

RECALIBRATING POST-PANDEMIC PLANNING IN

DOWNTOWN STATEN ISLAND

STUDIO
REPORT



Graduate Student Consultants
In The Staten Island Studio

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2023

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STUDIO TEAM



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"THE FORGOTTEN BOROUGH"

The first week of Urban Planning Studio, we boarded the Staten Island Ferry for our very first site visit. On the boat, we met Emily Pane, a community member who was surprised that we were not just another group of tourists taking the free ferry for the sole purpose of seeing the Statue of Liberty. Her reaction reflects how SI has historically been known as the forgotten borough. It has experienced redlining practices, disinvestment and deprioritization from city agencies.

Thinking that one project will be the silver bullet for all planning issues has resulted in failed capital investment mega projects and bankrupt tourist developments that have left the local residents with a total loss of trust in city planning. But they haven't lost hope for their community.



BUT NOT FORGOTTEN BY THE COMMUNITY

Throughout the studio course, we engaged with over 100 community members, and discovered a deep sense of neighborhood, community, and cultural pride in the North Shore of Staten Island. This report blends the voices of community residents, proposed plans, and our client's proposed plan for a BID, creating a set of recommendations grounded in the community assets and voices that have been forgotten for too long.

● MEET THE CLIENT!

The project client is the Chamber of Commerce of Staten Island. Founded in 1895, the Staten Island Chamber of Commerce (SICC) is Staten Island's largest business organization. The Chamber strives to improve the economic climate and expand business opportunities for all Staten Islanders.

SICC represents and advocates for more than 14,000 businesses across all shores of Staten Island. SICC has over 700 members that represent all types of business categories. The Chamber plays an integral role in supporting businesses of all sizes across the island with an emphasis on local, small business growth.

Throughout the project, we have worked closely with Janet Dugo, the project manager for the Downtown Staten Island Commercial District. Janet is deeply involved in the commercial landscape in the neighborhoods of St. George, Tompkinsville, and Stapleton. In 2018, Janet and the Chamber worked to produce a Commercial District Needs Assessment. The CDNA consecrated the existing business landscape and highlighted the need for several improvements. Before the pandemic, SICC began the process of creating a prospective Business Improvement District along Bay Street throughout Downtown Staten Island. The pandemic paused the efforts to formulate the BID. Now, this studio course aspires to consult the Chamber on ways of making the BID a successful, community-driven project that can serve as a mechanism for Downtown revitalization and placemaking.

