



RICHMOND HILL



QUEENS

Commercial District Needs Assessment



careers
businesses
neighborhoods



Queens Economic Development Corporation



ABOUT RICHMOND HILL

Avenue NYC is a competitive grant program created by the NYC Department of Small Business Services to fund and build the capacity of community-based development organizations to execute commercial revitalization initiatives. Avenue NYC is funded through the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development's Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) Program, which targets investments in low- and moderate-income neighborhoods.

Avenue NYC Commercial Revitalization grants provide multi-year commitments aimed at building the capacity of partner organizations to better understand neighborhood needs, develop impactful programs, and sustain their work in the community for at least three years.

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

This CDNA features **Liberty Avenue** and **101st Avenue** commercial corridors in **Richmond Hill**, and was conducted in partnership with **Queens Economic Development Corporation** between August 2019 and March 2020.

Key issues and opportunities identified through this assessment will help prioritize SBS-supported local investments, and serve as an informational and marketing resource for the neighborhood.

In This Report

Existing conditions, business data, and qualitative depictions of the neighborhood were gathered from more than **620 surveys** and various stakeholder meetings with neighborhood merchants, shoppers, workers, property owners, and residents.

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Background

Located in Southwest Queens, Richmond Hill is a vibrant, diverse neighborhood with more than 1,000 small businesses that form a unique cultural and culinary destination. Its key commercial corridors, geographically known as South Richmond Hill, Liberty and 101st avenues are bordered by the Van Wyck Expressway to the east and Woodhaven and Cross Bay boulevards to the west. Surrounding communities include Jamaica to the east, Ozone Park to the south, and Kew Gardens to the north. Richmond Hill is also advantageously located near large employers and economic anchors such as the John F. Kennedy (JFK) International Airport and the Resorts World Casino.

The southern portion of Richmond Hill is home to several tight-knit communities, such as the Punjabi Sikh and Indo-Caribbean populations, the latter of which forms the locally known "Little Guyana" neighborhood. Stepping off the elevated A train — where the subway line terminates at Lefferts Boulevard station — there is an abundance of Indo-Caribbean bakeries, roti shops, and open-air produce markets. Within blocks, there are also multiple Hindu, Muslim, Sikh, and Christian houses of worship, which further reflect the diverse composition of the Richmond Hill community.

The two-mile stretch of Liberty Avenue between Van Wyck Expressway and Woodhaven Boulevard currently serves as the main business corridor for the southern part of the neighborhood. A typical building on Liberty Avenue is mixed-use and two stories, with commercial use on the ground floor and residential apartments above. The majority of businesses along 101st Avenue are industrial in nature, relating to the construction or automotive industries. 101st Avenue shares a similar building typology as Liberty Avenue, but also contains large warehouses, auto shops, and several blocks of predominantly residential buildings.

Richmond Hill has long been a neighborhood for various waves of immigrant families. For much of the 20th century, it was heavily European, with many Italian businesses on 101st Avenue toward Woodhaven Boulevard. Since the 1980s, the demographics have shifted from a white European neighborhood to an enclave of Indian and Caribbean immigrants from Guyana and Trinidad.

The area continues to grow more diverse, as the number of immigrants from Punjab who own and operate businesses and Sikh gurdwaras increase. In 2019, their contributions to the neighborhood were recognized by the City, when a stretch of 101st Avenue from 111th to 123rd streets was co-named "Punjab Way."

