



**Testimony by Dennis M. Walcott, President and CEO of Queens Public Library
New York City Council Subcommittee on Zoning and Franchises
September 9, 2025**

Good morning, Chair Riley, Speaker Adams, Council Member Dr. Williams and the members of this esteemed committee. I am Dennis M. Walcott, President and CEO of Queens Public Library (QPL, Library). Thank you for the opportunity to testify today.

Queens Public Library is the trusted center of the community, and everyone can find the help they need at the library, regardless of their background or circumstances. Our Central Library is located in the heart of Jamaica on Merrick Boulevard, where in FY25 more than 710,000 visitors walked through its doors, circulation was over 728,000, and we saw nearly 116,000 computer sessions and nearly 67,000 Wi-Fi sessions. The 234,000 square-foot Central Library consists of our Children's Library Discovery Center, a dedicated Teen Center, a computer center, the Archives, an auditorium, and robust library collections. It offers specialized services like our Job and Business Academy, New Americans Program and Adult Learning Program.

More than 550 staff members work out of the Central Library building. In addition to its public spaces, the building houses QPL's administrative headquarters and base of operations, including core departments such as Information Technology, Capital Projects, Facilities, Security, Programs and Services, and Human Resources, which support Central and 65 other locations throughout Queens. The site also has a small loading dock where our Shipping department transports library materials, technology and equipment, and stations QPL vehicles. These departments are vital to our daily functions systemwide, allowing us to welcome 6.6 million visits, circulate 10.9 million items, offer 55,000 programs, and have 2.7 million Wi-Fi and 982,000 computer sessions last fiscal year.

Since 2000, the population surrounding Central Library has jumped by 25 percent, and the community continues to grow. We see this with the newly completed Ruby Square, a 50,000 square-foot housing development neighboring us on 90th Avenue. City Planning anticipates the rezoning will create up to 12,000 new housing units, increasing the local population even more.

The reality is the Central Library building, opened in its current location in 1966, is dated, rapidly aging, and too small to adequately serve the extensive and evolving needs of the community and our locations throughout Queens. Our critical infrastructure is struggling, and the public and staff floors need to be expanded and upgraded to meet current and future demands. We are thankful to our staff who go above and beyond in delivering high-quality and innovative service to our users and ensure our operations run efficiently; however, we are constrained by the physical limitations of our building.

In order to effectively serve the neighborhood and the borough well into the future, Central Library needs to be expanded and modernized. A vertical expansion of 50,000 square-feet and comprehensive renovation of the entire facility – both public and staff spaces – will enhance the



experience for patrons and improve critical systemwide logistics and operational support. According to calculations, the project estimates currently average \$168 million.

The Jamaica Neighborhood Plan is building a future for the region to thrive. Strong public libraries mean strong communities. **Investment in the expansion and renovation of Queens Public Library's Central Library – an institution where current and future residents can access trusted resources, inspiring spaces, and countless opportunities – is an investment in the vibrancy and success of Jamaica and our borough for generations to come.**

Thank you, Chair Riley and Council Members.

New York City Council, Subcommittee on Zoning and Franchise (Sept 9, 2025 Public Hearing)
Zoning, Jamaica Neighborhood Plan, Queens (C 250712 ZMQ; 250173 ZMQ ; C250171 HAQ)

Commenter: Emily Verla Bovino, PhD, Coordinator of the Art History program at York College of the City University of New York (CUNY) in Jamaica, Queens.

I joined the York faculty in 2023; however, in this testimony, I represent myself, not the college. Though I participated in Steering Committee Meetings for the Jamaica Neighborhood Plan, I preferred not to express support or opposition at the City Planning Commission Public Hearing on July 2, 2025; to comment online, however, I was required to give a position, so I opposed the plan due to concerns about the planning process, lack of attention to legacies of redlining, affordability and environmental justice issues. The concerns still stand.

If the plan is going forward, it must rigorously implement the task force requested by councilmember Nantasha Williams. Rezoning has caused displacement across New York City. Furthermore, I am concerned about the impact it may have on historically significant public art not being cared for by the City, State and Federal governments that funded it: in 1989, the New York Times described Jamaica as “a center for work by black artists” as a result of public art commissioned through the General Services Administration and the Dormitory Authority of the State of New York. The public sector, however, has done little to ensure care for this art as a resource for the neighborhood.

York College’s campus, for example, is a museum-in-school created with New York State funds from the campus construction budget. Its public art features artists selected by a Community Art Committee in 1984. Black artists of renown like Elizabeth Catlett, Houston Conwill, Sam Gilliam, Richard Hunt and Martin Puryear (images attached, pp. 2-15) dedicated years to their site-responsive projects out of commitment to Southeast Queens’ diverse communities. To date, care, conservation and interest in the role York’s public art can play in Jamaica’s thriving has been neglected by planners and elected representatives alike. **Let’s take care of what we have and build from it.**

York’s Art History program stewards York’s public art and works with artists of the Southeast Queens Artist Alliance to prepare students for arts leadership in Southeast Queens (images attached, pp. 16-28). Implementation of the Jamaica plan must involve outreach with SeQAA artists and York students pursued with more diligence through meetings designed for them. York College’s Master Plan can contribute to addressing open space issues and studio/exhibition availability issues. The York Faculty Caucus voted to support an agroforestry project that continues to seek the York administration’s official permission. The college’s Southeast Queens Biennial and Residency Program need funding. On 160th Street, the concrete under and around Houston Conwill’s Arc (1986) is deteriorating. Capital grants can contribute to restoration while

encouraging more programming around it. A collaborative project between York and SUNY Buffalo (images attached, pp. 29-39) shows the way art can assist in mitigating air quality issues in the Liberty Avenue area that will worsen with upzoning. Capital grants can support their realization. Art can be involved in improving the urban fabric through artist techniques in public engagement, not just murals and performances.

In 1971, artist-activist, and Jamaica resident, Tom Lloyd – who will have a major retrospective this fall at the Studio Museum in Harlem – conducted a Community Artist Cultural Survey with York students across Jamaica to conceive the Store Front Museum (image attached, p. 1). The first museum in Queens, a museum of African-American art, history and culture, it served Jamaica out of a former tire shop for fifteen years with 47 exhibitions and 250 performances. Yet, rather than bring different visions of the future together, the City facilitated unnecessary displacement of one by the other, evicting the Store Front Museum for the York College gym. It's my hope that, as rezoning goes forward, it can produce a new model for art and urban planning – a model for a just redistributive city that values Jamaica's history and its art as its vision.



**FOR YOUTH DEVELOPMENT®
FOR HEALTHY LIVING
FOR SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY**

**New York City Council
Subcommittee on Zoning and Franchises
Honorable Kevin Riley, Chair**

**Testimony of YMCA of Greater New York
Submitted by Cedric Dew, Vice President for Transitional Housing
& Executive Director, Jamaica YMCA**

**Public Hearing to Review Several Land Use Applications, including Jamaica Neighborhood
Plan
September 9, 2025**

I respectfully submit the following testimony on behalf of the YMCA of Greater New York.

The YMCA of Greater New York is committed to empowering youth, improving health, and strengthening community. With 24 YMCA branches and more than 100 community sites across New York City, the Y is among the city's largest providers of human services spanning from infancy to older adult — and an important anchor, convener, and catalyst for transformational change in underserved communities.

Within the community of Jamaica, the YMCA has owned the property at 89-25 Parsons Boulevard since 1922. Formerly known as the Central Queens YMCA, the Jamaica YMCA opened to the public in 1928. The Jamaica Y provides free youth programming, fitness courses and aquatics for all ages, and housing for different client populations.

The YMCA is pleased to learn that the Jamaica Neighborhood Plan (JNP) includes up to 11,759 new homes, including 2,984 income restricted affordable homes. 2020 Census data available through the NYC Population FactFinder shows that Jamaica Neighborhood Tabulation Area, which largely coincides with the area being rezoned, has high rates of crowded homes, both owner-occupied (26.9% of households have 5 or more people, compared to 14.1% in New York City as a whole) and renter-occupied (19.6% of households have 5 or more people, compared to 10.7% citywide).

YMCA OF GREATER NEW YORK 5 West 63rd Street, 7th Floor New York, New York 10023
D 212-630-9600 W ymcanyc.org

YMCA OF GREATER NEW YORK | Where there's a Y, there's a way.

As a provider of transitional housing services in the area included in the JNP, we strive to offer services that stabilize families and households. More affordable housing options, such as deeply affordable and senior housing, in the community will complement the Y's effort to support New Yorkers and strengthen communities.

On a broader scale, as a service provider with nearly 100 years of experience in the Jamaica community, the YMCA understands the needs of community members and as such supports a plan that goes beyond the creation of affordable housing to consider job training, commercial space, infrastructure investments, improved transit access, schools, libraries, open spaces and community spaces. We appreciate that City leaders are taking the time needed to hear community voices and come up with a plan that meets the needs of this community. We believe that community members are likely to benefit from a holistic plan that creates affordable housing while also addressing its impact on other areas of life.

The YMCA appreciates the opportunity to provide feedback and is thankful for your leadership in investing in the Jamaica community. The JPN has been years in the making and as a stakeholder in the Jamaica community, the YMCA looks forward to the positive outcomes such as the creation of stable housing, safe space for children to learn and play in, seniors are cared for, infrastructure works reliably, and community organizations are equipped to lead the way in shaping the neighborhood's future.

If you have any questions, please contact me at cdew@ymcanyc.org or Sharon Levy, SVP of Public Affairs at the YMCA of Greater New York at slevy@ymcanyc.org.



Department of Urban Studies

Natalie Bump Vena
Assistant Professor

September 12, 2025

I am testifying against the Jamaica Neighborhood Plan because it would accelerate gentrification, while failing to provide enough units of real affordable housing for the neighborhood's Black and brown residents. Designed to entice real estate development, this plan is a bad deal for Jamaica residents.

The Jamaica rezoning's boosters misleadingly assert that its provisions for mandatory inclusionary housing would prevent residential displacement. Queens Borough President Donovan Richards and Dan Garodnick, Director of the Department of City Planning and Chair of the City Planning Commission, have said in public hearings that the rezoning would create 4,000 income restricted units. However, the draft environmental impact statement gives different figures, stating "approximately 2,500-3,744" such units would be built (ES-1). This range reflects the four different MIH options that city council could apply. The highest affordable percentage would be available under MIH Option 2—at 30% of floor area. This undesirable choice would create apartments for relatively higher-income households (an average income of 80% AMI in affordable units). The Jamaica rezoning, however, would likely produce less than 3,744 units: during the Queens Borough President's public hearing, Richards repeatedly advocated for MIH Option 1, reserving 25% of floor area for income-restricted apartments.

Option 1 would fail to create enough affordable units for Jamaica residents. Only 10% of floor area would be set aside for residents making 40% of AMI. In 2025, 40% of AMI for a family of four in New York City is \$64,800. It is \$45,360 for a single person. According to the American Community Survey (2019-2023), the Jamaica neighborhood's median household income is \$59,944. The percentage of households making under \$50,000 is 41.2%, indicating that 10% of floor area is woefully inadequate in a community where new, luxury development would continue to fuel rising rents, eradicating any affordable market-rate units left in the neighborhood.

Moreover, since the [2024 Noel settlement](#) rolled back community preference,¹ Jamaica residents would only have access to 600-800 apartments (15% to 20% of affordable units) under Garodnick and Richards's high estimate. HPD also plans to develop 34 apartments for affordable homeownership and 83 affordable rental units on city-owned property. Again, under the *Noel* settlement, that is a piddly 5-7 affordable homes and 12-16 affordable rentals for Jamaica residents.

Finally, the plan would downzone wide swaths of Jamaica from M1 to M2 and M3 Districts, imperiling communities already struggling with pollution from cement mixing factories and waste transfer stations. The region is now emblematic of environmental racism, and the rezoning would further enable heavy industry to locate right next to residential homes. This is an unacceptable outcome for a plan that aims to "create a climate-resilient and environmentally just Jamaica," according to DCP's March 2025 booklet for the Jamaica Neighborhood Plan.

I welcome you to contact me at natalie.vena@qc.cuny.edu to discuss any aspect of my comments.

Sincerely,

Natalie Bump Vena, J.D., Ph.D.

¹ Chris Janaro, "Community Preferences Curtailed: City's Affordable Housing Lotteries Face Changing Dynamics," *City Limits*, January 26, 2024, <https://citylimits.org/community-preferences-curtailed-citys-affordable-housing-lotteries-face-changing-dynamics/>

Subject Jamaica Neighborhood Plan
September 9th hearing

From Lisa Edwards
[REDACTED]

To: testimony@council.nyc.gov
<testimony@council.nyc.gov>

Date Sep 12 at 1:57 PM

My name is Lisa Edwards. I'm submitting this testimony against the proposed Jamaica Neighborhood/Rezoning Plan; September 9, 2025 hearing held by the Subcommittee on Zoning and Franchises

I've been a resident of Jamaica, Queens for 25 years and own a coop in Downtown Jamaica. My siblings are homeowners in St. Albans and Queens Village.

I've raised my children here. They learned how to swim at the Jamaica YMCA and took

the Jamaica YMCA and took art classes at the Jamaica Center for Art and Learning ("JCAL"). However, now they are being priced out of the neighborhood they were born in.

I grew up in Harlem and I've seen how rezoning there and in other primarily Black and Brown communities have impacted affordability and equity, and led to gentrification, displacement of Black and brown families, huge increases in rents and property taxes, loss of small businesses and home ownership, and the erasure of the culture of our people who make our neighborhoods home.

The city planning commission, other city agencies and our own representatives are trying to sell this plan with promises

of affordable housing, job opportunities, and improvements in quality of life.

But affordable to who? Not the majority of current residents, or our children who are the next generation of Jamaica's current renters and homeowners. These units are priced far above what local residents can afford. Many Jamaica residents earn under 50% of the Area Median Income, but the Jamaica Rezoning Plan targets people earning 80% to 120% AMI.

We know that both adults and young adults, including college graduates, are struggling to acquire decent paying jobs that would allow people to pay for units the DCP claim are affordable. There are not enough

affordable units in this plan to meet the needs of Jamaica residents. The majority of the units being created under this plan are luxury units which are unaffordable. The plan relies on private developers to incorporate affordable units and address our other concerns. Private developers interest is in profit, it is not in preserving the Black and brown people of Jamaica Queens.

