

PLANNING THE FUTURE OF DOWNTOWN FLUSHING: FLUSHING RIVER AND WATERFRONT



WHO WE ARE



Alex Doulaveris
Audra de Falco
Jean Kapkanoff
Sean M. Dalpiaz
Regina Fojas
SooJi Lim
Muneeba Talukder
Nataly Rojas
Professor Tarry Hum
Julianne Landkammer

**In collaboration with:
The MinKwon Center
for Community Action**

QUEENS COLLEGE-MINKWON CENTER COLLABORATION

PLANNING THE FUTURE OF DOWNTOWN FLUSHING: FLUSHING RIVER AND WATERFRONT

We are...

- An Urban Studies class collaborating with the MinKwon Center for Community Action
- A diverse student body invested in the future of Downtown Flushing, studying what new development will mean for the entire community.

Our goal is to *promote awareness of redevelopment* to community members, organizations, and others involved in or affected by the redevelopment process **to ensure that all community members' voices are heard.**

Our Semester Research tasks:

We conducted a study of the planning initiatives in Downtown Flushing to gather information about the area.

- Toured the Flushing Waterfront
- Met with the stakeholders
- Worked side by side with the MinKwon Center Community Organizers
- Conducted land-use, small business, and residential surveys
- Researched in and out of the classroom, personally and in a group setting
- Studied Research Methods

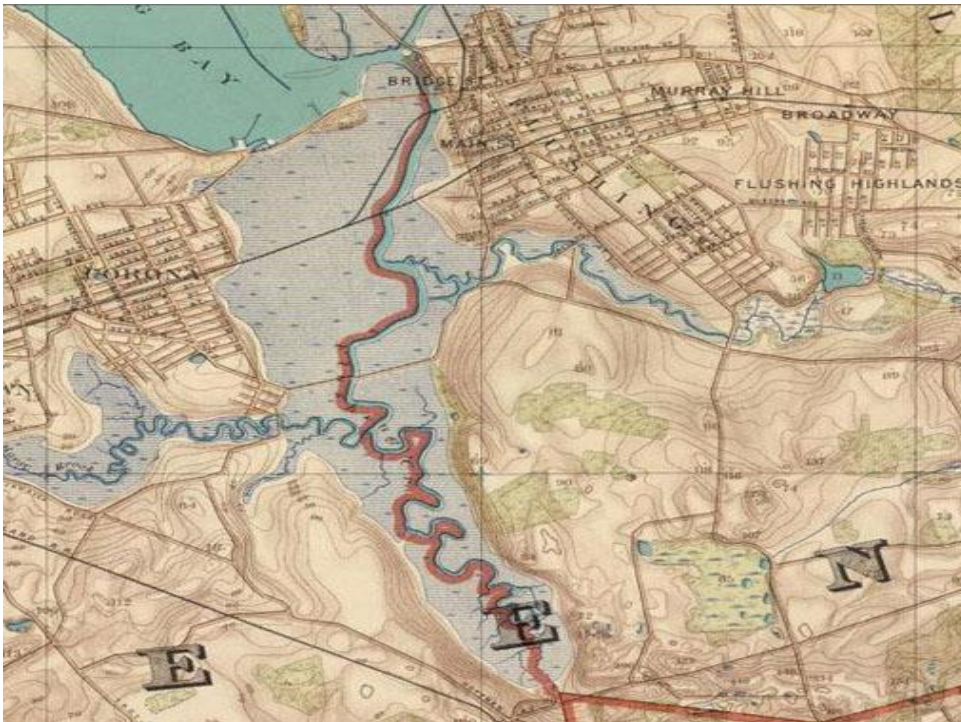


STUDY AREA



GEOGRAPHICAL HISTORY OF THE FLUSHING RIVER

The river flows through the **northern** part of central Queens into the **East River**. It is located in a **valley** that may have been a large riverbed before the last Ice Age that once divided Queens into an **Eastern** and **Western** half.



This map shows the Flushing River in 1891. The landscape here appears almost identical since the last Ice Age.

Source:

<http://www.mazeartist.com/flushingriver.htm>



The **source** of the Flushing River was once located in what is today known as **Kew Gardens Hills**. Many years ago the location was called the “**Head of the Vleigh**” (Dutch for “valley”) because it is where the **Queens Valley** began.

This is the **Queens Valley Exchange** where the **Grand Central Expressway**, the **Van Wyck Expressway**, **Union Turnpike** and the **Jackie Robinson Parkway** all cross paths. The source of the Flushing River is on the right.

Source: <http://www.mazeartist.com/flushingriver.htm>



The area near the mouth of the creek became the site of the 1645 Dutch settlement named Vlissingen. It is said that the name Vlissingen means “salt meadow,” given as a nod to the waters of the Flushing Meadows.

THE POLITICAL HISTORY OF THE FLUSHING RIVER

- By dredging the Flushing River, Robert Moses and **the 1939 World's Fair** fundamentally altered the look of the waterbed.
- To **ease travel** between the Western and Eastern part of Queens, the Flushing River was cut off from connecting bodies of water.



Post 1939 map of Queens.

Source: <http://macaulay.cuny.edu/eportfolios>



THE POLITICAL HISTORY OF THE FLUSHING RIVER

- Before 1930, one could cross the Flushing River from Flushing to Willets Point in two ways: drawbridges and boats.
- Today, the **Roosevelt Avenue Bridge** and the **Northern Boulevard Bridge** serve this function.
 - However, walking over these bridges is **not pedestrian friendly**.



Lack of Roads and Infrastructure
in Willets Point

Source: forgotten-ny.com

INDUSTRY ALONG THE FLUSHING RIVER

- When Flushing was mainly a residential area, the river was used for recreation and transportation.
- Flushing's accessibility by rail and road, as well as the construction of the World's Fair, drew manufacturers to the area in the mid 20th century.



Flushing River around 1890, south of Northern Boulevard. To the right is Wahnetah Boat Club.