Neighborhood Demographics

See more on page 12

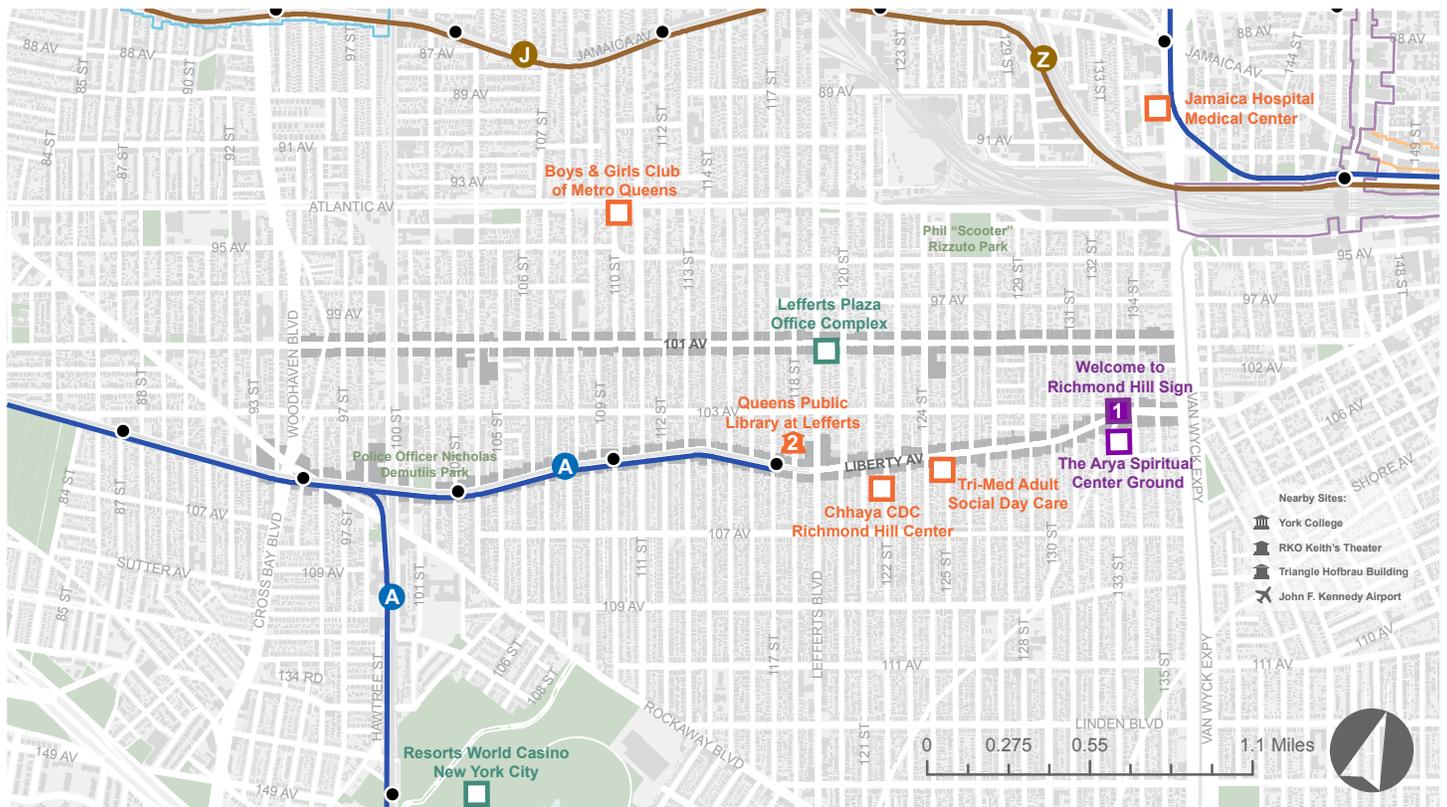
Despite Richmond Hill's low-rise character, it is a dense neighborhood with more than 147,000 residents according to the census, but the area is known to be undercounted. The primary demographics of this community are 33% Hispanic, 26% Asian, and 16% Black. The existing census categories present a challenge for the Indo-Caribbean population with many of these residents identified either as Asian or "Other." Many residents live in single and two-family homes that have been converted to multi-family apartments, and sometimes illegally converted, displaying a need for housing in the area.

Future Opportunities

See more on page 5

The businesses in Richmond Hill have the potential to be organized as a merchants association which will allow them to promote their unique offerings as a destination neighborhood and a cultural enclave. Resorts World Casino, undergoing a \$400 million expansion to be completed this year, and the JFK International Airport, which is undergoing a \$13 billion redevelopment, provide the potential for future partnerships and marketing opportunities for local businesses. Additionally, existing and new cultural events are opportunities to draw in new customers and showcase the distinct cultural characteristics of the Richmond Hill community such as Diwali and the Phagwah parades.

Richmond Hill



▲ Points of Interest

- Assessed Commercial Corridors
- Noteworthy Sites
- Public Facilities
- Cultural Destinations

Neighborhood Events

- Diwali Motorcade
- Nagar Kirtan
- Phagwah Parade
- Smokey Oval Park Festivals
- United Madrassi Day parade

Community Groups

- Chhaya CDC
- Divya Jyoti Association
- Guyanese Girls Rock Foundation
- Indo Caribbean Alliance Inc.
- Jahajee Sisters
- Queens Community Lions Club
- Richmond Hill Economic Development Council
- United Madrassi Association Inc.

▲ Notable Places



KEY FINDINGS & OPPORTUNITIES

Strengths

- ▶ Home to a diverse ethnic community and a vibrant shopping destination with a high density of culturally relevant businesses and professional services
- ▶ Year-round festivals and public events organized by residents and community organizations to celebrate the unique cultural diversity of the neighborhood
- ▶ A healthy retail mix of new and long-standing small businesses with deep roots in the Indo-Caribbean and Southeast Asian communities that serve all cultural populations
- ▶ An array of community-based organizations that are active in the neighborhood
- ▶ Consistent business activity which minimizes the likelihood of long-term vacancies
- ▶ Access to public transit, including multiple bus routes, the A train, and convenient connections to major auto routes, including the Van Wyck Expressway and Lefferts, Cross Bay, and Woodhaven boulevards
- ▶ Pedestrian-friendly and walkable commercial environment that offers a convenient place to shop and conduct business

Challenges

- ▶ Litter is prevalent along the main commercial corridors with litter baskets overflowing on sidewalks due to insufficient baskets and illegal dumping from households
- ▶ Lack of public spaces and parks for gathering and recreational activities
- ▶ Dark and shadowy street conditions created by the elevated train make the business environment less attractive and welcoming
- ▶ Increased online shopping and proximity to larger shopping malls create challenges for locally-serving small businesses
- ▶ Clusters of specialty restaurants and cultural clothing stores with limited commercial offerings for general merchandise
- ▶ Lack of a formal merchant organization limits the small businesses' ability to effectively address common local issues of the commercial corridors