Community organizations and faith based institutions that stand to benefit from the Jamaica Rezoning Plan have been targeted for participation and given positions on the steering committee to beef up public support of this plan under the guise of benefiting our community and a future promise of access to build a miniscule amount of

| affordable coops and housing.

| However, city officials and DCP have not conducted meaningful outreach to individual Jamaica residents to ensure their participation and inclusion in this process.

| Residents have not been given the opportunity to serve on the steering committee.

There should have been mailings, leafleting, and tabling throughout the targeted area, at every major transportation hub, every apartment building, and other direct outreach efforts to homeowners, renters and public housing

residents, and there still can be. Holding meetings without having effective outreach is not enough. In light of the increased diversity of the Jamaica community, outreach should have also been conducted in multiple languages

like Spanish and Bengali.

I personally learned of the rezoning plan, a year after it started. I only heard about the September 9, 2025, hearing through the grapevine. I did not receive any notice from DCP or my representatives who were elected to act on behalf of the community they serve.

On the occasions when individual community members were made aware of meetings concerning these plans, they have publicly opposed the plan as it now exists. However, their concerns were discounted, with promises that DCP would look into their concerns, answers will be provided in the future, and there was more time because the plan has not yet been finalized. It has been true

finalized. It has been two years since the process started and DCP still has not provided answers to the residents of Jamaica, Queens and the plan is being advanced to the next level despite this. DCP also strategically edited out every concern raised in every meeting by community residents when showcasing video presentations prepared by DCP which misleadingly implied that the community supported this plan.

Community Boards 8 and 12, which covers the rezoning zone, voted NO and for a PAUSE to the plan. And yet, the plan continues, without addressing our concerns in any concrete way.

I urge city officials to:

- Pause this rezoning process;
- Center real community input, by utilizing the outreach

efforts I mentioned above;

- Obtain written commitment from the private developers to ensure more affordable units, and address the additional community concerns listed below; and
- Create housing that matches the actual incomes of current residents.

- By DCP's own calculations and in their own presentations, we know the need for affordable housing is at rents below \$1500 and the larger need is for rents below \$1000. Almost none of the affordable housing promised by DCP meets these needs.

This plan should not move forward until we have written commitment by DCP, HPD and

the private developers seeking to profit off this plan that issues of affordability, displacement, and quality of life issues will be addressed. The promises of increased job opportunities should be clearly defined and a plan developed to ensure these jobs will be permanent and available to residents of the greater Jamaica area.

The following additional

concerns that residents have repeatedly raised have not been addressed in this plan.

- School overcrowding
- Infrastructure: sewage, flooding, air quality
- Sanitation. Trash cans overflowing on every corner or are non existing .
- Increased people density causing increase in street traffic
- Lack of parking

- Lack of recreational programs for our children and career programs and opportunities for our young adults
- Lack of green outdoor spaces
- Lack of hospitals and pharmacies
- Lack of supermarkets and fresh produce

Why do programs, resources and services that can address these needs only come to our communities after luxury housing is built, neighborhoods are gentrified, Black and brown residents are displaced, and our culture erased? Why aren't these needs being addressed now, or already included in the plan.

In prior townhalls there were discussion tables set up for Jamaica residents to provide

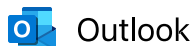
suggestions on how the culture of Jamaica Queens can be preserved throughout this Rezoning process. Why do you need a table dedicated to this. You need it because you already know that this plan brings an erasure of our culture and Black and Brown people. This should not be

condoned nationally, and it should not be condoned here in Jamaica, Queens

Enough is enough. Create True Affordable Housing Units. Stop Gentrification. Stop Displacement. Vote No.

Lisa Edwards





Outlook

[EXTERNAL] Additional testimony support on Jamaica Neighborhood Plan (JNP) and Parking Concerns

From Abu Nayeem [REDACTED]
Date Fri 9/12/2025 10:10 AM
To Land Use Testimony <landusetestimony@council.nyc.gov>

CAUTION: This email originated from outside of the organization. Do not click links or open attachments unless you recognize the sender and know the content is safe. Report suspected phishing emails with the Phish Alert Button or forward them to phish@oti.nyc.gov as an attachment.

Good morning city council,

My name is Abu Nayeem, Jamaica Queens resident. I provided an in-person testimony at the hearing about secure bike parking at transit hubs and sidewalk extension on Archer near Merrick Blvd.

I support the plan, but I want the DOT (and other applicable agencies) to address the serious concerns of parking.

I've read the DOT traffic analysis of the Hillside bus redesign, and there was indication that many non-local drivers traverse through the streets. These are indicators that outsiders are treating Jamaica as a "park and ride".

*Note: this problem persist in any transit hub at the boundaries.

As a field-team member at a transit org,
I've talked to a handful of locales that are doing this right now. There are two categories of drivers:

- 1) Locales that live close by to Jamaica, but public transit and/or micro-mobility is not reliable. They purchase a car to just drive to the hub and park in the area
- 2) Long-distance drivers coming from Nassau, Long Island and elsewhere. They could possibly drive to their destination directly; however it's much cheaper and possibly faster to do a "park and ride". Consider the cost savings (FREE Parking + No tolls + less traffic stress). I know of some persons doing this. There are many immigrant communities in Queens, with some individuals promoting individualism and over the collective good.

Under both of these scenarios, we have drivers that are contributing to locale congestion, remove parking for local residents and commercial customers. With the increase density from JNP, the systems will be more stressed.

I'm curious what strategies do DOT and city agency have to address this.

Here are my recommendations:

- 1) Increase micro-mobility options for locales to access transit hub (my in-person testimony)
- 2) If possible, implement residential permitting and/or metered parking on commercial streets. For the former, I believe this is only allowed in private streets. For metered parking at commercial zone, there can be heavier financial penalties for longer stays and/or strict hourly limits combined with traffic enforcement.
- 3) we can design Jamaica to be a low-traffic neighborhood, reducing their comfort going through Jamaica. I've written and published an op-ed in AMNY about this

<https://www.amny.com/opinion/cut-through-traffic-what-we-can-do-about-it/>

Final Thought:

To reiterate my concerns, Jamaica (and other outer+borough) CANNOT continue to be a Park and Ride for both a prosperous Jamaica and expanding transit mobility.

Thank you for listening
Abu Nayeem

P.S. my apologies for any grammatical errors. I wrote this while heading to work.

~Abu Nayeem

Field Team Ambassador at Transportation Alternatives

[Founder/Programmer of the NYC Open Data Initiative](#)

MS Agricultural and Resource Economics from UC Berkeley



Outlook

[EXTERNAL] Support Jamaica Plan

From Alma Reyes 
Date Tue 9/9/2025 1:02 PM
To Land Use Testimony <landusetestimony@council.nyc.gov>

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I tried to give my testimony in person but I couldn't stay after 1 pm ,because my work . So I send by this way

My name is Alma Reyes a member Queens Power, I have lived in Queens since 1992 and I have experienced struggling to pay my rent.
Therefore I support the Jamaica Plan in bringing 100% affordable housing to Queens, NOW!

Thank you



TESTIMONY OF ANDREA SCARBOROUGH
115-05 179TH STREET ADDISLEIGH PARK NY 11434

CITY COUNCIL REVIEW HEARING: THE JAMAICA NEIGHBORHOOD PLAN

Good-day members of the Planning and Land-use Committee. My name is Andrea Scarborough, I am a former president of my civic, Addisleigh Park Civic Organization, a Board Member of the Queens Solid Waste Advisory Board, a Board Member of Anthropocene Alliance a national Climate Justice and Environmental Justice organization and a Board Member of the Southeast Queens Residents Environmental Justice Coalition (SQREJC). SQREJC is an organization that advocates for environmental policy changes and tangible improvements in the Southeast Queens community. Today I come before you speaking as a concerned resident of the Queens, Jamaica community opposed to the Industrial upzoning from M1-2 to M2-3A in the Liberty Ave area.

Speaking as a resident that lives in proximity to Liberty Ave, I question why there would be any consideration to upzoning our community for heavier industrial use. The area is overburdened with waste transfer stations that belong in an M3 zoned area, trucks spewing emissions and idling, auto salvage junk yard businesses and cement manufacturing companies that generate dust along Liberty Ave. These businesses sit in the center of a residential community, 400 feet from a park and surrounded by one and two-family homes.

In July 2022, New York State contracted Aclima a tech leader in block level air pollution to measure air pollution by Aclima cars driving along neighborhood streets. The Liberty Ave m1 zoned area was part of the study which revealed high levels of pm 2.5 and black carbon (in the 90/95 percentile) along the Liberty Ave. corridor. We also know that many residents in the area suffer with asthma, the climate justice economic tool listed asthma in the 85%-89% range for the area. We know that black carbon contributes to lung cancer and respiratory diseases. Again, why would there be consideration to upzoning to encourage more potentially noxious uses, increased greenhouse gas emissions and increased noise.

Industrial Upzoning of the area would be a violation of the Environmental Justice Siting Law (EJSL) which was signed into law on December 31st, 2022 and amended on March 3rd, 2023. The law protects against giving any permits for a new project if it determines that the project will add pollution to that disadvantaged community. Liberty Ave is deemed a Disadvantaged Community. Upzoning the Liberty area from M1-2 to M2-3A allows for increased industrial activity and can potentially increase pollution in the existing area violating the EJSL.

Heavier Industrial zoning does not belong directly opposite to residents' homes. That has always been the Dept. of City Planning NYC guidelines. Under the new manufacturing zoning districts M1-2A are designed for a wide range of manufacturing and related uses which can conform to a high level of performance standards. Manufacturing establishments of this type, are within completely enclosed buildings, and provide a buffer between Residence (or

Commercial) Districts and other industrial uses which involve more objectionable influences. M1-2A zoning has been proposed for the Dunkirk area (which is adjacent to the Liberty Ave area) which like the Liberty Ave. area was originally M1 zoned. The zoning of M1-2A is appropriate for Dunkirk St. However, the newly designed M2-3A zoning is not appropriate for the Liberty Ave area. City Planning states that this type of zoning is targeted to districts that are designed for manufacturing and related activities which can meet a medium level of performance standards. Enclosure of such activities is not normally required except in areas along the boundary of a Residential District. City Planning does not mandate a buffer under this zoning; performance standards are medium level indicating benchmarks that are average or satisfactory allowing for the minimum required and inappropriate for an area that is predominantly residential. Although enclosure will be required due to its proximity to residents' homes, the zoning will not protect against increased pollution in the community due to increased industrial traffic.

This is clearly environmental injustice to upzone the industrial use in a residential neighborhood, overburdening even more an already overburdened community.

It was never the intent to place M2 and M3 zones right next to where people are raising their families. Instead, I ask the city council to consider providing commercial services that our neighbors need such as an urgent care or a fresh food supermarket. A community center would serve the needs of our youth as well as our seniors. These services can be implemented without any upzoning. The proposed zoning map needs to be corrected and if possible downzoned so it looks like the existing community or at minimum be allowed the same zoning of M1-2A as was proposed for the Dunkirk Street area.

Thank you.

Andrea Scarborough
Southeast Queens Resident

Concerned Citizens for Downtown Jamaica

To: New York City Council
Adrienne Adams, Speaker

Fr: Concerned Citizens for Downtown Jamaica
Carol J. Hunt, Facilitator

Re: **The Jamaica Neighborhood Plan**
NY City Council Hearing

Dt: September 9, 2025

Thank you for the opportunity to submit in writing to this body some thoughts and response to the many meetings and conversations held in Jamaica regarding rezoning for future growth and development.

The following written statement comes in the name of Concerned Citizens for Downtown Jamaica (CCDJ) a civic association in existence for about 8-9 years. CCDJ was established to have other stakeholders join them in addressing many issues that evolved when the homeless and homeless shelters continued to proliferate the community and seemed to be out of control.

CCDJ response to The Jamaica Plan Re-zoning before the City Council is limited In scope because the issues that the immediate downtown area of Jamaica is centered on homelessness and the accompanying challenges it brings.

The staff and invited guest that addressed the purpose of the rezoning was executed very well. It included wherever possible creative

opportunities to engage community members and anyone who participated on a given day.

The issues identified such as, infrastructure, green/open spaces, quality of life. housing, arts & culture, economic opportunity & security, education, affordability, health/safety, and transportation cover every area of life.

The above list covers every aspect of living that Jamaica residents would want for a full and prosperous existence regardless of geography. However, in downtown Jamaica, services have declines over the past 30-50 years, Each need on the above list does not get the attention or budgetary support they once had. The need is greater considering the elementary schools that have been built. They are evidence of new “American” families with cultures 365 degrees different than what they have found here. The infrastructure has not kept pace with the change in demographics.

In light of this. The immediate needs out-weigh the long-term vision of city urban planners. It requires a suspension in thought of what is being lived with every day in the hope the vision 10-15 years later will materialize. Perhaps. Who knows.

Issues of Immediate Concern

Cleanliness

Garbage – everywhere

Dirty Streets

Prostitution

Venders on Jamaica Avenue

165 Street Mall

Bikes

Scooters

If the City addressed these issues on a regular basis without having residents “scream” for them when it becomes intolerable then a look to the future would seem more likely because the present is being cared for.

Thank you.



TO: New York City Council - Subcommittee on Zoning and Franchises
CC: Councilmember Dr. Nantasha Williams
FROM: Downtown Jamaica Partnership
DATE: September 09, 2025
RE: Written Testimony in support of the Jamaica Neighborhood Plan Public Hearing on September 09, 2025

Dear Members of the New York City Council and Subcommittee on Zoning and Franchises,

On behalf of the Downtown Jamaica Partnership Business Improvement District (“DJP”), and the businesses, property owners and stakeholders we support and represent, below are the primary issues greatly impacting the quality of life for Downtown Jamaica’s residents, workers, business owners, property owners and visitors. The Downtown Jamaica Partnership, Jamaica’s Business Improvement District (“BID”) organization, works to beautify the neighborhood, support our small businesses and enable our commercial district to thrive. This rezoning is a tremendous opportunity not only to improve the quality of the experience of being in Jamaica – in any context – but to position Jamaica as a beacon for other communities. We envision Jamaica as the vibrant, forward-thinking, community-centered heart of southeast Queens that it is meant to be. We thank you for the opportunity to share these concerns and requests, and express thanks to Council Member Williams, and the department of City Planning for their work.