Credit: <http://www.forgotten-ny.com/STREET%20SCENES/flushing/oldflushingriver.jpg>



INDUSTRY ALONG THE FLUSHING RIVER



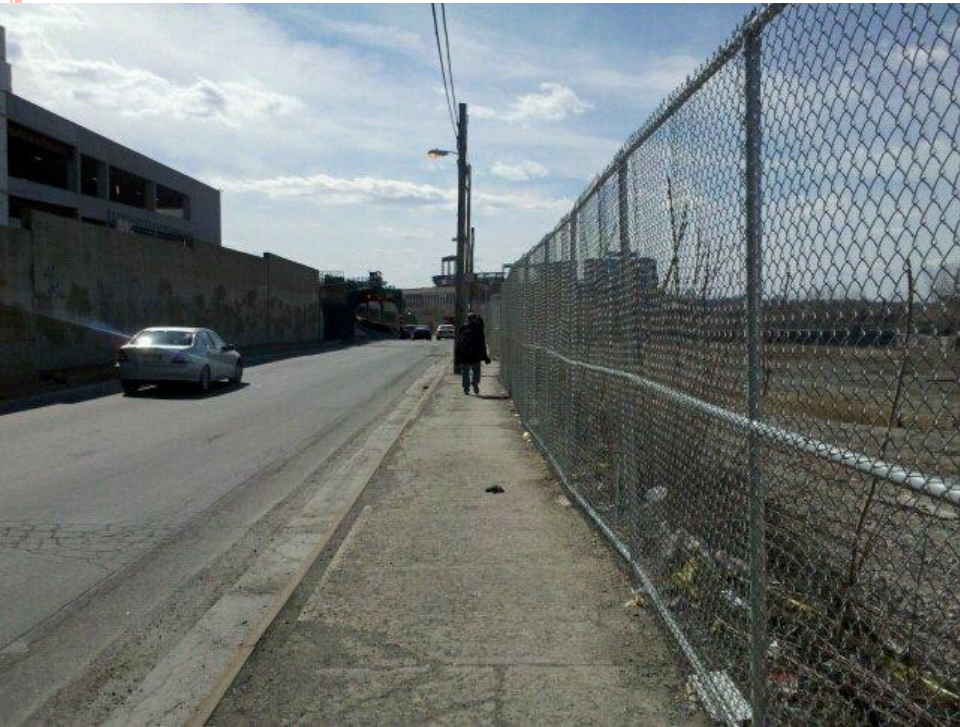
The Flushing River at present. Just north of Northern Blvd., one can see concrete plants and their barges along the river.

Credit: <http://www.forgotten-ny.com/STREET%20SCENES/flushing.river/42.flushriver3.jpg>

- The area around the Flushing River was rezoned in 1998 to accommodate mixed and commercial land use.
- Today, the Flushing River waterfront is still home to some manufacturers.
- Concrete barges account for most of the traffic on the river.

CURRENT CONDITIONS OF THE FLUSHING WATERFRONT

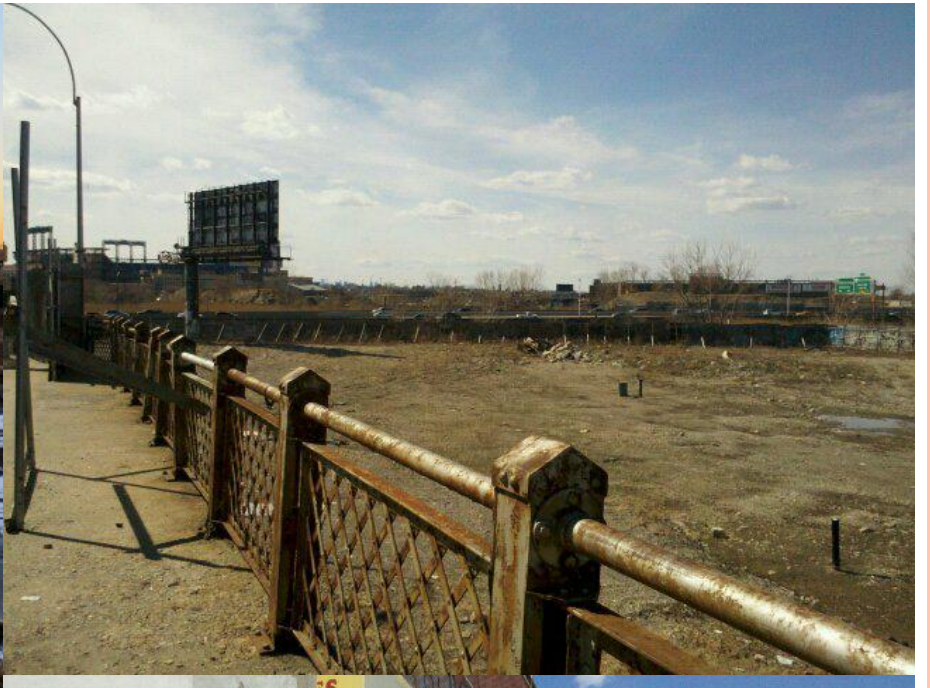
- Flushing River is polluted and gives off a foul smell.
- Few pedestrians seen on severely weathered sidewalks.



The view of the River itself is obstructed.

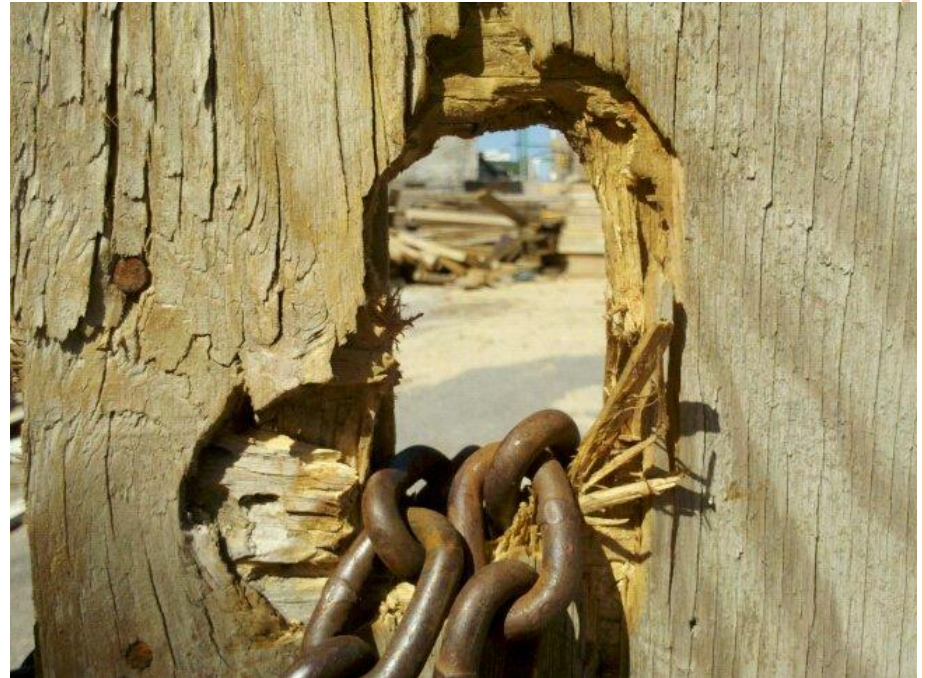
Traffic generally appears to be light or absent.

- **Overall, the area is in a state of disrepair.**



THE WATERFRONT: 39-08 JANET PLACE

- Deserted lot used as a dumping ground
- Currently owned by LED Development Group
- Adjacent to various auto repair shops and construction sites



KEY STAKEHOLDERS

- New York City EDC
- Department of City Planning
- **Flushing Willets Point LDC**
- New York City Councilmember Peter Koo
- **Community Board 7**
- **Asian Americans for Equality, Inc.**
- **MinKwon Center for Community Action**



DOWNTOWN FLUSHING FRAMEWORK

1. FLUSHING COMMONS

- Municipal Lot 1 will become **Flushing Commons**, a mixed retail, residential, and commercial development.
- **Parking** for 1,600 cars will also be provided.
- It will accommodate the new location of the **YMCA**, and feature a **town square** with water fountains and greenery.