Diwali Festival Celebration



Smokey Oval Park Music Festival



Nagar Kirtan



Phagwah Parade

Opportunities

- ▶ Explore opportunities to market the Richmond Hill neighborhood as a unique cultural and culinary destination
- ▶ Organize merchants to collaborate, share resources, and address local business needs along both Liberty and 101st avenues
- ▶ Clean and beautify the sidewalks and public spaces through supplemental sanitation and landscaping improvements to create a more inviting corridor for residents and consumers
- ▶ Prioritize COVID-19 commercial revitalization response activities by deploying actionable strategies that will enhance the economic recovery and long-term resiliency of the commercial district
- ▶ Increase the amount of street furniture on commercial corridors to serve families and elderly residents
- ▶ Implement winter holiday lights to welcome shoppers and reinforce neighborhood pride
- ▶ Leverage the proximity to economic anchors, including the new development at JFK International Airport
- ▶ Develop a storefront improvement program to help finance exterior renovations

What's Next?

To address these key findings and opportunities, Avenue NYC Grants have been awarded by SBS to nonprofit organizations.

For more information, visit: nyc.gov/avenuenyc

BUSINESS LANDSCAPE: RICHMOND HILL

Business Inventory

929

Total Number of Storefronts

10.4%

Storefront Vacancy*

*Note: In 2019, New York City's 76 Business Improvement Districts reported an average ground floor vacancy rate of 9.1% and median ground floor vacancy rate of 8.4% (SBS BIDs Trends Report, FY2019).

Storefront & Retail Mix*

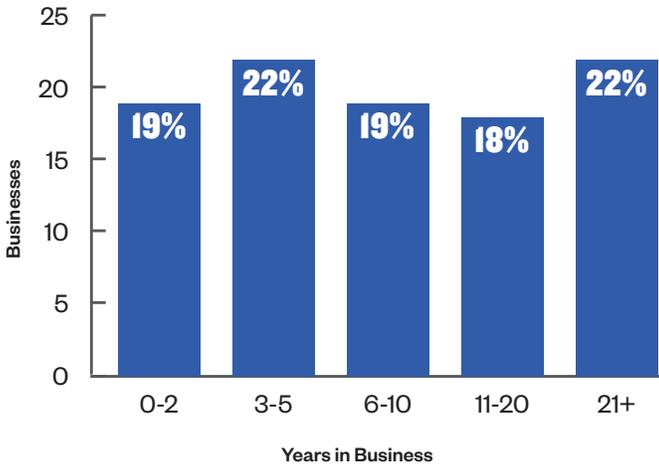


Business inventory and retail mix data were gathered by Queens Economic Development Corporation through a comprehensive area inventory of storefront businesses located along Liberty Avenue and 101st Avenue (December to February 2020).

***The data and findings presented in this report were gathered before the COVID-19 pandemic.** The economic impact of the COVID-19 outbreak has negatively affected 90% of small business owners nationally. Across New York City, purchases of local goods and services at brick-and-mortar stores declined by 24.9% in March 2020 compared to March 2019. With the exception of grocery stores and pharmacies, spending in all other retail categories declined significantly during the pandemic. During this time, in Richmond Hill, approximately 122 essential businesses remained open for service out of a total of 8x32 storefront businesses. As of June 2020, federal, state, and city resources have been and continue to be developed to support businesses during this extremely challenging time, but many businesses continue to struggle or remain closed. SBS and community partners, including Queens Economic Development Corporation, are working to develop new programs to support businesses and help Richmond Hill's commercial corridors recover from this crisis.

What We've Heard from Richmond Hill Merchants

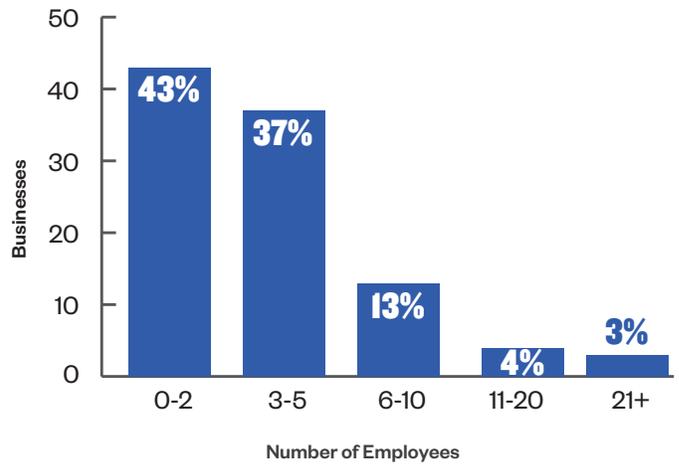
How many years have you been in business here?



25 Mean
21 Median
5 Mode

*Note: The mean is the average of all responses, the median is the middle number when all responses are arranged in ascending order, and the mode is the most common response.

How many full-time employees do you have?



6 Mean
6 Median
2 Mode

Do you own or rent your property?



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



What changes need to occur on or around your corridor to attract more visitors/shoppers?

	% Merchant Responses
▶ Parking	22%
▶ Sanitation	19%
▶ Landscaping/beautification	12%
▶ Safety	12%
▶ Community events	10%
▶ Storefront improvements	10%
▶ Street lighting	8%
▶ Merchant collaboration	5%
▶ Other	2%

What kinds of resources would help you grow your business?

