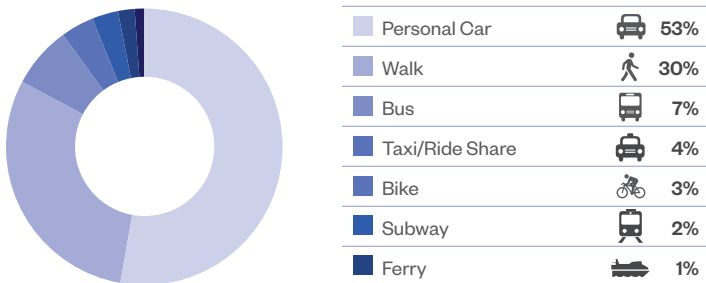
What additional types of businesses would you like to see in West Brighton?

- ▶ Kids play spaces 
- ▶ Hardware stores 
- ▶ Groceries and supermarkets 
- ▶ Restaurants 
- ▶ Clothing stores 
- ▶ Outdoor spaces 

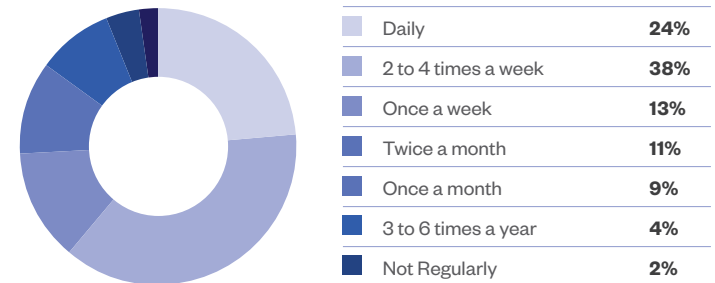
When do you usually shop in West Brighton?



How do you usually travel to West Brighton?