2. WILLETS POINT

- The plan for Willets Point calls for the construction of a **new 61-acre neighborhood** with:
 - a convention center
 - a hotel
 - entertainment venues
 - open space
 - a public school



3. THE FLUSHING WATERFRONT



- Along with more **housing** opportunities and **commercial** possibilities, the proposed project would enable **waterfront access**.



THE FLUSHING-WILLETS POINT-CORONA LDC

- FWCLDC is an organization, comprised of both public and private stakeholders
- Aims for the planned development of areas including Flushing, Willets Point and Corona
- The recipient of a New York State Brownfield Opportunity Areas Grant (BOA).



FWCLDC's VISION

- Goals for waterfront:
 - **Create link** to Downtown Flushing, Willets Point, and Corona
 - Environmental remediation and **clean up** of the waterfront
 - **Access** to the waterfront + preserving industrial uses of waterfront
- Long term development that is conducive to **affordable housing** and senior housing units
- Transportation Improvements
 - Renovation of LIRR station



GOALS FOR CONSULTANT

- Development of the BOA/Nomination Master Plan
 - Comprehensive study of the BOA and the following:
 - Existing info and land ownership
 - Indexing of buildings and historically significant sites
 - Current transportation, traffic, parking, infrastructure,
 - Sites on waterfront for potential development
 - Outreach to community
 - Shared vision of redevelopment

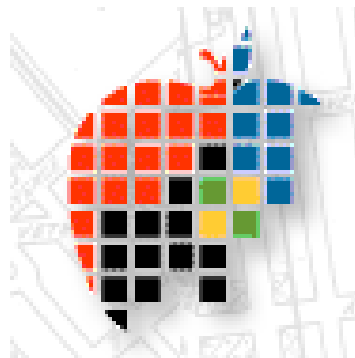




- An artist's rendering of the Riverfront Flushing development as seen from Willets Point.

VISION 2020

- A comprehensive plan of New York City to develop the waterfronts in all five boroughs.
- Released by the Department of City Planning
- It will be put into effect in the following three years and expected to conclude in the next ten years.
- Different agencies and patrons will be responsible for the funding and the design of the development.



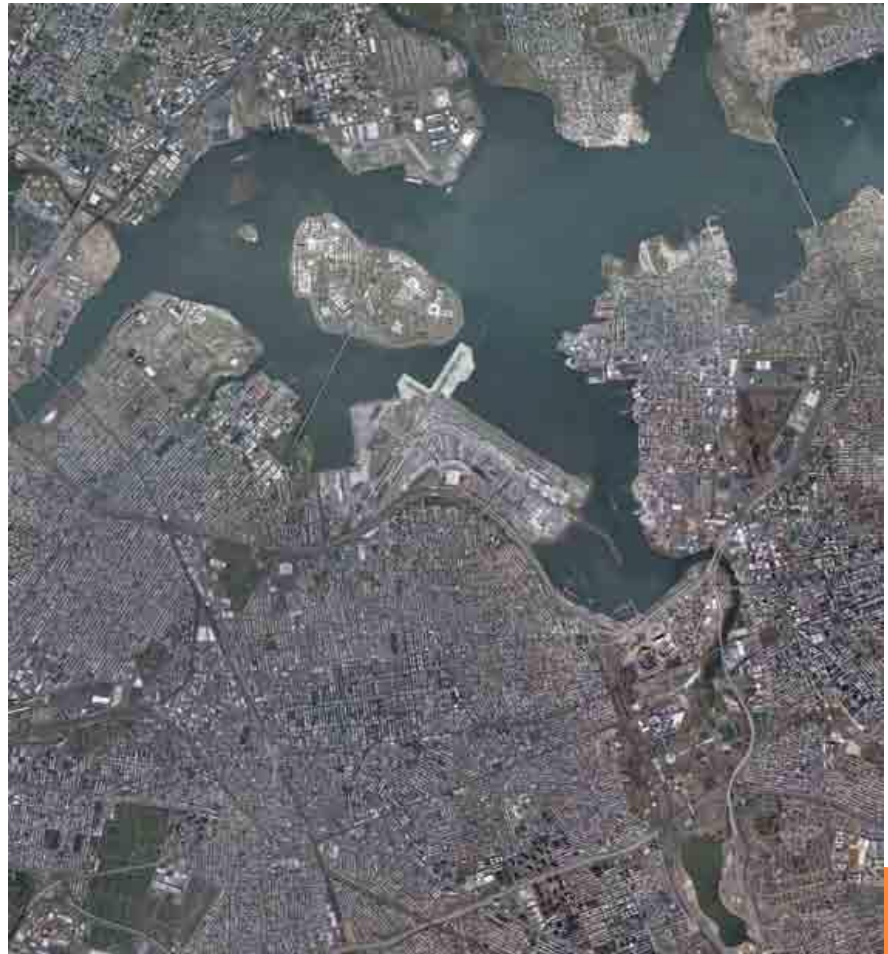
GOALS OF VISION 2020

1. Expand public access to the waterfront
2. Develop attractions and support public recreation on and near waterfront
3. Encourage economic activity that pertains to the waterfront
4. Improve water quality
5. Restore degraded natural waterfront areas
6. Enhance the public experience of the waterfront
7. Enforce governmental regulation of the waterfront
8. Pursue strategies to defend against climate change and sea level rise



VISION 2020: REACH 11

- Flushing River will become a great attraction for its enhanced Blue Network and vitality.
- There will be publicly accessible spaces along the shoreline.
- Recreational boating may be a possibility.
- The City's goal for the waterfront is to construct mixed-use development.