	% Merchant Responses
▶ Marketing support	27%
▶ Space improvements	16%
▶ Access to financing	12%
▶ New equipment	11%
▶ Training for staff	11%
▶ Regulatory compliance assistance	8%
▶ Lease support	6%
▶ Legal services	5%
▶ Other	4%

Source: Based on 272 merchant surveys conducted by Queens Economic Development Corporation in Fall 2019.

BUSINESS LANDSCAPE

What We've Heard from Richmond Hill Merchants

What do you like about the commercial corridor?

"All the West Indian products are available."

"The culture is a big contribution to our sales."

"I like the people in the neighborhood. People enjoy each other's holidays."

"Access to public transportation, access to ethnic shops and produce."

"It's very busy and bright. I feel like I'm back home in Guyana."

What makes this commercial district unique?

"There are lots of small businesses in the commercial area."

"Easy access to public transportation."

"Diversity."

"It's like mini Guyana / Trinidad."

"There is a mix of every business in the area."

What would you say are the most pressing needs of businesses on this corridor?

"Many people do not know about the neighborhood."

"The noise from the train keeps people away from this area."

"I want to see more variety of stores."

"People throw trash on the street by the bus stop. There are not enough trash cans."

"Our business depends on displaying our items on the sidewalk, but we get fined."

What We've Heard from Richmond Hill Shoppers

What would you like to see more of in this commercial district?

"Bookstores and a gym."

"Coffee shops."

"Safe hangout spots for young adults and women."

"Healthy food choices, more choices for everything."

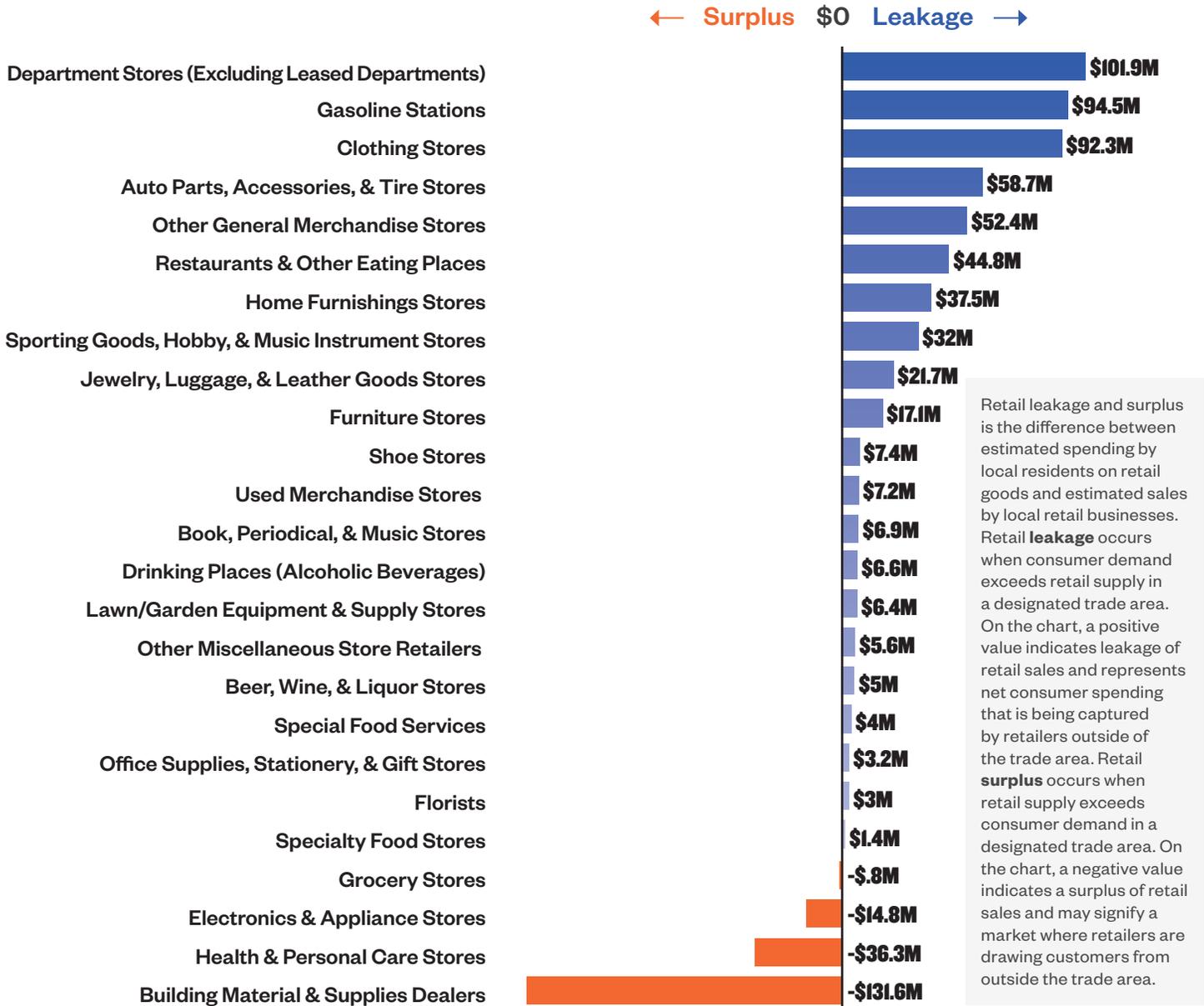
"Diversified restaurants, not just the West Indian roti shops or bars."

