

## **Flushing Commons Town Plaza: Creating Open Space for Multiple Publics**



Prepared by:

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# **Flushing Commons' Town Plaza: Creating Open Space for Multiple Publics**

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I am delighted that the report “Flushing Commons Town Plaza: Creating Open Space for Multiple Publics”, prepared by Urban Studies faculty Prof. Tarry Hum and students of Queens College, is now complete and is being made available for public use. The report is significant not only for its content highlighting issues of public space in rapidly changing urban neighborhoods such as Flushing, but also for bringing attention to the potential in campus-community collaborations.

Asian/American Center is currently developing an Asian American and Pacific Islander Community Studies (AAPICS) curriculum for Queens College, City University of New York, and class projects such as “Planning the Future of Downtown Flushing” are particularly relevant for our new interdisciplinary program. We are happy to support wider public dissemination of this report so that other academic programs, as well as policy makers and community leaders, can make full use of it.

Dr. Madhulika Khandelwal  
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## INTRODUCTION

Flushing, Queens is a dynamic and diverse multi-racial, multi-ethnic community undergoing much new development. The Flushing Commons project proposed for the Municipal Parking Lot #1 site in the downtown center is symbolic of the transformative remaking of Flushing. The Municipal Parking Lot #1 currently provides approximately 1,100 parking spaces deemed vital to sustaining the livelihood of surrounding ethnic-based small businesses. Historically a site of Flushing's sizable free Black community, the five acre parking lot is a product of New York City's late 1940s urban renewal and slum clearance practices. As a result, the site is also significant due to the potential for historic artifacts buried just beneath the asphalt.<sup>1</sup>

The New York City Economic Development Corporation (NYCEDC) completed a comprehensive revitalization plan for Downtown Flushing in 2003. The Downtown Flushing Framework elaborates three key development goals to: (1) Reconnect and Renew Downtown Flushing, (2) Revitalize the Waterfront, and (3) Redevelop Willets Point ([www.downtownflushing.com](http://www.downtownflushing.com)). The development of Municipal Parking Lot #1 is the primary strategy to renew downtown Flushing and reconnect this regional economic center to its waterfront and a redeveloped Willets Point neighborhood. After several false starts, the proposal for the Flushing Commons project prepared by a collaboration between TDC Development and the Rockefeller Development Corporation (henceforth, the development team is referred to as Flushing Commons LLC) was certified by the NYC Department of City Planning on January 25,

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<sup>1</sup> Historic remains including remnants of a church burial ground were discovered during the initial construction of the municipal parking lot #1 in the early 1950s. Refer to New York Times article, "Forgotten Graveyard in Flushing Stalls Bulldozers in Parking Lot," June 23, 1953. For recent coverage on the range of potential historic artifacts, refer to the New York Daily News article, "Hoping to dig up the past: Seek archives under car lot," by Nicholas Hirshon, June 8, 2010.

2010.<sup>2</sup> The certification marked the completion of a draft study that examined the potential environmental impacts of the proposed Flushing Commons project. In addition to the sale of city-owned property to private developers, the Flushing Commons LLC seek numerous zoning text amendments and special permits including a General Large-Scale Development permit and modification of height regulations which pertain to areas that neighbor major airports. Upon certification of the Flushing Commons project application and Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) in January 2010, the city's public land use review process referred to as the Uniform Land Use Review procedure (ULURP) was initiated.<sup>3</sup>

Flushing Commons will transform downtown Flushing by adding approximately 620 market-rate residential units, up to 275,000 square feet of retail and restaurant space, up to 234,000 square feet of office space; up to 250 hotel rooms, and up to 98,000 square feet of community space facility space which includes an approximately 62,000-square-foot YMCA and medical offices (DEIS 1-5). These new residential, retail, and commercial uses will be accommodated in four towers -- three of which reach 16 to 17 stories. The towers anchor the perimeter of the five acre site which features a 1.5 acre public open space described as the "crown jewel" of the project.<sup>4</sup> As one of two key public benefits, the city and development team have stated that Flushing Commons proposes to "(C)reate a town square-style *public open space* that would be a *center of community activity*" and that "(T)he open space would be *open to the public at all times* and available for the programming of public events" (DEIS 1-2, 1-7 emphasis added).

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<sup>2</sup> Refer to Queens Chronicle article, "Flushing Commons on Track," by Liz Rhoades, October 16, 2008.

<sup>3</sup> For more information on the Uniform Land Use Review Procedure (ULURP), refer to NYC Department of City Planning website at : <http://www.nyc.gov/html/dcp/html/luproc/ulpro.shtml>

<sup>4</sup> Michael Meyer, President, TDC Development quoted in a Queens Gazette article, "Board 7 Hears Of Flushing Commons Plans," by Jason D. Antos, March 24, 2010.

While much community concern about the Flushing Commons project has centered on the number and cost of parking spaces, projected traffic impacts, expanding retail options, and the impacts on surrounding small businesses, our class studied the largely ignored but potentially project-defining proposal for the 1.5 acre town plaza. We agree with TDC President Michael Meyer's assessment that the open space, widely recognized as lacking in Flushing's congested downtown, is potentially a "crown jewel" that can benefit the public at large. As a critical and much needed public green space for community recreation, cultural activities, and daily interactions, we offer this report which details our research and planning recommendations to help promote a space that is inclusive and welcoming, and encourages community building in one of the most diverse neighborhoods in the world.

This report is the product of a semester-long intensive study of Downtown Flushing and the proposed Municipal Parking Lot #1 project. Comprised of twelve students, we represent a combination of undergraduate and graduate Urban Studies students. Some of us know Flushing well as we are current or former residents, and for others, this course was an intensive introduction to the neighborhood. While we organized into teams to research and write each section, we all read and commented on the complete report. We know this report is not an exhaustive planning study of the proposed Flushing Commons town plaza project and as a student endeavor, our report is also defined by the parameters of an one semester learning experience. Nonetheless, we hope our contribution will help advance the goals of public stewardship and public access in developing a green space that serves community interests and needs.

In conducting our research, we used both quantitative and qualitative research methods. City documents and resources including the Downtown Flushing Framework and the Draft

Environmental Impact Statement for the Flushing Commons project provided important context and detail about the proposed redevelopment of Municipal Park Lot #1. We utilized Census data to document the sociodemographic composition of Community Board 7 and downtown Flushing. In addition to the decennial census for 1990 and 2000, we used the 2007 American Community Survey (ACS) data to provide updated demographic information. While the smallest geographic level for the ACS data is the sub-borough level (which approximates community boards in NYC), we utilized QC Professor Beveridge's census tract level estimates for the 2007 ACS data ([www.socialexplorer.com](http://www.socialexplorer.com)).

In addition to census data analysis, we engaged in qualitative methods which included interviews and fieldwork. We met with official stakeholders including Robert Holbrook, Project Manager, NYC Economic Development Corporation, Marilyn Bitterman, Queens Community Board 7 District Manager, Alexandra Loh, Flushing Transit Hub BID, TDC Development President Michael Meyer and members of his development team, Howard Hsu and Lorinda Karoff, City Council Member Peter Koo and his chief of staff, James McClelland. We sought additional expertise from Adjunct Professor Jenny Lee, City College School of Architecture, Urban Design, and Landscape Architecture, and Professor Jim Moore, QC Anthropology.

We conducted extensive fieldwork by attending numerous public meetings including community board meetings and the May 12, 2010 City Planning Commission public hearing. Our fieldwork also included an assessment of the use and quality of Flushing's open spaces utilizing the widely-accepted town plaza principles developed by the Project for Public Space. Our analysis and recommendations for Flushing Commons' open space was informed by an extensive literature on public space including articles by CUNY Professors Sharon Zukin and Setha Low, and a growing literature on historic and contemporary Flushing, Queens. We draw

from local and international best practice examples to illustrate possible strategies that can be implemented to ensure that the Flushing Commons town plaza is, indeed, a crown jewel that will serve the outstanding need for a quality public space accessible to Flushing's diverse and vibrant communities.

Our report is organized into the following five major sections. The first section provides a brief historical narrative of Flushing with a focus on its rich and complex racial composition and dynamics, and the central importance of urban renewal policies in establishing Municipal Parking Lot #1 in the center of downtown Flushing. The second section reviews an empirical profile of Flushing's multiple publics from 1990 to 2007; and emphasizes the distinct sociodemographic composition of downtown Flushing relative to Community Board 7 overall. The third section underscores the outstanding need for quality open space in Flushing. This section features photographs and a descriptive evaluation of Flushing's open spaces based on the open space criteria developed by the Project for Public Space. The fourth section examines the potential cumulative impact of recently completed and proposed new developments in downtown Flushing. Based on this comprehensive study of Flushing and its public spaces, the final section outlines our recommendations and best practice examples for the Flushing Commons Town Plaza. For ease of reference, this section concludes with a table that summarizes our assessment of the planning challenges pertaining to Flushing, and our recommendations and examples of best practices in the provision and management of public space.



## SECTION I

### **The Historic and Contemporary Remaking of Downtown Flushing**

Flushing has been a place of significant neighborhood transformations and the proposed redevelopment of the Municipal Parking Lot #1 site is set to remake Flushing once again. Given its desirable proximity to the heart of downtown and all the generous transportation options that this area offers, this site is seen by many to be representative of the entire downtown area. The controversy therefore arises because so many stakeholders know that this project will not only transform the blocks that immediately surround it but has the potential to fundamentally transform the neighborhood's identity and daily lived experiences of community residents in profound ways.

The history of Flushing is relevant to the discussion of Flushing's future because while Flushing has the fortunate reputation as being culturally progressive, there are identifiable skeletons that should serve as warning signs so that future development does not unknowingly duplicate the mistakes of the past. Therefore, while our report is focused primarily on the "open space" element within the Flushing Commons project, revealing what this space and the surrounding area was once used for will serve to illuminate the possibilities, highlight the shortcomings and accentuate the attributes of the Flushing Commons plan.

The 1657 Flushing Remonstrance exemplifies the neighborhood's founding on principles of tolerance and diversity. On December 21<sup>st</sup>, 1657, a group of notable Flushing residents signed a document to end the persecution of Quakers for practicing their religion. Governor Peter Stuyvesant arrested several town officials and eventually banished them from the colony for signing the document – the Flushing Remonstrance -- which respected and allowed for religious diversity. Despite this, Flushing residents began to hold illegal Quaker meetings. Upon his

arrest for holding meetings at his home, farmer John Bowne advocated his case for freedom of religion to the leaders of the Dutch India West Company. The leaders agreed to support John Bowne and wrote a letter to Governor Stuyvesant to allow freedom of religion in the colony of Flushing. The Flushing Remonstrance was a remarkable moment in Flushing's history and the document is often noted as a precursor to the provision of religious freedom in the United States Constitution.

Although Flushing is looked upon as an example of racial tolerance, the existence of slavery was present in the late 1600s. In fact, John Bowne was said to have owned slaves. In the late 1700s, Flushing residents began to free their slaves. The sites in Flushing that were associated with the Underground Railroad were the Bowne House, Aspinwall House, Friends Meeting House, and the Macedonia A.M.E church which is located on the northeast corner of the current Municipal Parking Lot #1 site.<sup>5</sup> In addition to the church, the site was the location of a Free School founded by the Flushing Female Association -- a Quaker women's organization -- in 1814. In contrast to segregated educational institutions of the time, the Free School served both poor black and white children in Flushing. Despite its landmark status, the little red brickhouse school was demolished as part of the slum clearance efforts of the late 1940s.

In the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Flushing absorbed waves of German, Italian, and Irish immigrants not unlike similar trends in major cities all over the country. In the last few decades, however, this population has declined in the downtown area but many can still trace their ancestry back to this population movement at the turn of the 20th Century. The 1965 Immigration Act renewed and transformed Flushing's demography as immigrants from China, Korea, and India established new roots in the community. The first Koreans of Flushing came from the middle class of South

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<sup>5</sup> Refer to the Queens Historical Society website at:  
<http://www.queenshistoricalsociety.org/freedom.html>.

Korea. The Chinese arrived from three different regions -- Taiwan, Hong Kong, and Mainland China. The South Asian population was primarily comprised of Indian professionals who relocated from Manhattan to Flushing, Queens (Smith 1995). While many New York City neighborhoods experienced a decrease in population during the 1970s, the settlement of Asian and Latino immigrants sustained Flushing's growth and transformation.

The influx of human and financial capital helped establish downtown Flushing as a regional economic center based on numerous small businesses and employment opportunities. In the 1970s, Caucasian business owners were succeeded by Asian business owners. The new local businesses served their ethnic communities just as previous generations had. For example, the Taiwanese acquired real estate to establish residential and commercial properties. They sold homes and provided employment to other Asians (Smith 1995, 74). Both the Chinese and Koreans established Asian banks to provide financing for new homes and businesses. These local businesses, ethnic banks, and real estate contributed to the increase of Flushing's Asian population.

Downtown Flushing serves as a regional transportation nexus with the Long Island Railroad, MTA 7 subway line and numerous bus routes. While the goals of downtown areas were once to attract and serve commuters and visitors by all transportation methods, a debate is well underway among varied stakeholders including citizens, transportation activists, and urban planners to reconsider how people arrive in the Flushing downtown area. Mayor Bloomberg adopted Smart Growth principles as part of his sustainability initiatives outlined in the PLANYC 2030 and transit oriented development has become a planning priority.<sup>6</sup> While accommodating

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<sup>6</sup> Refer to Mayor Bloomberg's PLANYC 2030 section on housing and land use which states the pursuit of transit oriented development as a key strategy:  
[http://www.nyc.gov/html/planyc2030/html/plan/land\\_housing.shtml](http://www.nyc.gov/html/planyc2030/html/plan/land_housing.shtml)

pedestrians sounds reasonable enough, small business owners, namely Union Street Korean businesses that helped revitalize downtown in part by relying on Municipal Parking Lot #1, are concerned that they will be devastated by the loss of low-cost, off-street parking.