DOWNTOWN FLUSHING RESIDENT SURVEY FINDINGS



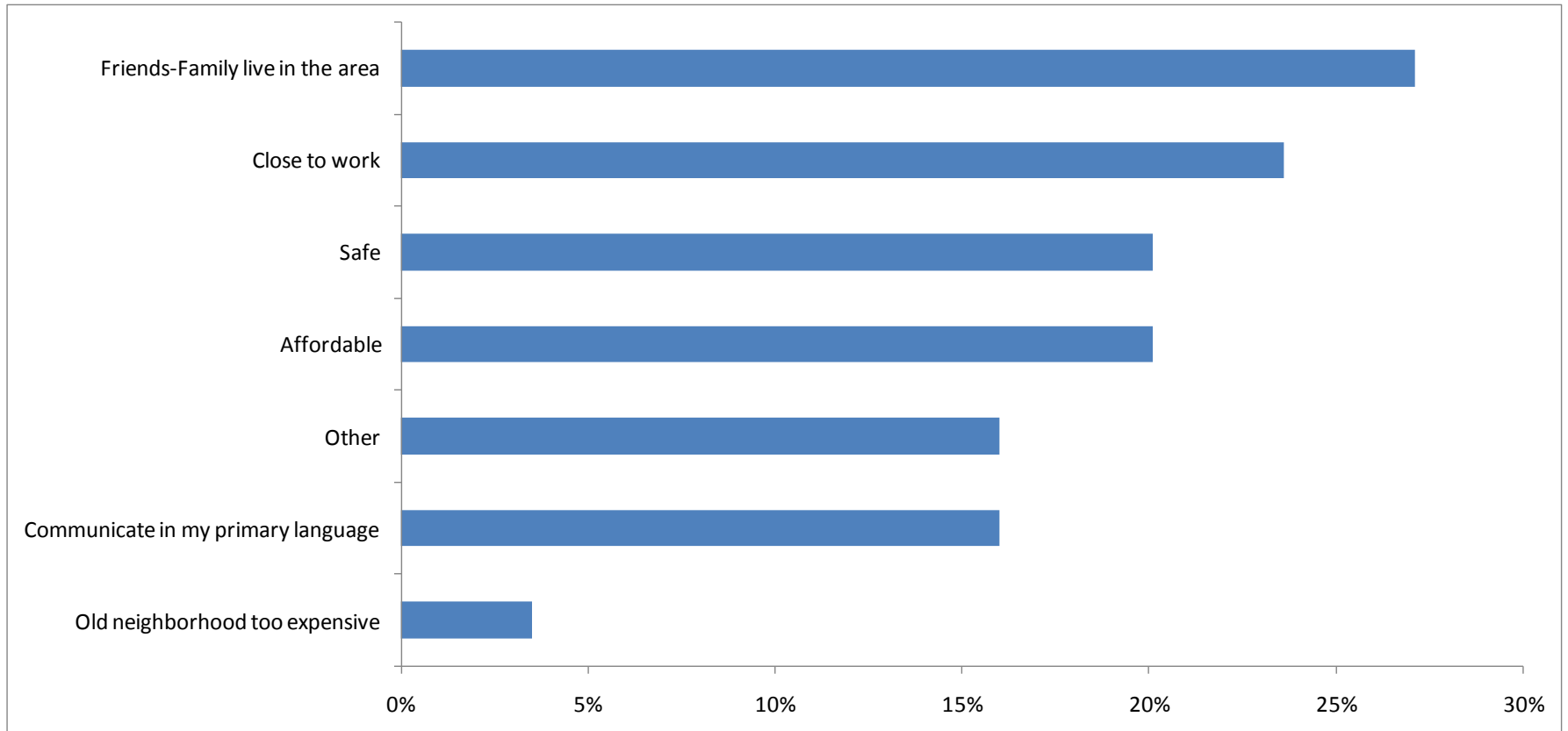
Table 1hh

Demographic Characteristics of Resident Survey Respondents

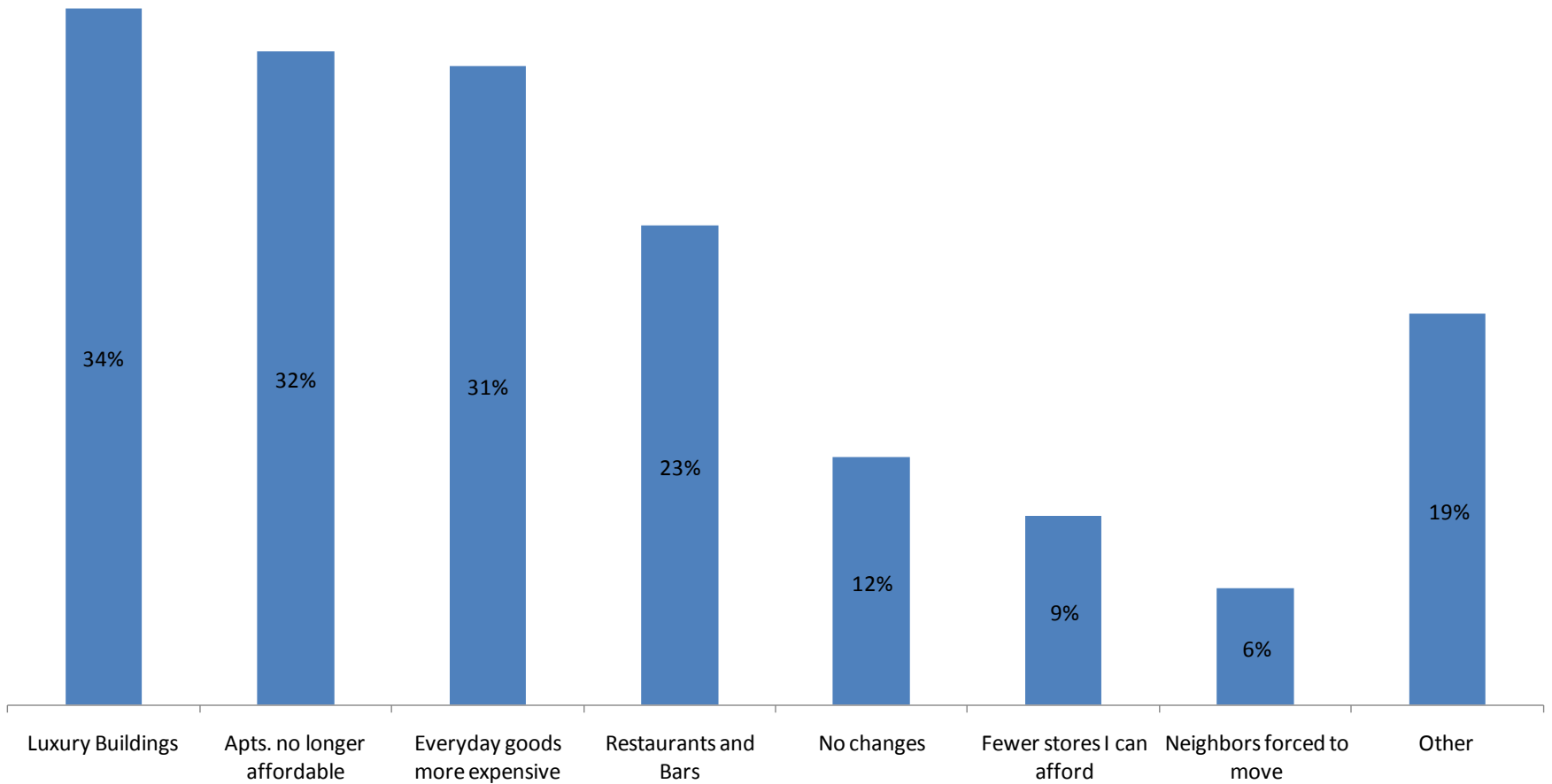
Total Survey Respondents N= 151

Race		Asian Ethnicity		English Speaking Ability	
148		104		140	
Asian	74%	Chinese	54%	Not at all	7%
Latino	18%	Korean	25%	A little	34%
Black	4%	Asian Indian	8%	Fluently	51%
White	3%	Taiwanese	4%		
Other	2%	Filipino	4%		
		Other	6%		
Age Category		Household Income		Industry of Employment	
141		134		142	
< 18 years	4%	10k or less	11%	Service	23%
18-21 years	8%	10K-20K	19%	Professional	18%
22-34 years	34%	20K-25K	9%	Retail	7%
35-49 years	25%	25K-30K	13%	Food Service	6%