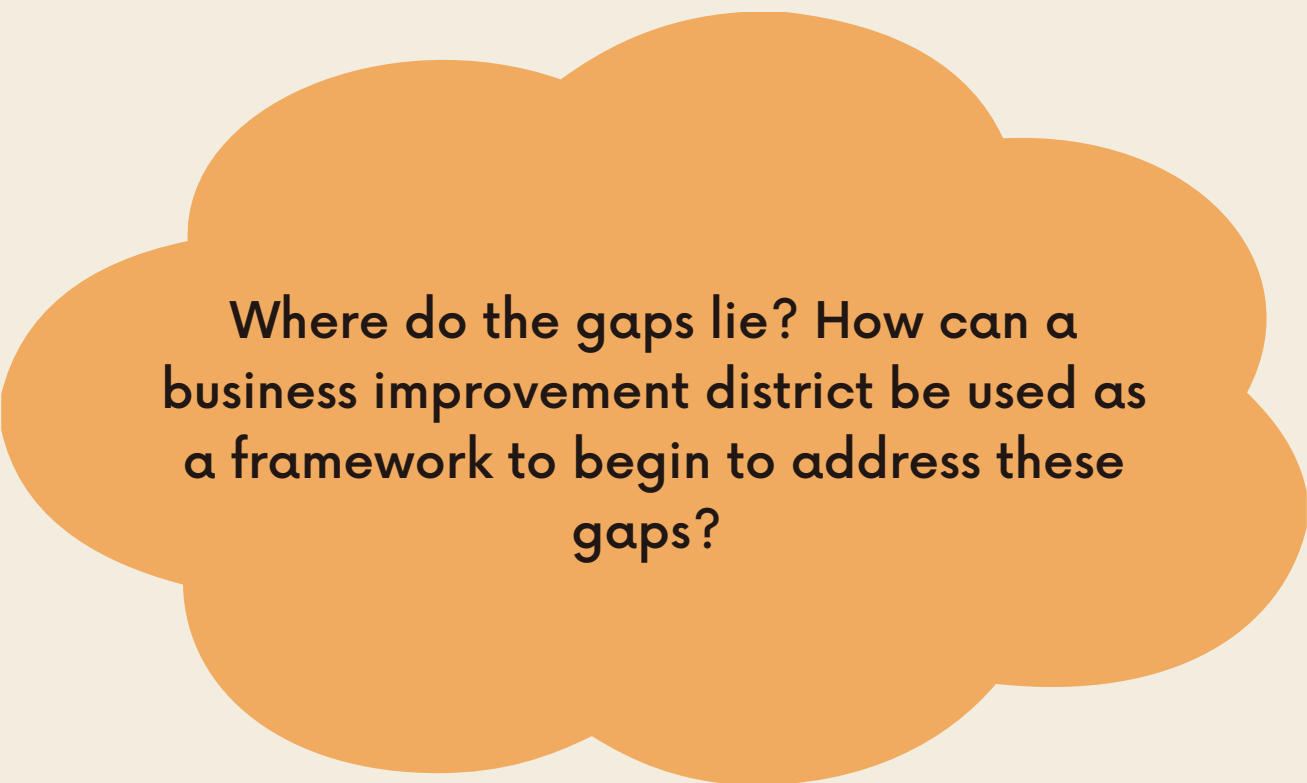


THE STUDIO GOAL

Several plans have been proposed for the North Shore of Staten Island...

...however, there is a disconnect between these plans, on-ground realities, and community priorities.

The pandemic and the economic disruptions that it caused have amplified the disconnect between local stakeholders' needs and the priorities of these plans.



Where do the gaps lie? How can a business improvement district be used as a framework to begin to address these gaps?



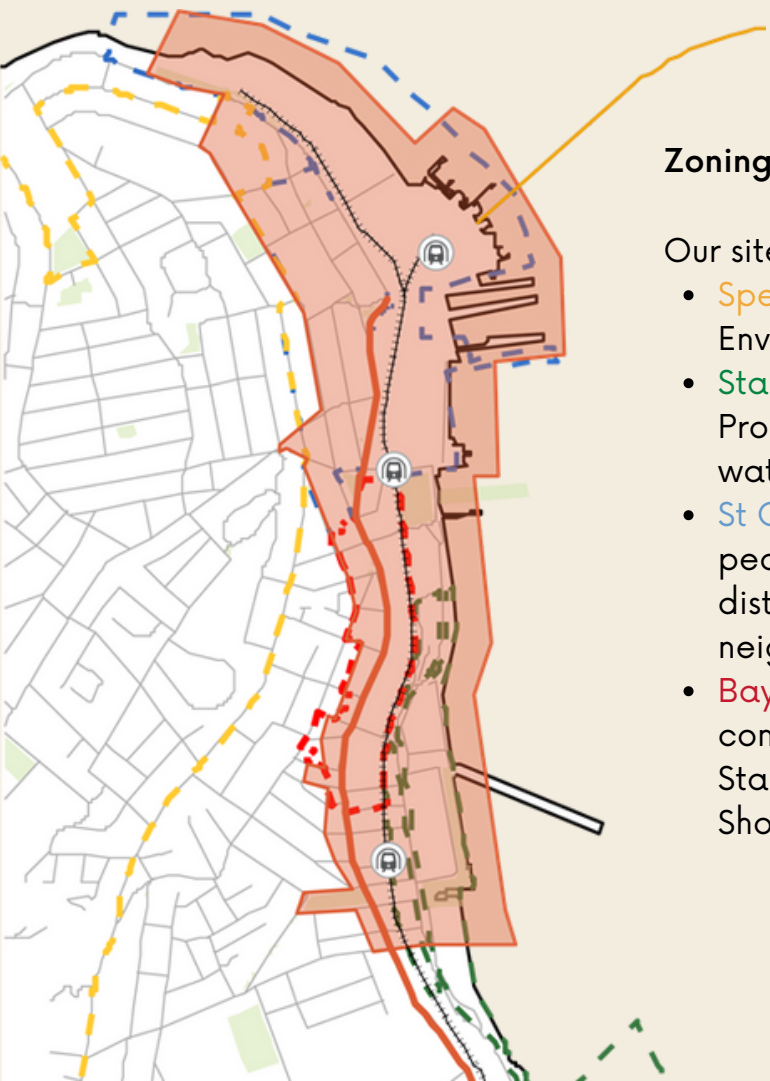
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METHODS AND LIMITATIONS

METHODS & APPROACH

01**Archival
Research****02****Site Visits****03****Stakeholder
Interviews****04****Community
Engagement**

The first half of the semester focused on archival research on previous plans for the North Shore of Staten Island and rezoning proposals. This process helped us understand how the three neighborhoods of Downtown Staten Island were set to transform in the coming years, and the problems and solutions identified by different agencies and organizations.