The proposed Flushing Commons project site had not always been a municipal parking lot. As noted, the site once anchored Flushing's African American population. Local urban renewal and slum clearance efforts headed by city builder Robert Moses included plans to raze two "blighted areas" in the business section of Flushing to construct low-income housing and a parking field (New York Times 1948). Deemed a "twin attack on slum and traffic conditions", a five acre parcel on which the Macedonia AME Church was sited was cleared in the late 1940s. Although the church was spared, church leaders lamented that "A way of life was destroyed as members of the African-American community were scattered, leaving only their church as a reminder of their former existence in the area."<sup>7</sup> According to the New York Times, the site was "occupied by seventy-five ramshackle dwellings, a four-story apartment building, a church, nine stores and a clubhouse" (New York Times 1949). Some displaced residents were later relocated to the newly constructed NYCHA James A. Bland Houses a few blocks away along the industrial Flushing River (New York Times 1953).

In the early 1950s, construction bids were solicited for a "pilot project" on the "slum-cleared" site in downtown Flushing as part of the city's new revenue-producing parking lot program (New York Times 1953). Earlier, the city adopted a new local law which expanded the Board of Estimate's authority to establish off-street parking areas with parking meters once only permitted on street curbs. Even before the pilot municipal parking lot was completed in downtown Flushing, the city anticipated setting up similar revenue generating lots in Jamaica,

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<sup>7</sup> Refer to the Macedonia AME Church website for a brief history -- <http://www.nycago.org/Organs/Qns/html/MacedoniaAME.html>

Queens, downtown Brooklyn, and parts of the Bronx (New York Times 1953). The construction of the city's first municipal parking lot entailed widening Union Street and building a new 138<sup>th</sup> Street along the parking lot's western boundary between 37<sup>th</sup> and 39<sup>th</sup> Avenues.

If history teaches us well, it is that progress is never as cut and dry as presented. Consequences, intended or not, continue to reverberate throughout the remade downtown Flushing area. As the city weighs the impacts of this Flushing Commons proposal, it is important to remember that all major projects affect the people and their landscape in ways that are often difficult to predict. Municipal Parking Lot #1 displaced a black community, leaving the AME Church to be buttressed against the cold concrete of pavement and the steel chassis of automobiles. The history of a place is important when considering how to mediate that delicate line between having too much reverence for the past and not acknowledging it at all. With a project as potentially transformative as Flushing Commons, it is important that we get it right. We hope the open space element within this project will represent some of what is good in Flushing and that the future will arrive with Flushing's heart intact.

## SECTION II

### **Defining Flushing's Multiple Publics: A Socio-Demographic Analysis, 1990-2007**

Flushing is historically and currently defined by a high level of diversity. In order to adequately examine the need and goals for public space in Flushing, it is important to define Flushing's multiple publics. It is the goal of this section to demonstrate that Flushing not only has a diverse public but that there are important patterns which differentiate Downtown Flushing from its surrounding areas which comprise Community Board 7.

According to the DEIS, the immediate public that will be affected by the Flushing Commons project is defined as all people within the census tracts that have at least half of their area located within a ½- mile of the project area. While census tract 889.01 has more than half of its area stretching beyond the quarter mile radius of the project, we have decided that it is relevant to our study and have included it. The census tracts that constitute this area as well as the rest of CB 7 can be found on Table 3.1 at the end of this section. Henceforth, "Downtown Flushing" will denote specifically those census tracts noted in Table 3.1. The following analysis is based on the 1990 and 2000 United States Census as well as the 2007 American Community Survey census tract-level estimates calculated by QC Professor Andrew Beveridge.

Downtown Flushing has experienced steady population growth in the last two decades. Its total population grew from 58,622 in 1990 to 64,224 in 2000, and is estimated to be 64,675 in 2007 (refer to Table 3.3). While Downtown Flushing's land area is about a twelfth of CB 7s, it houses almost a quarter of the CB 7 population. In 2000, the population of CB 7, excluding Downtown Flushing, was 207,126. This makes CB 7s population comparable to that of Boise, Idaho, and Downtown Flushing's to that of Portland, Maine.

Downtown Flushing has a significant child and senior population. In 2000, of Downtown Flushing's 64,244 people, 12,483 are children under 18. This constitutes approximately one fifth of the population. Seniors over 65, account for 9,259 of the total population. The sizable share of children should indicate the need for children-oriented spaces and facilities. Moreover, the substantial senior population indicates the need for senior living spaces.

During the 1970s, New York as a whole experienced a loss of population but Flushing experienced a gain (Smith and Logan 2006). Although there was an overall increase in population, Downtown Flushing lost a significant amount of its White and Black population. By 1990, immigration had dramatically changed the racial and ethnic composition of Flushing. The neighborhood had become home to a large number of Chinese, Korean, Indian, and Pakistani, as well as many Latino immigrants.

Today, Flushing is one of the most diverse neighborhoods in the country. Census data for the year 2000 indicates that 16.3% of Downtown Flushing is Non-Hispanic White, 5.0% is Black, 22.8% is Hispanic or Latino, and 52.3% is Asian. The majority of the Asian population is Chinese followed by Korean. This was reversed from 1990, when Koreans constituted the greater part of the Asian population. By 2000 onwards, the Chinese became the primary Asian ethnic group. In 2007, it is estimated that 55.8% of the Asians living in Downtown Flushing are Chinese, 28.3% are Korean, and 7.1% are Indian. Over the ten year span from 1990 to 2000, Flushing lost 38.6% of its white population and gained 52.4% more Asians (refer to Table 3.3). This trend continued and by 2007, Downtown Flushing was estimated to be almost 60% Asian and only 11.3% White. To emphasize Downtown Flushing's diversity, in 2000, 67.6% of its population was foreign-born. Additionally, two-thirds of that population is not naturalized.

The racial breakdown of Downtown Flushing is significant when contrasted with the

demographics of the rest of CB 7. CB 7, excluding Downtown Flushing, was 50.7% White in 2000, which is a drop of 18.6 percentage points from 1990. The White population in 2007 is estimated to be 45.4% of the total, down from 50.7% in 2000, and 69.3% in 1990. The Asian population in 2007 is estimated to be 36.8% of the total, up from 29.6% in 2000, and 16.8% in 1990. While the Asian population is increasing, the ethnic breakdown is similar throughout CB 7 including the downtown area. The majority of the Asian population is Chinese, followed by Koreans, and then Indians. In 2007, the Hispanic population was about 14.6%, up from 10.8% in 1990. In 2000, 43.2% of the population was foreign-born, with 22.6% not naturalized.

Downtown Flushing is a high-density area with respect to pedestrians and residents. Its sidewalks suffer from overcrowding 83% of the day (Gehl 2008). After Times and Herald Squares, the intersection of Roosevelt Avenue and Main Street has been identified as the third busiest intersection in New York City. The downtown area houses 52,303 people per square mile in 2000. This is about a 4,000 people per square mile increase from 1990. The dense downtown is contrasted with the rest of CB 7, which, in 2000, had a population density of 15,222. This means that Downtown Flushing is about three and a half times denser than the rest of CB 7! Occupying one twelfth of the land area, Downtown Flushing contains about 23% of CB 7s housing units which amounted to 23,319 units in 2000. The high density of Downtown Flushing should serve as a cry for the need for open space.

Flushing is further characterized by a socio-economic disparity. The median household income in 1999 for Downtown Flushing was \$32,620. This is about \$17,000 less than the median household income for the rest of CB 7. In other words, households residing in the rest of CB 7, on average, earn over 50% more than those in Downtown Flushing. However, household incomes for Downtown Flushing and the rest of CB 7 appear to be increasing at similar rates. In



1990, Downtown Flushing has a median household income of \$26,844 and the rest of CB 7, \$40,372. Estimated median household incomes in 2007 for Downtown Flushing and the rest of CB 7 are \$39,463 and \$61,070, respectively. The census data brings light to the significant socio-economic differences between Downtown Flushing and the rest of CB 7.

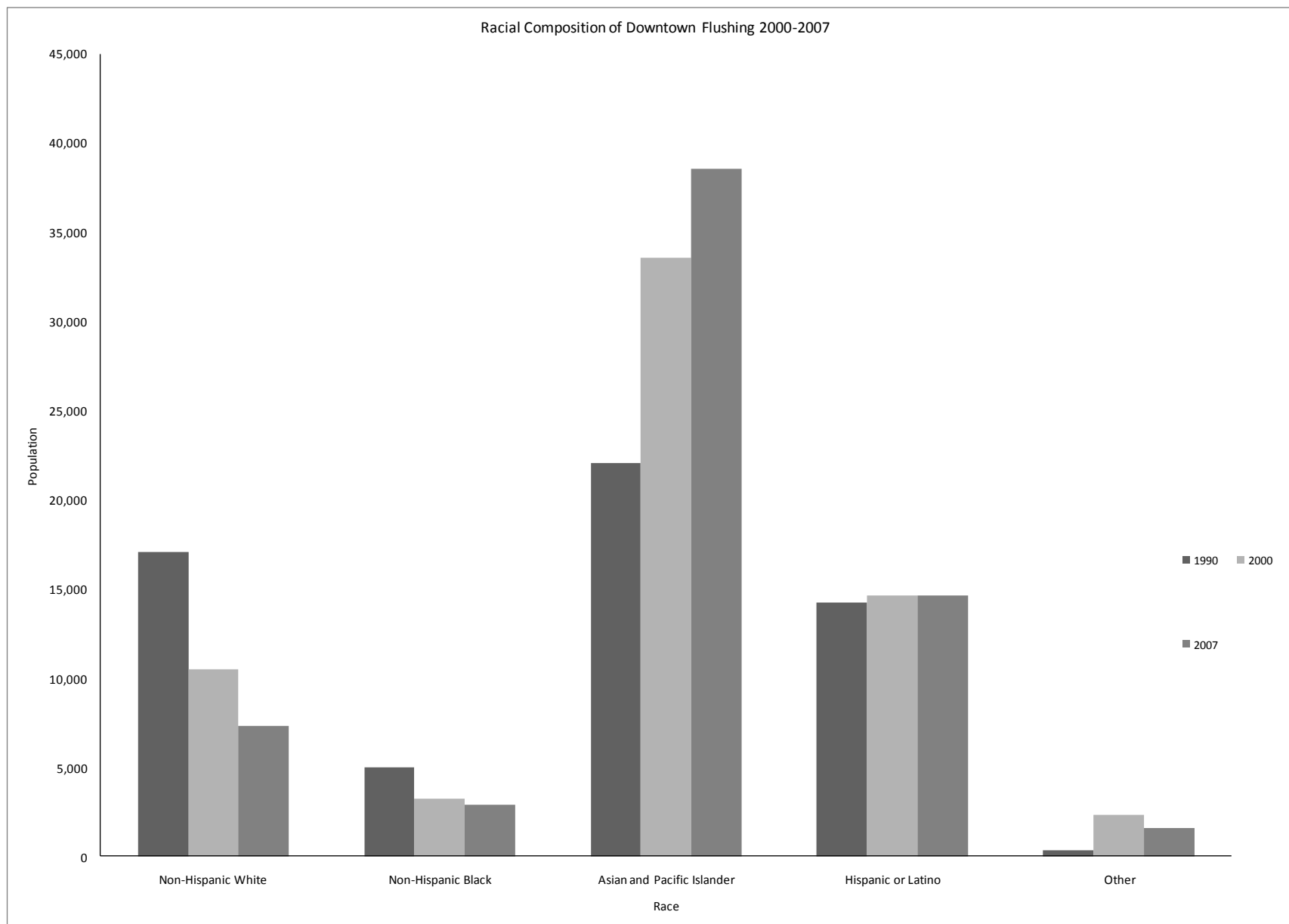
As is evident from the census data analysis, the socio-demographic makeup of Downtown Flushing differs significantly from that of the rest of CB 7. Flushing is far from homogenous and is home to multiple publics. This should be noted and carefully regarded when making decisions that will shape and affect the area.

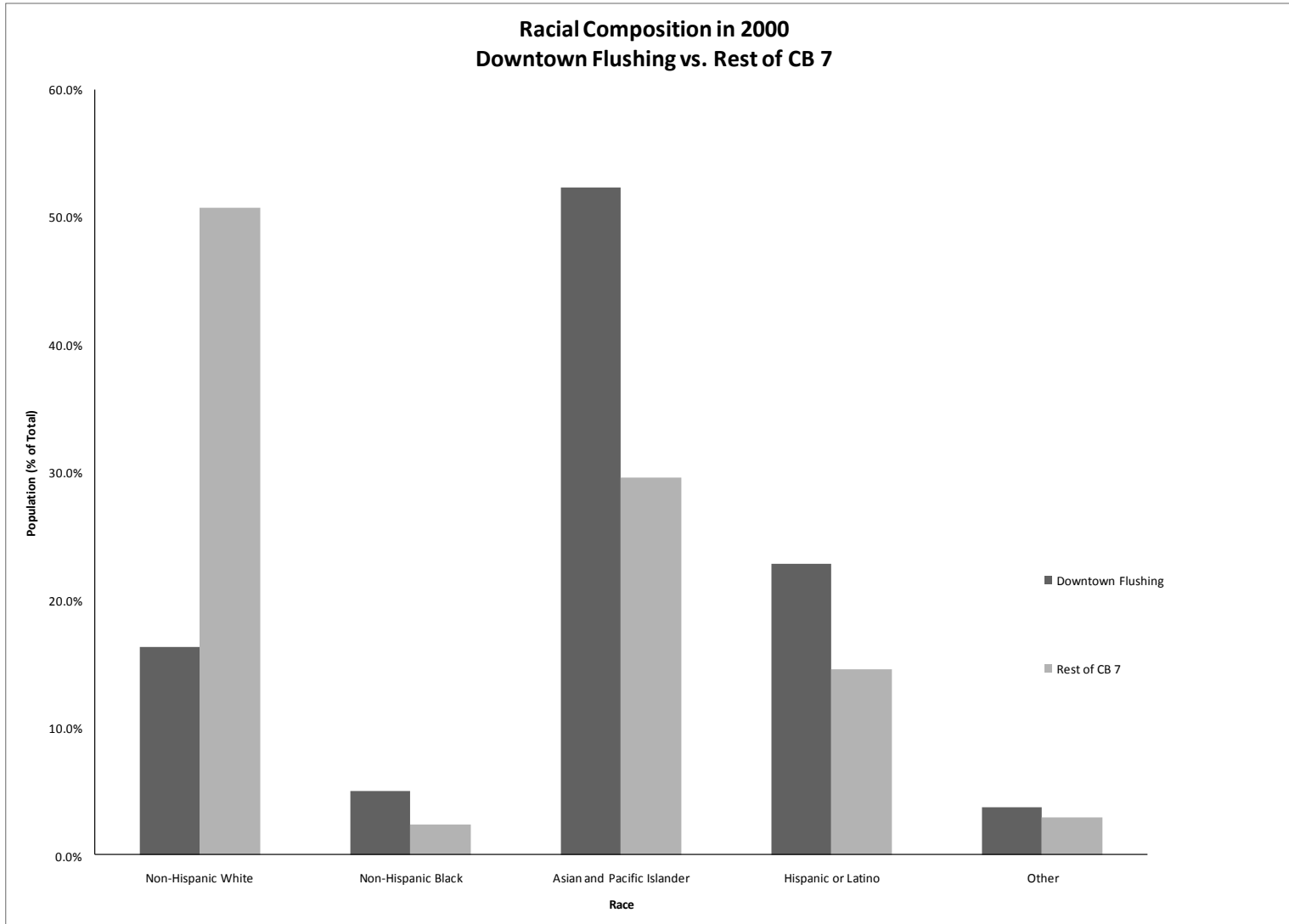
<b>Table 3.1</b>					
<b>Area</b>	<b>Census Tracts</b>				
<b>Downtown Flushing</b>	851, 853, 855, 857, 863, 865, 867, 871, 875, 889.02, 1161, and 1163				
<b>Rest of CB 7</b>	383*, 797, 799, 803.01, 803.02*, 837, 845, 859, 861, 907, 919, 925, 929, 939, 945, 947, 973, 981, 987, 991, 997.01, 997.02*, 999*, 1017, 1029, 1033, 1039, 1047, 1059, 1083*, 1139, 1141, 1147, 1151, 1155, 1157, 1159, 1167, 1171, 1175*, 1185, 1187, 1189, 1191, 1193, 1195, 1199, 1201, 1203, 1205, 1207, 1211, 1215, 1223*, 1227.01*, 1417.01*, and 1459*				
*area falls slightly outside the community board boundary					