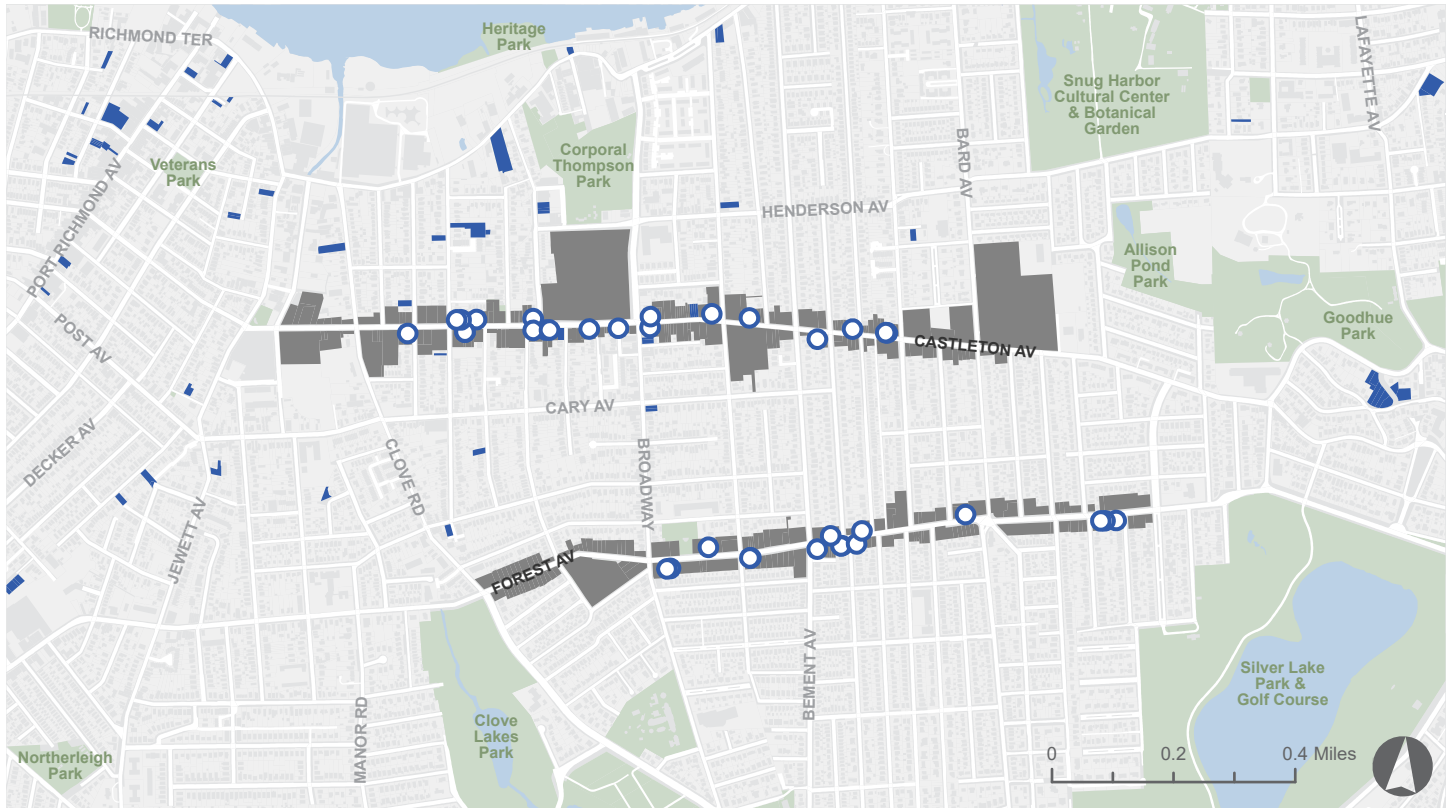


How often do you shop in West Brighton?



Source: Based on 286 consumer surveys conducted by Staten Island Business Outreach Center in Fall 2023 and Winter 2024.

Storefront Vacancies



■ Vacant Lots

○ Vacant Storefronts

■ Parks & Open Spaces

An analysis of 293 storefronts along Forest Avenue and Port Richmond Avenue revealed that 23% of storefronts are in poor condition, 24% are in average condition, and 54% are in good condition.

Streetscape Observations

- ▶ Murals on Castleton Avenue, historic architecture, and elaborate multilingual signs enhance the area's appeal for consumers and also encourage sports in the neighborhood as skaters, cyclists, and others visit street-style influenced small businesses in the area.
- ▶ The tree-lined streets and colorful storefronts make the neighborhood a welcoming home to open streets and community parades.
- ▶ More street lighting is needed on Forest and Castleton avenues at night.
- ▶ There is a need for more visible district signage and wayfinding since 21% of merchants reported that low foot traffic affects their businesses.
- ▶ Businesses have made an effort to keep pedestrian areas clean and clear of obstacles; being mindful that their standees, posters, and other visual merchandising are not in the way.
- ▶ Sidewalk litter, complaints about overflowing public litter baskets, and other sanitation issues are prevalent on Castleton Avenue, especially in tree pits; the sanitation issue becomes worse closer to the NYCHA campus due to the lack of public litter baskets.
- ▶ Both corridors lack necessary public transportation amenities such as bus shelters and benches. The absence of public seating and furniture makes the area less accessible for less mobile and aging people.



Litter on Castleton Avenue



Faded Crosswalk Markings



Litter Basket on Castleton Avenue

DATA APPENDIX

Study Area Boundaries

Assessed Commercial Corridors

Primary data on West Brighton storefront businesses presented on pg. 6-9 was gathered along the following commercial corridors:

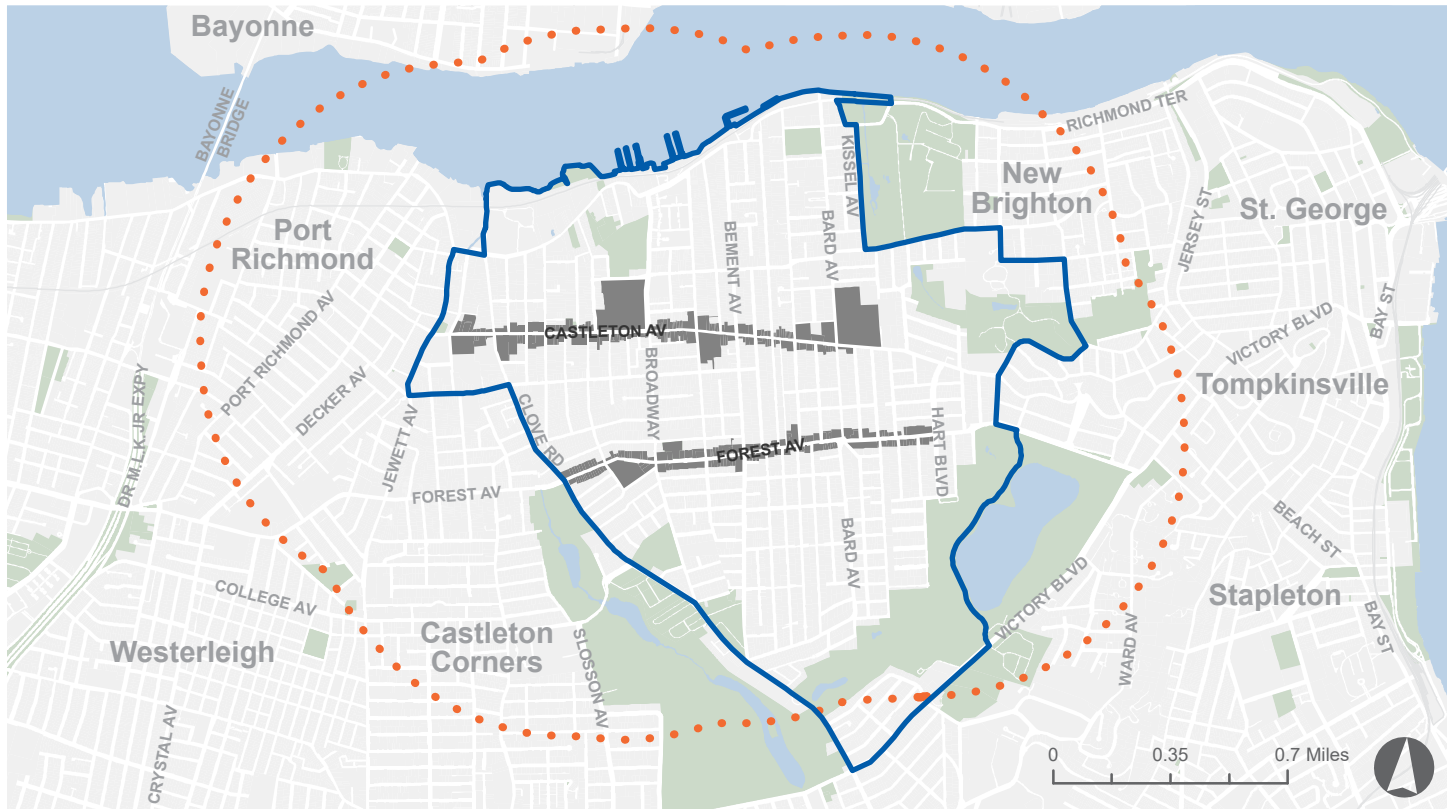
- ▶ Forest Avenue between Broadway and Hart Boulevard
- ▶ Castleton Avenue between Rector and Hoyt avenues

West Brighton Context Area

Demographic and employment data on pg. 12-14 represents the population within the West Brighton neighborhood context area.

Trade Area

Consumer spending data on page 9 corresponds with the 0.75 mile trade area.



Area Demographics

Total Population

26,661	West Brighton
492,925	Staten Island
8,622,467	New York City

Population Density (per square mile)

15,063	West Brighton
8,499	Staten Island
28,517	New York City

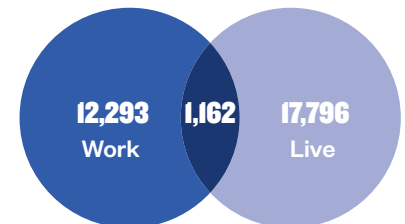
Average Household Size

2.82	West Brighton
2.86	Staten Island
2.56	New York City

Car Ownership

78.3%	West Brighton
84.8%	Staten Island
45.3%	New York City

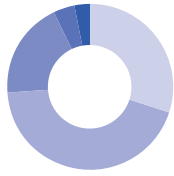
Commuting Patterns



12,293	Work in West Brighton, live elsewhere
1,162	Live & Work in West Brighton
17,796	Live in West Brighton, work elsewhere

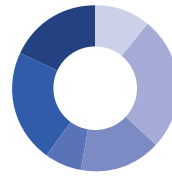
Area Demographics

Race/Background



	West Brighton	Staten Island	NYC
Hispanic or Latino (of any race)	30%	19%	29%
White alone	44%	58%	31%
Black or African American alone	19%	9%	21%
Asian alone	4%	11%	14%
Two or more races	3%	2%	3%
Some other race alone	0%	1%	1%
American Indian and Alaska Native alone	0%	0%	0%
Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander	0%	0%	0%

Educational Attainment



	West Brighton	Staten Island	NYC
12th Grade or Less, No Diploma	11%	11%	17%
High School Graduate	26%	30%	23%
Some College, No Degree	16%	16%	13%
Associate's Degree	7%	7%	7%
Bachelor's Degree	22%	21%	23%
Graduate or Professional Degree	18%	14%	17%