Source: Based on 272 merchant surveys and 348 consumer surveys conducted by the Queens Economic Development Corporation Fall 2019.

Richmond Hill Retail Opportunity

<p>Residents spend</p> <p>\$1.7B</p> <p>each year in goods and services</p>	<p>Local businesses make</p> <p>\$1.4B</p> <p>each year in retail sales</p>	<p>Every year,</p> <p>\$411M</p> <p>is spent outside the neighborhood</p>
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Retail Leakage & Surplus

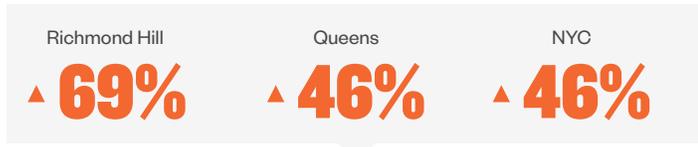


Source: ESRI and Infogroup, 2020

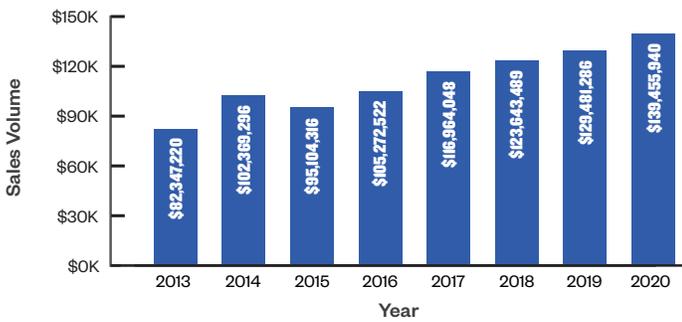
BUSINESS OUTLOOK

Business Trends

Change in Total Business Sales, 2013-2020



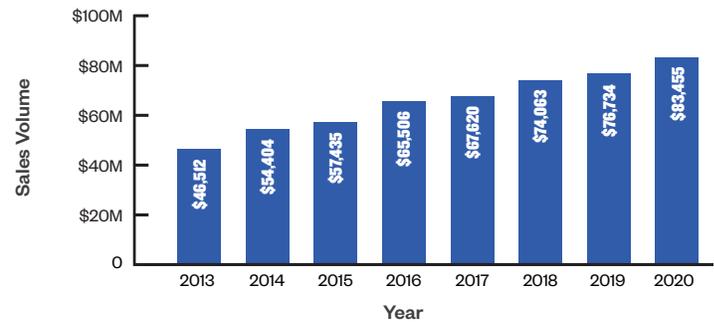
Richmond Hill Total Business Sales*



Change in Median Sales by Business, 2013-2020



Richmond Hill Sales by Business*



*Year 2020 reflects data gathered up until March 2020. Source: Division of Tax Policy, NYC Department of Finance

What We've Heard from Shoppers

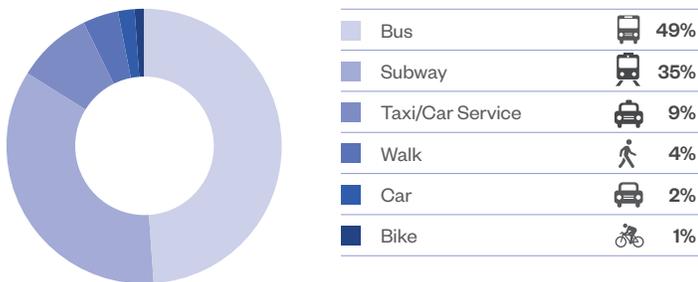
What additional types of businesses would you like to see in Richmond Hill?

- ▶ Coffee shops, bookstores, & cafés 
- ▶ Gym, yoga, & meditation studios 
- ▶ Healthy food options 
- ▶ Malls & branded clothing stores 
- ▶ Movie theater & family-friendly entertainment 

When do you usually shop in Richmond Hill?

	Liberty Avenue	101st Avenue
Weekdays	20%	15%
Weekday evenings	19%	14%
Weekend days	21%	17%
Weekend evenings	8%	7%
No set time	32%	46%

How do you usually get to Richmond Hill?



How often do you visit here to go shopping?

	Liberty Avenue	101st Avenue
Daily	14%	7%
2 to 4 times a week	31%	18%
Once a week	21%	16%
Twice a month	10%	9%
Once a month	8%	10%
3 to 6 times a year	4%	3%
Rarely/Never	11%	36%

Source: Based on 348 consumer surveys conducted by Queens Economic Development Corporation in Fall 2019.