								Table 3.2												
Statistics	New York City								Downtown Flushing						Rest of Community Board 7					
Year	1990		2000		2007		1990		2000		2007		1990		2000		2007			
Total Population																				
Total	7,322,564		8,008,278		8,308,147		58,622		64,224		64,765		185,879		207,126		209,121			
Age																				
Population:	7,322,564		8,008,278		8,308,147		58,622		64,224		64,765		185,879		207,126		209,121			
Under 18 years	1,686,718	23.0%	1,940,269	24.2%	1,914,494	23.0%	11,877	20.3%	12,483	19.4%	11,782	18.2%	35,290	19.0%	41,204	19.9%	39,328	18.8%		
18 to 34 years	2,147,348	29.3%	2,171,033	27.1%	2,049,033	24.7%	16,880	28.8%	16,344	25.5%	13,908	21.5%	50,727	27.3%	48,745	23.5%	41,282	19.7%		
35 to 64 years	2,535,181	34.6%	2,959,119	37.0%	3,322,239	40.0%	21,138	36.1%	26,138	40.7%	28,766	44.4%	68,579	36.9%	83,503	40.3%	91,879	43.9%		
65 and over	953,317	13.0%	937,857	11.7%	1,022,431	12.3%	8,727	14.9%	9,259	14.4%	10,312	15.9%	31,283	16.8%	33,674	16.3%	36,629	17.5%		
Race																				
Total Population:	7,322,564		8,008,278		8,308,147		58,622		64,224		64,765		185,879		207,126		209,121			
Non-Hispanic White	3,163,125	43.2%	2,801,267	35.0%	2,920,839	35.2%	17,032	29.1%	10,461	16.3%	7,305	11.3%	128,830	69.3%	104,932	50.7%	94,868	45.4%		
Non-Hispanic Black	1,847,049	25.2%	1,962,154	24.5%	1,947,522	23.4%	4,991	8.5%	3,217	5.0%	2,894	4.5%	5,203	2.8%	4,939	2.4%	3,764	1.8%		
Hispanic or Latino	1,760,643	24.1%	2,151,135	26.9%	2,278,081	27.5%	14,212	24.3%	14,620	22.8%	14,597	22.6%	20,207	10.8%	29,968	14.5%	30,417	14.6%		
Asian and Pacific Islander	512,719	7.0%	792,477	9.9%	984,379	11.9%	22,035	37.6%	33,586	52.3%	38,536	59.5%	31,144	16.8%	61,310	29.6%	77,119	36.8%		
Other	39,028	0.5%	301,245	3.7%	204,542	2.4%	352	0.7%	2,340	3.7%	1,561	2.4%	495	0.2%	5,977	2.9%	3,485	1.7%		
Asian By Specific Origin																				
Total Asian with one Asian category only	509,955		774,163		976,882		22,010		33,128		40,711		31,090		60,517		74,881			
Asian Indian	94,590	18.6%	170,899	22.1%	227,158	23.3%	3,465	15.7%	3,718	11.2%	2,889	7.1%	4,016	12.9%	8,201	13.6%	7,414	9.9%		
Cambodian	2,565	0.5%	1,771	0.2%	3,343	0.3%	5	0.0%	5	0.0%	5	0.0%	9	0.0%	27	0.0%	26	0.0%		
Chinese, including Taiwanese	238,919	46.9%	361,531	46.8%	448,969	46.0%	7,083	32.2%	15,064	45.5%	22,701	55.8%	15,090	48.5%	30,644	50.7%	43,441	58.0%		
Filipino	43,229	8.5%	54,993	7.1%	69,457	7.1%	689	3.1%	607	1.8%	1,007	2.5%	1,500	4.8%	2,073	3.4%	2,854	3.8%		
Japanese	16,828	3.3%	22,636	2.9%	26,415	2.7%	195	0.9%	156	0.5%	246	0.6%	497	1.6%	305	0.5%	457	0.6%		
Korean	69,718	13.7%	86,473	11.2%	89,014	9.1%	9,591	43.6%	11,982	36.2%	11,499	28.3%	8,731	28.1%	16,502	27.3%	16,097	21.5%		
Thai	3,944	0.8%	4,169	0.5%	5,477	0.6%	39	0.2%	35	0.1%	109	0.3%	112	0.4%	156	0.3%	276	0.4%		
Vietnamese	8,400	1.7%	11,334	1.5%	18,624	1.9%	192	0.9%	148	0.5%	458	1.1%	155	0.5%	533	0.9%	1,109	1.5%		
Other Asian	31,762	6.3%	60,357	7.8%	97,100	10.1%	751	3.4%	1,413	4.4%	1,853	4.6%	980	3.1%	2,076	3.4%	3,356	4.6%		
Median Household Income (In 1999 Dollars)																				
Median household income in 1999	\$38,394		\$38,394		\$50,320		\$26,844		\$32,620		\$39,463				\$49,191		\$61,070			

[illegible]

Statistics	New York City				Downtown Flushing				Rest of Community Board 7			
Year	1990		2000		1990		2000		1990		2000	
<b>Total Population</b>												
Total	7,322,564		8,008,278		58,622		64,224		185,879		207,126	
<b>Age</b>												
Population:	7,322,564		8,008,278		58,622		64,224		185,879		207,126	
Under 18 years	1,686,718	23.0%	1,940,269	24.2%	11,877	20.3%	12,483	19.4%	35,290	19.0%	41,204	19.9%
18 to 34 years	2,147,348	29.3%	2,171,033	27.1%	16,880	28.8%	16,344	25.5%	50,727	27.3%	48,745	23.5%
35 to 64 years	2,535,181	34.6%	2,959,119	37.0%	21,138	36.1%	26,138	40.7%	68,579	36.9%	83,503	40.3%
65 and over	953,317	13.0%	937,857	11.7%	8,727	14.9%	9,259	14.4%	31,283	16.8%	33,674	16.3%
<b>Race</b>												
Total Population:	7,322,564		8,008,278		58,622		64,224		207,126		209,121	
Non-Hispanic White	3,163,125	43.2%	2,801,267	35.0%	17,032	29.1%	10,461	16.3%	104,932	50.7%	94,868	45.4%
Non-Hispanic Black	1,847,049	25.2%	1,962,154	24.5%	4,991	8.5%	3,217	5.0%	4,939	2.4%	3,764	1.8%
Hispanic or Latino	1,760,643	24.1%	2,151,135	26.9%	14,212	24.3%	14,620	22.8%	29,968	14.5%	30,417	14.6%
Asian and Pacific	512,719	7.0%	792,477	9.9%	22,035	37.6%	33,586	52.3%	61,310	29.6%	77,119	36.8%
Other	39,028	0.5%	301,245	3.7%	352	0.7%	2,340	3.7%	5,977	2.9%	3,485	1.7%
<b>Asian By Specific</b>												
Total Asian with one	509,955		774,163		22,010		33,128		31,090		60,517	
Asian Indian	94,590	18.6%	170,899	22.1%	3,465	15.7%	3,718	11.2%	4,016	12.9%	8,201	13.6%
Cambodian	2,565	0.5%	1,771	0.2%	5	0.0%	5	0.0%	9	0.0%	27	0.0%
Chinese, including	238,919	46.9%	361,531	46.8%	7,083	32.2%	15,064	45.5%	15,090	48.5%	30,644	50.7%
Filipino	43,229	8.5%	54,993	7.1%	689	3.1%	607	1.8%	1,500	4.8%	2,073	3.4%
Japanese	16,828	3.3%	22,636	2.9%	195	0.9%	156	0.5%	497	1.6%	305	0.5%
Korean	69,718	13.7%	86,473	11.2%	9,591	43.6%	11,982	36.2%	8,731	28.1%	16,502	27.3%
Thai	3,944	0.8%	4,169	0.5%	39	0.2%	35	0.1%	112	0.4%	156	0.3%
Vietnamese	8,400	1.7%	11,334	1.5%	192	0.9%	148	0.5%	155	0.5%	533	0.9%
Other Asian	31,762	6.3%	60,357	7.8%	751	3.4%	1,413	4.4%	980	3.1%	2,076	3.4%
<b>SE:T110. Nativity By</b>												
Total Population:	7,322,564		8,008,278		58,703		64,198		185,868		207,124	
Native	5,239,633	71.6%	5,137,246	64.2%	24,237	41.3%	21,029	32.8%	125,433	67.5%	117,372	56.7%
Foreign born:	2,082,931	28.5%	2,871,032	35.9%	34,466	58.7%	43,169	67.2%	60,435	32.5%	89,752	43.3%
Naturalized citizen	865,416	11.8%	1,278,687	16.0%	10,505	17.9%	14,615	22.8%	29,762	16.0%	46,928	22.7%
Not a citizen	1,217,515	16.6%	1,592,345	19.9%	23,961	40.8%	28,554	44.5%	30,673	16.5%	42,824	20.7%





## SECTION III

### An Evaluation of Flushing's Open Spaces

The DEIS noted 16 open spaces that fell within the vicinity of the proposed Flushing Commons site. While the city conducted an evaluation of these spaces, we were compelled to inventory and assess them as well because of our vested interests in the Flushing area as residents, workers, students and consumers. In doing so, we were able to verify whether these open spaces were indeed used by, and provided benefits to, the community, as well as the condition of each space. We also learned about the different types of open spaces in the Downtown Flushing area and the activities, if any, that were housed there.

The City Environmental Quality Review (CEQR) is a process by which agencies of the City of New York review proposed actions to identify the effects those actions may have on the environment. The CEQR Technical Manual (which is located in the Office of Environmental Coordination's website through [www.nyc.gov](http://www.nyc.gov)) is the City of New York's guidance document that assists City agencies, project sponsors, and the public in conducting environmental review of projects in the City. The manual summarizes CEQR procedures and provides guidance on all the substantive areas of analysis customarily undertaken during environmental review.

According to the CEQR Technical Manual, *open space* is defined as:

*"[P]ublicly or privately owned land that is publicly accessible and has been designated for leisure, play, or sport... Open space may be public or private and may include active and/or passive areas"*

The manual further elaborates on the many different types of open spaces, however, for the purpose of this report, only data pertinent to our research were extracted (key points are in **bold**).

***Public open space*** - *Only open space that is accessible to the public on a constant*



*and regular basis or for designated daily periods is defined as "public"; **Public open space may be under government or private jurisdiction** (for the New York City Department of Parks and Recreation, "open space" includes public parks, playgrounds, ...and all other property, equipment, buildings and facilities...under the jurisdiction, charge or control of the agency); **open space designated through regulatory approvals (such as zoning), including large-scale permits that prescribe publicly accessible space, plaza bonuses, etc.; outdoor school-yards; ball fields; playgrounds; designated greenways, landscaped medians with seating; housing complex grounds...***

***Private open space** - This includes open space that is not publicly accessible or is available only to limited users and is not available to the public on a regular or constant basis. It is not included in the quantitative analysis but may be considered in the qualitative assessment of potential open space impacts. For example, private-access fee-charging spaces, such as health clubs, are considered private open spaces. In addition, the following are also considered private and are not included in the definition of public open space: streets, arcades, sidewalks...*

Open space includes both "active" and "passive" areas:

***Active open space** - Open space that is used for sports, exercise, or active play is classified as "active open space." Active open space consists mainly of recreational facilities, including the following: playground equipment, playing fields (baseball, soccer, football, track), playing courts (basketball, handball, tennis), multipurpose play area (open lawns and paved areas for active recreation, such as running games, informal ball-playing, skipping rope, etc.).*

***Passive open space** - Open space that is used for relaxation, such as sitting or strolling, is classified as "passive." Facilities may include the following: plazas or medians with seating, greenways and esplanades (sitting, strolling)...*

In many cases, open space can be used for active or passive recreation.<sup>8</sup>

## **Methodology**

The open spaces in Flushing were divided into three categories based upon their location. The DEIS made reference to 16 open spaces (*Open Space Inventory*, Table 5-4). The study area is based on the distance a person is assumed to walk to reach a neighborhood open space.