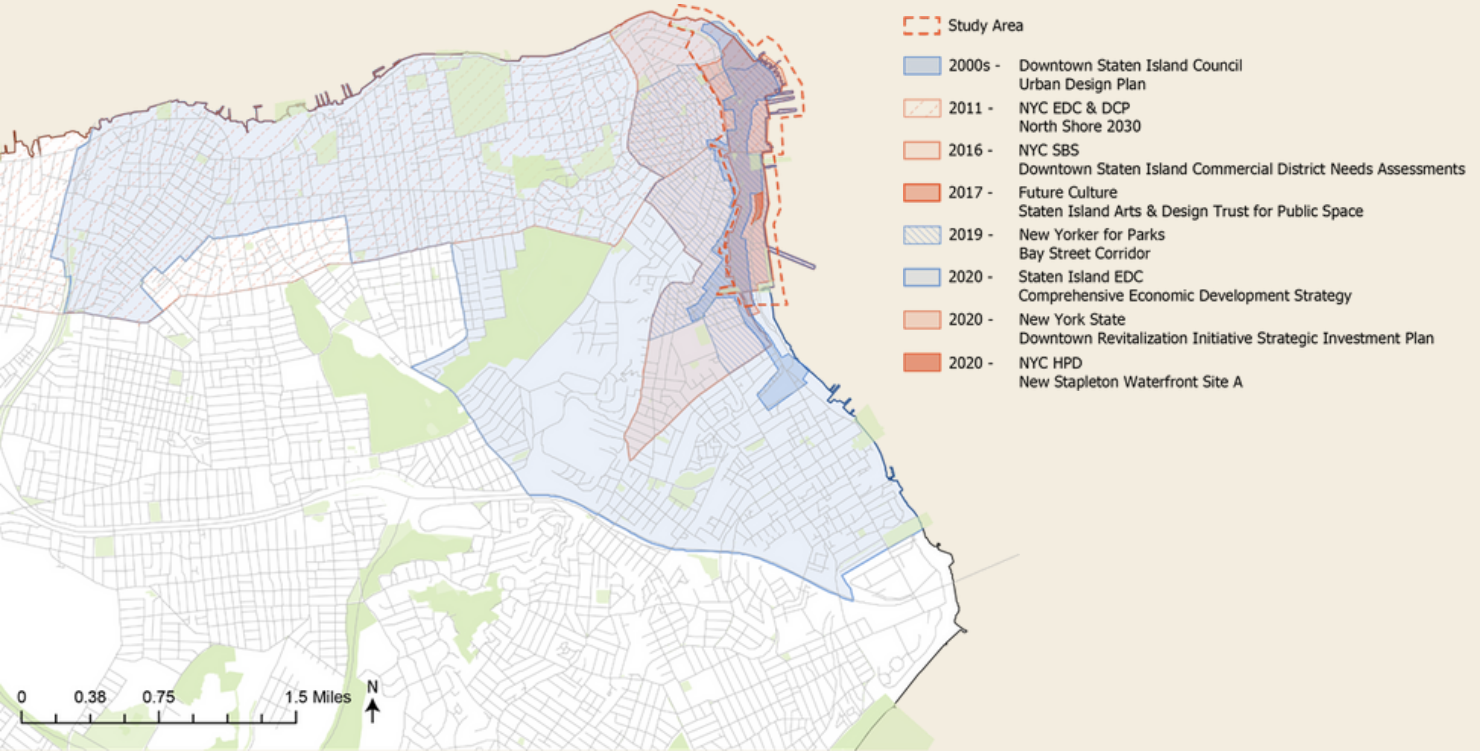
Zoning

Our site overlaps with 4 Special Zoning Districts:

- **Special Hillside Preservation** (effective 1986): Environmental and topological protection
- **Stapleton Waterfront** (effective 2006): Promote mixed-use redevelopment for the waterfront esplanade
- **St George** (effective 2008): Support a pedestrian-friendly business and residential district in Staten Island's oldest commercial neighborhood
- **Bay Street Corridor** (effective 2019): Improve connectivity between St George and Stapleton; create more housing on the North Shore