Item 1: Lighting: We need better, brighter, and more reliable street lighting – especially along Jamaica Avenue, the 165th Street Mall, Parsons Boulevard, Rufus King Park (and all surrounding streets), Archer Avenue, Sutphin Boulevard, in and around the AirTrain and under the LIRR – with a special focus on pedestrian walkways and side streets. While we’re thrilled at the recent restoration and installation of bright lights under the LIRR trestle – thanks to GJDC and Senator Comrie – we need broader efforts to restore and install lighting that encompass the entirety of Downtown Jamaica. Lighting is a critical part of both the perception of public safety as well as the reality, and it serves as a powerful statement about the level of stewardship in a given neighborhood. It is not enough for the lighting in Downtown Jamaica to be merely adequate. It is absolutely essential for a major transportation and commercial district like Downtown Jamaica to have well-placed lighting that is consistently operational and well-maintained.

Item 2: Greenery: We’d like to see more greenery, including trees, large sidewalk planters, hanging flower baskets and planted tree beds with tree guards. Green rooftops, terraces, and planted building setbacks should be incorporated into every new development that results from the rezoning. In-ground plantings and intentionally placed planters are an important part of placemaking – especially in public spaces and plazas – as they solidify a sense of caretaking and stewardship. Vegetation is also critical in alleviating elevated temperatures in urban areas, and we strongly advocate for a greener Jamaica.

Item 3: Pedestrian Walkways and Cameras: We'd like to see improved pedestrian walkways throughout Downtown Jamaica, but particularly along Archer Avenue near the Parsons and Archer bus station. The current sidewalks are narrow, inaccessible in some spaces, and underlit. Capital investment to improve the York College underpasses, with strong, evenly distributed lighting, well-monitored and well-placed cameras, and wider pedestrian walkways would improve safety and encourage connectivity for students between the campus and the Downtown Jamaica Commercial District.

Item 4: Busway Removal or Modification: We continue to request the removal of, or a serious modification to the Busway along Jamaica Avenue. We would like to see the restoration of at least one set of travel lanes for vehicles to navigate freely down Jamaica Avenue, installation of wider pedestrian walkways, the addition of bicycle lanes for bikes and the newly imposed e-scooters, along with the restoration of parking along Jamaica Avenue. Street parking would enable those traveling to Jamaica to patronize our businesses to park easily and would help to restore the vital foot traffic and shopping to support the historic, economic engine that is Jamaica Avenue.

Item 5: Public Spaces: We'd like more investment in public spaces, especially considering the increase to the school-aged population, and new school buildings currently in development. Public spaces should include amenities, like shaded seating, play structures, splash parks, dog runs or dog parks, water-refilling stations, space for live performances or other events, and community garden spaces among other amenities.

Item 6: Investment in Food Preparation Incubator Spaces: We want to ensure our small businesses aren't priced out as Jamaica changes. We suggest considering something akin to a redevelopment of the Jamaica Market here in Jamaica, or Industry Kitchen by Grand Central, to enable smaller entrepreneurs who provide much-needed food establishments in our district to get a foothold in their business, to grow and to scale up as desired, and to help expand creative food culture in Downtown Jamaica.

Item 7: Investment in the 165th Street Pedestrian Mall: Funding to repave and redesign the 165th Street Mall was not included in the \$62M repaving/streetscape improvement funding announced in 2023. This rezoning is a huge opportunity to rethink the whole space, which is such an asset for Downtown Jamaica and a rare treasure for all of NYC. A redesigned space could include more permanent features to promote pedestrian uses, like permanent but movable traffic bollards, climbing structures and dedicated space for children, and other elements to enable community building events and activities, like electrical hookups to enable holiday lighting, public art exhibits, holiday, craft and green markets, live performance, music, a Citi bike Station and more.

Item 8: Investment in Jamaica's Cultural Buildings: We'd like to see considerable capital investment in Jamaica's cultural buildings – Jamaica Center for Arts and Learning, its space at the Jamaica Performing Arts Center, the King Manor Museum, and the historic Tabernacle church building, among others. Focused attention on restoring and revitalizing these cultural and architectural assets will enable greater access to enriching events and activities for our current residential population and for the influx of anticipated residents, families and visitors. These restored spaces would, in turn, foster more robust

and consistent programming, provide reasons to stay in (and spend money in) Downtown Jamaica, and help to encourage the community to patronize Jamaica's venues when they're looking for social, educational, or artistic activities. These spaces should be new, state of the art, and exciting, and should serve as a beacon for the surrounding communities and beyond.

Item 9: Alignment with Station Plaza Project: All new streetscape elements planned for Jamaica should be planned synergistically and should be aligned with the EDC's design for the forthcoming Station Plaza by the AirTrain. Ensuring a holistic design process for the entire district will help to unify the commercial area and solidify a sense of place. Design elements should include planters, bike lanes, and trees. Conversations between DCP, DOT, EDC and other stakeholders in Downtown Jamaica should be regular, inclusive, collaborative and productive to enable this alignment.

Item 10: Crosswalks: We'd like to request and advocate for additional crosswalks – specifically at the west-side intersection of Jamaica Avenue and Union Hall, which is currently a dangerous place to cross, yet is one of the most heavily populated blocks along the Avenue. Its disjointed and chaotic traffic patterns, along with fast-moving buses and a surplus of motorized mopeds, e-scooters and pedestrians, create consistently dangerous street-crossing conditions. A crosswalk at this location in particular would greatly improve pedestrian safety.

Item 11: Downtown Jamaica Gateway: We'd like to request a new physical gateway, expressing, "Welcome to Downtown Jamaica" and funded by the city, as seen elsewhere in critical commercial and cultural corridors in New York City and worldwide. This is a vital placemaking tool and would be beneficial for wayfinding, for promoting the neighborhood, and for connecting Downtown Jamaica with other major transportation hubs, such as JFK Airport.

Item 12: Street Furniture and Amenities, and Greater Connectivity: We would like more public seating, more bike racks, bike lanes and greater connectivity by bicycle between different parts of Jamaica, retail or food-based kiosks, water features, bottle refilling stations, and Citi bike stations. We also emphatically request better maintenance of DOT-owned infrastructure, including streetlights, roadway markings, crossing poles (some of which fall over when their buttons are pressed), and plazas.

Item 13: Vendor Market: Street vending has become a citywide trend, but its impact on Jamaica Avenue is particularly acute. The unregulated growth in vendors has created significant challenges for brick-and-mortar businesses, contributed to sidewalk congestion, and increased street-level disorder. In response, some storefront operators have begun vending themselves, compounding these issues. Illegal dumping by vendors places a heavy burden on city sanitation services, overwhelms the 311 system, and exceeds the capacity of the BID's supplemental cleaning resources. Additionally, many food vendors operate without proper hygiene, refrigeration, or safe fuel sources, posing serious public health and safety risks, as well as air quality concerns.

While we recognize that many vendors are working in good faith, the lack of structure and enforcement is unsustainable. We support the establishment of a comprehensive, managed vending program that includes designated locations, enforceable health and safety standards, waste disposal protocols, vendor education, and consistent enforcement. A dedicated coordinator should oversee registration,

encouraging more programming around it. A collaborative project between York and SUNY Buffalo (images attached, pp. 29-39) shows the way art can assist in mitigating air quality issues in the Liberty Avenue area that will worsen with upzoning. Capital grants can support their realization. Art can be involved in improving the urban fabric through artist techniques in public engagement, not just murals and performances.

In 1971, artist-activist, and Jamaica resident, Tom Lloyd – who will have a major retrospective this fall at the Studio Museum in Harlem – conducted a Community Artist Cultural Survey with York students across Jamaica to conceive the Store Front Museum (image attached, p. 1). The first museum in Queens, a museum of African-American art, history and culture, it served Jamaica out of a former tire shop for fifteen years with 47 exhibitions and 250 performances. Yet, rather than bring different visions of the future together, the City facilitated unnecessary displacement of one by the other, evicting the Store Front Museum for the York College gym. It's my hope that, as rezoning goes forward, it can produce a new model for art and urban planning – a model for a just redistributive city that values Jamaica's history and its art as its vision.



Before DASNY/CUNY Public Art - Tom Lloyd & Store Front Museum, 1971 - 1987, on York College Urban Renewal Area
Exterior, front and side of Store Front Museum Building,
 Queens, New York, NY. Photographed circa 1981. Courtesy of the Queens Borough Public Library, Archives, Store Front Museum Records.



Former Store Front Museum location, now Health and Physical Education Building, York College, The City University of New York, Queens, New York, NY, built 1988-1990. Photographed 2025. Photo credit: Tawasi Clarke.



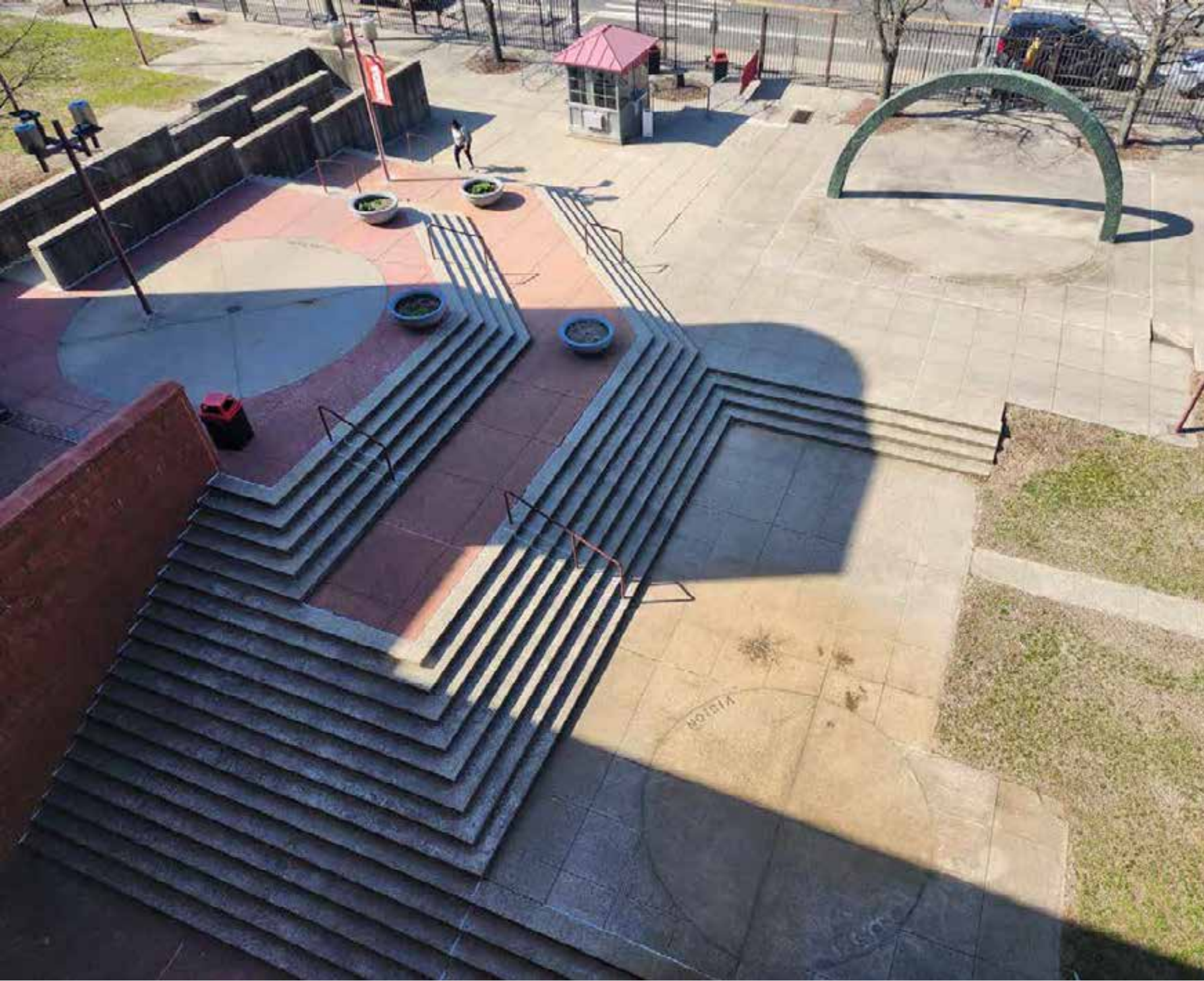
DASNY/CUNY Public Art **James Brown, *Marketplace*, 1986**, oil on canvas, 64 x 87 inches. York College CUNY, Jamaica, Queens, New York, NY. Photographed 2025. Photo: Emily Verla Bovino.



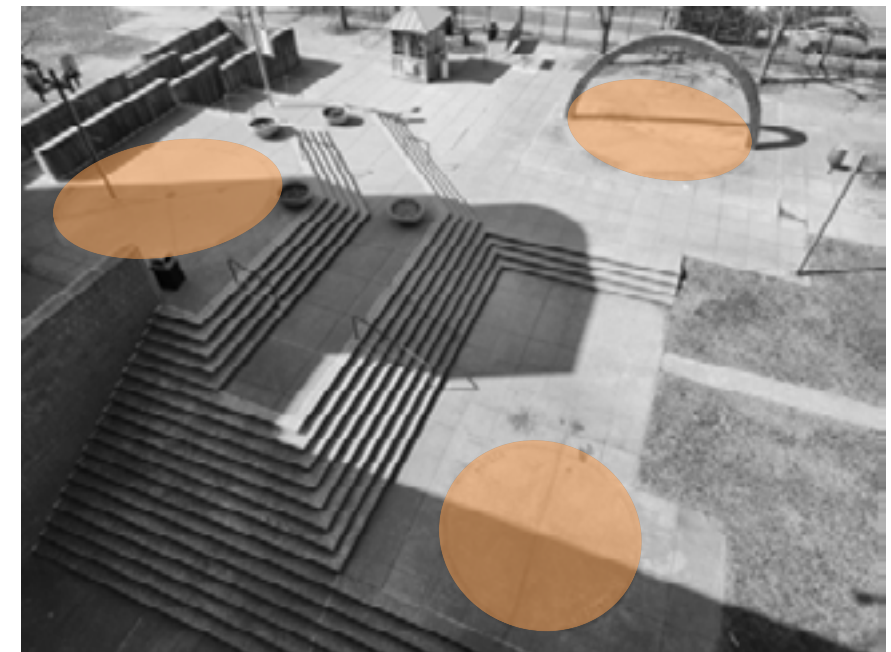
DASNY/CUNY Public Art Elizabeth Catlett,
***Torso*, 1985**, mahogany, 35 x 19 x 16 inches, York
College CUNY, Jamaica, Queens, NY.
Photographed 2025. Photo: Emily Verla Bovino.