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<sup>8</sup> Refer to Chapter 3 of the CEQR Manual available online at:  
[http://www.nyc.gov/html/oec/downloads/pdf/ceqr\\_chapter\\_3d.pdf](http://www.nyc.gov/html/oec/downloads/pdf/ceqr_chapter_3d.pdf)

Workers are typically assumed to use passive open spaces and walk approximately 10 minutes (about a ¼-mile distance) from their workplaces. Residents are considered more likely to travel farther to reach parks and recreational facilities. They are assumed to walk about 20 minutes (about a ½-mile distance) to reach both passive and active neighborhood open spaces. Because the proposed Flushing Commons project would involve both commercial and residential components, two study areas are evaluated—a commercial study area based on a ¼-mile distance from the project site and rezoning area, and a residential study area based on a ½-mile distance. Most fell within the Commercial Study Area, while only one fell within the Residential Study Area. Based upon the open spaces resource map (*Open Spaces Resources*, Figure 5-1), five of the sixteen open spaces listed were not included in the quantitative analysis, and were therefore categorized as the Outside Residential Study Area.

We applied a combination of field research and direct observation method to qualitatively analyze the areas proposed as open spaces by the developer. In conducting field research, the essential idea is that the researcher goes “into the field” to observe the phenomenon in its natural state. The researcher typically takes extensive field notes. In applying the method of direct observation, an observer doesn’t try to become a participant, but the observer strives to be as unobtrusive as possible so that their observations don’t inherit any biases. Direct observation suggests a detached perspective. As a researcher, watching rather than participating is critical. Technology proves to be a very useful part of direct observation, such as a video recorder or a camera to record phenomena. Lastly, direct observation allows for observing certain sampled situations or places.

Our observations took place during the weekends and weekdays, at various times of day, particularly those days that weather permitted. We also applied a technique called *behavior*

*mapping* or *activity mapping*. Activity mapping allows you to study people's activities in a specific area for a predetermined amount of time. We used a pre-set form and a do-it-yourself checklist from *Placemaking Chicago*<sup>9</sup> that measured:

- Access
- Comfort and Image
- Uses and Activities, and
- Sociability

This made inputting data easier and organized. We visited the different locations on different days with cameras in tow. Photos of our observations are included. While we could have focused on just the areas that fell within the *Commercial Study Area*, we opted to include most of the spaces in our research. The purpose of doing so allowed for some variety in spaces, location, and uses by workers and community residents. It also provided a better demographic of the people that actually uses the open spaces.

### **Analysis**



Maple Playground (space 1) serves as a playground for children. There are basketball and handball courts; swings, slides, jungle gyms, and water fountain (for children's play) as amenities in the active space. In front of the playground area, there are benches with chess

tables that are often busy with older male chess players. There is a seating area, which

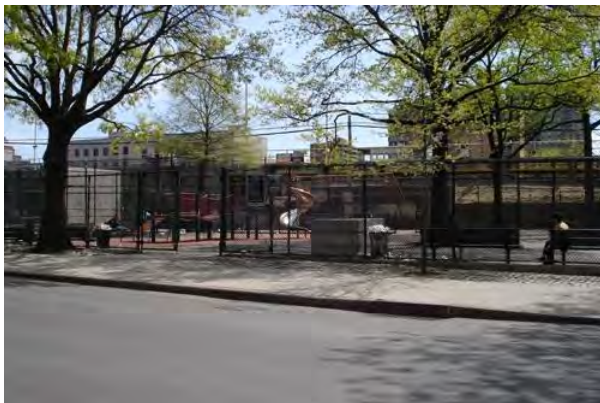
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<sup>9</sup> *Placemaking Chicago* uses the PPS principals as a guide to collect information and evaluate public spaces. Their *Downloads* area provides documents with in-depth descriptions of several observational techniques—including behavior mapping ([www.placemakingchicago.com](http://www.placemakingchicago.com)).

constitutes the passive open space. The space is located on the corner of a major thoroughfare, Kissena Blvd and Maple Ave, which can become burdened with traffic from buses and vehicles. The seating area faces this street.

There is a diverse group of users of Maple Playground. Children and teenagers use the playground and active area, while adults primarily use the chess tables and passive areas. Activities in the passive areas include sitting (with or without a dog—the place is popular among dog walkers and owners), people watching, and reading. The ethnicities represented were Asian, African-American, and Latino. Ages ranged from toddlers to teenagers, middle-aged to seniors. There were more males (chess players and passive space occupants) than females (mothers and grandmothers with small children in the playground) observed.

Maple Playground is a nice sized space between mixtures of apartment/condo buildings. It sits under a canopy of trees with ample shade over the passive space and portions of the active area. Restrooms and drinking water fountains are available. The space's separate functions and uses are clear and the space experiences a lot of visitors on a daily basis.



Bowne Playground (space 2) combines a Department of Parks & Recreation's playground and a Department of Education Public School 20 schoolyard for its open space. On one side, it is a paved concrete and asphalt yard with little shade, since the trees line the perimeter. There are basketball courts, handball courts, a softball/baseball field and benches for sitting. The other side houses the playground. It has jungle gyms, swings, restrooms, and water fountains. This park is set in a semi-residential neighborhood away from the bustle of Downtown and therefore

most Downtown Flushing commuters and shoppers and residents are unaware or unfamiliar with this location. Most of the participants observed were residents that lived within the vicinity of the playground.



Bland Playground (space 3) and Bland Houses (space 4) are located next to each other. They border the Long Island Railroad elevated tracks and both have basketball and handball courts, benches, swings, jungle gyms, and fountains (for children's play). The locations have a lot of trees that provide shade and greenery in a concrete

setting.

Distraction in the form of noise from the railroad and playing children can be a concern to those who wish to sit and relax. Bland Playground is situated in a very busy commercial district, at the end of 40<sup>th</sup> Road and Prince Street. That area is consumed with traffic, pedestrians, massage parlors, restaurants, and bakeries on a daily basis. Aside from the location and noise, there was a litter issue observed; a garbage can was knocked over by three benches and litter was sprawled across the ground. This location was visited on several occasions for study, during which other garbage incidents were monitored.

The basketball courts in between the buildings at the Bland Houses also suffer from poor location. It is easy to conceive that the open spaces at the Bland Houses are meant for the enjoyment of the residents only, which begs the question of whether the space is available to, or used by, the public. There is the association of these two spaces to NYCHA, which may deter most visitors. At the time of our study, the basketball area at Bland Houses was empty, which

surprised us considering the number of residential buildings in proximity to this space. No one was playing ball on the basketball courts, even though it was a weekend and the weather was warm enough to permit outdoor activity. Most of the people there did not appear to be residents, and were using the walkways in between Bland Houses as a short cut from Prince St. to College Point Blvd.



Flushing Branch Library (space 5) At the Flushing Library, you can stand or sit on the steps. Flushing Library is most utilized as a waiting space for either the bus or as a meeting point. It is a focal point in Flushing: at the junction of two of Flushing's busiest

thoroughfares, Main St and Kissena Blvd, and at the heart of Flushing's transportation hub. The Q17, Q25, Q27, Q34 and Q65 stops in front of the library; the LIRR's Flushing station is across the street; and the terminus of the IRT #7 train at Main St is two short blocks away. During the morning and evening rush hours, the area is flooded with commuters, both young and old.

There is no shade, there aren't any benches, the amount of noise, congestion, and air pollution is enormous. Aside from the amenities located *inside* the library, such as restrooms and proper seating, this space doesn't function well. There are no active spaces, however the DEIS lists it as having 0.02 acres of passive space. If we are to apply that same principle to the Flushing Library, then we should, and could, apply it to ALL buildings with steps in front of it. The fact of the matter is that the Flushing Library is a *de-facto* open space. It was not planned for that use. The steps of the public library were adopted by the community in response to the lack of suitable open spaces in the downtown area.





Weeping Beech Park/Carman Green (space 6) is located on Bowne Street between Northern Boulevard and 37<sup>th</sup> Avenue, next to the historical Bowne House. This open space is located two blocks away from the project site and includes a great amount of passive and active space. The

active and passive space is divided into two different sections marked by a fence in between.

The passive space (Carman Green) has a green space with trees in the middle, and is surrounded by benches and two lampposts. An Asian senior population was observed using this area, playing mahjong on the benches (lack of tables) and reading newspapers. Mostly men gathered in groups there.

On the active space side, is the playground Weeping Beech Park. It has an open concrete field where predominantly Latino men engage in an active game of soccer during lunch hours and after work. There are also handball courts, benches, swings, jungle gyms, water fountains (for drinking and children's play) and restrooms. They are divided by a chain-linked fence; therefore the passive space is not protected from the noise in the active space. The park is used by a lot of residents that live within the vicinity. Children were actively engaged in play and sport on the days we observed. Adults, in groups, were seated at every bench, socializing; soccer was in full swing on the field; the handball courts were busy and the jungle gyms were bustling with parents and toddlers.

These two locations exceeded our expectations; its functions were clear, and use was at maximum capacity. Its location is in a residential area with apartment/condo buildings on a lush tree-lined, albeit busy, street. The historical structures are a lure for tourists and history buffs

alike (although the Bowne House is currently closed for restoration, it's still a marker along Flushing's *Freedom Mile* and can be viewed through the fence). A disappointing phenomenon was observed: litter. The space was spotted with trash despite the placement of several litter cans throughout the active space area. The restrooms were locked and the water fountain was out of service. In speaking with several people there, they mentioned that they have never used the bathrooms because it never appears to be in service.



Places such as the Daniel Carter Beard Mall (space 7) and Flushing Greens (space 8), are medians along Northern Boulevard, and provide passive areas of open space. These spaces both include narrow walkways, fenced-in greens, and monuments. The Mall has four benches;

Flushing Green has two. The limited amount of seating options as well as the poor location of the existing benches renders this space relatively unusable, although the benches are used by employees during their lunch breaks. Traffic during the day on Northern Boulevard is excessive and makes for an unsafe environment for any activity to be feasible. While the fenced-in greens are visually attractive, they provide no real communal gathering space or areas for people to



enjoy. Most people use the Mall and/or the Greens to get to the other side of Northern Blvd. Rarely did anyone actually *use* the space during the course of our observations.

It seems that the medians serve as a traffic-calming method for pedestrians crossing



the wide portions of Northern Blvd. Because of the fencing that encloses the greens, the walkways are very narrow; this forces people to walk alongside traffic, which is a safety hazard since there aren't any barriers protecting them from getting hit by a vehicle. The fencing also creates a pseudo-mega block in the middle of the street: pedestrians must use the crosswalks at the corners of Union St and Northern Blvd, Linden St. and Northern Blvd, or Main St and Northern Blvd., even to reach destinations located directly across the street. The shortest path to anywhere is a straight line however, due to safety concerns, pedestrians end up circumventing the Mall and Greens, and opting instead to cross safely at the endpoints of these locations. Those who even *attempt* to cross the intersections at either Farrington or Leavitt St along Northern Blvd find themselves dodging traffic because there are no pedestrian signals.

We were disappointed with these spaces. They are not perceived as traditional open spaces such as playgrounds or parks. The Mall and the Greens seem more like beautification projects or a streetscape with no benefit in the form of activity.



Lippman Arcade (space 9) is perhaps the most utilized space since it serves as a walkway through a long block that leads to different types of transportation on either side. Vendors and people handing out flyers can always be found there, and on one occasion during observation, there was a group of singers singing songs of praise in the middle of the space. It is used daily and at all hours as a short-cut between 39<sup>th</sup> Ave and Roosevelt Ave for pedestrians walking to their destinations. There are three bus stops (NYCMTA Q13, Q16, and Q28) on 39<sup>th</sup> Ave alongside Municipal Lot #1. On the other side is Roosevelt Ave, where there are more bus routes (NYCMTA Q12, Q14, Q15, Q20A/B, Q26,

Q44; and Long Island buses N20 and N21). These buses transport a lot of commuters to/from different parts of Queens, Bronx, Manhattan and Long Island during the morning and evening rush hours. The IRT #7 train terminus (Main Street) is accessible less than a block away.

Roosevelt Ave is home to a lot of commercial spaces: Macy's, Old Navy, McDonalds, several banks, Mom and Pop retail stores, and restaurants. Lippman Arcade has nine trees and four lampposts. There is also a historical marker where you can learn about the *Freedom Mile*, though most people just walk through and do not stop to look.

The DEIS described this space with “~~seating~~” and “~~trees~~”. We found the trees but we could not locate the seats. What we observed was people sitting on the edges of the planters that house the trees, but no formal seating accommodation was present. We are unsure of whether this location is a true passive open space, since it is a busy thoroughfare for pedestrians. This space has nothing passive about it! For the amount of pedestrians it endures, there is little enjoyment in this space.

Roosevelt Ave and College Point Boulevard GreenStreet (space 10) is a small triangle of greenery on a median on Roosevelt Ave near the intersection at College Point Blvd. The location baffled us; we passed it on several occasions, looking for something like a park or a green, only to discover it while waiting for a parking space nearby. The GreenStreet is more like a green patch of streetscape. The most you can do at the GreenStreet is cross it to get to the other side of Roosevelt Ave. It serves as a median and merely connects two crosswalks. Once again, it is visually attractive and the green provides an added component to the sidewalk, but there are no passive or active spaces here for people to enjoy.



Hunter Gardens (space 11) is located outside the ½-mile radius on 38<sup>th</sup> Avenue between 147<sup>th</sup> and 149<sup>th</sup> Streets. There was difficulty in locating it since it is a gated cooperative residence with a courtyard between the buildings. Inside, there is a walkway encircling small grass fields with signs on the trees that say “Keep off the grass”. There are two small entrance gates to the space, and we were hesitant about entering. The area doesn’t appear to be open to the public and it seems that it functions for the benefit of residents solely.

Whether or not this space is a public open space is subject to the interpretation of *public*. If this is located within the confines of a cooperative, then it is paid for and maintained by the cooperative fees. John Q. Public, who doesn’t live there, and therefore doesn’t contribute to the fees, would be trespassing on private property, should he be found there. Why the developers even listed this locale in the DEIS is questionable.



Latimer Gardens (space 12) is a housing complex under the jurisdiction of NYCHA. The open space, which is actually a common area between the buildings, has benches, jungle gyms, and a fountain (for children’s play). It has some shade over the seating areas, which lie along the perimeter of the space.