METHODS & APPROACH

Existing Plans for Downtown Staten Island



Recent Investments

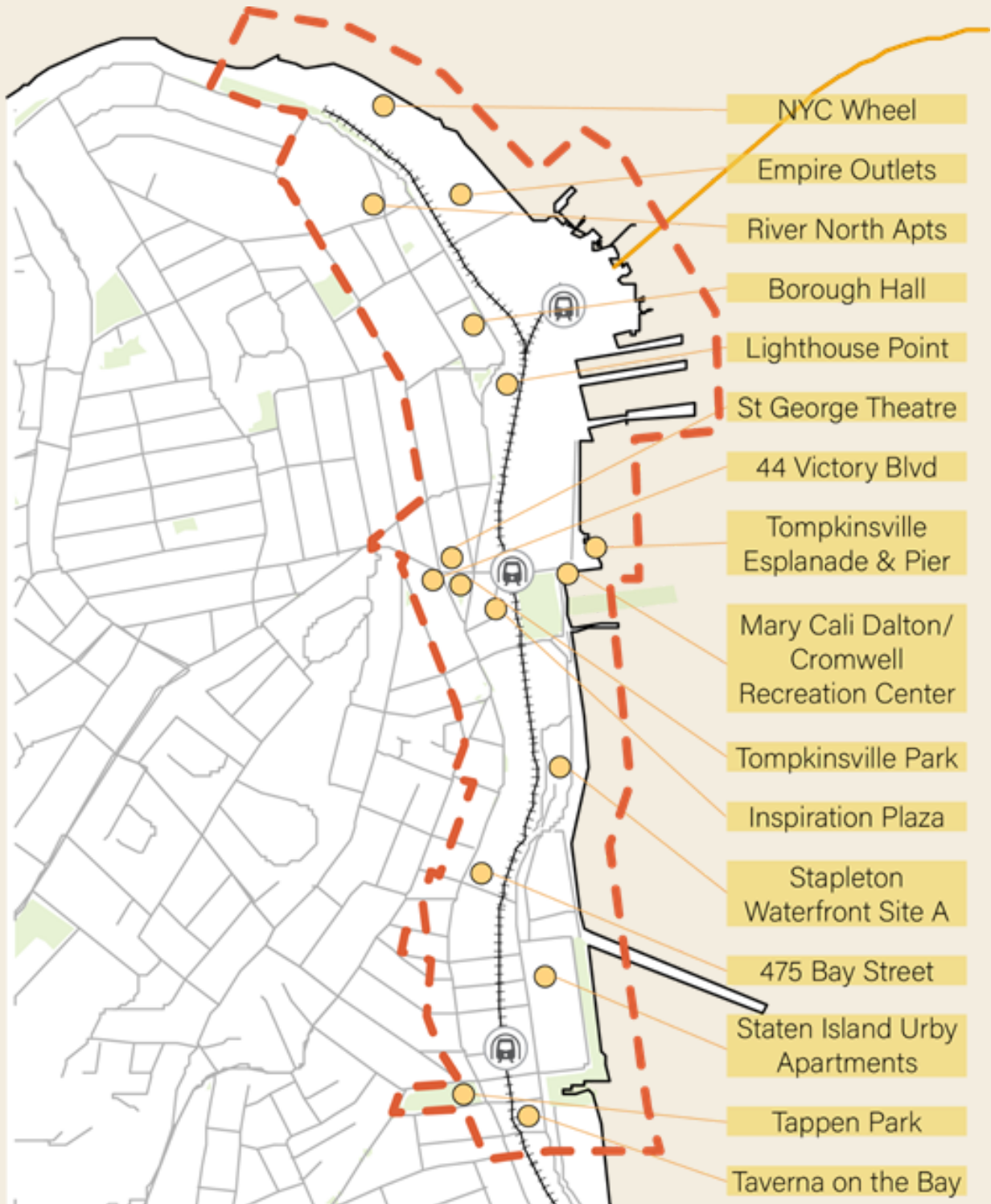


Upcoming Projects



METHODS & APPROACH

Site visits to new and ongoing projects



Community engagement snapshots



HIGHLIGHTS FROM COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Throughout this journey, we engaged stakeholders from all perspectives, asking generative questions to truly understand how each perspective could be used to shape our findings and recommendations.

Interviews were scheduled with structured and impromptu questions, and we engaged with City Agency Experts, Grassroots Organizations, small business owners, and community residents.

We organized three engagement events where community residents could voice their opinions and neighborhood concerns, reaching 125 residents .



LIMITATIONS

Time Constraint

Our findings were limited by a time constraint due to the limited duration of our study as well as the time of year we were able to conduct site visits. This means that we may have missed out on incidents or observations that occur outside our study period.

Representation

Being English speakers, we were limited in our engagement with non-English speakers. Our engagements also focused on the three main civic organizations active in our study area, which may not have been inclusive of all community voices.

Positionality

Our perspective is shaped by our education, intersectional identities, and our positionality as planners in the Columbia Urban Planning program.