50-61 years	15%	30K-35K	5%	Construction	3%
62+ years	14%	35K-40K	5%		
		40K-50K	13%	Manufacturing	1%
Immigrant Status		50K-60K	4%	Other Sector	29%
144		60K or more	21%	Unemployed/Retired	8%
US Citizen	65%				
Permanent Resident	26%				
		Years in the United States		Average Household Size	
		144		3.36	
Non Immigrant Visa	7%				
Undocumented	3%	3 or less	10%		
		4-7 years	16%		
Survey Language		8-11 years	15%		
151		12-15 years	11%		
English	60%	16+ years	48%		
Chinese	28%				
Korean	11%				
Spanish	1%				

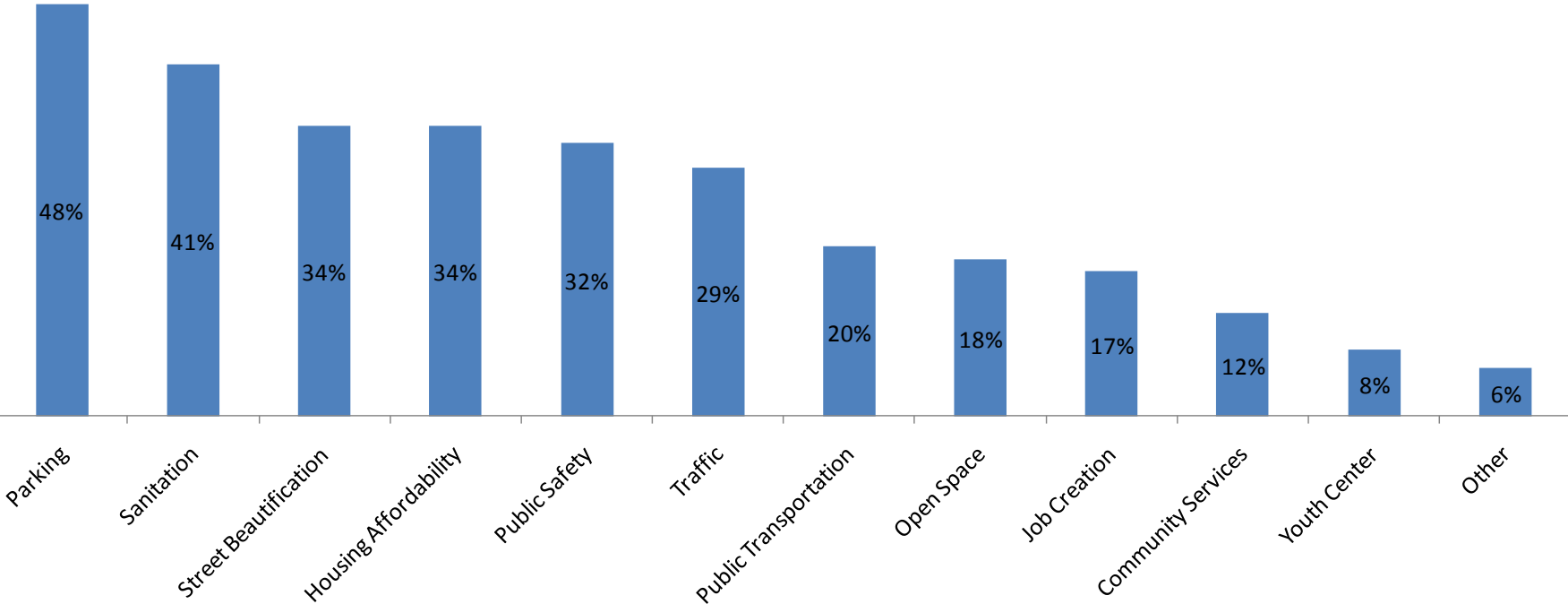
REASONS SURVEYED RESIDENT RESPONDENTS MOVED TO FLUSHING



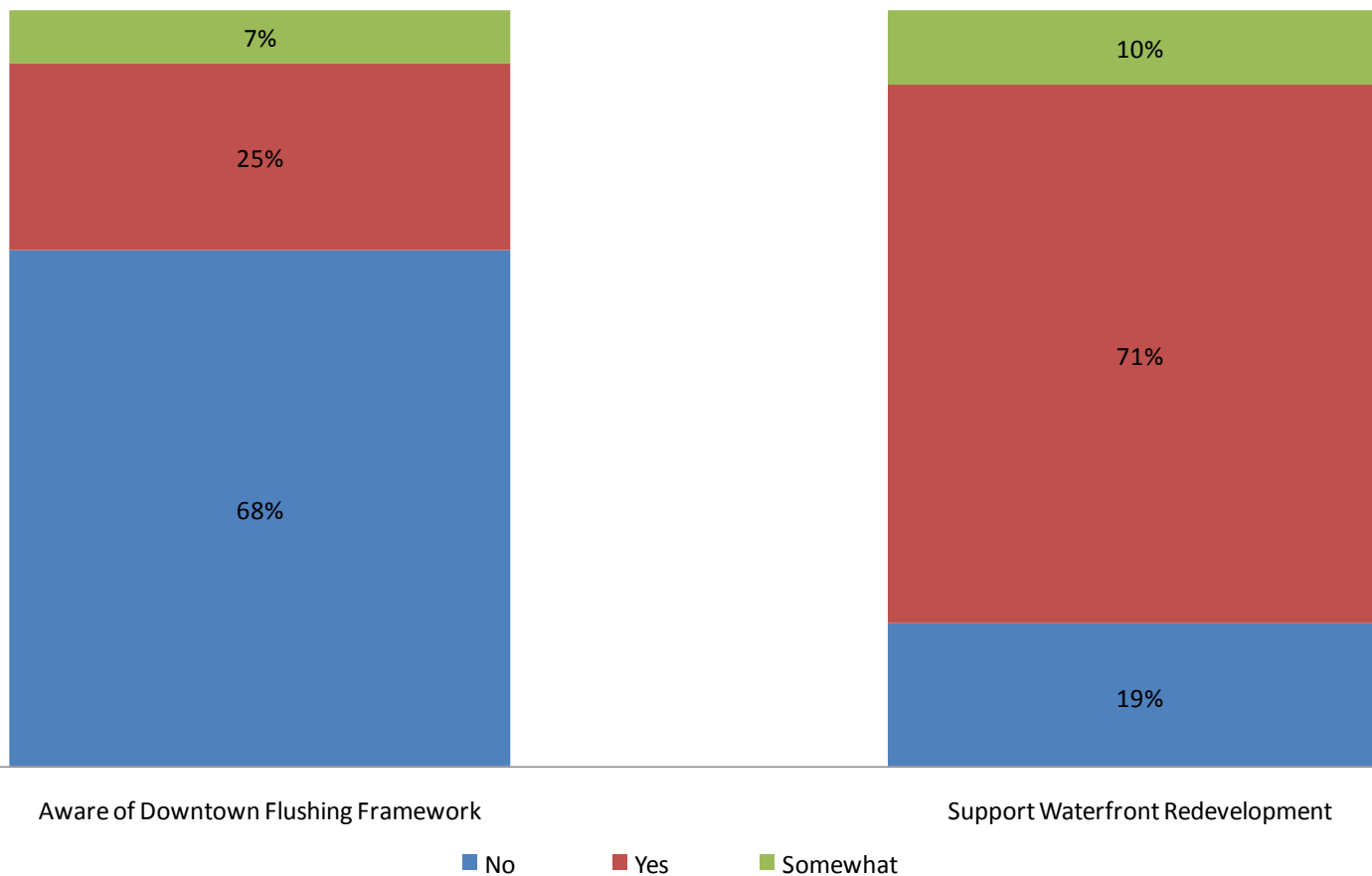
Resident Survey Respondents Observed Neighborhood Changes in Past Five Years