On the days of observation, there were elderly women sitting and socializing on the benches, and parents with children in the playground area. We were impressed with the cleanliness and maintenance. The location on the side that faces Linden Place was distracting,

since that street is lined with industrial businesses, and the noise from the traffic was a bit startling. The size of the space is unsuitable for the amount of residents that live in Latimer Gardens, let alone any additional visitors. There is only one entrance to the space, on 137<sup>th</sup> St, which is also the entrance into some of the different buildings situated on that block. Because of that, the open space wouldn't appeal to someone off the street; it appears to be for the enjoyment of the residents only.

Athletic Field (space 13) could not be observed because it's been closed for several months for renovation.



Cadwaller Colden Playground (space 14) was the northern-most location in this study. It was busy on the days during our observation. There are basketball and handball courts, baseball/softball (paved) field, benches, jungle gyms, swings and a beautiful fountain area for children's play. People from diverse cultures, and various ages, were observed enjoying both the active and passive open spaces there. It has trees and ample shade areas. The streets alongside were tree-lined. The area appeared well-maintained; however there was a litter issue evident despite litter cans located throughout. There was parking available on the side streets and a bus stop in front. The basketball court, baseball/softball/soccer field are actually in a school yard located adjacent to the playground (P.S. 214).

We were satisfied with this space, despite the trash strewn about near the swings and handball courts. The area is surrounded by one- and two-family homes, and condo low-rises. There were many Asian mothers and grandmother with children in the playground; and Latino

teenagers in the playing field, basketball and handball courts. The passive space is inside the playground and along the fence near the swings. It was noisy with all the children playing but nevertheless, there were people sitting on the benches, reading, talking on their cell phones, and monitoring their kids as they played.

Kissena Corridor West (space 15) and Flushing Meadows-Corona Park (space 16) were excluded because with the vast acreage of each space (100 and 1,255, respectively), we were willing to concede that they are indeed open spaces, with both active and passive spaces.

## **Findings**

### **Active space**

- 1) Of the 16 open spaces, six had *active* open spaces that spanned over an acre:
  - Athletic Field, Colden Playground, Kissena Corridor West and Flushing Meadows-Corona Park all lay outside the Residential Study Area and were not included in the quantitative analysis.
  - Bowne Playground *shares* its active space (the school yard) with an elementary school, and therefore may not be accessible during the day or school hours.
  - Weeping Beech Park has the only true accessible active space, but is often occupied by soccer players.
- 2) Of the 10 open spaces that were included in the Commercial Study Area:
  - half of them(five) had 0 *active* open spaces (Flushing Branch Library, Daniel Carter Beard Mall, Flushing Greens, Lippmann Arcade, and Roosevelt Avenue and College Point Boulevard GreenStreet)
  - Four were playground areas for children (Maple Playground, Bowne Playground, Bland Playground, and Weeping Beech Park)
  - One was strictly a basketball court (Bland Houses).

### **Passive space**

- 3) Of the 16 open spaces, only three had *passive* open spaces that spanned over an acre:
  - Kissena Corridor West and Flushing Meadows-Corona Park both fall outside the study area (and surprisingly, the DEIS doesn't even mention the acreage of passive spaces in these areas).

- Bland Houses is the only location with a passive open space that was measured in the DEIS as being over an acre. The description in the DEIS for Bland Houses state: –Basketball courts, walkways, lighting”. Nowhere does it mention any seating areas or anywhere that can house a passive space activity, which begs the question: Are the walkways being considered as the 1.3 acres of *passive open space*?

4) Of the 10 open spaces that were included in the Commercial Study Area:

- Only one, Bland Houses, was over an acre of passive open space.

## **Conclusion**

Adults in the Commercial Study Area have limited options when it comes to activities; and even fewer options in selecting locations that house or require active open spaces. Adults can either pay for access at different locations (YMCA, gyms, sports clubs, etc.) for active open spaces and/or compete with children in the available spaces. When considering the latter, that really isn't an option since the Department of Parks and Recreation prohibit adults without children from using their facilities. The amount of active open spaces is insufficient in comparison to the population served by the Commercial Study Area. When calculated, there is only 4.4 acres of active open spaces total. Of the 4.4 acres, only .44 acre is available for adult use (Bland Houses).

The amount of passive open spaces is insufficient in comparison to the number of people served by the Commercial Study Area. The quality of passive open spaces in the Commercial Study Area is poor. They lack function and use due in part to: bad location, too much noise, congestion, traffic, safety concerns, minimal access and/or inadequate seating areas. These issues hinder the enjoyment of passive activities such as strolling, reading, sunbathing, and people watching. Our evaluation of the open spaces located in Downtown Flushing underscores the acute need for quality, centrally located, and accessible public green space in the congested and underserved Downtown area.

## **SECTION IV**

### **New Developments in Downtown Flushing**

Economic development is vital for a successful community. However, residential and commercial developments also bear considerable environmental and social costs. In addition to assessing development costs and benefits, it is also important to pose the question, when is a community considered overdeveloped? Since 2006, more than 49 new developments have been constructed (or are in various development stages) in Community Board 7. This section considers the cumulative impacts of new development especially since all the projects – except for the proposed Flushing Commons – provide no or little new open space. This section raises the question of overdevelopment in Downtown Flushing and the potential affects particularly the lack of open space on the surrounding neighborhood.

Flushing has always been a flourishing neighborhood with a significant and notable past. The scale and pace of new development in Downtown Flushing raises the specter that overdevelopment may diminish the character of this historic and diverse community. Based on our calculations of the DEIS Table 14-5 which lists CB 7 development projects, over 1,700 residential units have been added to CB 7's housing stock since 2006. By 2013, approximately 2,618 residential units not including the 600+ units proposed by Flushing Commons will be constructed. New commercial development is also contributing to Flushing's transforming landscape. Since 2006, Downtown Flushing has absorbed over 1,298,910 square feet of retail, office and restaurant space, and hotel development. Plans going forward show an approximate addition of 2,281,502 square feet in commercial businesses including Flushing Commons.

While the proposed New Millennium residential project on the north side of Northern Blvd and the mixed-use Flushing Commons project will bring ambiance and modernity to the

area, plans to give back to the community appear relatively limited.<sup>10</sup> These developments are being built without adequate compensatory benefits or consideration of environment effects caused by potential overdevelopment and heightened population density. In 2008, only one 441-seat primary school was built and another school is being proposed at the Willets Point site. By 2013, there will only be an addition of 4.1 acres of open green space. All other public space, according to the DEIS Table 14-5 List of No Build Projects, appear to be community facilities.

While there is much debate and discussion about traffic and parking impacts, other environmental consequences of overdevelopment receive less attention. The Mayor's Office of Environmental Coordination states, "As a planning goal, the City attempts to achieve a ratio of ***2.5 acres per 1,000 population for large-scale plans and proposals***. However ... this goal is ... is a benchmark that represents an area well served by open spaces." The New York City Department of Parks and Recreation records approximately 600 acres of open space in Community Board 7. While this may seem like an adequate amount, according to our calculations, there will be an additional 4,262 residential units x 2.61 (average family size) meaning approximately more than 11,000 new residents living in CB 7 by 2013 – the majority concentrated in the Downtown Flushing area.

While the proposed Flushing Commons site offers 1.5 acres of open space, it is imperative that this coveted open space not only accommodate the approximately 1,566 anticipated new condominium residents but serve as a true town plaza by maximizing public access and use. Unlike dense commercial centers such as midtown Manhattan where people leave the area at the end of the day, Downtown Flushing is both a vibrant commercial and residential community. The proposal for 1.5 acres of open space will have a defining impact on

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<sup>10</sup> Refer to Queens Chronicle article, "Yet another mixed-use Flushing high-rise plan," by Liz Rhoades, March 18, 2010.



neighborhood quality and local environmental health and conditions. Hence, its management must ensure the space is accessible and being used to its fullest potential to benefit the public at large (refer to Section V on planning recommendations and best practices).

In addition to environmental effects, economic development projects also have sociodemographic consequences. Community stakeholders have expressed concern that new developments such as Sky View Parc, Flushing Commons, and Willets Point are inaccessible to the middle-class. New York City's middle class is a vital population segment that anchors neighborhood stability and sustainability. Flushing Commons proposed open space exemplifies the current trend to privatize public spaces which we are concerned, may lead to heightened socioeconomic segregation. The provision of Flushing Commons' open space should embrace Downtown Flushing's rich demographic diversity and ensure that all socioeconomic classes have the right of access and use of the town plaza. These principles should be integrated in the open space design, and management and governance framework.

Though additional residences are a vital aspect of community economic development, to ensure that a diverse community flourishes, there must be an open space for social mixing among different ethnic groups and economic classes. These spaces can contribute towards a peaceful and equal society through the commingling of Flushing's multiple publics. When Fredrick Law Olmsted envisioned public parks and open space, he envisioned places where all people can coexist in a pleasant environment. Interactions that occur among citizens who frequent public spaces are generally civil connections. The connections give diverse sectors of society an opportunity to mingle and to have conversation, seek common ground, debate, and engagement that otherwise may not take place in a privatized setting. This is the very essence of what makes

certain cities and communities, like New York and Flushing, an unique experiment in co-existence and multiculturalism.

Building Project Breakdown										
Location	Retail Space	Restaurants	Residential Units	Parking	Community Space	Office Space	Hotel	Storage	School	Open Space
Skyview Parc	76,000 sf	51,800	750	3,000	29,600	14,400 sf	0	0	0	0
Queens Crossing	110,000 sf	37,000		401	33,600	0	0	0	0	0
New Millenium	3,600 sf	0	84	222		0	0	0	0	0
New Millenium	17,167 sf	0	91	223	35,722	0	60 rooms	0	0	0
Victoria Tower	0	0	178	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
132-27 41 Road	0	0	6	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
31-18,31-22 Union Street	0	0	30	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
140-24 31 Drive	0	0	20	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
31-33 Linden Place	0	0	8	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
33-34 Farrington Street	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	20469	0	0
33-35 Farrington Street	0	0	0	0	0	0	9887 sf	0	0	0
137-07 Northern Boulevard	0	0	0	0	0	0	81 rooms	0	0	0
134-39 Northern Boulevard	0	0	0	0	0	12,212 sf	0	0	0	0
136-16 35 Avenue	0	0	28	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
138-06 35 Avenue	0	0	9	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
32-18 Union Street	0	0	8	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
135-11 40 Road	0	0	14	0	0	55170 sf	0	0	0	0
40-42 Main Street	0	0	0	0	0	17015	0	0	0	0
41-18 Haight Street	0	0	6	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
41-55 College Point Boulevard	0	0	50	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
132-27, 132-27, 132-45, 132-49, 132-61 41 Road	0	0	43	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
5-10 Summit Court	0	0	18	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
133-53 37 Avenue	0	0	47	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
133-51 37 Avenue	0	0	0	0	0	9,050	0	0	0	0
133-40 37 Avenue	0	0	0	0	0	12,742	0	0	0	0
143-21 38 Avenue	0	0	25	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
P.S. 144	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	442 seats	0
140-22 Beech Avenue	0	0	42	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
143-51 Franklin Avenue	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
143-22 Beech Avenue	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
36-36 Main Street	0	0	0	0	0	26,936	0	0	0	0
133-47 39 Avenue	11,419 sf	0	0	0	0	12,272/9,755	0	0	0	0
36-31 Prince Street	0	0	6	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
38-34 Parsons Boulevard	0	0	40	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
137-04 31 Road	0	0	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
31-27 137 Street	0	0	9	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
31-38 137 Street	0	0	16	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
River Park Place	13517 sf	0	475	788	1,494	347,516	0	0	0	0
132-73 Maple Avenue	0	0	8	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
134-43 Maple Avenue	0	0	23	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
42-11 Parsons Boulevard	0	0	20	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
42-33 Main Street	0	0	66	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
132-25 Pople Avenue	0	0	14	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
133-20 Avery Avenue	0	0	26	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
43-57 Main Street	2,085 sf	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
132-29 Blosson Street	0	0	49	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
132-26 Avery Avenue	0	0	40	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
132-18 41 Avenue	0	0	18	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	980,000 sf	0	2,100	0		500,000	430	0	0	0
Flushing Commons	420,000 sf	0	600	1600	98,000	185,000	0	0	0	1.5 acres
* Note-Items in red are scheduled to be built 2010-2012										

## SECTION V

### **Flushing Commons Town Plaza: Planning Recommendations and Best Practice Examples**

The following recommendations for the Flushing Commons Town Plaza are based upon a keen understanding of the many attributes of Flushing as well as a broader acknowledgment of the factors that make a public space work. These recommendations come out of a literature review on public spaces in cities around the world as well as first-hand experiences in public spaces in New York City and Melbourne, Australia. They are also informed by Flushing-specific research, including historical and demographic research as well as the concerns and comments of stakeholders. Most importantly, the recommendations are inspired by the stated public goals of the Town Plaza and the strong desire of all stakeholders for an ongoing role in the development and betterment of much-needed open space in Downtown Flushing. We hope the following planning recommendations will act as a valuable springboard for action as well as a touchstone for those who feel the same commitment to the Downtown Flushing community as is felt by the authors of this report. We organized our planning recommendations and best practice examples based on the well-established Project for Public Space principles for a great Town Plaza.<sup>11</sup>

#### **The Central Role of Management**

***Represent diverse local groups in the management of the Flushing Commons Town Plaza open space in order to create a space that “fits” the community and promotes citizenship and civic engagement.***

Public spaces that are inviting to all residents of a community often implement methods to ensure the involvement and inclusion of economically, socially and ethnically diverse groups in

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<sup>11</sup> An example of the application of the Project for Public Space Ten Principles in Town Plazas is available online at: <http://www.metrojacksonville.com/article/2007-dec-ten-principles-for-creating-successful-squares>.

the planning and programming of a public space such as a park or a plaza. Several municipalities across the nation and world have implemented strategies to empower the community and promote civic engagement through the planning and management of public spaces. In Seattle, Washington, their “Charleston Principles” require that any proposed change to a public space is first discussed and approved through a process that involves a variety of community leaders, public agencies, local economic interests and cultural organizations (Low 2005, 12). In Australia, where there has been a conscious effort to empower the local indigenous population, several towns have implemented the “Taking Action” project which sets forth strategies to engage the local community in the democratic process of planning local heritage projects (Low 2005). The engagement of local community members in the management of public space is seen as a step to promote democracy and engagement. This not only allows the inclusion of diverse cultural values and preferences for use of a public space, but also promotes a sense of ownership and duty in maintaining the public space.