Population Age



	West Brighton	Staten Island	NYC
Under 5 Years	8%	6%	6%
5-14 Years	12%	12%	11%
15-24 Years	13%	12%	12%
25-44 Years	26%	26%	31%
45-64 Years	28%	28%	25%
65+ Years	13%	16%	16%

Median Age

36.5	West Brighton
40.3	Staten Island
37.5	New York City

Foreign-Born Population

23%	West Brighton
25%	Staten Island
36%	New York City

Income

Median Household Income

\$105,805	West Brighton
\$96,185	Staten Island
\$76,607	New York City

Pop. Below Poverty Line

13%	West Brighton
10%	Staten Island
17%	New York City

Employment

Population in Labor Force

63%	West Brighton
60%	Staten Island
63%	New York City

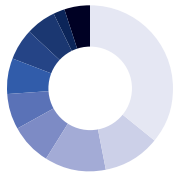
Unemployment*

5%	West Brighton
5%	Staten Island
8%	New York City

* Note: As of May 2024, the unemployment rate is 4.4% for Staten Island and 4.9% for New York City (NYS DOL); updated neighborhood-level data for West Brighton is not available.

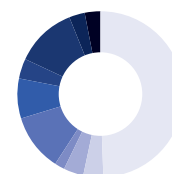
Local Jobs and Employment

Local Residents' Employment



Educational Services, Health Care, Social Assistance	36%
Retail Trade	11%
Professional, Scientific, & Technical Services	12%
Finance, Insurance, Real Estate	8%
Public Administration	7%
Construction	7%
Accommodation, Food Services, Arts, Entertainment	6%
Transportation, Warehousing, Utilities	6%
Manufacturing	2%
Other Services	5%