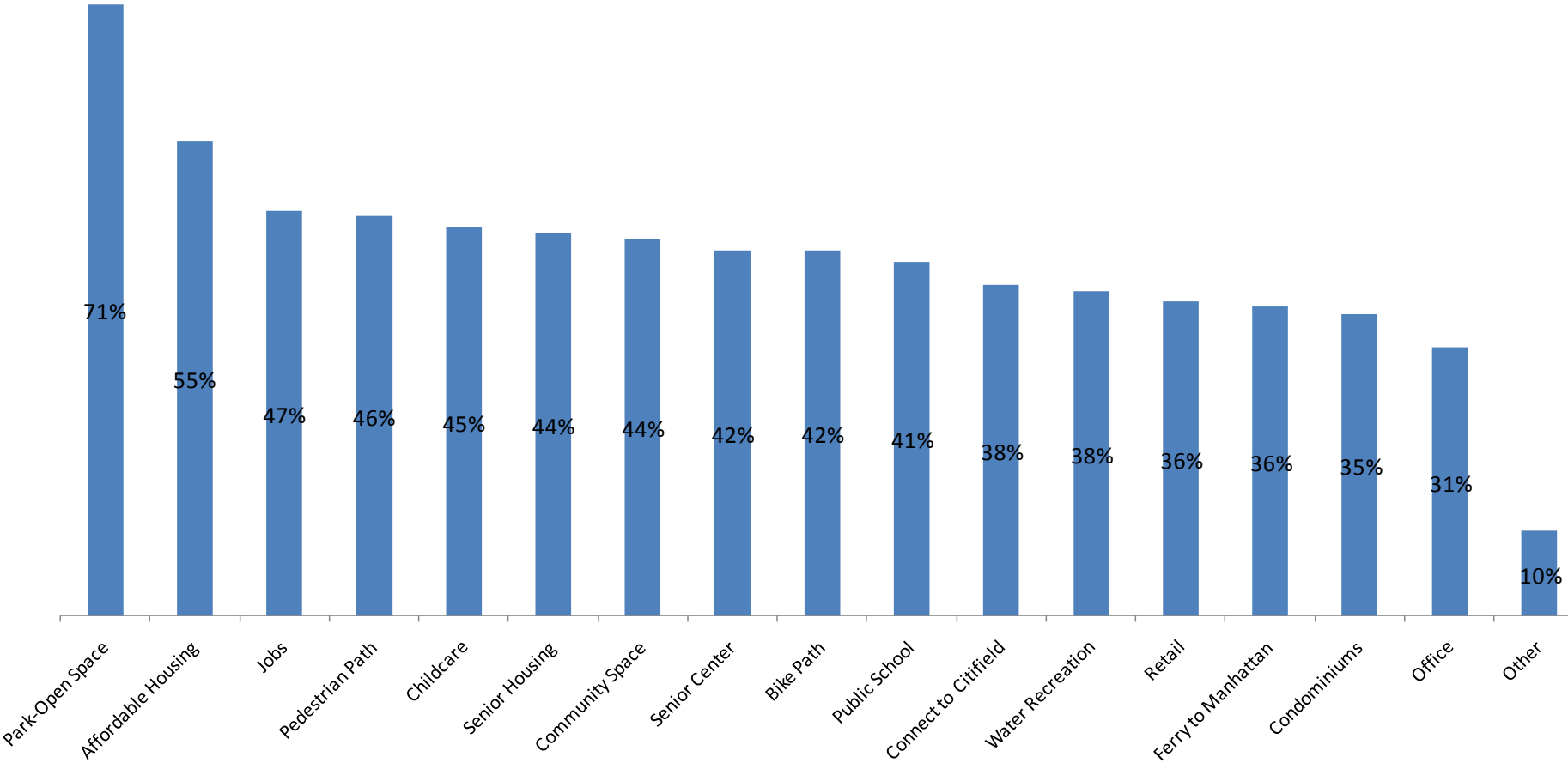
Resident Survey Respondents Neighborhood Quality Concerns



Resident Survey Respondents Awareness of Downtown Flushing Framework and Support for Waterfront Redevelopment