The inclusion of diverse community groups in the management of public space ensures that community needs are periodically gauged in order to help adapt spaces to fit the needs of the community and promote different uses. This is especially important in expansive parks like Prospect Park in Brooklyn. Although Prospect Park has faced some segregation by race and ethnicity, it has also accommodated diverse cultural events and practices. In her research about Prospect Park, Professor Setha Low notes that the African American/West Indian community has frequent drumming events in one section of the park. She suggested that since this was a sustained community activity, the management of the park needed to gauge the prevalence of this use and redesign that area to better accommodate this practice (Low 2005, 67). Having the diverse local community members and groups manage a public space will allow for this

continuous assessment of the flexibility of a space and allow for the accommodation of different community needs.

The international trend of the privatization of public spaces has inspired several methods of management. Privatization of public space is, in essence, the outsourcing of the management of public space. Privatization involves ~~—~~changes in public space provision and management [and] includes the retreat of direct government involvement, [and the] transfer of management responsibilities to private and community stakeholders” (De Magalhães & Carmona 2006, 290). The noted trend emerged from a rethinking of the traditional city departmental management of public space and a broader effort to increase the efficiency, and at times, the quality of public spaces through outsourcing and privatization. However, scholarly research has shown that privatization often leads to public spaces that are ~~—~~formally owned by the state, by the public, but that are subject to control and regulation by private interests” (Low & Smith 2006, 153) and that lead to the unfortunate ~~—~~spontaneous malling” of some inner-city neighborhoods (Nissen 2008, 1137). Ultimately, privatization often causes the deterioration of truly ~~—~~public” public spaces.

Privatization and truly public spaces are, however, not mutually exclusive. In fact, the effort to improve service delivery in open spaces for urban publics has led to the development of both top down and bottom up approaches to a more holistic and creative management of the delivery of public services. ~~—~~Research points [to] an emerging public space agenda...involving the community and voluntary sector in deciding on and implementing public space strategies and actions” (De Magalhães & Carmona 2006, 298). This hybrid form of control which combines private and non-profit sectors in the management of spaces can mitigate the negative impacts of privatization and enhance its positive effects. Academics have suggested that such a hybrid model can go a long way in addressing historical community values, represent important

community stakeholders, assuring a democratic sense of access and providing an ongoing reaching out toward the surrounding business and residential neighborhood.

Privately-owned public spaces also impair a community's ability to adopt a sense of ownership of a public space. There is a consensus among academics of public spaces that in such privatized public spaces, the developer has the most control over the usability of the space and that the nature, interests, and values of the organization of private interests that maintain the plaza determine the priorities of the space (Smithsimon 2008). Due to this reality, academics insist that spaces are most public and most used when they are managed by institutions with a long history of commitment to public access. Specifically in New York City, the Department of Parks and Recreation has a strong track-record of maintaining truly public open spaces.

However, some privately funded management organizations also have been successful in creating usable and inviting public spaces. Mainly, the Battery Park City Parks Conservancy, though privately funded, has a commitment to public use and access (Smithsimon 2008). The key to making a privately-owned public space truly public and inclusive is to ensure that the management process includes the contributions, commitment and voices of local diverse stakeholders.

***Democratize the Flushing Commons Town Square through a style and structure of management that ensures community input.***

Both the nature of Flushing and the Flushing Commons development are conducive to an inclusive and efficient oversight of the Town Plaza open space. It is commonly accepted that private developments function most efficiently and fairly within a democratic governmental framework. Namely, just as Flushing Commons will add economic vitality to Downtown Flushing, it can also draw strength from the variety of its established community stakeholders. With this in mind, we recommend the following managerial structure for the Flushing Commons

Town Square – the formation of a Flushing Commons Town Square Planning Oversight Committee.

## **I. Membership**

The members involved in the Oversight Committee must represent the diversity, both of interests and “publics” of Flushing, in order for the Committee to be truly representative of all community stakeholders who have a stake in the Town Plaza. One self-selected representative of each of the following organizations are suggested to participate in the Committee: the Flushing Business Improvement District (BID), Macedonia AME Church, Flushing YMCA, Queens Museum of Art, New York Hall of Science, Flushing Branch of Queens Borough Public Library, Flushing Town Hall, Partnership for Parks, NYC Department of Parks and Recreation, Community Board 7, and various community-based organizations including the MinKwon Center for Community Action and Asian Americans For Equality as well as the Flushing Commons’ Condominium Resident Management Company, Commercial Leasing Management Company, and Residents Board and Retail Board, if applicable.

## **II. Responsibilities.**

The Flushing Commons Town Square Planning Oversight Committee should meet at least twice a year or as necessary to review and formulate policies and procedures to maximize and assess the quality of public access and uses, and public events including collecting statistics and feedback on event attendance, in order to improve decision-making and recommendations on strengthening public services and programs. Recommendations should come from community surveys and representative organizations and can be forwarded to a Flushing Commons Executive Manager. Improvements may include new physical facilities, programs and events to be offered, concerns about security or sanitation, and other relevant issues. Meeting minutes and



directives for management on all of the above as well as public relations, advertising and webpage development will held on record and made available to the public. Public relations could include newsletters with inserted calendars produced in multiple languages. Flyers could be generated for specific events and exhibits.

The Flushing Commons Town Square Planning Oversight Committee would also be charged to make recommendations for public service utilization of the remaining 30,000 square feet of community space after construction of the YMCA facility. The Committee should make recommendations or directives to be passed on to the temporary manager (or the retail space leasing office) in charge of delegating or leasing out the use of this space.

### **III. Flushing Commons Town Square Executive Manager**

The Executive Manager can be appointed by the City Councilmember based on recommendations of the member organizations. The Executive Manager will work from the Flushing Commons Town Square Planning Oversight Committee office space that should be part of the remaining 30,000 square feet of community services space in Flushing Commons. Ideally, this space will visible and accessible from the ground level. S/he will be responsible for coordination, implementation, and accountability for Oversight Committee decisions and governance of the Town Plaza space. The Executive Manager serves as the liaison between the Oversight Committee, the public at large, city agencies and the Flushing Commons corporate owners. Daily responsibilities can include:

1. Communication with Security and local police precinct about public safety and public events;
2. Budgeting for needed temporary facilities at events and related performer fees;
3. Promotion and advertisements for events and the Commons in general including multilingual flyers;
4. Content of web pages related to Flushing Commons that, with some variation, could also be generated as multilingual newsletter;
5. Management of public art exhibitions including:

- a. Contact with local artists, art organizations, and universities.
- b. Organize changing displays for multiple cultures/interests at different times of the year.
- c. Promotion and sale of locally produced art.
- 6. Maintenance of Central Kiosk or tourist/information center.
- 7. Promote and facilitate access and flexibility in Town Plaza amenities.

Multiple funding sources for the management of public spaces are important to ensure a strongly committed and independent management and to avoid dominance of any one group over the utilization of a public space. Towards this goal, the budget of the office of the Flushing Common's Town Square Executive Manager should come from 10% of parking revenues, a percentage of residential and commercial maintenance fees, stall rentals at the Farmers Market and sources deemed appropriate by the Flushing Common's Town Square Planning Oversight Committee. The long term acquisition of public art and other capital projects should be carried out in consultation and with the approval of the Flushing Commons Town Square Planning Oversight Committee. The funding for capital projects could be generated by establishing a Flushing Commons foundation or trust that can initially be endowed with a percentage (5-10%) of the city's sale price for Municipal Parking Lot #1.

The Flushing Commons Town Square Oversight Committee can ensure a lively and well-utilized public space by drawing upon Flushing's rich diversity of community stakeholders including residents, local businesses, cultural and non-profit groups, advocacy organizations, and civic associations. Commitment to the public stewardship and democratic oversight of the Flushing Commons Town Plaza is essential to establishing an accessible, sustainable, and true public space.

### **Image and Identity**

*Incorporate the histories and values of the diverse residents of the Flushing community into the open space to allow for a similarly diverse usage of the space.*

The social sustainability of a public space relies on the inclusion of existing cultural values and an understanding of the relationship between historical values, cultural diversity and patterns of use. Inherent to the inclusion of culturally diverse values is the representation, ownership and retention of the historical past of a public space (Low 2005). Not only is Flushing culturally and racially diverse, but it also has a unique, and sometimes disputed, past that includes religious tolerance, slavery and an early free black community. Immigration and the influx of new and diverse people into Downtown Flushing will make representing different cultural values in the Flushing Commons Town Plaza all the more difficult as these newer residents create their own histories. However, it is essential that the Town Plaza, *as a center of community activity*, be representative of not only the newer East Asian, South Asian and Latino communities, but also the historically located White and African-American populations.

Successful public spaces like esplanades, wide streets and town centers of Northeast England exemplify how the inclusion of historical and cultural values can make a successful public space. The public spaces of Northeast England such as the Market Place in the town of Alnwick share several characteristics with the Flushing Commons Town Plaza. They are comprised of the downtown and/or historic cores of their towns and function as prominent town plazas, monuments or squares. The Market Place in Alnwick has a striking similarity to Municipal Parking Lot #1 in that it is a highly used shopping center that was once used largely for parking. Of course, Municipal Parking Lot#1 will undergo more phenomenal change to become a town center. Additionally, the Market Place has been re-vamped by large chain retail businesses that are the equivalent to our Barnes & Noble and Applebee's. Although the "uniqueness" of these public spaces has been challenged by the homogeneity of national retail chains, in fact, these businesses do not "make" the public space. Rather, what insures the vitality

and diversity of these urban spaces is their unique historical and/or cultural identities and their value as spaces for social interaction (Townshend and Madanipour 2008).

Public spaces in Northeast England have been successful in integrating diverse historical and cultural values to create spaces that provide for a sense of ownership for all the different groups of users. For example, Old Eldon Square in the town of Newcastle has incorporated the history of World War II for the older families as well as allowed for the expression of the cultural value of congregation for youth (Townshend and Madanipour 2008). The Square has a war memorial that attracts war veterans and their families, but it also has open green space that allows for congregation by local —6th” teens. The overwhelming majority of the users of the Square cite its diverse users as a strength (Townshend and Madanipour 2008). Flushing has several historical pasts for its different populations including a history of religious tolerance, slavery and an early free black community. To be a truly successful and accessible space, Flushing Commons must incorporate these historical values while at the same time create a space that serves its newer populations and the new histories that are being created by Flushing’s diverse immigrants.

Scholars have suggested several strategies to incorporate diverse ethnic and racial groups that can help make Flushing Commons accessible to all residents. One successful recommendation is for large American parks to include images of diverse people using the space to promote a feeling of acceptance and discourage segregation within the park (Low 2005). The use of signs, especially in public spaces that are managed by private entities like the local BID, can often be exclusive and limit the public character of a space (Nissen 2008). Signs, often thought to be harmless, can create a symbolic character of the space which can be inclusive to some and exclusive to other users of the space. Therefore, signs and images of diverse people

using the space can be utilized to ensure the inclusiveness and openness of a public space.

Engaging local community members in creating public space helps to incorporate diverse cultural and historical values. Alnwick has been successful in the revitalization of its public spaces by incorporating the feedback of local artists and civic associations. For example, neighboring children designed the public benches in the Market Place based on local historical themes, and then, the benches were built by a local blacksmith. In addition, artists were consulted to help enhance the local identity through public art. The inclusion of artists in the planning process also alludes to the importance of cultural and “creative” industries as well as local trade. The Market Place in Alnwick is seen as the perfect place to promote local employees of “creative” industries to sell their craft. In Alnwick, the inclusion of a farmer’s market in the town center is regarded positively by the community because it promotes local craft and goods (Townshend and Madanipour, 2008).

The use of art is an increasingly popular and successful method of engaging and incorporating the diverse cultural and historical values of a community. Academics claim that open spaces at their best are dynamic prosperous organisms. These spaces almost instinctually crave displays of art, either in permanent installations or in the form of evolving exhibits. Spaces for art or creative expression within public spaces have been proven to be effective in enhancing the character of the immediate development and the surrounding areas. In addition, well-designed artistic installations can attract people who may not think of themselves as artistically inclined to use a public space. Many in the academic realm acknowledge public art as the incorporation “of artists in the conception, development and transformation of public space”.

These scholarly tenets are exemplified in Federation Square in Melbourne, Australia which succeeds in incorporating both a sense of nationalism and a respect for the artistic

endeavors of its citizens. Completed approximately 10 years ago, the “Fed,” a square of buildings and open spaces that define a precinct stretching from Swanson Street to Melbourne Park has become one of the most prominent places in all of Melbourne to meet and congregate. The Fed integrates civic spaces, a transportation hub, tourist and civic facilities. The Fed is distinguished by a number of features including a large irregularly shaped city piazza and building complexes that house restaurants and cafes as well as a multimedia center and the offices of ACMI, a prominent local arts institution.

The public spaces in the Fed were designed specifically for economic benefit to the city. On a given warm fall afternoon, a visitor will find multitudes of people, both tourists and locals, partaking in the joys that the Square has to offer. Much of its planned programming and activities revolve around the arts and creative industries. In March 2010, for example, the Square featured a Dennis Hopper film and art retrospective inside ACMI. Those working for the square’s organization to promote the Hopper exhibition handed out pamphlets. On the lower end of the sloped open space, a magician/entertainer had set up shop. Though it was unclear whether he was licensed to be there, he had an audience of hundreds of people and many customers poured tips into his hat. Many teenagers use this public space as a logical meeting point and this was especially true being that March is the start of school holidays. While skateboarding around the area does not appear to be allowed, many were nevertheless holding skateboards, most likely to be used in the nearby parkland that is perfectly suited for daring young individuals.

Additionally, Fed Square offers a full school’s out program to correspond with school holidays in Melbourne. Fed Square offers a jam-packed School Holiday Program of free and affordable activities to delight visitors of all ages. In March, such events included a free jam session with members of the Melbourne Symphony Orchestra, a badge-making workshop led by

a local nonprofit, and performances of African music and dance and interactive drumming. This exemplifies the openness and accessibility to the Federation Square, which features diverse programs to attract the old and the young, local and tourist, and shopper and patron to enjoy its offerings.