DASNY/CUNY Public Art Houston Conwill, *Arc*, 1986, bronze arch with reliefs: 26 feet wide x 13 feet high; concrete circle: 26 feet diameter. York College CUNY, Jamaica, Queens, New York, NY. Photographed 2025. Photo: Emily Verla Bovino.



DASNY/CUNY Public Art
Houston Conwill, *Arc*, 1986,
bronze and concrete, York College
CUNY, Jamaica, Queens, New York,
NY. Photographed 2025.
Photo: Emily Verla Bovino.



Three concrete circles of Conwill's *Arc*:
Memory, Vision and Imagination



DASNY/CUNY Public Art **Stephen Antonakos, *Neon For York*, 1986**, neon and metal, 12.2 high x 3.5 feet diameter. York College CUNY, Jamaica, Queens, NY. Photographed early 2000s. Photo: York College & Michael Smith.



DASNY/CUNY Public Art

Romare H. Bearden, *Recollection Pond*, 1975, tapestry, 60 x 70 inches, produced by Gloria F. Ross through Felletin weavers, France, or Dovecot Studios, Scotland. York College CUNY, Jamaica, Queens, NY. Photographed 2025. Photo: Emily Verla Bovino.



DASNY/CUNY Public Art **Marta Chilindron, *Opus III*, ca. 1986**, plywood panels, 15.8 x 5.3 x 7.25 feet. York College CUNY, Jamaica, Queens, NY (demolished by unknown parties). Photographed early 2000s. Photo: Michael Smith.



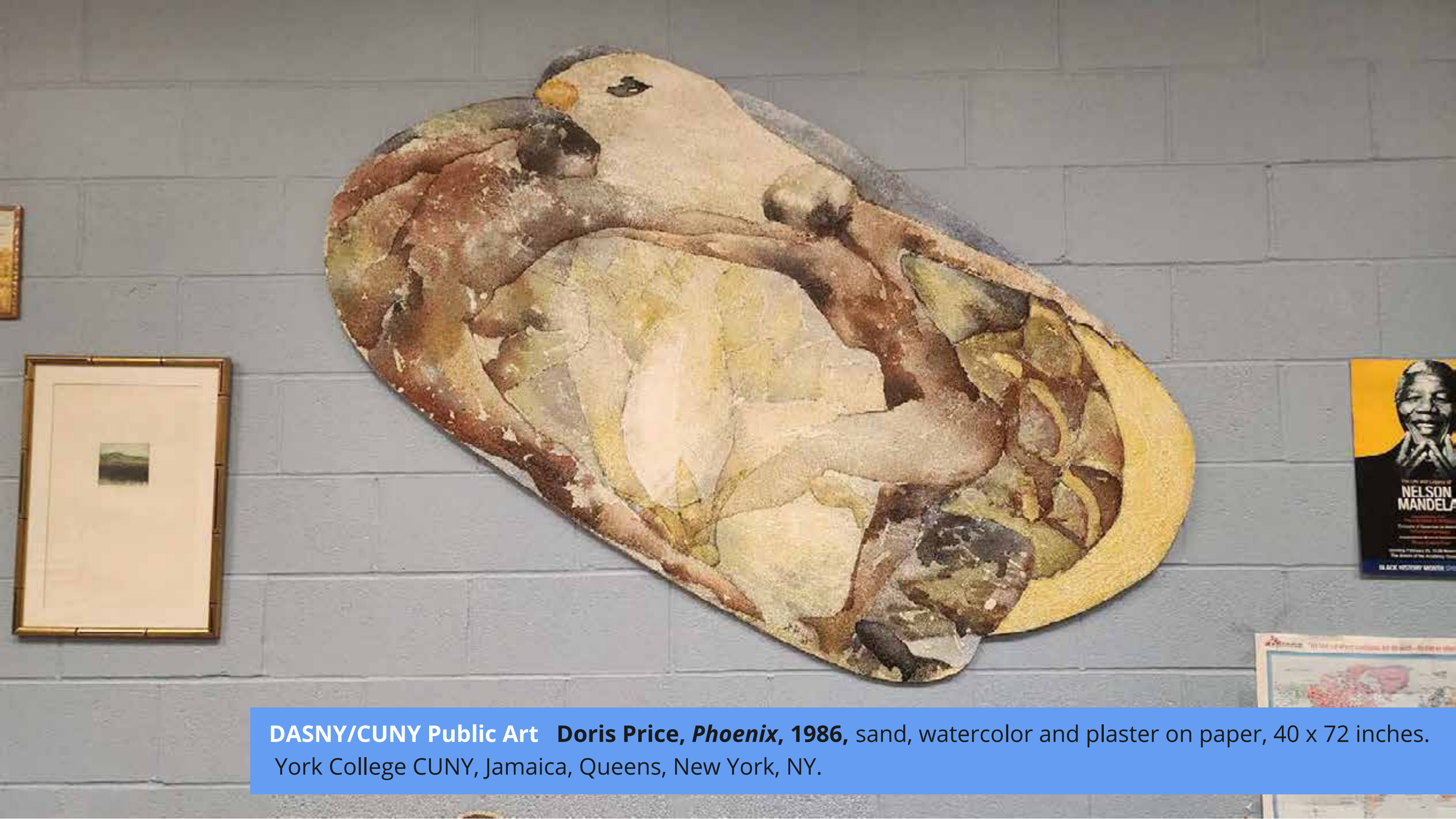
DASNY/CUNY Public Art **Sam Gilliam, *Solar Canopy*, 1986**, painted aluminum, 34 x 12 feet. York College CUNY, Jamaica, Queens, New York, NY. Photographed 2025. Photo: Tawasi Clarke.



DASNY/CUNY Public Art **Richard Hunt, *Build-Grow*, 1986**, galvanized steel, 13 x 4 feet. York College CUNY, Jamaica, Queens, New York, NY. Photographed 2025 and early 2000s. Photo: Emily Verla Bovino & Michael Smith.



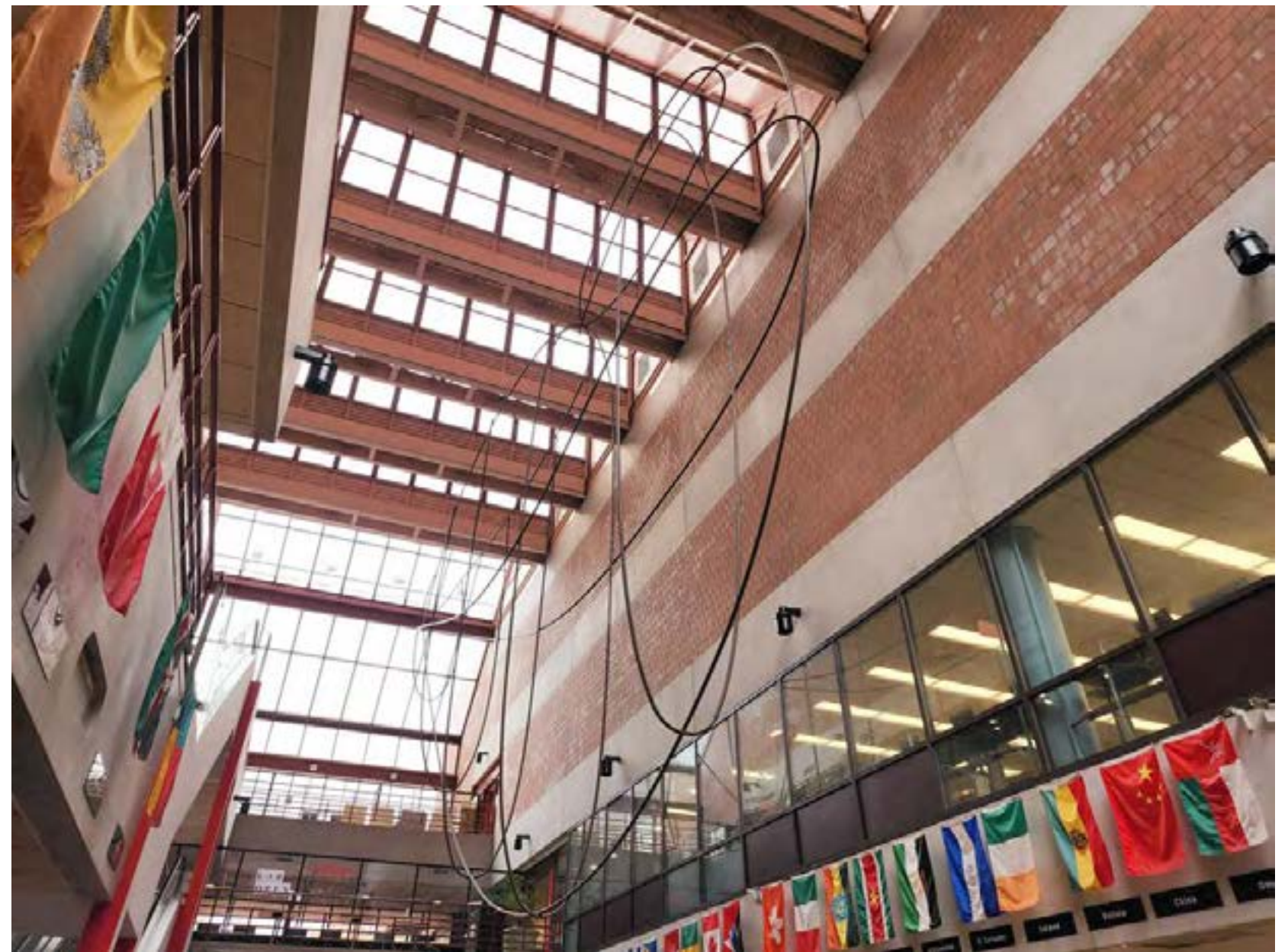
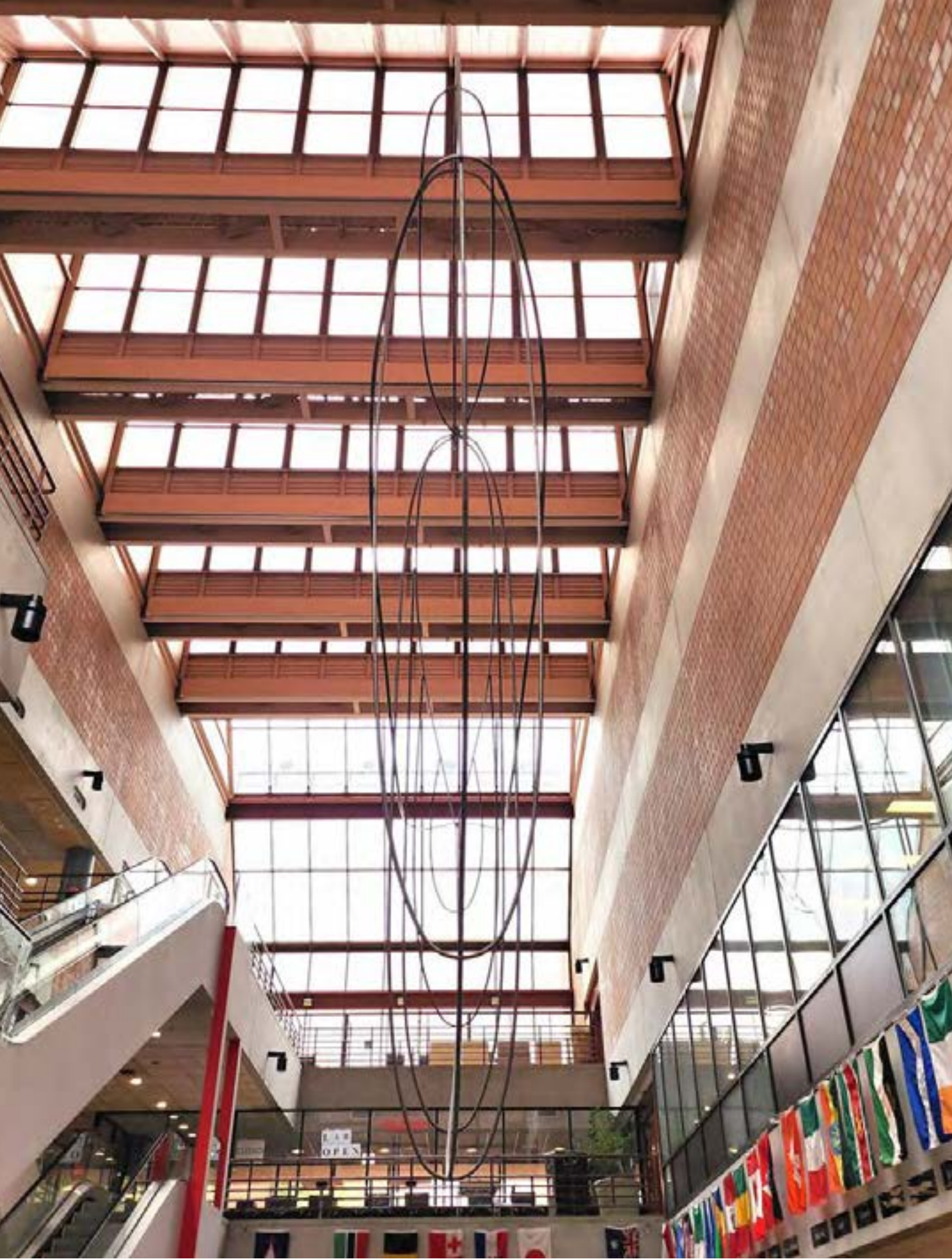
DASNY/CUNY Public Art **Al Loving, *Untitled*, 1994**, paint and cardboard collage, 12 x 25 feet.
York College CUNY, Jamaica, Queens, NY. Photographed 2025. Photo: Nicholas Fraser.



DASNY/CUNY Public Art **Doris Price, *Phoenix*, 1986**, sand, watercolor and plaster on paper, 40 x 72 inches.
York College CUNY, Jamaica, Queens, New York, NY.



DASNY/CUNY Public Art **Martin Puryear, *Ark*, 1986**, copper pipe and suspension cables, 72 x 30 x 3 feet. York College CUNY, Jamaica, Queens, New York, NY. Photographed 2025. Photos: Tawasi Clarke & Emily Verla Bovino.



DASNY/CUNY Public Art **Martin Puryear, *Ark*, 1986**,
copper pipe and suspension cables, 72 x 30 x 3 feet.
York College CUNY, Jamaica, Queens, New York, NY.
Photographed 2025. Photo: Emily Verla Bovino.