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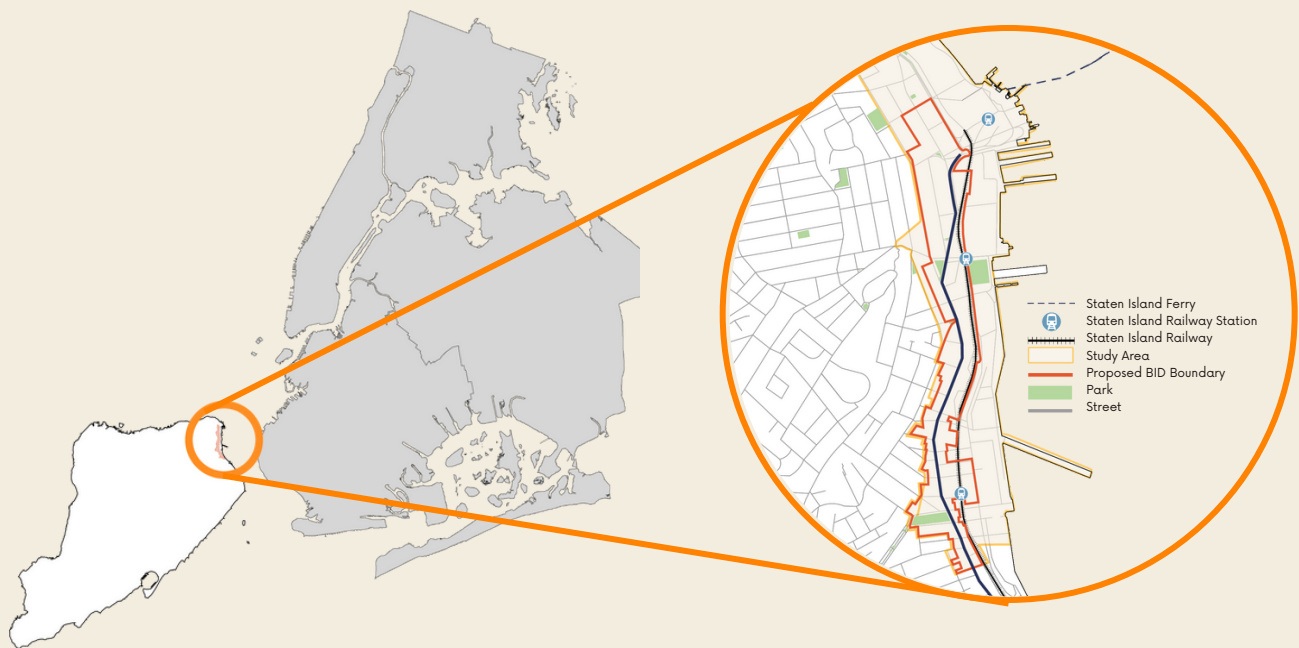
NEIGHBORHOOD BACKGROUND

NEIGHBORHOOD BACKGROUND

Staten Island, one of the five boroughs of New York City, is a large island across the Hudson River. The North Shore represents the northern part of the island, known mainly as the area surrounding the ferry terminals.

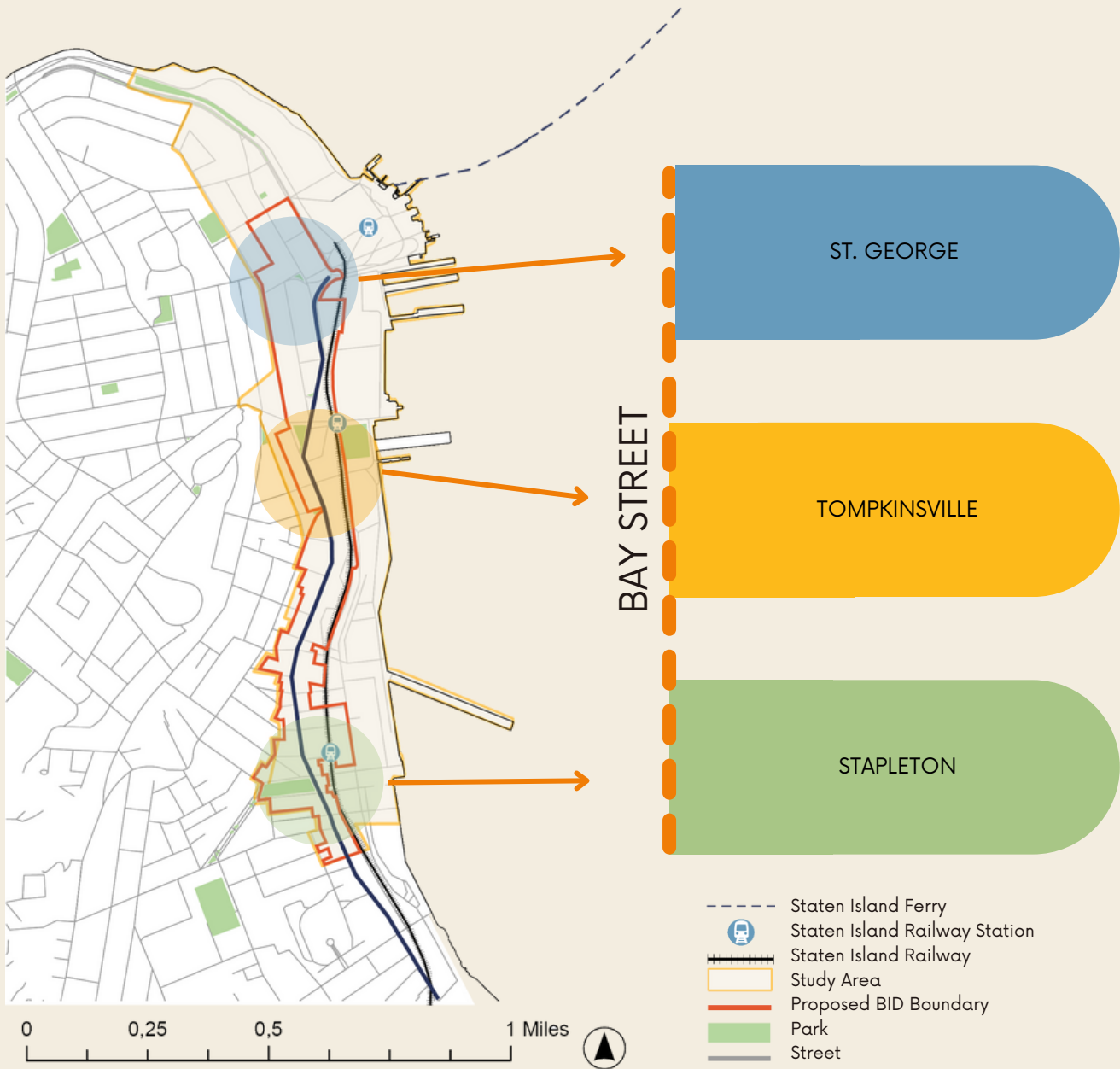
Our study area overlaps with three distinct neighborhoods: St. George, Tompkinsville and Stapleton. All together these neighborhoods represent Downtown Staten Island. With a total of 25,700 residents, they all are interconnected through Bay Street, the main retail corridor as well as through the beautiful waterfront. The Staten Island railway and the multiple bus lines also serve all three neighborhoods.