It seems that the best way to ensure the integration of diverse cultural and historical values is to engage different community members and to incorporate local traditions and businesses through local community arts. Monuments, plaques, images and signs that allude to the different historical values of Flushing such as its history of religious tolerance and its early free black population, can be effective ways to integrate these histories without excluding others. Incorporating the participation of local schools, craftsmen and artists, libraries and community groups in the planning of a town plaza can give it a unique local identity which is the most important factor in making it a popular, well-liked and well-used space.

***Incorporate the arts into Flushing Commons Town Plaza through displays of public art, diverse programming, and public events led by various local community groups and arts institutions.***

Flushing has a rich pool of diverse community groups and institutions that produce, showcase and thrive on local artwork. Flushing Commons Town Plaza can incorporate artwork and arts programming from these institutions to embrace and reflect diverse community values and social perspectives, which can foster vibrant discussions among Flushing's community. Not only does the Town Plaza's stage make it conducive to arts programming, but a portion of the 30,000 square feet of community facility space could be devoted to an arts center which incorporates an evolving outdoor exhibition and permanent indoor facility. The center should receive partial funding from parking fees and should be overseen by a combination of local non-profits, arts institutions and the Flushing BID. To ensure accessibility to the public, all

exhibitions, programs, and events held within the Flushing Commons should remain free for the public at all times.

The center should involve local community groups, both formal and informal, that are diverse in ethnic and racial focus, social goals and interests and that can be sources of local artwork and creative arts programming to engage all members of the community. The facility should have close relationships with local public elementary, middle and high schools such as Flushing High School, Townsend Harris High School, and Flushing International High School. In addition, creating partnerships with local CUNY colleges such as Queens College, Queensborough and LaGuardia Community Colleges, as well as formal arts institutions like the Queens Museum of Art, will facilitate building deep ties between local area students and the Town Plaza which will infuse the space with new and youthful cultural expressions.

The Flushing Commons Town Plaza should engage the local community by partnering with diverse non-profits to program community events. Artwork from local artists can be displayed and changed seasonally or throughout the year and community nonprofits can be involved in specific commissions. To create art spaces and exhibitions at the Flushing Commons Town Plaza, a lead artist from a local nonprofit could be hired or volunteer to organize various artistic endeavors including performances. Physical art can be incorporated as mosaics along the steps sloping toward the stage area, near the entryway space on the corner of 138th Street and 39th Avenue and in the various passageways to Flushing Commons, as well as ground and wall mosaics, collapsible exhibits, and imprints on outdoor furniture. Events should promote use of the space by children and teens through programming that is timed to correspond with school vacations and holidays. In addition, the Flushing Commons Town Plaza can embrace symbols of various cultures as part of programming that can be rotated on a seasonal or holiday basis (e.g.



symbols of Dawali, Hanukkah, Christmas, Lunar New Year). Inviting community members to promote cultural activities that correspond to their respective holidays and celebrations would go a long way to make the community feel involved in Flushing Commons Town Plaza. The symbols can include sculptures, street art, fairs, concerts, gatherings, and cultural or religious commemorations. Sharon Zukin's assertion that —the cultural power to create an image, to frame a vision, of the city has become more important as publics have become more mobile and diverse” may be very relevant to Flushing’s multiple publics (Zukin 1995). Local artists have long been recognized as the harbingers of positive change to challenged neighborhoods and original works of art can be important factors in capturing Flushing’s authenticity and complex identity in the Town Plaza.

The inclusion of educational and citizenship activities by commissioned artists with local schools, nonprofits and the general public will enhance an understanding of the “publics” of Flushing and instill in them a sense of ownership of the Town Plaza. The community facility in the Town Plaza that will house an arts center should be in close partnership with local nonprofits to facilitate the process of advocacy, consultation, and community-based education.

### **Attractions and Destinations**

***Incorporate a tourist center in the Flushing Commons Town Plaza that will promote Flushing’s rich historical and cultural roots, nearby businesses and Flushing Commons retailers, and engage locals and visitors in Town Plaza activities and events.***

Tourist and information centers in public spaces have been successful in informing visitors about attractions and enhancing accessibility. In Melbourne, Australia, the Federation Square houses an underground tourist center at the base of a sloped area that can be spotted by a glass atrium that protrudes from the ground. The tourist center provides information about events at Fed Square, exhibitions in the greater Melbourne area and attractions throughout

Australia. There is a substantial gift shop filled with stereotypically “Australian” items such as Boxing Kangaroo Pens, Wallaby erasers, Outback photos, and disposable digital cameras. The gift shop most likely subsidizes other facilities in the area including a restroom open to the public which is intentionally placed at the back of the tourist center to maximize the shopping experience. The center also provides an opportunity for tourists to hire a guide for a historical tour of the city. The guides are knowledgeable in their subject area and are always appreciated by visitors.

A tourist center in Flushing Commons can help to centralize and exploit the mostly untapped history of Downtown Flushing. A central kiosk can be located inside the community facility space, or it can be inside the parking elevator entrance in order to be accessible to visitors who travel by car. In either location, it should be located near a public bathroom open to Flushing Commons users. The kiosk could offer BID information, maps and brochures, an events calendar for the Town Plaza and a historic Flushing calendar. As the future development of greater Flushing incorporates a redeveloped Willets Point and the Flushing-Corona Meadows Park, there could be an area which illustrates the history of the 1939 and 1964 World’s Fair, Municipal Parking Lot #1, and the federally designated International Express 7 subway train.

### **Amenities -- Reaching out like an Octopus**

***Encourage walking and pedestrian uses in and around the Commons through improved lighting and improved sitting and walking spaces.***

An essential component in making public spaces in Bogota, Columbia pedestrian-friendly was the improvement of street access. “Carrera” or Avenue 15 in Bogotá was once a shopping-mall-like strip with boutiques and cafés on the sidewalk and on-street parking. Avenue 15 was revitalized into a dynamic public space by permanently closing two lanes of the street and restricting on-street parking. In addition, improved lighting and the creation of walking

pathways which encourage pedestrian use and brick-textured sidewalks which discourage vehicle use made the newly pedestrian corridor a safe and inviting place to stroll and shop (Montezuma 2004, 17).

Public plazas and streets in Montreal, Canada also incorporate pedestrian-friendly laws to enhance public access. Dorchester Square and Place du Canada, two urban squares in Montreal, have surroundings similar to those in Flushing. Namely, they are near the city's two principle train stations, four metro stations, and the densest portion of the Underground City, a large underground complex. The two squares are located right next to each other and both act as traffic diffusers since they are accessed by foot from three streets. They can be accessed by car but the parking spaces are located under the square to keep the public space as pedestrian-friendly as possible. Similarly, Place Jacques-Cartier, an urban plaza in Montreal Canada becomes a car-free zone in the summer and used only for pedestrian traffic.

In addition to better lighting and walking spaces, places to sit, eat, and talk are essential to improving pedestrian use. "Bonus" plazas in Manhattan are analogous in some ways to the Flushing Commons Town Plaza in that they are created as privatized public spaces to attract consumers to nearby businesses (Smithsimon 2008). These spaces are often managed by a BID or the local plaza businesses. Many of these plazas include small fountains or centerpieces like the proposed fountain in the Flushing Commons Town Plaza. However, most are not successful because they don't provide many amenities. Successful plazas allow the public to make the most use of the fountain by building thick ledges on the fountain and allowing users to sit on the ledges. This ensures more sitting space for users and an active atmosphere around the fountain. Fountains are, in fact, a best practice all around the world. For example, St. Louis Square in Montreal is centered on a classic Victorian fountain and an old gazebo that sells small snacks.

This square has plenty of benches, small patches of grass, and old trees. The place is in a peaceful section of the city and has townhouses on either side of the rectangle urban square. The fountain in the plaza center with ample seating is what makes the square so successful and attracts many people to the area.

***Establish walkways as the primary mode of access to the Town Plaza and provide ample and flexible seating in order to encourage a pedestrian-friendly Flushing Commons Town Plaza.***

The importance of walking and walkways is part and parcel of the vision for Downtown Flushing and the future of Flushing. The architects of Flushing Commons envision it as the beginning of a long pedestrian path toward the Flushing River and beyond. Flushing Commons itself has several streets leading to the open space including Lippmann Arcade. As walkways will be the main mode of pedestrian traffic, they must be well-lit at all times of the night and they should also have markers establishing the direction of travel, accessibility of exit areas, and a map designating the current location. Lippmann Arcade should be revamped to be more inviting both as a passageway and as a public space. In Astoria, Queens, the “Astoria Walkway” is a pedestrian walkway between two rows of buildings which at one point, was largely frequented by the homeless. It was renovated to accommodate pedestrian use by incorporating brick-textured ground and installing small stalls that allow licensed vendors to sell goods and keep the passageway lively and safe in the evening hours. A small plaque at the entrance of the walkway denotes it as the “Astoria Walkway” and establishes a sense of place.

## **Access**

***Establish a webpage for Flushing Commons to promote its history, businesses and events, and to attract visitors from surrounding neighborhoods.***

Federation Square in Melbourne is one of the most central public spaces in Australia and uses an online presence to help incorporate users of all kinds. “Fed” Square has a significant and

interactive online presence which provides a calendar of events. Additionally, a FEDCAM and FEDTV in Fed Square allow viewers from all over the world to tune in to live video and watch international events.

In this day and age, having an online presence is almost a necessity. For Flushing Commons, having an online presence could do wonders to promote its businesses and public spaces. A website that allows citizens to interact in a positive way with the space when they aren't physically in the Town Plaza can entice visitors to leave the comfort of their homes and come to enjoy Flushing Commons. The website should have the option of being viewed in several languages including Mandarin, Korean, Spanish, and Hindi, and should be marketed through the different NYC ethnic media organizations.

### **The Inner Square and the Outer Square**

***Establish temporary or permanent street closings around Flushing Commons to encourage walking, entertainment and businesses uses.***

Bogotá, a densely populated city in Columbia, has revitalized many of its public spaces including streets and plazas like Avenue Jimenez and Plaza San Victorino through implementing improved pedestrian uses. Temporary street closings and some restriction of vehicle traffic can be very successful if community residents and visitors have access to high-quality, public transportation. Along Avenue Jimenez, the ebb of vehicular traffic has also made the street much less noisy and polluted, and therefore a much more inviting public space. In Bogotá, this practice of closing off certain streets, called “ciclovía,” happens every Sunday and attracts as many as two million residents to use the streets and public spaces (Wright and Montezuma, 2004, 17). In addition, some streets are used for weekly carnivals which have not only improved the use of public space but have generated positive economic impacts as well.

Street closings are increasingly popular as evidenced by the Summer Streets Program in

NYC which was initiated in the summer of 2008. The program involves closing off different streets throughout the summer on different dates in various neighborhoods in all five boroughs. The programming is done by different community groups such as the local Business Improvement District (BID) or non-profit organization depending on the location of the closed off street. These street closings not only attract pedestrians to use the streets as public spaces but they also invigorate the surrounding businesses. In Sunnyside Queens, 40th Street between Queens Blvd and Greenpoint Avenue was closed as part of the Summer Streets program. The closing was successful in several ways. The street closing encouraged pedestrians who would usually walk through Queens Blvd and Greenpoint Avenue to instead sit and relax in the street.

The Summer Streets program has evolved from simple street closings to the creation of pedestrian plazas like the one in Times Square and Herald Square. After the success of the Summer Streets program in the summer 2008 with the 7 mile long stretch of Manhattan's streets from the Brooklyn Bridge to Central Park closed off, the 2009 Summer Streets Program in Manhattan closed off Centre to Reade Street in Lower Manhattan, and parts of Lafayette Street up to 4th Avenue and Park Avenue, as well as 72nd by Central Park for three weekends. There were different "stops" along the route which offered different activities held by non-profit groups. While pedestrian plazas are quite expansive, street closings happen on smaller scales in neighborhoods like Astoria, Queens. In Astoria, the street closing of one block of Ditmars Blvd happens once a month on Sundays to accommodate a carnival which includes kiosks for vendors, entertainment and food. This event draws families from all over Astoria to enjoy the public space and shop and eat at local businesses.

Adopted on a similarly small scale, this best practice can be very successful around Flushing Commons, an area in which pedestrian and vehicular traffic has been a cause for

concern. As noted, Flushing is a regional economic and transportation hub. Temporary street closings on one or two streets on a Sunday can give Flushing residents a little room to breathe and certainly room to walk, shop, and enjoy Flushing Commons. Flushing can experience the multitude of benefits from street closings by creatively establishing temporary or permanent pedestrian public plazas.

***De-map 138th Street to create a pedestrian public plaza that will integrate and improve the public space in front of Queens Crossing and create a cohesive pedestrian experience with the Flushing Commons Town Plaza.***

The NYC Department of Transportation (DOT) has launched a new initiative called NYC's World Class Streets Program expanding on Mayor Bloomberg's creation of pedestrian plazas in Times Square and Herald Square by restricting main traffic arteries for pedestrian use only. In 2007 and 2008, the DOT used temporary materials to transform surplus lots and underutilized roadway into attractive new public plazas. Building on these successful efforts, the city unveiled a new program in June 2008 called the NYC Plaza Program which allows eligible groups to identify new plaza sites through a competitive application process.

This program can strengthen the capacity for local organizations to become stewards of the newly created spaces. In order to do this, the DOT and NYC Department of Small Businesses have partnered to establish long-term relationships with local community groups who will maintain and program these plazas. In the summer of 2008, the city narrowed Broadway from 42nd Street to 35th Street to make a bike lane and a promenade with tables, chairs, and planters in a project called Broadway Boulevard lead by DOT. Many were skeptical about this project but it soon became popular with office workers and tourists. Under this new plan, city officials are considering creating a similar promenade from 47th Street north to Columbus Circle. Closing off Times Square was so successful that it was decided that the pedestrian plaza

or “mall” would become permanent. The city is also in the process of creating a permanent plaza from Herald Square to the Empire State Building and establishing 34th Street as an auto free zone between 5th Avenue and Avenue of the Americas. Like the Times Square pedestrian plaza, the traffic plans were reconfigured for both the Union Square and Herald Square plazas. The public plazas of Manhattan are well-documented examples that inconveniencing drivers may ultimately serve to enhance opportunities for safe pedestrian activities and benefit a larger public interest.