DASNY/CUNY Public Art

Frank Stella, *Brzozdowce*, 1985,
mixed media, 10.3 x 7.4 feet x 8 inches.
York College CUNY, Jamaica, Queens,
NY. Photographed 2025.
Photo: Emily Verla Bovino



5-Years of Programs 2018 Southeast Queens Biennial: A Locus of Moving Points.
York College CUNY, Jamaica, Queens, New York, NY. Photo: Nicholas Fraser.



5-Years of Programs 2020 Southeast Queens Biennial: Writing Home.
 York College CUNY and Jamaica Center for Arts and Learning, Jamaica,
 Queens, New York, NY. Photo: Nicholas Fraser.



5-Years of Programs 2022 Southeast Queens Biennial: Formations. York College CUNY and King Manor Museum, Jamaica, Queens, New York, NY. Photo: Nicholas Fraser.



5-Years of Programs 2022 Southeast Queens Biennial: Formations. York College CUNY and King Manor Museum, Jamaica, Queens, New York, NY. Photo: Nicholas Fraser.



5-Years of Programs Margaret Rose Vendryes: An Unstoppable Force, 2023.
York College Arts Gallery CUNY, Jamaica, Queens, New York, NY. Photo: Nicholas Fraser.



5-Years of Programs Southeast Queens Triennial Research Program: Roving Reverie, 2024-2025 (Prep & Practice Sessions, November 2024 to March 2025), York College CUNY, Jamaica, Queens, New York, NY. Photographed 2024-2025. Photo: Emily Verla Bovino.



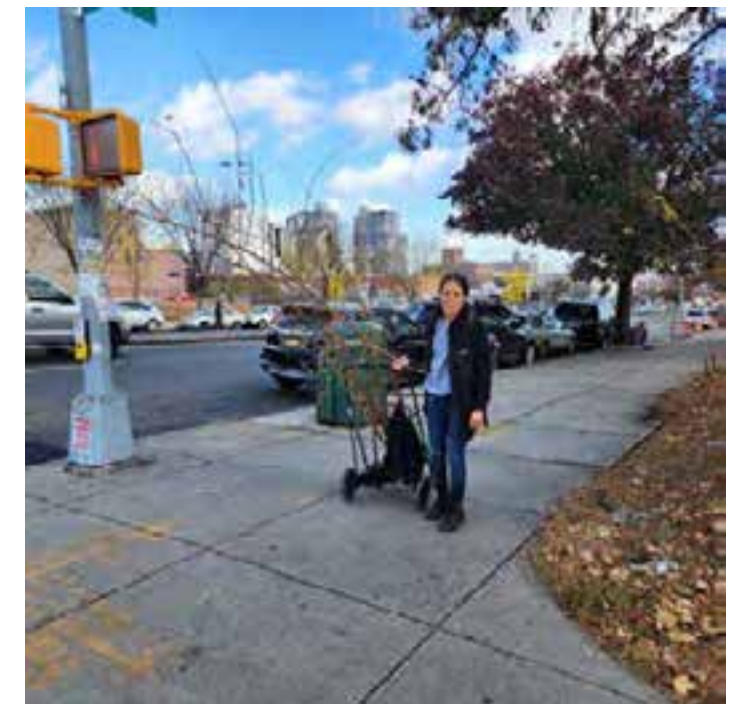
5-Years of Programs Southeast Queens Triennial Research Program: Roving Reverie, 2024-2025 (Event: Performing and Fine Arts Day, April 1, 2025), York College CUNY, Jamaica, Queens, New York, NY. Photo: Emily Verla Bovino.



5-Years of Programs Southeast Queens Triennial Research Program: Roving Reverie, 2024-2025 (Event: Performing and Fine Arts Day, April 1, 2025), York College CUNY, Jamaica, Queens, New York, NY. Photos: Emily Verla Bovino & Rejin Leys.



5-Years of Programs Southeast Queens Triennial Research Program: Roving Reverie, 2024-2025 (Event: Performing and Fine Arts Day, April 1, 2025), York College CUNY, Jamaica, Queens, New York, NY. Photo: Emily Verla Bovino.



5-Years of Programs Southeast Queens Triennial Research Program: Roving Reverie, 2024-2025 (Event: Performing and Fine Arts Day, April 1, 2025), York College CUNY, Jamaica, Queens, New York, NY. Photo: Emily Verla Bovino.



5-Years of Programs Southeast Queens Triennial Research Program: Roving Reverie, 2024-2025 (Conclusion of Event: Performing and Fine Arts Day, April 2025), York College CUNY, Jamaica, Queens, New York, NY. Photo: Emily Verla Bovino.



Southeast Queens Artist Alliance (member)

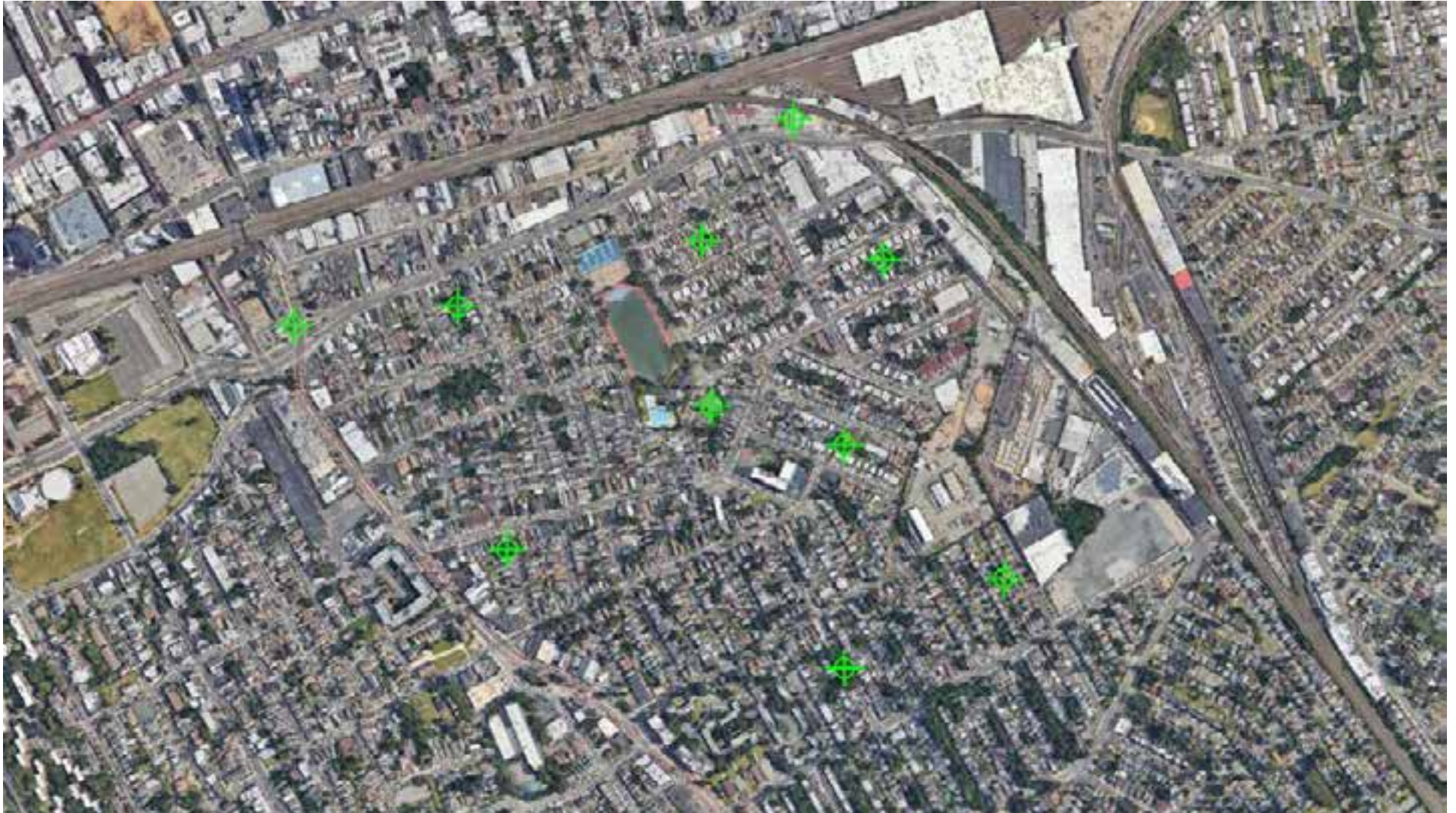
Shervone Neckles, *Domiciliation: Bless this House Installation and Repository*, 2019, York College Arts Gallery CUNY, Jamaica, Queens, NY. Photo: Yao Zu Lu.



Shervone Neckles, *Creative Wellness Gathering Station Happening*, 2016, Jamaica, Queens, NY. Photo: Dominique Sindayiganza.



Southeast Queens Artist Alliance (member)
Rejin Leys, *East River Chronicle*, 2021,
 handmade paper, various dimensions; **(left)**
***Imprisoned Lightning*, 2020,** silkscreen on paper,
 18 x 12 inches. Photo: Rejin Leys.



BRICKTOWN SENTIENT HEDGEROWS

SCHEMATIC DESIGN STRATEGIES

SENTIENT HEDGEROW / MARK SHEPARD with ANTONINA SIMETI, MAREK WALCZAK AND WES HEISS
AUGUST 30, 2024 / with contributions by EMILY VERLA BOVINO (CUNY York)



Hedgerow, a Sentient Hedgerow at the Brooklyn Navy Yard

A Sentient Hedgerow

is an urban landscape intervention that provides opportunities for surrounding communities to engage in the interaction between natural and built systems, conservation, horticulture and environmental health. Native plants and environmental sensors combine in these micro-sites of biodiverse habitat that support various forms of life around them in myriad ways, from easing pollution impacts to tracking these same impacts to facilitate climate action and pollution reduction. The Hedgerow creates a much needed conversa-

tion between human and more-than-human stakeholders, like the butterflies, bees, birds and squirrels that make a vibrant ecosystem, and the artificial intelligence systems that communicate data to support care for these ecosystems. The infrastructure of the Hedgerow generates a series of feedback loops that offer learning, playful response and possibilities for action on behalf of community health. It seasonally transforms over its life-cycle -- growing, generating data, building knowledge and fostering community change.

Climate Action - Green Infrastructure and Nature-Based Solutions

Hedgerows Protect, Sustainably Manage & Restore Natural Systems While Providing Benefits for People & the Environment

1.Reducing Exposure to Air Pollution

- *Protection from Particulate Matter:* Hedges have been shown to soak up significant quantities of particulate matter (i.e. magnetic particles) emitted from vehicular traffic. Integrated into backyard properties and streetscapes, they act as filters on outdoor air to support indoor air quality improvement strategies.
- *Human-scale design:* Streetside hedges at head-height help to block the particulate matter that humans, especially children, are exposed to during daily activities. Hedges integrated into green wall scaffolding around industrial sites and parks can act as buffers.

2. Carbon Sequestration

- *Absorption of CO₂:* Hedgerows capture carbon dioxide from the atmosphere through photosynthesis and store it in their biomass (trees, shrubs, roots) and in the soil. Over time, this carbon becomes sequestered in the soil, reducing the overall concentration of CO₂ in the atmosphere. Sentient Hedgerows can monitor CO₂ with the assistance of Berkeley Atmospheric CO₂ Observation Network.
- *Long-term storage:* Unlike annual crops, the woody vegetation in hedgerows can store carbon for decades or even centuries, providing a stable and long-term sink for atmospheric CO₂.

3. Soil Health Improvement

- *Preventing Soil Erosion:* The root systems of hedgerows stabilize the soil, reducing erosion. Erosion can lead to the release of stored soil carbon back into the atmosphere, so preventing it is crucial for maintaining soil carbon stocks.
- *Enhancing Soil Carbon:* The leaf litter and organic matter from hedgerows contribute to building up soil organic carbon, further enhancing the soil's ability to store carbon.

4. Biodiversity Support

- *Habitat for Wildlife:* Hedgerows provide habitat for a wide range of species, including pollinators, birds, and small mammals. This biodiversity is essential for healthy ecosystems.
- *Biological Pest Control:* By supporting natural predators of crop pests, hedgerows can reduce the need for chemical pesticides, which often have a carbon-intensive production process.

5. Microclimate Regulation

- *Windbreaks:* Hedgerows act as windbreaks, reducing wind speed and thereby lowering the rate of evaporation and soil erosion. This can also help to moderate temperatures and reduce the need for energy-intensive irrigation.
- *Water Retention:* By slowing down water runoff, hedgerows help maintain soil moisture, which is vital for plant growth and maintaining carbon sequestration levels.

6. Easing Urban Heat Island Effects and Flooding

- *Urban Heat Island Effects:* Studies have shown that vegetation in urban areas can cool air temperature when located inside and around buildings and on urban streets. This depends on size, location and type of vegetation, all details that the team will attend to.
- *Flooding:* Hedgerow planting is being explored as a way to reduce the frequency and impact of flood events in the United Kingdom. It can reduce the potential for surface runoff and overland flow.

7. Engaging and Empowering People

- *Hyperlocal Data:* Real-time site data, captured expressed in a variety of ways, connects people to the immediate and long-term changes in their environment and builds knowledge to create connection with the direct impacts of change on individuals.
- *A Feedback Loop:* Empowered by increased awareness of environmental and climate change, people can act to change their behaviors, change the hedge and advocate for policies of care and their enforcement in system-wide behaviors for mitigating effects.

Sentient Hedgerows play a crucial role in reducing greenhouse gas emissions, enhancing carbon storage, supporting ecosystems that are resilient to the impacts of climate change, easing urban heat island effects and flooding, and engaging and empowering people to take action.

Pollution Reduction - Outdoor Air Quality & Community Health Improvement

Hedgerows Include Plant Life that Assists in Limiting Exposure to Pollution & Technologies that Contribute to Monitoring

1. Monitoring Pollution Impacts on Health

- *Instruments:* Sentient Hedgerows include small sensing and monitoring devices to capture an array of air toxics, in particular those emitted by the two waste transfer facilities, the concrete batching plant, and the near-road and mobile-source pollutions that can be connected to their activities in Bricktown.
- *Technologies:* Hedgerows use various sensing technologies, smart irrigation systems, mobile apps, digital platforms and artificial intelligence to create the Hedge's sentience -- its ability to express feelings and sensations. The Hedgerow captures data and communicates it accessibly on an app from sensors through an AI system.