The portion highlighted in red in the map below represents the proposed BID boundary for potential interventions and improvements that will be recommended throughout the report.



It is also important to note that Staten Island is a high flood prone area, surrounded by water on all sides. The North Shore faced many structural damages during hurricane Sandy in 2012, leaving parts of the waterfront shattered until today. One example is the Cromwell Gym Center that fully collapsed during Sandy. This center had more than 1000 visits a day and never got rebuilt, leaving Staten Islanders with no gym recreation center.

NEIGHBORHOOD BACKGROUND



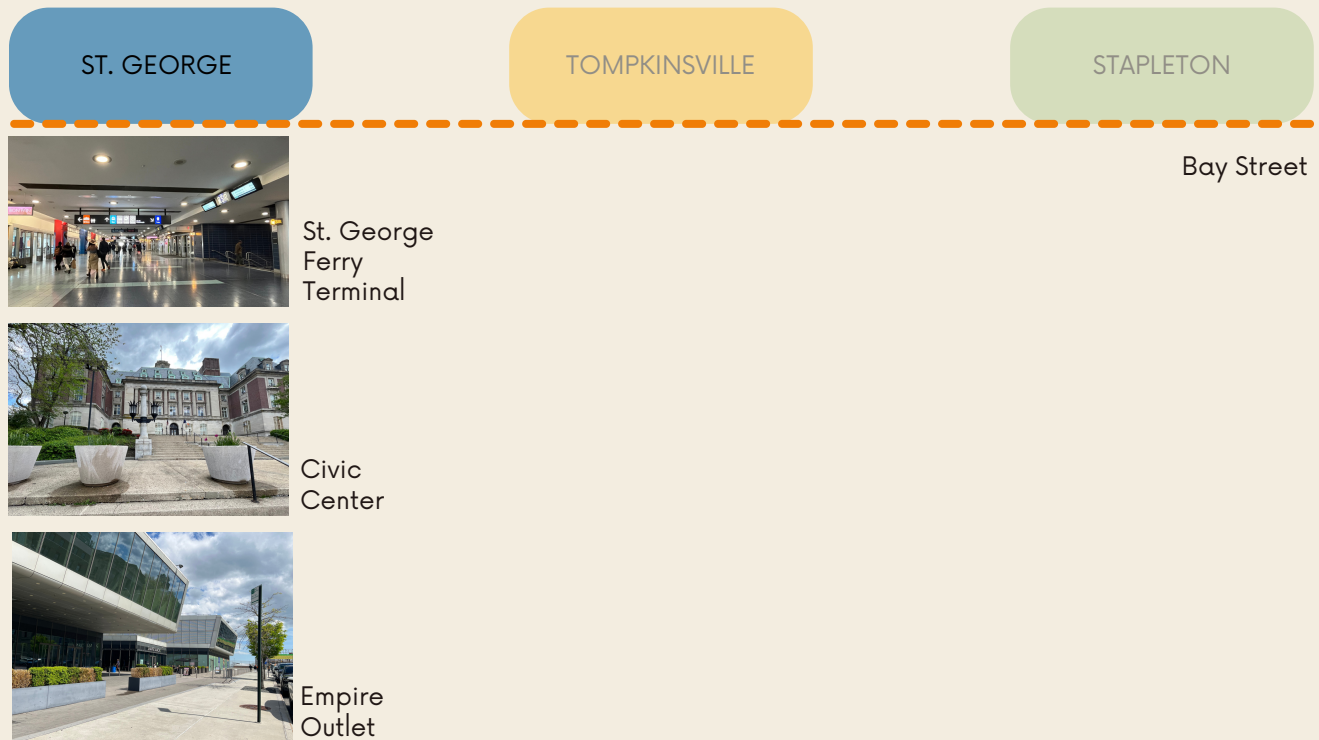
25,700
Residents

Source: American Community Survey, 2021

NEIGHBORHOOD BACKGROUND

St. George is known as the main transit hub, with the two ferry terminals: the free Staten Island Ferry and the fast ferry. It also represents the civic center, with its multiple courthouses and municipal offices. St. George also has a weekly farmers market as well as the newly developed Empire Outlet Mall.

St. George is a cultural and entertainment destination for residents as well as visitors with the St George Theatre, the National Lighthouse Museum, the ballpark stadium that is home to the Ferry Hawks.



NEIGHBORHOOD BACKGROUND

Tompkinsville is home to Tompkinsville Park which is a very small yet practical area, with many bus interchanges around it as well as small businesses. One of the only two supermarkets in our study area, Key Food, is also located across from the Park. Tompkinsville can be characterized as the area's recreational center, with tennis courts and the Lyons pool.