Resident Survey Respondents Vision for the Flushing Waterfront



Small Business Survey Findings



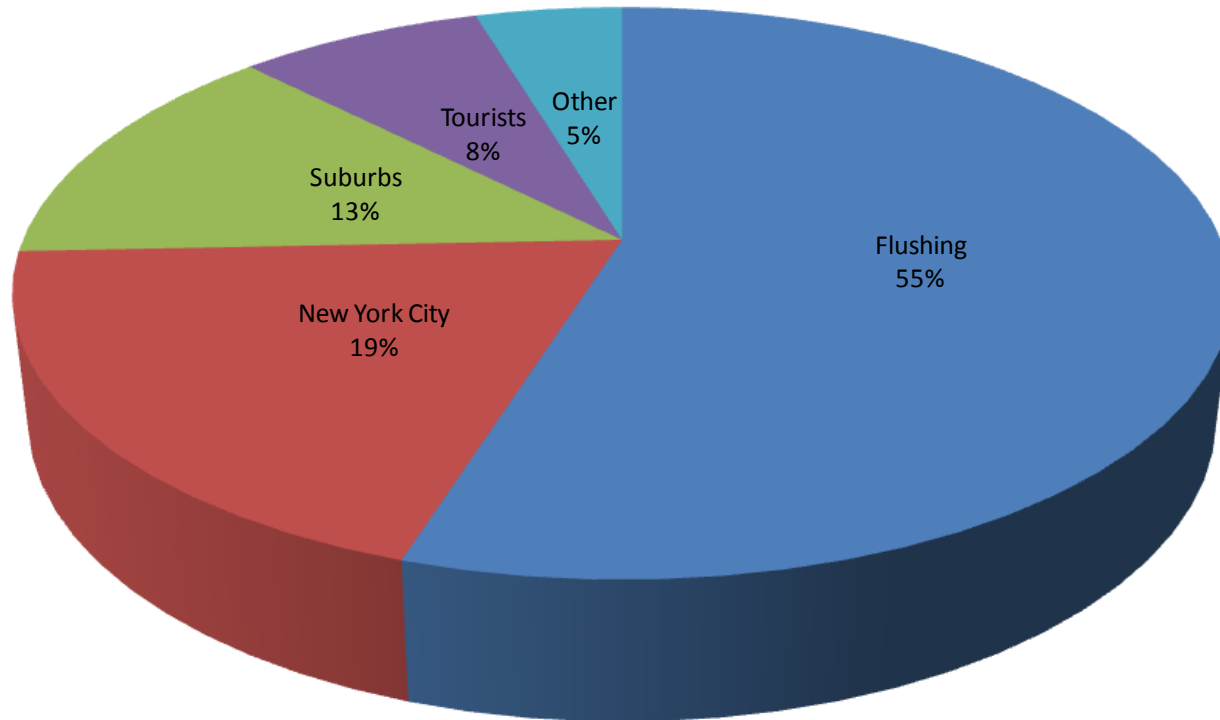
Table 2

Demographic Characteristics of Small Business Survey Respondents

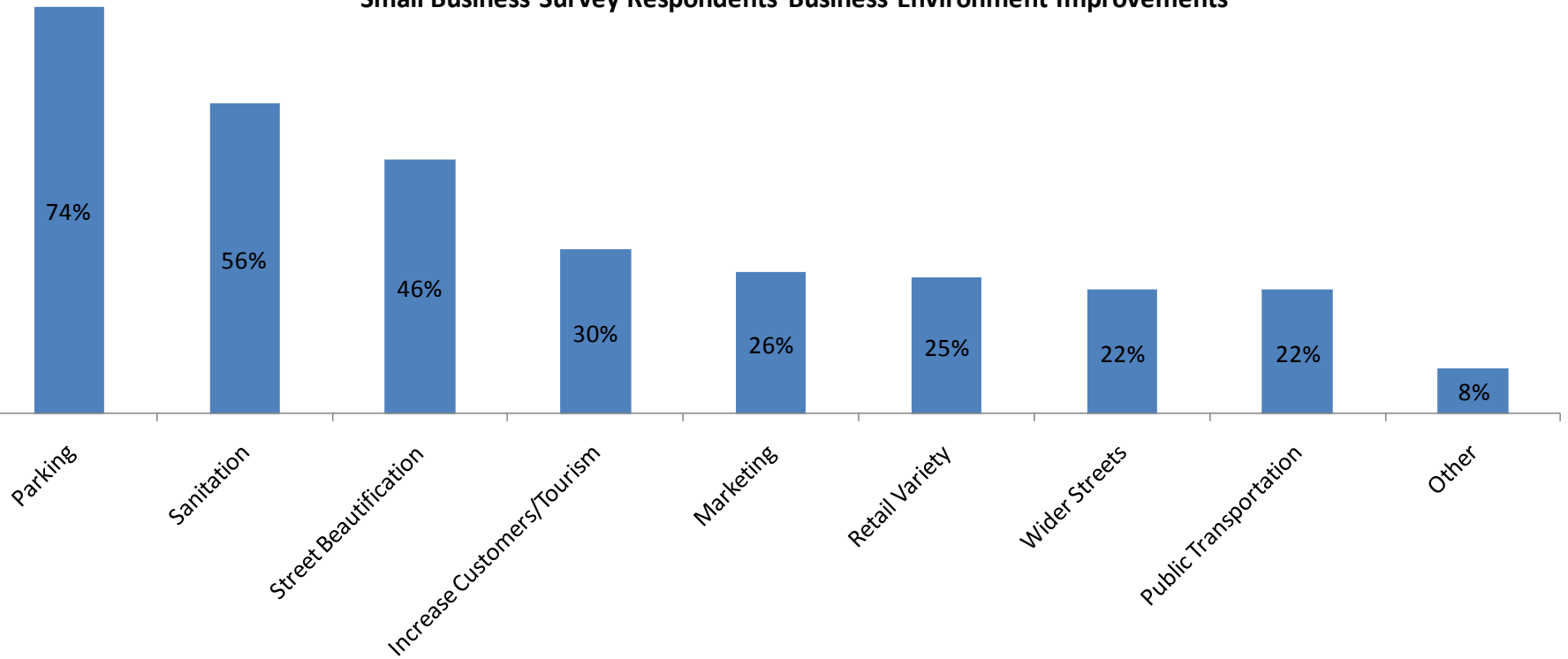
Total Survey Respondents = 98

Race	98	Asian Ethnicity	95
Asian	97%	Chinese	66%
White	2%	Korean	30%
Latino	1%	Taiwanese	2%
		Other	2%
English Speaking Ability	95		
Not at all	5%	Flushing Resident	68
A little	66%	Yes	82%
Fluently	28%		
Business Position	97	Business Climate	85
Owner/Manager	0.54	Better	6%
Employee	0.46	Worse	55%
		About the same	39%
Average Number of Employees = 4.7 employees		Government-Sponsored Business Assistance = 7%	
Average Years of Business Operation = 7.7 years		Member of BID, Chamber of Commerce, Business Association = 7%	
Rents Business Location	87		
Yes	93%		