2. Limiting Exposure to Outdoor Air Pollutants

- *Near-Road Pollution:* Industrial traffic around Bricktown can expose people to a mix of harmful pollutants like PM as well as carbon monoxide, benzene, nitrogen dioxide, ozone, ultrafine particles, black carbon, PAHs and metals. By tracking these pollutants, Sentient Hedgerows can contribute to limiting exposure.
- *Mobile-Source Pollution:* On-road vehicles like commercial trucks, and nonroad vehicles including engines from heavy equipment, trains (LIRR) and small engines and tools used on and around the industrial sites are the cause of dangerous air pollution impacting Bricktown residents. Sensing technologies in Hedgerows can provide near-source monitoring of the most relevant of the 30 HAPs.

3. Mobilizing and Supporting Changes to Land Use & Zoning

- *Industrial Business Zone (IBZ):* A Sentient Hedgerow has been implemented in the Brooklyn Navy Yard, which like the area around Bricktown, is a NYC IBZ. Data collection through Hedgerows can contribute to efforts to change land use in Bricktown, a residential area which has high rates of asthma.
- *Zoning Policies:* The area around Bricktown is currently undergoing draft rezoning. The NYC Dept of City Planning proposes this rezoning may raise property values and encourage two waste transfer facilities and a concrete batching plant to change activities or sell. Tracking pollution levels can provide community members with data for enforcement, changes & new directions in zoning policy.

4. Communicating Air Pollution Results

- *Reduce Exposure During Environmental Emergencies:* Sentient Hedgerows can alert residents to when neighboring industrial facilities are especially active or when environmental conditions exacerbate their impact. A precedent is the the DontFlushMe prototype in Brooklyn. Data collected can assist in reducing exposure.
- *Reduce Exposure Where Risk of Pollution Exposure is High:* Sensing Technologies in a Hedgerow can be designed to notify residents where the risk of pollution exposure is especially high. Residents can avoid these areas, growth can be added to Hedges and data gathered can assist in enforcement and policy solutions.

5. Engaging and Empowering the Community

- *On Air Toxics:* In their interactions with the Sentient Hedgerow -- both in co-designing it and in communicating with it through the AI-driven app -- community members learn about the air toxics in their environment, where they may be coming from, and how they can toxics may be impacting their health.
- *On Monitoring:* The machine learning model used in the AI system that runs the Sentient Hedgerow app can be trained with specific data on monitoring devices so when community members query it, it responds with simple information on environmental data, actions for on-ground self-protection, as well as how pollution monitoring works. The research team will also consult with project partners and community leaders on educational programs about monitoring.

Sentient Hedgerows play a crucial role in monitoring pollution impacts on health with sensing equipment and technologies, limiting exposure to outdoor air pollutants including near-road pollution and mobile-source pollution, mobilizing and supporting changes to land use and zoning, communicating air pollution results and engaging and empowering the community with specific information on air toxics, as well as on how monitoring works.

Bricktown Hedgerows for EPA Community Change Grant (CCG)

Sentient Hedgerows can be the nucleus of the EPA Community Change Grant (CCG) for Bricktown in the following two areas:

- 1) Climate Action Strategy - Green Infrastructure and Nature-Based Solutions, and;
- 2) Pollution Reduction Strategy - Outdoor Air Quality and Community Health Improvements.

With the assistance of our CUNY York colleagues, we propose to co-design a series of hedgerows and their sensing systems with community leaders, the Southeast Queens Residents Environmental Justice Coalition (SQREJC) and residents of the project's target area around and including Bricktown.

Co-design refers to a participatory approach to design, in which community members are equal collaborators in the design process. It is a way of creating environments that are more responsive and appropriate to their inhabitants' and users' practical, cultural, emotional and spiritual needs.

Co-design is a process that is critical to community engagement in the project and its collaborative governance.

The series of co-design workshops with local community members will be organized around questions such as:

- What aspects of your local environment most concern you?
- What questions would you want to be able to ask your Hedge?
- What do you want your Hedge to tell or show you?
- How do you want to communicate with your Hedge?
- Where should the Hedge be located?
- Who will take care of and maintain the Hedge?

We also propose to support the workforce development program with our activity as consultants on this part of the project providing relevant resources and specific sites for fieldwork. We understand this is fundamental to community strength.

This includes partnering with the job creation program developed for the project by other Collaborating Entities and contributing to the preparation of a climate-ready workforce pipeline through training and paid work experiences in the following domains:

- Green Infrastructure / Landscaping
- Environmental Sensing and Data Science
- Climate Justice Advocacy

While the planning of the location, scale and scope of each Hedgerow will be determined through the co-design process, the following schematic design strategies are offered to illustrate a potential range of public and private sites and various scales and degrees of complexity throughout the neighborhood.

These designs were created after a visit to the site with project leaders from CUNY York and SQREJC.



Backyard Hedges

SCENARIO:

Integrate sentient hedgerows into backyard property-line fencing, enrolling individuals to play a part in mitigating climate change and monitoring progress.

AREA: 50' L x 3' W = 150 SF (minimum)

COMPONENTS:

- Native plants
- Environmental sensors





Ashmead Park

SCENARIO:

Create a gateway to the neighborhood at the intersection of Liberty Ave & Merrick Blvd that serves as a signpost for the project draws attention to the green infrastructure work taking place in Bricktown.

AREA: 125' L x 3' W = 375 SF

COMPONENTS:

- Native plants and shrubs
- Environmental sensors
- Sculptural artifacts supporting wild-life habitat





Liberty Learning Garden (William Simmons Community Garden)

SCENARIO:

Create a large public-facing sentient hedgerow supporting educational activities and workforce development initiatives.

AREA: 150' L x 6' W = 900 SF

COMPONENTS:

- Native plants
- Environmental sensors
- Camera system
- Sculptural artifacts
- Gravity-fed irrigation system





Detective Keith L. Williams Park

SCENARIO:

Create a large public-facing sentient hedgerow where the park faces Liberty Avenue, mitigating the environmental impacts of the Regal and American Waste Transfer Stations and supporting educational activities and workforce development initiatives.

AREA: 275' L x 6' W = 1,650 SF

COMPONENTS:

- Native plants
- Environmental sensors
- Camera system
- Sculptural artifacts
- Gravity-fed irrigation system





Industrial Green Walls

SCENARIO:

Integrate a sentient hedgerow into green wall scaffolding applied to existing industrial site walls providing local business an opportunity to participate in the project.

AREA: 500' L x 16' H = 8000 SF
(Tre-Crete site)

COMPONENTS:

- Native plants
- Green wall scaffolding
- Environmental sensors
- Camera system
- Sculptural artifacts
- Irrigation system





Industrial Green Walls

SCENARIO:

Integrate a sentient hedgerow into green wall scaffolding applied to existing industrial site walls providing local business an opportunity to participate in the project.

AREA: 750' L x 40' H = 30,000 SF
(Regal and American Waste Transfer)

COMPONENTS:

- Native plants
- Green wall scaffolding
- Environmental sensors
- Camera system
- Sculptural artifacts
- Irrigation system



[EXTERNAL] Jamaica Re-zoning Plan

From Kevin Ali **Date** Fri 9/12/2025 8:58 AM**To** Land Use Testimony <landusetestimony@council.nyc.gov>

CAUTION: This email originated from outside of the organization. Do not click links or open attachments unless you recognize the sender and know the content is safe. Report suspected phishing emails with the Phish Alert Button or forward them to phish@oti.nyc.gov as an attachment.

September 12th, 2025

To Whom It May Concern:

My name is Dr. Kevin Ali and I want to express my sincerest appreciation and support for the Jamaica Rezoning Plan, particularly since it will provide more residential and affordable housing units to hard working New Yorkers. No doubt, our beloved city has become too expensive for many New Yorkers to live in. This is the city we love, and to consider leaving it for the sake of seeking a more affordable standard of living is just heartbreaking. Statistics have shown that over 200,000 New Yorkers have already left because of their inability to afford to live here.

Many of these 200,000 individuals are educated and invigorated youth filled with much potential to contribute so much to the growth and development of NYC. Sadly, we have lost them to other cities across this nation which they deem to be more affordable. Having been an educator in NYC for close to 20 years, I have seen first hand how much intelligence and energy our youth possess, and we need to keep them here so that New York can prosper in the long run from their contributions to contemporary society.

I also believe that a rezoning project like this one can be a model for other successful projects of a similar nature across New York City where there is so much unoccupied land, as well as land that can be redeveloped. Let's use this land such that public land can be used for public good.

Once again, I am strongly in support of the rezoning project in Jamaica, it is long overdue, and nothing detrimental can come out of it in the long run. Many more New Yorkers will be able to live comfortably in the city they love. Thank you very much.

Sincerely,
Dr. Kevin Ali
First Presbyterian Church of Jamaica



Outlook

[EXTERNAL] Jamaica Neighborhood Plan - Support

From Kion Sawney 
Date Fri 9/12/2025 5:41 AM
To Land Use Testimony <landusetestimony@council.nyc.gov>

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This email is to state my support for the Jamaica neighborhood plan.

Best,

Kion Sawney (he/him)

[Website](#) | [LinkedIn](#) | [Email](#) | [Phone](#)

"What can we build together?"



Leonard Jacobs
Executive Director

Courtney Ffrench
Artistic Director

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To the Subcommittee on Zoning and Franchises:

My name is Leonard Jacobs. I speak in favor of the Jamaica Neighborhood Plan, both as a member of the Steering Committee and as Executive Director of Jamaica Center for Arts and Learning.

The Plan centers the critical role played by cultural groups in job creation, building nonprofit and commercial businesses, and especially in prioritizing our youth.

The Plan ensures that all cultural spaces in Jamaica will be affordable, accessible, and visible.

The Plan emphasizes long-lasting community investments and change-making operational support to serve more residents.

The Plan resources organizations—like JCAL—to protect and celebrate the history and identity, and to ensure the continuity, of Jamaica.

And the Plan prioritizes two critical needs for JCAL—needs that will determine whether this landmark arts nonprofit, serving more than 56,000 people last year, thrives and survives or not.

Before I cite those priorities, I'd like to speak to those against the Plan. With humility, I'd like to say first that I respect your views; we all come to this process with love for what Jamaica needs, demands, and deserves.

For example, I agree: let's not settle for affordable housing that isn't truly "affordable." Let's demand that the final text of the legislation for the Plan takes great care that zoning changes respects, in letter *and* spirit, Jamaica's character and legacy.

And let's *never* stop demanding better transportation, better schools, better incentives for our entrepreneurs, better streets, and a better quality of life.



But on balance, and succinctly stated, I do feel that the Plan does speak with integrity, with authentically and with sensitivity to these and other concerns.

Which returns me to JCAL, a cultural anchor in Jamaica since 1972 and a CIG member since 1978. In FY25, audiences overflowed our spaces, attending over 40 music concerts, art exhibitions, dance and theater performances, festivals and education classes and activations. For this reason, our organization has proposed that the Jamaica Neighborhood Plan include **a renovation and expansion of the Jamaica Arts Center, one that would add at least 15,000 square feet of public space**. This was an idea first suggested in a 2002 master plan, which followed the last renovation some 30 years ago. Council Member Williams, thank you for encouraging this project.

We are equally grateful to the Council Member for embracing the second, absolutely critical priority for JCAL in the Jamaica Neighborhood Plan: **a dedicated baseline to operate our second building, the Jamaica Performing Arts Center**. Since 2008, JCAL has been the only Queens CIG to operate two 19th-century landmark buildings, and it has done so without a cent of baseline support from the Department of Cultural Affairs. More than 150 events were presented at JPAC in FY25 yet DCLA's 17-year refusal to acknowledge, must less address, this monumental inequity renders JCAL unable to hire, on a full-time basis, even one dedicated JPAC employee.

To be sure, we, like all 34 CIGs, applaud the City raising baselines for the first time in a generation. Yet JCAL's total baseline nonetheless remains much lower than it was 17 years ago. Moving forward, it will not be possible for JCAL to run both buildings without this funding. And if this or the next administration refuses to fix this problem in the Jamaica Neighborhood Plan, we will reserve the legal option to return JPAC—our beloved performing arts center serving thousands of people in Southeast Queens year after year—to the City.

Jamaica deserves better than to have JCAL become the first CIG to un-CIG itself due to the deliberate and willful neglect of the City. And so I urge you to vote for the Jamaica Neighborhood Plan, and to ensure that the Plan doesn't disenfranchise the community for another 20 years.

Leonard Jacobs
Executive Director, on behalf of
Jamaica Center for Arts and Learning

To: NY City Council Land Use Committee

Re: Jamaica Neighborhood Plan

Further Comments to

Writer: Maureen A. Grey

Public Historian and Founder of **The Southeast Queens Historical and Preservation Society (SQHPS)**

“I’ve always wanted to leave something on this earth the way something was left for me.”

Clarence L. Irving, Sr.

Cultural Activist/Machinist/Baseball Coach/Mentor

Clarence L. Irving, Sr. lived in Southeast Queens-Addisleigh Park. He lived amongst many of the Jazz greats and Harlem Renaissance intellectuals. He started the Black American Heritage Foundation which worked to create the Black American Heritage Trail of Landmarks in Southeast Queens with York College to help commemorate the Bicentennial of the United States. He also proposed Black Heritage Postage Stamp program to New York Congressional leaders. He teamed with York College to curate the artifacts that he collected. Irving’s legacy is evident each time a new stamp is issued that has a Black person on it-the last one issued on January, 2025. He was honored by several elected officials including Governor Pataki. Rep. Gregory Meeks proposed a bill that would honor Irving by naming the St. Albans Post Office in his honor. The bill did not pass.

Why is Irving-a man who left something on this earth the way it was left for him- forgotten in the neighborhood and the greater St. Albans area just ten years after his death?

Answer: Irving is forgotten because there is no marker, plaque, or museum with his name on in the area in which he lived. In order for people, institutions,, and accomplishments to be remembered monuments with historical documentation, museums located in and dedicated to the history of the peoples of Southeast Queens, and ever growing educational programs should be implemented not Jamaica Avenue, but further south throughout all of Springfield, the old name for Southeast Queens that runs from Murdock Avenue along Merrick Blvd to Jamaica Bay.