It also has a maker space and a skate park. There are many breweries along Minthorne Street that have been there since the 18th century when some German immigrants arrived to Staten Island. The buildings are mostly single family use with restaurants and small businesses on the bottom floors.

ST. GEORGE

TOMPKINSVILLE

STAPLETON

Bay Street



Tompkinsville Park



Bus Interchange



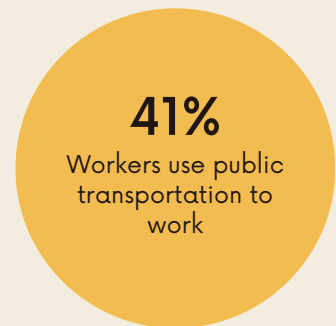
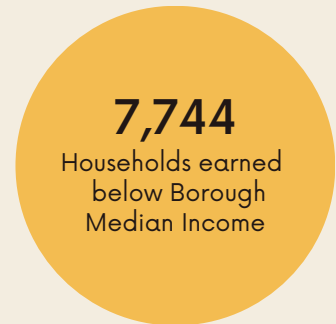
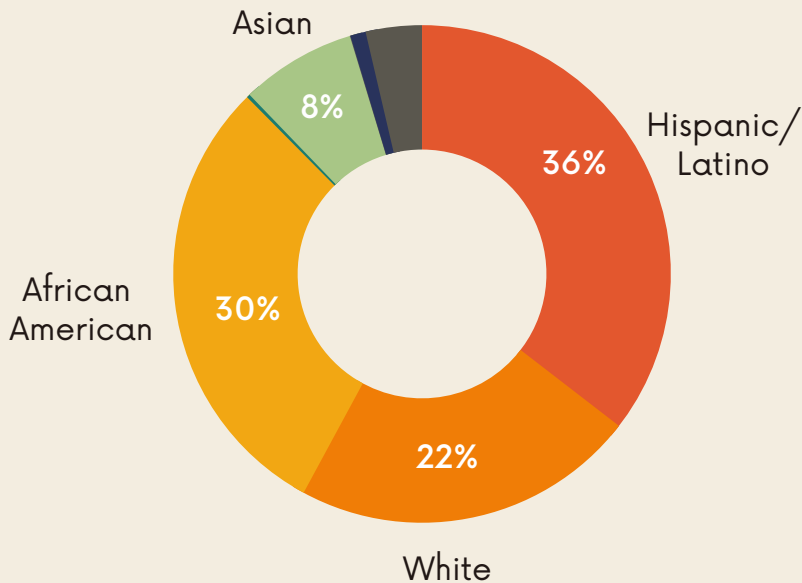
Key Food Grocery Store

NEIGHBORHOOD BACKGROUND

Stapleton is a waterfront community that also has a higher housing density with mostly low rise buildings and retail on the ground floors. It is very multicultural and has many restaurants such as a handful of Sri Lankan ones. Tappen Park is one of the oldest public parks on the island. Lastly, the Stapleton waterfront served as the US navy homeport between 1990 and 1995.



NEIGHBORHOOD BACKGROUND



Source: Census 2021 and 2022

We observe that the North Shore is very diverse and has household income and public transit ridership rates lower than New York City averages.



3

BID AS A FRAMEWORK

BID AS A FRAMEWORK

When designing the final deliverable for our client, we took into consideration that the community is tired of another white paper or a plan, as they have already had too many. As our client, Staten Island Chamber of Commerce, is in the process of forming a BID, we want to uplift this existing effort and explore how proposing a BID can address bigger planning issues. But first of all, what is a BID?