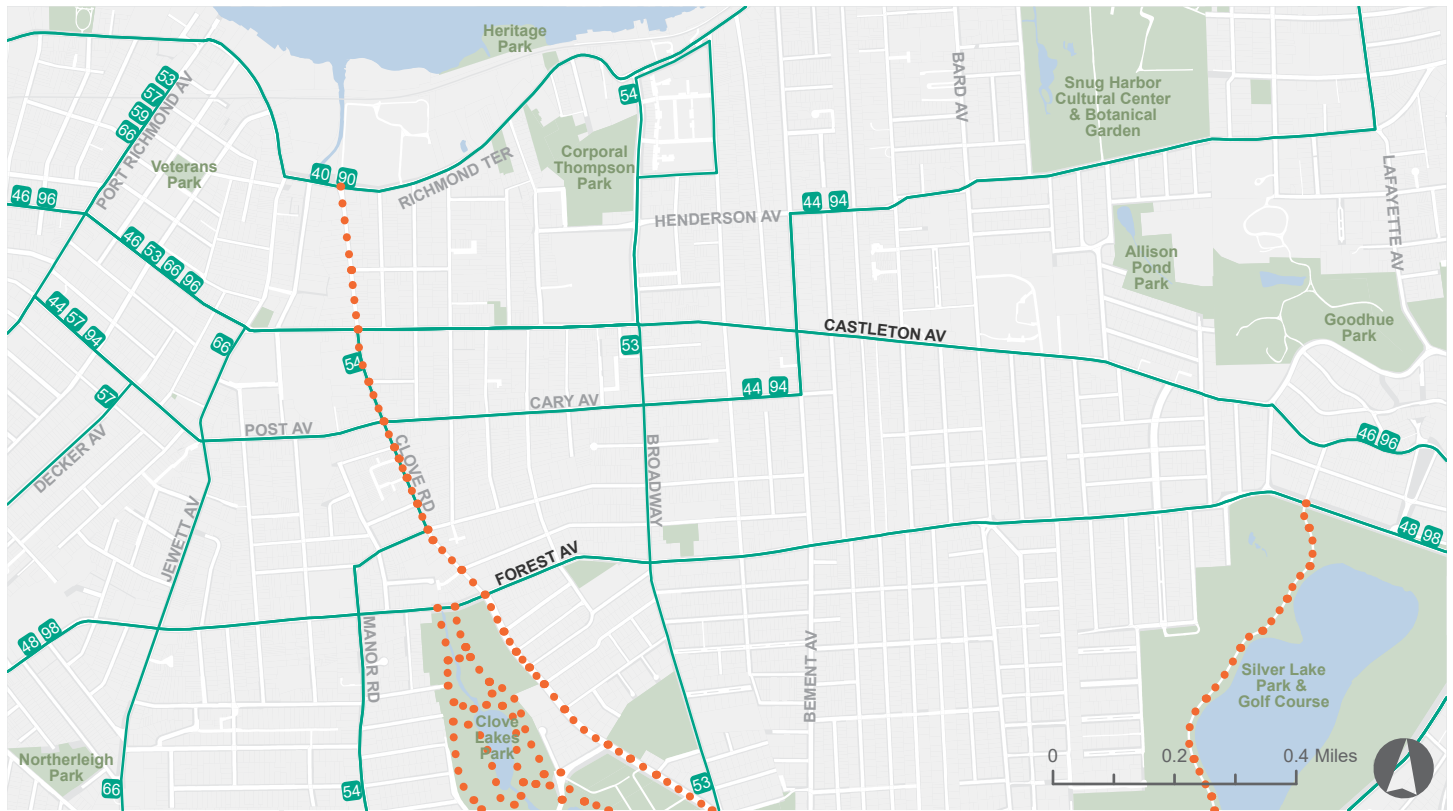
Jobs Located in West Brighton



Educational Services, Health Care, Social Assistance	50%
Retail Trade	4%
Professional, Scientific, & Technical Services	4%
Finance, Insurance, Real Estate	2%
Public Administration	11%
Construction	8%
Accommodation, Food Services, Arts, Entertainment	4%
Transportation, Warehousing, Utilities	12%
Manufacturing	3%
Other Services	3%

DATA APPENDIX

West Brighton Transportation



▲ West Brighton Transportation

— Bus Routes

... Bicycle Lanes

Average Weekday Bus Ridership (2023)

4,851	S53	711	S66
3,043	S44/94	691	S57
2,898	S48/98	644	SIM30
2,096	S46/96	463	S54
1,713	S59	431	SIM35
1,697	S40/S90	265	S56
1,393	S52		

Average Daily Vehicular Traffic (2023)

10,671	Average daily vehicles on Castleton Avenue between Nicholas Avenue and Jersey Street
7,454	Average daily vehicles on Forest Avenue between Broadway and Victory Boulevard
6,472	Average daily vehicles on Bement Avenue from Clove Road to Richmond Terrace
6,292	Average daily vehicles on Henderson Avenue between Broadway to Lafayette Avenue
3,337	Average daily vehicles on Bard Avenue between Clove Road and Richmond Terraces
1,267	Average daily vehicles on Pelton Avenue between Richmond Terrace to Forest Avenue

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

Recent SBS Neighborhood Investments

- ▶ *Neighborhood 360° Grant*, multi-year grant of \$450,000 awarded to SIBOC, 2024-2027.
- ▶ *Commercial Revitalization*, Strategic Impact Grant, single-year CDNA grant of \$80,000 awarded to SIBOC, 2023-2024.
- ▶ *Small BID Support Grant*, single year grant of \$50,000 awarded to Forest Avenue BID, 2023-2024.

Existing Plans & Studies

Permanent Affordability Commitment Together (PACT) West Brighton, NYC Housing Authority, 2022.

North Shore 2030: Improving and Reconnecting the North Shore's Unique and Historic Assets, NYC Department of City Planning and NYC Economic Development Corporation, 2011.

West Brighton Exploratory Development Strategy, NYU Wagner Capstone with West Brighton Local Development Corporation.

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

Metropolitan Transportation Authority, 2023. Average Weekday Subway Ridership and Average Weekday Bus Ridership.

NYS Department of Labor. May 2024. Unemployment Rate Rankings by County.

Live XYZ, NYC Storefront Data, June 2024. SBS Business Improvement Districts Trends Report, FY 2023.

NYS Department of Transportation. 2023 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.

NYC Department of Small Business Services. Fiscal Year 2023. Business Improvement Districts Trends Report.

U.S. Census Bureau. 2021. OnTheMap Application. Longitudinal-Employer Household Dynamics Program.

U.S. Census Bureau. American Community Survey, 2021 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates, using NYC Population FactFinder. West Brighton Census Tracts: 59.01, 67, 97.01, 105, 133.01, 121, 125, 133.02

Photo Credits: Staten Island Business Outreach Center: Nina Flores and Samantha Skonieczny. NYC SBS: Zaxx Abraham.



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.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

We would like to recognize and thank the following individuals and organizations for their contributions to the development of the West Brighton Commercial District Needs Assessment:

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Castleton Avenue Merchants Organization
West Brighton Merchants
West Brighton Shoppers and Residents