We, in Jamaica and Southeast Queens (Springfield), New York live in areas that have been built-first by the First Nations Peoples respecting the environment. Then built by the Dutch, English, and their Black/African slaves using European resource stressing construction methods. Those same areas were re-developed and expanded by the Dutch and English

descendents, and other European and immigrant entrepreneurs in the 19th and 20th centuries depleting Long Island's timber supply and draining the underground water table. Often those 20th century building developments destroyed long standing well maintained colonial buildings for the sake of progress or accommodation without **concern or forethought** to relocating the buildings on other lands or posting historic markers that note the buildings' histories so that future generations may know about the residents'/institutions' accomplishments, survival struggles and/or failings so as to have a more successful community and residential pride.

Besides Clarence Irving, George Washington is forgotten in Southeast Queens. In 1790, Washington toured Long Island. "Washington spent his first night on Long island at Warne's Taverne. It was near the original home that Rufus King, a signer of the Constitution, purchased in 1805 in Jamaica." (Grasso, Joanne, S. George Washington's 1790 Grand Tour of Long Island. Chapter 3. The History Press, Charleston, SC. 2018.) Despite his importance to American history, almost every known place where George Washington slept, drank, or took rest was demolished by the middle of the 20th century and replaced by structures made of brick or cement-often lacking any architectural merit like the colonial wooden structures they replaced. **What is more sad is that there is no marker on Jamaica Avenue mentioning this Grand Tour and the visit of America's first president to Jamaica, Queens, Long Island.**

Rationale

I am an immigrant from Kingston, Jamaica, W.I. I spent most of my childhood in St. Albans; and was educated in Queens Village and Garden City, New York. I have always loved history and learning about people's lives. I am currently a history teacher who was trained at the second oldest United States' school of higher education, The College of William and Mary, University, located in Williamsburg, Virginia. As an undergraduate there, I was exposed to historic Williamsburg and its constant research of old documents, archeological digs, and reconstruction of colonial and post Revolutionary buildings so as to reflect the essence of what it was like to live in Virginia's second capital where America's first center for representative government (House of Burgesses) was established, and where the resolution to call for a debate on independence from England was penned.

After graduating William and Mary with a BA in History and a minor in Education, I taught high school history in Manhattan and Queens. I completed my graduate work at Adelphi University, Garden City, New York earning my MA (Social Studies/Education). I have taught history to Kindergarten to 12th graders-always with the ideas of making history seem alive by using role-playing or comparing the problems of today with those of the past. Besides role-playing, I take my students on field trips. We journey from Queens to Manhattan to see historic places such as Trinity Church, Federal Hall, or the United Nations. As an inquiry lesson, I had my 7th graders explore the burial grounds (during the day) at Trinity Episcopal Church. Afraid at first, the students eagerly returned with information that they gleaned from the tombstones-such as the women died young and often the babies were buried with them. That sort of observation was not in their textbook. After that, the students asked if they could go back and look at the grave stones some more. History became alive for those students. They saw the names of

famous people and realized that Trinity was where those historic personalities went to church just like my students went to chapel every day in Queens.

Over the past 15 years, especially after the elimination of the 5th and 8th grade Social Studies exams and subjugation of Social Studies being considered part of ELA's non fiction curriculum, I have noticed that there is a tendency for many students to be disinterested in history or current events. Their energies are more directed to their cell phones or video games. That changes however, when students are given old photographs of the places where they live or go to school, they suddenly become interested in the history and figure out why life is the way it is in that neighborhood.

Making the history of neighborhoods like Downtown Jamaica and Southeast Queens more visible by repurposing buildings so as to create museums or placing markers on historic sites whether the building is erect or not will help to increase historical knowledge. It was not until 2023 that I realized that I did not have to go all the way to Trinity with my students. Jamaica had Grace Episcopal Church with a grave yard with famous patriots buried there and the church was established 3 years after Trinity.

Where is Historic Jamaica and Springfield, Queens, Long Island?

After taking a bus tour of historic places in Queens in 2022, I realized that Queens had historical sites. Perhaps it was the era in which I was raised in Queens where Blacks were restricted from living north of Jamaica Avenue and could not venture north of Hillside Avenue unless one was going to school or work that prevented me from thinking about doing field trips in Queens. Those restrictions may have blocked me from thinking of taking my students to the historic museums north of Jamaica Avenue like the Bowne House. After that bus tour, I realized that there are no major museums south of Jamaica Avenue in Southeast Queens. Why is that? Are the antebellum racial segregation rules still in effect in the 21st century? Or are there no historical societies to build museums? **Is there still the notion that those who live south of Jamaica Avenue are not deserving of preservation and museum curation?**

I learned the answers to those questions the hard way. The Landmarks Commission declined to landmark the 126 year old Episcopal church and school buildings that I attended twice-once in the 1970's and again in 2021 when a small group was trying to stop the near secret demolition. With that denial all hope to preserve the 1800's ended. In 2022, the red-clapboard barn-like buildings that reminded people of Queens Village's farming past were bulldozed. These were the buildings that I used to teach my students about the purpose of medieval stained glass windows, the similarities between Christianity and Judaism houses of worship, patriotism through the memorials around the church and in the school, and the school's local history. The political will to demolish was too strong for the few who were striving for preservation.

Currently, there is an effort to save the Ketcham House in Hollis, built prior to 1849 and if preserved could archaeological research could be done to determine if the house was part of the Underground Railroad as David Ketcham's family on Long Island were documented

conductors. Buildings are more than the materials of which they are built. Buildings can construct a life, make a community whole again and educate young minds, especially buildings built by hand like my church and day school.

Demolition is not the only answer. **There is money to be made in preservation.** Great Britain makes millions of pounds from tourists coming to see their old buildings-and very proud they are of the buildings' notorious histories. The United States is no longer a young country and it is time to conserve resources and preserve buildings, artifacts, and people' histories in Jamaica and Southeast Queens. Manhattan is not the only place that has a history of settlement, slavery, revolution, war heroes, and industrialization. Jamaica and Southeast Queens have similar histories-now just have to find the buried histories so as to attract tourists like what Jamaica used to when Jamaica was Rufus King's summer home and others came for the hunting and camping out in the Springfield woods. Without Southeast Queens' produce and livestock, Manhattan would not have survived to be the premiere historical destination.

If buildings have to be demolished consider the following:

Solutions

Besides markers, there should be some consideration to set aside land for historic preservation. I was so saddened to learn that the well maintained 17th century Mansion-a tourist attraction in Northern Queens was demolished to make way for IND. **A structure like that should have been moved instead of demolished.**

Perhaps it is the appellation "new" that causes elected officials to think that there must be a constant state of construction in New York. As this nation nears its 420 anniversary in 2027 and New York commemorates its 400th anniversary of Dutch colonialism in 2025, it is time to consider making what is old, new again by repurposing buildings and reducing demolition. There is money in preservation too. The constant smell and inhalation of concrete-and perhaps asbestos- is not healthy and poses environmental threats.

So much is unknown by current residents about the history of Southeast Queens. This lack of or limited knowledge is affecting our African-American/Black communities. Young people do not feel proud of where they live or see the advantages of living in Southeast Queens. I certainly felt that way when I was young, but as I got older, I learned to appreciate the privilege of having a backyard with grass and trees. Now, I appreciate St. Albans more because I am uncovering its First Peoples, Dutch and English farmers, and slave histories. I feel that I have a purpose that is to bring back to life my community that centuries of racism took from the 1600's to about 2008. The loss of homes due to the Great Recession and the deaths of so many elders has caused many in my generation to start collecting our history of living in Southeast Queens. What is most delightful is seeing the amazement in young people's eyes when they learn something from the past. It is not fair to say that all young people want new things. What they really want is guidance. Often studying one's family's past or local history is like studying a blueprint to avoid disaster. Consider promoting museums for archiving and curating whatever history is left in Downtown Jamaica and Southeast Queens.

What Do I Think Will Be of Help to Improve Southeast Queens and Jamaica?

Use the few existing historical buildings to make Downtown Jamaica into a historical tourist attraction.

- **Establish a part of Jamaica Avenue or another place in Southeast Queens as a historic recreation of indigenous peoples' and colonial life (like colonial Williamsburg in Virginia) with reenactors conducting workshops on skills that were needed in colonial, Revolutionary, or early industrial times.**
 - **Grace Episcopal Church was established in 1702, five years after Manhattan's Trinity Church. Grace could conduct tours for students and tourists during which the church's role in the development of Jamaica, its architecture, organ, and burial grounds could be explored. There could also be a scavenger hunt for famous people buried in Grace Church's cemetery such as Rufus King.**
- **More preservation and repurposing of buildings**
 - **Consider changing DCP's attitude about old buildings now that Queens is almost 400 years old.**
 - **modernizing and repurposing interiors is the new trend.**
 - **Great Britain has kept its old buildings, but designs the interiors for new industries**
 - **Eliminating historic buildings will leave Jamaica and Southeast Queens without physical historical proof of its origins.**
- **Less demolition of existing Dutch and English architectural inspired houses built in the 1920's to 1940's. Those developments are historical now for places like St. Albans, Queens Village, and Southeast Queens; the architecture honors the European settlers**
- **Funding/Grants to build museums, historical festivals and educational programs**
- **Research the buildings under consideration for demolition and document the histories in books and post markers with information for residents and tourists to read so as to get an understanding of the importance of Jamaica. A number of high rise apartments in the past 5 years have been built where prominent 1930's commercial or financial buildings were located.**
- **So much of the prestige of Jamaica is being erased. It was the premier city on Long Island from 1814-now it seems that all DCP wants to do is build condos. Jamaica was more than a bedroom community. Bring back plays and performances to the Merrick Theater**
 - **Restore the Merrick Theater-which is now a store**
- **Design and build new buildings that harken to some aspect of Jamaica and Southeast Queens history-keep the height low as seeing the horizon is the reason people like to come to Jamaica Avenue**
 - **Include low in-come housing to attract artists who will work in Downtown Jamaica**

- **Create a map to Historic sites in Downtown Jamaica to increase tourism and preserve its history** (Jamaica was a trading post then it became a farming area with houses, thoroughfare for the produce from Montauk to Brooklyn, a retail center, and now it seems the plans are to return it to a residential area-just one that is vertical instead of horizontal. The only problem is what is Jamaica's history after that. It is sacred land, but repeated rapid development is making it seem that Downtown Jamaica is being used by developers just to make a profit without understanding the essence and spiritual composition of Jamaica. South east Queens and Jamaica are spiritual places. The Dutch knew that and named the area Rustdorp (Resting place).
- **Continue to promote activities at Rufus King Park**
 - **Increase funding for restoration work at Rufus King Park**
- **Since The Green, the segregated area south of Jamaica Avenue bought by free Blacks who were allowed only to live south of Jamaica Avenue since the early 1800's (research ongoing) was industrially developed, there should be a re-creation of another Green further south. Brooklyn has its Weeksville, Manhattan has Seneca Village, Southeast Queens should have its center that reflects black life in the 1800's.**
- **Establish an agency to find an old plantation house in Springfield and restore it so as to serve as a living museum-generates jobs**
- **Promote historic tours of Jamaica, Southeast Queens, and Springfield by listing the tours in NYC and foreign tour guides-a job generator**
 - **Suggest Tour Titles**
 - **Dutch Jamaica**
 - **Colonial African-American life in Southeast Queens**
 - **The role of churches in the development of Jamaica**
 - **Grace Church could have tours of its graveyard like what I did with my 7th graders**
 - **African American burial ground at Prospect cemetery**
 - **Re-enactment of Washington's retreat from Long Island or the capture of Nathaniel Woodhull, American patriot, by the British in Hollis (East Jamaica)**
 - **The First Village on Long Island: Jamaica Queens**
 - **Jewish life in Southeast Queens**
 - **The Long Island Railroad and its role in developing Jamaica and Southeast Queens.**
 - **Famous pioneer families of Jamaica and Southeast Queens**
 -
 - **Each town in Southeast Queens should also have a tourist center and provide tours.**
 - **Create a welcome Center for visitors with tours of the area including South and East of Jamaica Avenue (Hollis, Queens Village, Floral Park, St. Albans, Laurelton, etc.)**

- **Native American Museum and historic markers that relay the history of the First Peoples of Southeast Queens and Queens**
- **Build museums south and east of Downtown Jamaica where residents will be encouraged to**
 - **Archive their artifacts**
 - **Exhibit their artifacts or collections**
- **Signs on the buildings so people know when hearings are being held to discuss the future of buildings. It may seem that people do not care about the area buildings-they do not know to care because all is done without visible street notification. In Nassau County all changes have to be printed and posted at the site that is going to be changed, therefore people who pass by the building/site who may be impacted by the changes have the opportunity to go to the hearings about the changes. We in Queens learn that something is going to be changed when we see the green board going up. Too little communication is going out to the majority of the people. The Zoom meeting had 46 people on. Many people represented areas other than St. Albans. St. Albans has a population of about 40,000. 46 people does not represent 3% which is the percentage needed to do a valid survey.**

Race and Jamaica Avenue

African-Americans/Blacks have been on Long Island since the 1600's. The first slave came to New Amsterdam about 1628. Dutch slaves were able to have their own houses as they were employed to the Dutch West Indian Company. The British ended that but insisted that Black freedmen were to live South of Jamaica Avenue. Less resources were given to neighborhoods south of Jamaica Avenue. Political district lines and civic associations jurisdictions still follow that "Mason Dixon" platitude. I hope that the plans being presented to Southeast Queens do not reinforce the segregation and financial inequality policies that I have lived with most of my life.

Thank you for this opportunity. Please forgive me if my writing is abrupt. I do not intend to hurt anyone's feelings just present an immediate response to a long time series of events.

You may email me with any questions.

**Testimony by Neil J. Moore, CEO of NYC Health + Hospitals/Queens
Before the City Council on the Claire Shulman Pavilion Expansion Initiative**

Greetings, members of the City Council, stakeholders, and community representatives. My name is Neil J. Moore, and I am honored to serve as the CEO of NYC Health + Hospitals/Queens. Today, I am here to advocate for the expansion of the Claire Shulman Pavilion—a \$180 million investment essential for ensuring that our healthcare facilities remain robust and ready to meet the future demands of Southeast Queens.

Although our hospital is not located within the specific boundaries of the Jamaica Neighborhood Plan, we serve as the primary healthcare provider for its communities. As the plan anticipates significant population growth, we foresee an increased demand for quality healthcare services. This expansion is crucial to maintaining the exceptional standard of care that our community expects and deserves.