DATA APPENDIX

Study Area Boundaries

■ Assessed Commercial Corridors

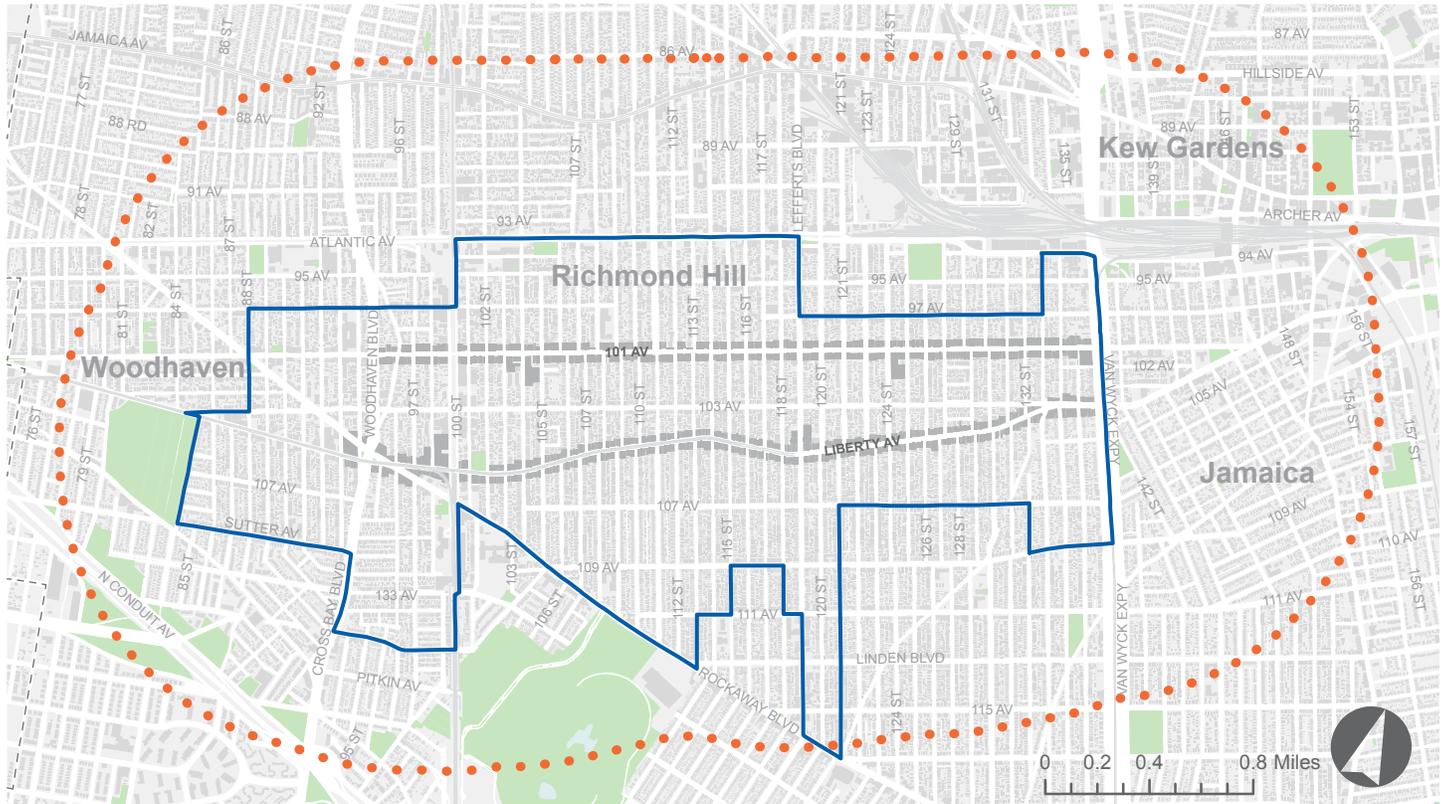
Primary data on Richmond Hill storefront businesses presented on pages 6-8 was gathered along the following commercial corridors: Liberty Avenue and 101st Avenue between Woodhaven Boulevard and Van Wyck Expressway.

— Richmond Hill Context Area

Demographic and employment data on pages 12-13 represents the population within the Richmond Hill neighborhood context area.

●●● Trade Area

Retail leakage, surplus, and retail opportunity on page 9 corresponds with the 0.75 mile trade area.



Area Demographics

Total Population

147,999	Richmond Hill
2,298,513	Queens
8,443,713	New York City

Population Density (per square mile)

34,442	Richmond Hill
21,595	Queens
27,926	New York City

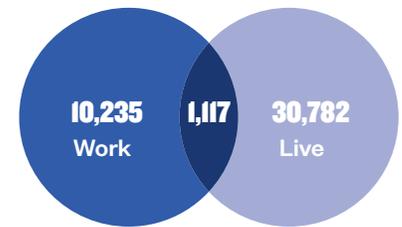
Average Household Size

3.83	Richmond Hill
2.91	Queens
2.62	New York City

Car Ownership

71.4%	Richmond Hill
63.2%	Queens
45.4%	New York City

Commuting Patterns



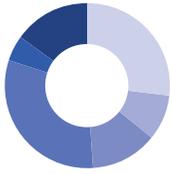
10,235 Work in Richmond Hill, live elsewhere