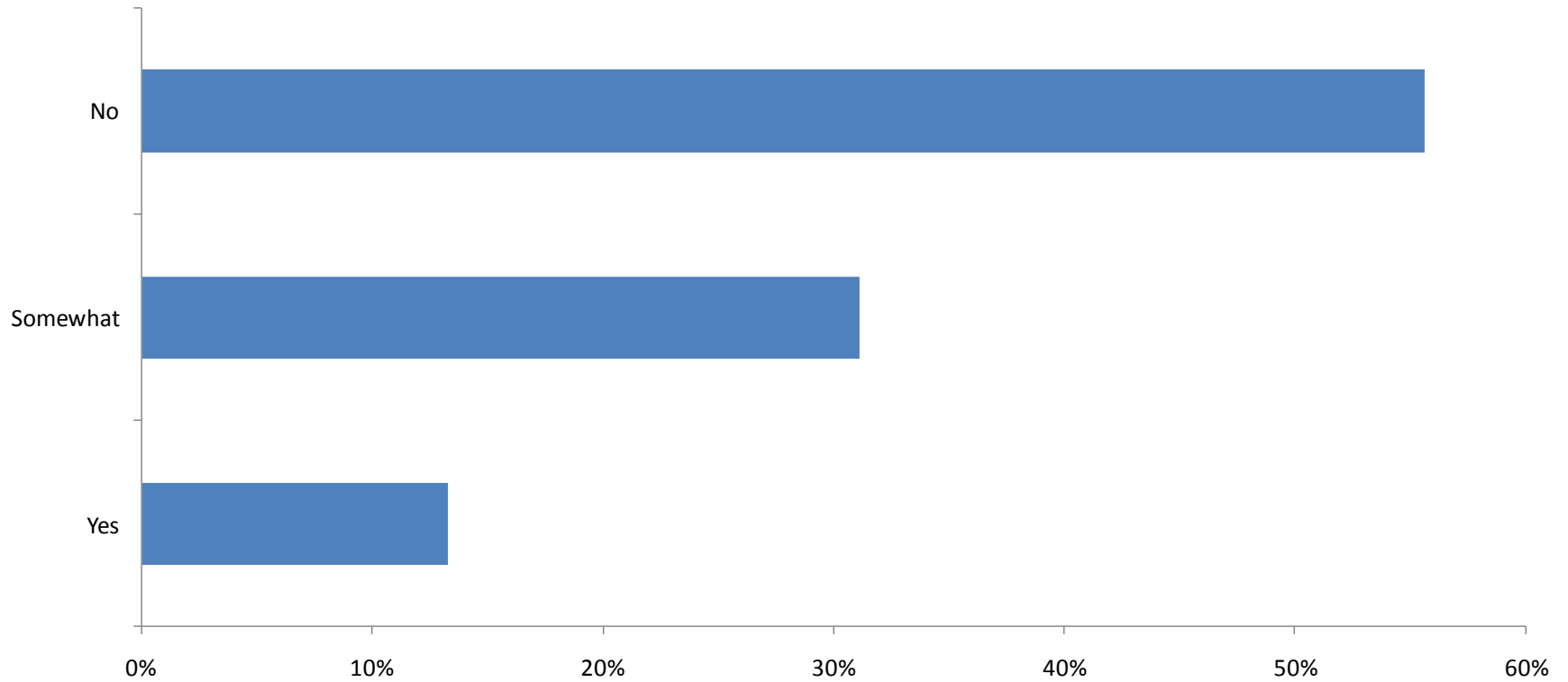
Customer Base of Surveyed Small Businesses in Downtown Flushing



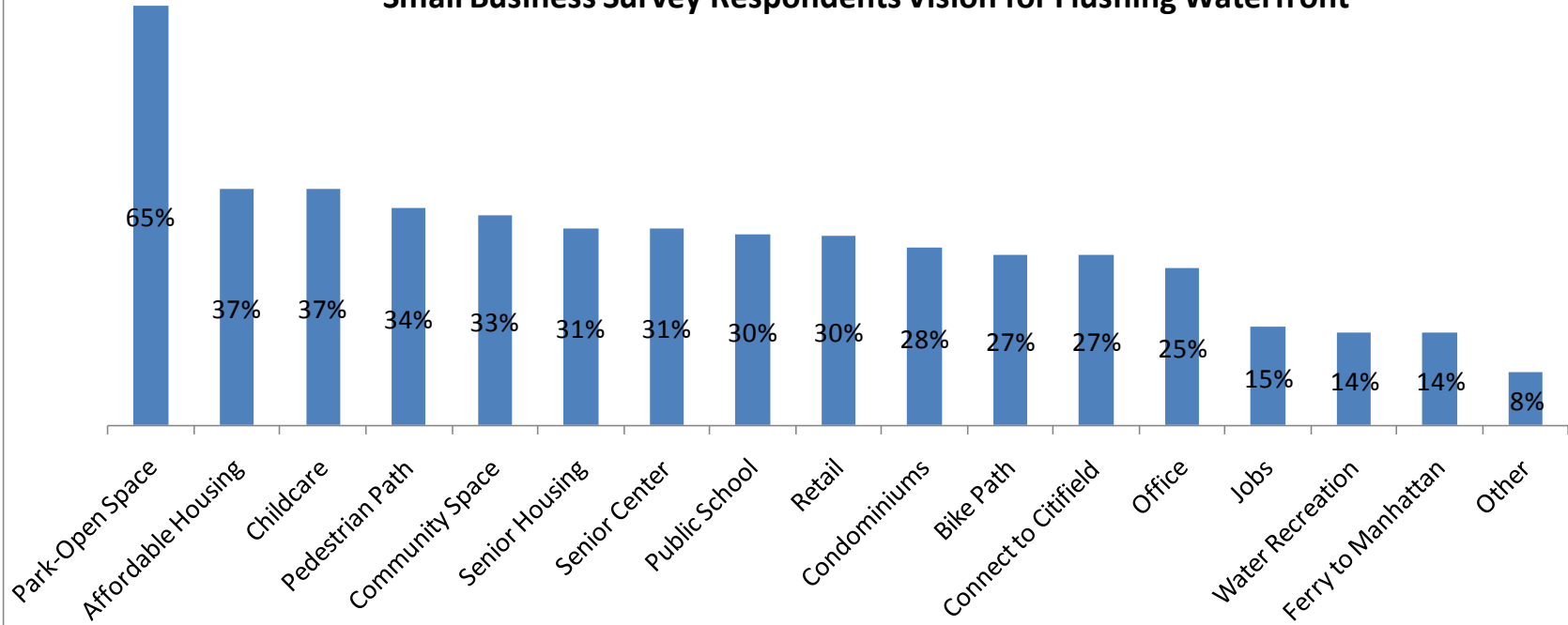
Small Business Survey Respondents Business Environment Improvements



Small Business Survey Respondents Awareness of the Downtown Flushing Framework



Small Business Survey Respondents Vision for Flushing Waterfront



ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

CONTACT INFORMATION

- MinKwon Center for Community Action
 - A Korean American community organization that focuses on community organizing and advocacy, social services, civic participation, youth, and culture.
 - <http://www.minkwon.org>
- Queens College
 - Professor Tarry Hum at the Urban Studies Dept.
- NYC Economic Development Corp. (EDC)
 - <http://www.downtownflushing.com>
- NYC Dept. of City Planning (DCP)
 - Joy Chen, Flushing Planner at the Queens Office.
 - <http://nyc.gov/html/dcp/html/cwp/index.shtml>
- The FWCLDC
 - http://www.queensalive.org/pdf/BOA_RFP.pdf