Currently, our facilities, including the emergency room, behavioral health services, and many of our ambulatory care spaces, are operating beyond capacity. The forthcoming growth from the Jamaica Neighborhood Plan will exacerbate these demands, turning an existing challenge into a more acute issue. Expanding our capabilities is necessary to continue providing exceptional care without delays or compromises, allowing us to support these growing needs effectively.

The proposed expansion, encompassing a 40,000 to 62,000 square-foot addition, offers numerous anticipated benefits for our community's healthcare needs:

1. **Increased Capacity:** The expansion will allow us to accommodate more patients, effectively addressing current overcapacity issues in critical service areas.
2. **Enhanced Mental Health Services:** Relocating and expanding our Comprehensive Psychiatric Emergency Program (CPEP) will significantly improve access to mental health care, creating a cohesive unit for psychiatric services that meets the community's needs.
3. **Improved Patient Flow and Care Coordination:** By integrating additional space and resources, we will streamline patient flow and enhance coordination among care teams, resulting in more effective treatment plans for our patients.
4. **Addressing Social Determinants of Health:** The expansion will enable us to address the intersection of housing insecurity and mental health, providing a holistic approach to care that tackles the root causes of these challenges.
5. **Equitable Access to Healthcare:** It supports our mission to reduce health disparities, ensuring all community members have access to timely, high-quality care, regardless of socio-economic status.
6. **Economic Benefits:** The project will create jobs during the construction phase and provide permanent healthcare positions, contributing to local economic growth and stability.
7. **Sustainable and Future-Ready Infrastructure:** This expansion prepares us to accommodate population growth from the Jamaica Neighborhood Plan, ensuring our infrastructure meets community needs and demographic changes.
8. **Comprehensive Care Under One Roof:** Integrating emergency, psychiatric, and primary care services foster a seamless continuum of care, enhancing patient experience and outcomes.

The Claire Shulman Pavilion Expansion symbolizes our unwavering commitment to community health and sustainability. With your support, we can continue to be a cornerstone of quality healthcare in Southeast Queens, equipped to address both current and future challenges.

I urge you to invest in this crucial expansion, reinforcing our capacity to deliver world-class healthcare to our community. Thank you for your attention and consideration. I am available to address any questions you may have regarding this proposal.

Statement from Pastor John Boyd

Senior Pastor, New Greater Bethel Ministries

Good afternoon! My name is Dr. John H. Boyd II. I serve as the Senior Pastor of New Greater Bethel Ministries and Chair of ARK Community Development — faith-based organizations that has faithfully served the Southeast Queens community for over 50 years.

I want to first thank the city council, Speaker Adams, Chair Rally and especially Dr. Nantasha Williams for her incredible leadership on this initiative. And that she has my full support on the Jamaica Neighborhood plan.

Our Ministry was founded in 1972 by my father, Apostle John H. Boyd SR., our ministry was built on a vision of spiritual leadership and social responsibility.

As a point of reference, when my parents moved into the St. Albans community back in 1951. The cost of our one-family home was only \$13,500 and is now valued at over \$700,000.

Throughout the decades, our mission has remained steadfast: to meet both the spiritual and practical needs of our neighbors. We have operated a Christian school serving students from Pre-K through 12th grade, established a food pantry and first-time home buyers seminars, and launched numerous programs to uplift our community.

- Churches are uniquely positioned to lead the way in developing deeply affordable housing on church-owned land. These projects should reflect the real incomes of congregants and neighbors, ensuring seniors and working families can remain rooted in Jamaica.
- Beyond housing, church buildings and properties can serve as hubs for services that strengthen families and improve daily life, such as childcare, afterschool programs, food assistance, and senior support.
- Development tied to the Jamaica Plan must protect long-time residents from being priced out. Housing created on faith-based land should prioritize existing community members first.
- Churches are not just landowners, but stewards of sacred ground and community trust. Purposeful development allows churches to preserve ownership, build generational wealth, and ensure land continues to serve God's people for decades to come.

For us, Southeast Queens is more than just a place we serve — it is our home. I was raised in this community. I was educated here. I have coached, mentored, and ministered to generations of children and families who call this neighborhood home. Our commitment is not temporary — it is generational.

One of the great visions of my father was to develop affordable and senior housing right here in Southeast Queens — ensuring that the families who built their lives here could remain here, and that they could pass on generational wealth and stability to their children and grandchildren.

This was not a fleeting idea. Today, that dream lives on through our ministry. It is my sincere desire to see his vision fulfilled — to see a project that offers dignity, opportunity, and long-overdue investment to a community that has given so much to this city.

The development of mixed-use housing in Southeast Queens is not just a project — it is a moral imperative. It is a step toward providing affordable options for our seniors and ensuring that long-time residents can continue to live with pride and purpose in the community they helped build, without the burden of property maintenance or displacement.

Our vision is to build 150 units of affordable and mixed-use housing at our Jamaica Avenue location, including a much-needed community outreach center for our youth, commercial space dedicated to the special needs of those living there, as well as the continuation of our schools and a new sanctuary.

And Ditto Ditto Ditto about the DOT and bus lanes referenced by Councilmember Williams



Outlook

[EXTERNAL] Against the Jamaica Rezoning Process

From Project Hajra [REDACTED]
Date Thu 9/11/2025 12:31 PM
To Land Use Testimony <landusetestimony@council.nyc.gov>

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Hi there, this is from Neelofar Farooq and Project Hajra :

I am against the rezoning because rents are extremely expensive. I want more houses for people who have survived violence and haven't been able to work now or currently. Our neighborhood needs to be affordable for all because we need help. This is for those people who are really needy and they don't have any income, specially women and children. women or ppl who are struggling or separation or any violence, start to provide a free housing scheme in future. We cannot provide this type of support if Jamaica is rezoned, because the rents will be too high.

REBNY Testimony| September 9th, 2025

The Real Estate Board of New York to The City Council Committee on Zoning and Franchises on the Jamaica Neighborhood Plan

The Real Estate Board of New York (REBNY) is the City's leading real estate trade association, representing commercial, residential, and institutional property owners, builders, managers, investors, brokers, salespeople, and other professionals active in New York City real estate. REBNY appreciates the opportunity to testify in support of the Jamaica Neighborhood Plan (N250173ZRQ).

New York City is facing a deepening housing crisis characterized by severe lack of new production and an absence of sufficient affordable housing to meet the city's needs. The citywide residential vacancy rate is at an all-time low of 1.4% and in Queens the rate is even lower at just 0.88%. Neighborhood Rezoning such as the Jamaica Neighborhood Plan are important catalysts for housing production and toward meeting the City's 500,000-housing unit goal.

The Jamaica plan proposes to rezone 230 blocks to facilitate the creation of up to 12,000 new housing units and nearly 4,000 permanently affordable homes, through the mapping of MIH. Additionally, it will create 7,000 new jobs and 2 million square feet of commercial and community space. The Jamaica Neighborhood Plan is a thoughtful and balanced proposal that addresses our city's urgent housing needs while also investing in the long-term vitality of a critical growth neighborhood.

The success of the Jamaica Neighborhood Plan hinges on the ability to maximize the projected housing yield. This will require alignment between the Mandatory Inclusionary Housing (MIH) requirements with the new 485-x tax incentive enacted in last year's State housing package. Under 485-x, new developments must set aside 25% of units at an average affordability of 80% AMI. Given market rents in the area, it will be critical to maintain the flexibility of multiple MIH options so projects can remain financially feasible while delivering the intended level of affordability.

REBNY commends the Department of City Planning for this necessary undertaking and urges the City Council to approve the Jamaica Neighborhood Plan.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments.

CONTACTS:

Maddie DeCerbo

Director of Urban Planning

Real Estate Board of New York

Mdecerbo@rebny.com



Outlook

[EXTERNAL] Written testimony for Jamaica Rezoning

From Caesar III, Roderick **Date** Fri 9/12/2025 10:43 AM**To** Land Use Testimony <landusetestimony@council.nyc.gov>

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Hello I trust this finds you well.

My name is Roderick Caesar III and I am the lead pastor of Foundation Church NYC in Jamaica Queens New York.

We have been in the community serving for the past 93 years and are looking forward to the future of this city.

As you know Jamaica has gone through many changes over the years and this new initiative is another wonderful step on the journey of a better Jamaica.

As a church that has space to build upon we would look to help be apart of this process by shaping equitable development in Jamaica.

Some key points as to why partnering with churches and houses of worship would be beneficial to are listed below

- ◦ **Affordable Housing with Dignity:**
Churches can be the forerunners for developing affordable housing on their land. We are all aware of the economy and housing market today and housing that is created on the church property can give priority to those that are already here to ensure that they remain in our city and community.

Activating Church Properties for Community Good:

Churches can also utilize their space as community centers or places where the community can be strengthened. Locations like childcare centers, afterschool programs, food assistance, and senior support bring a positive impact to the community and help to improve the quality of life for its residence.

- **Standing Against Displacement:**

We are all aware of the economy and housing market today and housing that is created on the church property can give priority to those that are in our community.

Stewardship and Legacy:

As previously stated our church has been in the community for 93 years. There are many other churches like this and houses of worship have the unique distinction of being a beacon of hope and faith through generations. Being able to develop and grow on land ensures that this impactful work continues in the years to come.

Partnership and Support from the City:

Churches and houses of worship cannot exist in a silo. We must engage with the community leaders and developments that are around us.

For this to continue to happen the City must provide consistent financial resources, technical assistance, and accountability to help move projects move from vision to reality.

- **A Moral Obligation to Invest:** The Jamaica Neighborhood Plan is about more than zoning. It is about dignity, legacy and doing right by our community. The city must partner with faith based organizations to ensure that the work that has been taking place will continue.

Thank you for taking the time to read through this testimony.

Regards and Blessings,

Roderick Caesar III

Lead Pastor

Foundation Church

Formerly Bethel Gospel Tabernacle

Jamaica Queens, N.Y. 11433

From: Miss Simon [REDACTED]
Sent: Monday, September 8, 2025 4:18 PM
To: Speaker Adams <SpeakerAdams@council.nyc.gov>
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Testimony on the Jamaica Neighborhood Plan Refinement

[REDACTED]

Please forward to proper contacts

Shónese Simon

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

9/8/25

New York City Department of City Planning

120 Broadway, 31st Floor

New York, NY 10271

Re: Testimony on the Jamaica Neighborhood Plan Refinement

Dear Commissioners and Members of the Planning Committee,

I submit this testimony as a disabled resident of Queens who is directly impacted by the proposed Jamaica Neighborhood Plan. While I recognize the City's effort to address housing shortages and economic revitalization, I must raise urgent concerns about accessibility, transportation equity, and healthcare infrastructure that remain unaddressed in this plan.

Accessibility & Parking Concerns

The proposal outlines a reduction of nearly 400 parking spaces and an increased emphasis on pedestrian streetscapes. While these changes may benefit some, they pose serious barriers for disabled residents who cannot rely on public transportation due to medical conditions or mobility challenges. Accessible parking is not simply a convenience—it is a lifeline. Eliminating spaces without providing adequate replacement or accommodations effectively excludes disabled individuals from participating in community life, accessing services, or attending appointments. This directly contradicts the City's equity and inclusion goals.

Transit Limitations for Disabled Residents

Though Jamaica is a transit hub, not all transportation options are accessible. Many subway stations in Queens remain without elevators. Bus routes, while extensive, are often unreliable, overcrowded, or difficult to navigate for people with chronic illnesses or physical disabilities. For individuals like myself, safe, accessible, and reliable car access is essential—not optional. Increased density without ensuring accessible transit alternatives will deepen inequities for the disabled community.

Healthcare Infrastructure Crisis

The plan anticipates adding more than 12,000 new housing units, yet there is no parallel commitment to address the existing healthcare crisis in Queens. Since the closure of three hospitals in Queens, including facilities that once served Jamaica, residents already face long travel times, overcrowded emergency departments, and limited access to specialized care. Introducing thousands of new residents without reopening or replacing critical hospital facilities will severely strain the already fragile healthcare system, placing disabled individuals at heightened risk. For a neighborhood that was among the hardest hit during the COVID-19 pandemic, this oversight is unacceptable and dangerous.

Conclusion

As a disabled person, I should not have to choose between housing opportunity and basic accessibility or healthcare. True equity planning requires centering those who are most vulnerable. I respectfully urge the Department of City Planning and all partner agencies to:

1. Reconsider the removal of parking spaces and ensure that accessible parking is increased—not reduced.
2. Guarantee that any streetscape changes include universal design principles and accessibility features.
3. Pair new housing development with commitments to expand healthcare access, including the reopening or replacement of Queens hospitals.

Without these measures, the Jamaica Neighborhood Plan risks worsening conditions for disabled and medically vulnerable residents while claiming to serve equity and inclusion.

Thank you for your attention to these critical issues.

Respectfully,

Shónese Simon

VENTURE HOUSE

September 9, 2025



Hello, my name is David Plotka, and it is my honor to speak with you today as the Director of Venture House, a 38-year-old community-based mental health program in Jamaica, Queens whose mission is to help people living with mental health challenges recover through access to employment, education, housing, civic engagement and the arts.

Venture House utilizes an evidenced-based approach to psychiatric rehabilitation known as the Clubhouse Model, and we serve over 450 active members and more than 2,000 lifetime members, helping hundreds of people stay out of the hospital, off the streets, and out of jail. Our cost-effective service (where one year of Clubhouse membership equals the cost of two weeks in a psychiatric hospital), leads to better health outcomes, better employment rates, stable housing, and a better quality of life. Embedded within our Clubhouse is our supported housing program which serves up to 117 people.

Investing in Supportive Housing is *essential*. We know that housing stability and mental health go together, and investments in supportive housing programs are critical to help people live with dignity, maintain recovery, and be a part of their community. Supportive housing must be paired with accessible wrap-around services including mental health care, workforce training, and peer support.

Venture House firmly believes in the idea of promoting equity in neighborhood investments. Just as Jamaica needs better schools, parks, and transit service, it also needs a strong network of *human* services. Equitable funding should include plans that address mental health needs while providing wellness and recovery services.

Local organizations, like Venture House, are best suited to deliver these services because of our trust and track record with the community.

Venture House supports the Downtown Jamaica Oversight Taskforce as a mechanism to ensure that commitments to housing, and human services are honored.

In closing, supports this initiative and we believe in a future for Jamaica in which:

- Supportive housing is vital!
- Those living with mental health challenges are supported!
- And where the community grows stronger by ensuring that no one is left behind!

Thank you, Members of the City Council.

David Plotka, LMSW
Director, Venture House-Queens

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