Like Midtown Manhattan, Downtown Flushing experiences high levels of pedestrian and vehicular congestion. Yet, with the success of public plazas in Midtown Manhattan, the rerouting of traffic to make a pedestrian plaza in Downtown Flushing is certainly a worthwhile consideration. Downtown Flushing is a major hub for buses and 138th Street is used by idle buses. While demapping streets may be controversial, careful and thoughtful participatory planning can decrease traffic congestion and improve the quality and uses of the streetscape. A possible sponsor for a DOT public plaza can be the Flushing BID. Demapping 138th Street between 39th and 38th Avenues and transforming that area into a public park should integrate sound urban design principles and engage the surrounding area. Current urban planning practices support demapping sections of districts that have become overrun with cars and vehicular traffic. The following is a list of potential benefits and challenges for demapping 138<sup>th</sup> Street.

#### Potential Benefits

1. A significant amount of truly public space is added back to an area that desperately needs it;
2. The potential for new child-oriented play areas and activities;
3. Integrated pedestrian connectivity between Queens Crossing and Flushing Commons enhancing the pedestrian experience;
4. An enhanced gateway to both Queens Crossing and Flushing Commons at the corner of



- 138th Street and 39th Avenue;
5. An extension of the public area that already exists at the corner of 39th Avenue and 138th Street where the street sculpture is currently sited;
6. A safer alternative for pedestrians to travel northeast without having to dart automobile traffic and fumes;
7. A greener Downtown Flushing;
8. An integrated built environment in the downtown area;
9. 138<sup>th</sup> Street could —become a place scaled to people, not cars” (Kunstler 1994, 14).

### Challenges

1. The MTA would have to reroute buses through already crowded area streets;
2. Automobile confusion would be created at first;
3. Area businesses could complain about access points;
4. Emergency vehicles could be delayed;
5. Although the DOT public plazas are run and maintained by local organizations, the inclusion of community input is unknown.

The corner of 138th Street and 38th Avenue is an important corner in terms of open space possibilities and its potential to close the gap between Queens Crossing and Flushing Commons.

The corner featuring the street sculpture is currently a minimally functional space for public enjoyment. Demapping 138<sup>th</sup> Street creates tremendous opportunity for additional open, green public space that can enhance the integration of Queens Crossing and the proposed Flushing Commons and maximize space for community use and engagement.

PPS Principle (www.pps.org)	Challenges	Recommendations	Best Practice
<p><b>1. Image and Identity</b></p> <p>“Historically, squares were the center of communities, and they traditionally helped shape the identity of entire cities. Sometimes a fountain was used to give the square a strong image: Think of the majestic Trevi Fountain in Rome or the Swann Fountain in Philadelphia’s Logan Circle. The image of many squares was closely tied to the great civic buildings located nearby, such as cathedrals, city halls, or libraries. Today, creating a square that becomes the most significant place in a city—that gives identity to whole communities—is a huge challenge, but meeting this challenge is absolutely necessary if great civic squares are to return.”</p>	<p>Flushing diverse in image/identity</p> <p>Lacks character/ doesn’t identify with the values of the different cultures and the unique community that resides in Flushing</p> <p>Lacks the open space plan- seems gated and gives a feel of privatization</p> <p>Main features of the open space are Roman in origin</p> <p>Lack of community input</p>	<p>The histories and values of the diverse residents of a community must be represented in a public space to allow for a similarly diverse usage of the space.</p> <p>Incorporate the arts into Flushing Commons Town Plaza through displays of public art, diverse programming and events led by various local community groups and arts institutions.</p> <p>Incorporate historical values while at the same time create a space that serves its newer populations and the new histories that are being created by Flushing’s diverse immigrants.</p> <p>Involve the local community by partnering with diverse nonprofits to program community events.</p> <p>Create an Art center in the 30,000 square feet of community facility space not being used by the YMCA; incorporate an evolving outdoor exhibition and permanent indoor facility.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Partial funding from parking fees</li> <li>- Overseen by a combination of local nonprofit, arts institution and Flushing bid.</li> </ul> <p>Incorporate signs and images of diverse people using the space to ensure the</p>	<p>Public spaces in Northeast England:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The Market Place in Alnwick</li> <li>- Old Eldon Square in Newcastle</li> </ul> <p>Federation Square in Melbourne, Australia</p>

		inclusiveness and openness of the public space.	
<b>2. Attractions and Destinations</b>  “Any great square has a variety of smaller “places” within it to appeal to various people. These can include outdoor cafés, fountains, sculpture, or a bandshell for performances. These attractions don’t need to be big to make the square a success. In fact, some of the best civic squares have numerous small attractions such as a vendor cart or playground that, when put together, draw people throughout the day. We often use the idea of “The Power of Ten” to set goals for destinations within a square. Creating ten good places, each with ten things to do, offers a full program for a successful square.”	Choices in retail are subject to the developer approval  Attractions and Destinations are subject to change at the developers discretion (pre-construction)  Attractions and Destinations are subject to change at the developers discretion (post-construction)  Some of the proposed attractions and destinations are seasonal  Parking contracted to outside vendor - Parking rates are capped for the first 5 yrs. (First 3 yrs during construction and 2 yrs. after)	Tourist centers in large public squares can give insight into the attractions and historical and cultural aspects of the space and town, and provide for accessibility to both locals and visitors.  A tourist center in the Flushing Commons Town Plaza can promote Flushing’s rich historical and cultural diversity and the businesses of the Commons and encourage use of the Town Square.  A Central Kiosk located inside the community facility space or glassed paved pavilion. The Kiosk could offer BID information, maps, and brochures, event calendars for the Town Square and a historic Flushing calendar.  Public bathroom near Central Kiosk	Federation Square in Melbourne, Australia
<b>3. Amenities</b>  “A square should feature amenities that make it comfortable for people to use. A bench or waste receptacle in just the right location can make a big difference in how people choose to use a place. Lighting can strengthen a square’s identity while highlighting specific activities, entrances, or pathways. Public art can be a great magnet for children of all ages to come together.	Lack of public restroom  No water fountain for drinking purposes  Amenities are subject to change at the developers discretion (pre-construction)	Encourage walking and pedestrian uses in and around public spaces through improved lighting and improved sitting and walking spaces.  To encourage a pedestrian-friendly Flushing Commons Town Plaza, establish walkways as the primary mode of access to the Town Square and provide ample and flexible seating.  Well-lighted walkways at all times of the	“Carrera”, or Avenue 15, in Bogotá, Colombia  Public Plazas and Streets in Montreal Canada: - Dorchester Square - Place du Canada - Place Jacques-Cartier - St. Louis Square

<p>Whether temporary or permanent, a good amenity will help establish a convivial setting for social interaction.”</p>		<p>night.</p> <p>Markers establishing the direction of travel, accessibility of exit areas and a map designating the current location.</p> <p>Mosaics along the steps sloping towards stage areas.</p> <p>Water fountain feature ledges should allow for seating to encourage use at all times of the day.</p> <p>Large planters located all around the Plaza should provide for seating on wide ledges.</p> <p>Multi-tiered seating with corner angles built into the design in step-like patterns.</p>	
<p><b>4. Flexible design</b></p> <p>“The use of a square changes during the course of the day, week, and year. To respond to these natural fluctuations, flexibility needs to be built in. Instead of a permanent stage, for example, a retractable or temporary stage could be used. Likewise, it is important to have on-site storage for movable chairs, tables, umbrellas, and games so they can be used at a moment’s notice.”</p>	<p>Flexible design subject to change at the developers discretion (pre-construction)</p>	<p>Collapsible exhibits during Farmers Market days.</p>	

<p><b>5. Seasonal Strategy</b></p> <p>“A successful square can’t flourish with just one design or management strategy. Great squares such as Bryant Park, the plazas of Rockefeller Center, and Detroit’s new Campus Martius change with the seasons. Skating rinks, outdoor cafés, markets, horticulture displays, art and sculpture help adapt our use of the space from one season to the next.”</p>	<p>Outdoor café and seating area subject to climate changes</p> <p>Subject to programming</p>	<p>Artwork from local artists can be displayed and changed seasonally or throughout the year.</p> <p>Events should promote use of the space by children and teens through programming that is timed to correspond with school vacations and holidays.</p> <p>Incorporate symbols of various cultures as part of programming that can be rotated on a seasonal or holiday basis (e.g. symbols of Christmas, Chinese New Year).</p> <p>Farmers Market</p>	
<p><b>6. Access</b></p> <p>“To be successful, a square needs to be easy to get to. The best squares are always easily accessible by foot: Surrounding streets are narrow; crosswalks are well marked; lights are timed for pedestrians, not vehicles; traffic moves slowly; and transit stops are located nearby. A square surrounded by lanes of fast-moving traffic will be cut off from pedestrians and deprived of its most essential element: people.”</p>	<p>Traffic and congestion – Flushing is a major transportation hub</p> <p>Lack of lights, road bumps and/or barriers with the exception of the street light on the corner of 39 Ave and Union.</p> <p>The main portion of this space would be an elliptical green opening onto 138th Street, which is a two way street and part of 3 bus routes</p>	<p>Public squares that have online presences increase accessibility to locals, visitors from surrounding neighborhoods and tourists.</p> <p>Establish a webpage for Flushing Commons to promote its history, its businesses and past and upcoming events and programming.</p> <p>A website that allows citizens to interact in a positive way with the space when they aren’t physically in the Town Plaza.</p> <p>English on all awnings but not exclusively traffic diffusers.</p>	<p>Federation Square in Melbourne, Australia</p>
<p><b>7. The Inner Square &amp; the Outer Square</b></p>	<p>Because of the residential units located near the open space, the area</p>	<p>Establish temporary or permanent street closings around public space to encourage</p>	<p>Public spaces in Bogotá, Colombia: - Avenue Jimenez</p>

<p>“Visionary park planner Frederick Law Olmsted’s idea of the “inner park” and the “outer park” is just as relevant today as it was over 100 years ago. The streets and sidewalks around a square greatly affect its accessibility and use, as do the buildings that surround it. Imagine a square fronted on each side by 15-foot blank walls — that is the worst-case scenario for the outer square. Then imagine that same square situated next to a public library: the library doors open right onto the square; people sit outside and read on the steps; maybe the children’s reading room has an outdoor space right on the square, or even a bookstore and cafe. An active, welcoming outer square is essential to the well-being of the inner square.”</p>	<p>appears to be for private use only</p> <p>Amenities placed near retail space may imply a required purchase to use</p>	<p>walking, entertainment and businesses uses.</p> <p>De-map and include 138<sup>th</sup> St., from 38<sup>th</sup> Ave. to 39<sup>th</sup> Ave., into a publicly owned portion of the Flushing Commons Town Square.</p>	<p>- Plaza San Victorino</p> <p>NY Plaza Program/ Street Closings:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Summer Streets Program</li> <li>- Astoria, Queens</li> <li>- Times Square pedestrian plaza</li> <li>- Herald Square</li> </ul>
<p><b>8. Reaching out like an Octopus</b></p> <p>“Just as important as the edge of a square is the way that streets, sidewalks and ground floors of adjacent buildings lead into it. Like the tentacles of an octopus extending into the surrounding neighborhood, the influence of a good square (such as Union Square in New York) starts at least a block</p>	<p>Sidewalk paving ends at the curb and does not extend any further</p> <p>Whether or not pedestrians are enticed by retail depends on the type of retail that will be available</p> <p>The space is visible however, nothing seems to connect the space to the community or the surrounding spaces</p>	<p>Lippmann Arcade should be revamped to be more inviting both as a passage way and as a public space on its own.</p> <p>(see amenities)</p>	<p>(same as amenities)</p> <p>“Carrera”, or Avenue 15, in Bogotá, Colombia</p> <p>Public Plazas and Streets in Montreal Canada:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Dorchester Square</li> <li>- Place du Canada</li> <li>- Place Jacques-Cartier</li> <li>- St. Louis Square</li> </ul>

<p>away. Vehicles slow down, walking becomes more enjoyable, and pedestrian traffic increases. Elements within the square are visible from a distance, and the ground floor activity of buildings entices pedestrians to move toward the square.”</p>			
<p><b>9. The Central Role of Management</b></p> <p>“The best places are ones that people return to time and time again. The only way to achieve this is through a management plan that understands and promotes ways of keeping the square safe and lively. For example, a good manager understands existing and potential users and gears events to both types of people. Good managers become so familiar with the patterns of how people use the park that waste receptacles get emptied at just the right time and refreshment stands are open when people most want them. Good managers create a feeling of comfort and safety in a square, fixing and maintaining it so that people feel assured that someone is in charge.”</p>	<p>The central role of management is subject to discretion (pre-construction)</p>	<p>The representation of diverse local groups in the management of public space is essential to creating space that “fits” the community and promotes citizenship and civic engagement.</p> <p>Democratize the Flushing Commons Town Plaza through a style and structure of management that ensures community input.</p> <p>Managerial structure for the Flushing Commons Town Square:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Flushing Commons Town Square Planning Oversight Committee</li> <li>- Flushing Commons Town Square Executive Manager</li> </ul> <p>The Flushing Commons Town Square Oversight Committee can ensure a lively and well-utilized public space by drawing upon the diversity of community stakeholders, including businesses, cultural and non-profit groups, as well as a diversity of funding for</p>	<p>Charleston Principles in Seattle, Washington Australia Prospect Park in Brooklyn Battery Park in NYC</p>

		community events and projects in the Town Square.	
<b>10. Community-Sponsored Events</b>  “A well-managed square is generally beyond the scope of the average city parks or public works department, which is why partnerships have been established to operate most of the best squares in the United States. These partnerships seek to supplement what the city can provide with funding from diverse sources, including—but not limited to—rent from cafés, markets or other small commercial uses on the site; taxes on adjacent properties; film shoots; and benefit fundraisers.”	Programming of events/activities is unknown and is subject developers discretion	All exhibitions, programs, and events held within the Commons should remain free for the public at all times.  Educational events in the area of public arts and local high school and college art student involvement	



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