1,117 Live & Work in Richmond Hill

30,782 Live in Richmond Hill, work elsewhere

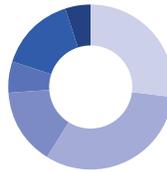
Area Demographics

Race/Background



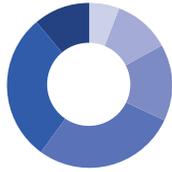
	Richmond Hill	QN	NYC
Hispanic or Latino (of any race)	27%	28%	29%
White alone	9%	25%	32%
Black or African American alone	13%	17%	22%
Asian alone	31%	25%	14%
Two or more races	5%	2%	2%
Some other race alone	15%	2%	1%
American Indian and Alaska Native alone	0%	0%	0%
Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander	0%	0%	0%

Educational Attainment



	Richmond Hill	QN	NYC
12th Grade or Less, No Diploma	27%	19%	18%
High School Graduate	32%	28%	24%
Some College, No Degree	15%	15%	14%
Associate's Degree	6%	8%	5%
Bachelor's Degree	15%	20%	22%
Graduate or Professional Degree	5%	12%	16%

Population Age



	Richmond Hill	QN	NYC
Under 5 Years	6%	6%	7%
5-14 Years	11%	11%	11%
15-24 Years	15%	11%	12%
25-44 Years	28%	30%	31%
45-64 Years	29%	27%	25%
65+ Years	11%	15%	14%

Median Age

37	Richmond Hill
38.7	Queens
36.5	New York City

Foreign-Born Population

58%	Richmond Hill
47%	Queens
37%	New York City

Income

Median Household Income

\$69,560	Richmond Hill
\$64,987	Queens
\$60,762	New York City

Pop. Below Poverty Line

13%	Richmond Hill
11%	Queens
19%	New York City

Employment

Population in Labor Force

66%	Richmond Hill
64%	Queens
64%	New York City

Unemployment

9%	Richmond Hill
6.2%	Queens
6.9%	New York City

*Note: As of February 2020, the unemployment rate is 3.0% for Queens and 3.4% for New York City (NYS DOL); updated neighborhood level data for Sunnyside is not available.

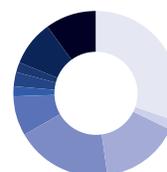
Local Jobs and Employment

Local Residents' Employment



Educational Services, Health Care, Social Assistance	25%
Transportation, Warehousing, Utilities	12%
Retail Trade	11%
Construction	10%
Accommodation, Food Services, Arts, & Entertainment	9%
Professional, Scientific, & Technical Services	9%
Finance, Insurance, Real Estate	7%
Manufacturing	5%
Public Administration	3%
Other Services	10%

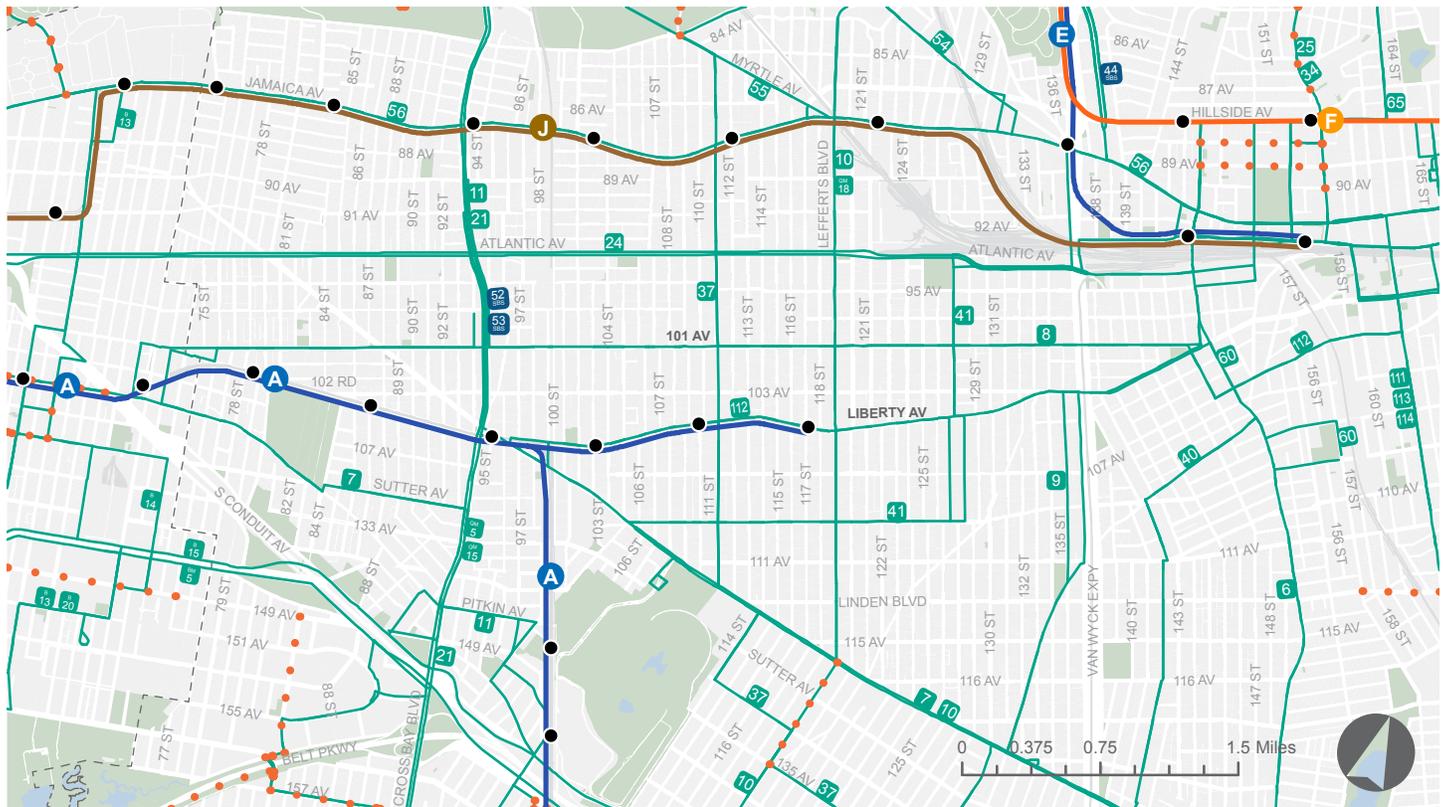
Jobs Located in Richmond Hill



Educational Services, Health Care, Social Assistance	31%
Transportation, Warehousing, Utilities	2%
Retail Trade	16%
Construction	19%
Accommodation, Food Services, Arts, & Entertainment	8%
Professional, Scientific, & Technical Services	2%
Finance, Insurance, Real Estate	3%
Manufacturing	2%
Public Administration	9%
Other Services	10%

DATA APPENDIX

Richmond Hill Transportation



▲ Richmond Hill Transportation

— Bus Routes

••• Bicycle Lanes

— NYC Subway

MTA Annual Bus Ridership (2018)

3.2M	Q8
7M	Q10
2.3M	Q24
2.2M	Q37
2.1M	Q41
1.7M	Q112
0.05M	QM18

Vehicular Traffic

17,770	Average daily vehicles on 101st Avenue
7,941	Average daily vehicles on Liberty Avenue

Average Weekday Subway Ridership (2019)

7,591	A Ozone Park-Lefferts Blvd
25,536	E F Kew Gardens-Union Turnpike
2,819	J 111 Street
1,354	J Z 121 Street

Source: MTA 2018; NYS DOT, 2016 Annual Average Daily Traffic data.

Recent SBS Neighborhood Investments

▶ *Commercial Revitalization*, Avenue NYC multi-year grant awarded to the Queens Economic Development Corporation, 2020-2022.

Existing Plans & Studies

Demographic Profile of Richmond Hill, Asian American Federation Census, 2015

Liberty Avenue Retail Market Analysis, Queens Economic Development Corporation & Richmond Hill Economic Development Corporation, 2010

Sources

ESRI and Infogroup, Inc. 2020 ESRI Retail MarketPlace Profile.

JPMorgan Chase Institute, "The Early Impact of COVID-19 on Local Commerce: Changes in Spend Across Neighborhoods and Online," June 2020, <https://institute.jpmorganchase.com/institute/research/cities-local-communities/early-impact-covid-19-local-commerce>

Metropolitan Transportation Authority. 2018. Average Weekday Subway Ridership and Annual Bus Ridership.

National Federation of Independent Business, April 9, 2020,

<https://www.nfib.com/content/press-release/economy/70-percent-of-small-businesses-applied-for-ppp-loans-nearly-half-applied-for-eidl/>

NYS Department of Labor. January 2020. Unemployment Rate Rankings by County.

NYS Department of Transportation. 2016 Annual Average Daily Traffic, using Traffic Data Viewer.

NYC Department of Finance, Division of Tax Policy, using data from NYS Department of Taxation and Finance. Business sales are reported by tax year, which runs from March 1st to February 28th. Sales data are compiled from sales tax returns, which are rolled up by tax filer within a year, excluding returns with negative sales amounts. For each year, each tax filer is reported according to the address listed on their latest return. Large outliers were removed from the analysis, and the top 5% of filers from Manhattan and the top 1% of filers from the outer boroughs by sales were removed.

NYC Department of Small Business Services. Fiscal Year 2019. Business Improvement Districts Trends Report.

U.S. Census Bureau. 2017. OnTheMap Application. Longitudinal-Employer Household Dynamics Program.

U.S. Census Bureau. American Community Survey, 2018 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates, using NYC Population FactFinder. Richmond Hill, Queens Census Tracts: 96, 98, 106, 120, 112, 114, 38, 40.01, 94, 104, 116, 154, 156, 158.02, 166, 152, 206, 158.01, 202, 110, 100, 40.02, 108, 118, 54, 86

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ABOUT SBS

The NYC Department of Small Business Services (SBS) helps unlock economic potential and create economic security for all New Yorkers by connecting New Yorkers to good jobs, creating stronger businesses, and building thriving neighborhoods across the five boroughs.

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Assembly Member David I. Weprin
Queens Community Board 9
Queens Community Board 10
Chhaya CDC
Divya Jyoti Association
Guyanese Girls Rock
Queens Community Lions Club
Richmond Hill Economic Development Council
Richmond Hill and Ozone Park Merchants
Richmond Hill and Ozone Park Shoppers and Residents