WHAT IS A BID?

A BID is a special assessment district where property owners within a set of boundaries pay an annual assessment based on their storefront linear footage that is used to enhance the economic and social vitality of the area.

Typical services of a BID include: sanitation, safety, marketing, and beautification. BID services do not replace city services. Rather, they enhance them.



WHO RUNS THE BID?

The BID is supervised by a board of directors representing property owners, commercial tenants, residents, and elected officials. The daily operations are conducted by a managing team. It is important to note that though our client, SICCC, is helping the formation of a BID, it will not be the entity that operates the BID once established.

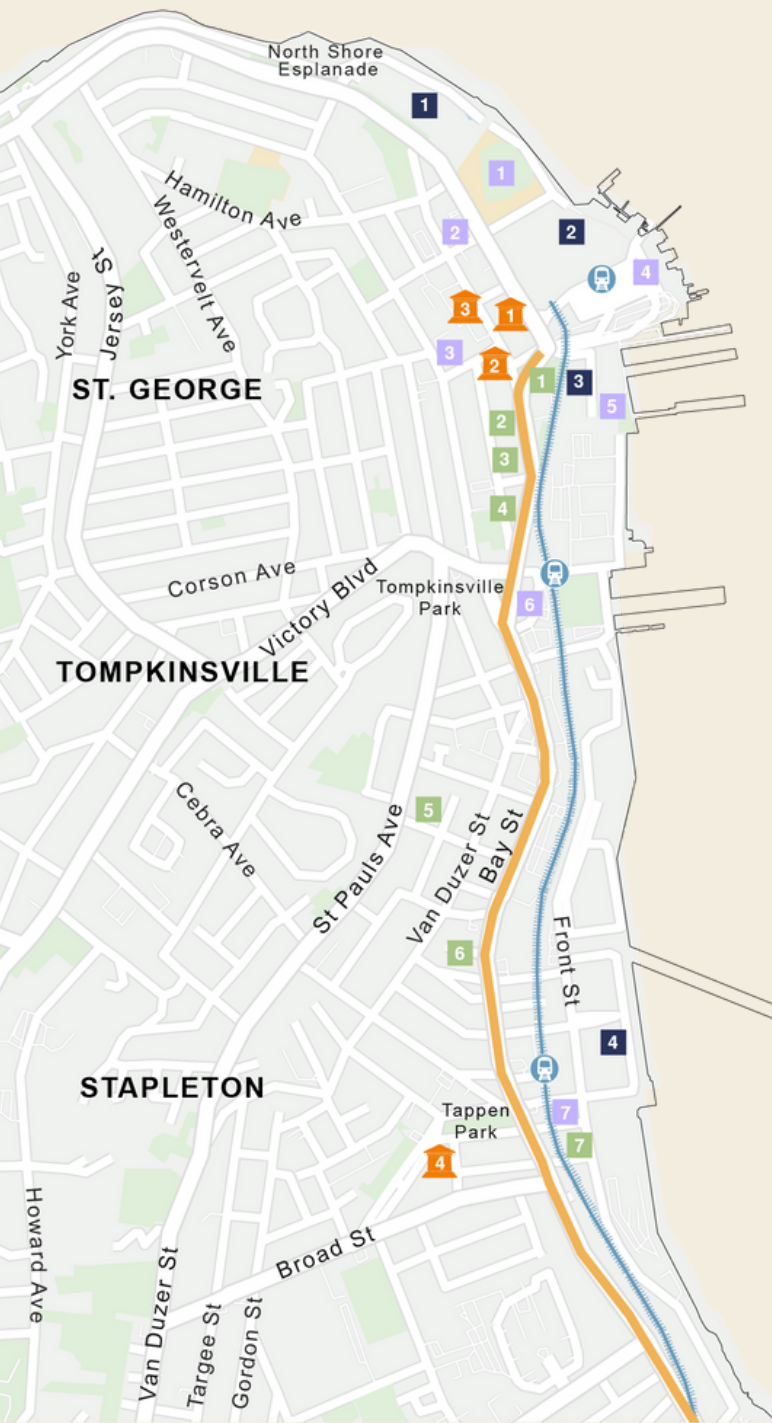


LIMITATIONS OF A BID

While BIDs can be beneficial in many ways, they also have some limitations. Firstly, not all businesses perceive the assessment as an “investment”; some business owners mistake the assessment with a form of taxation and thus perceive the BID as “excessive governance”. Secondly, there may be conflicts between the goals of the BID and the needs of the broader community, which can create tension and limit the BID's effectiveness. Third, BIDs are typically created through a petition process, which requires a certain percentage of property owners within the district to sign on. This can limit participation from smaller property owners or those who may not be aware of the process. Thus, it is vital for a BID to 1) equally distribute resources, 2) directly speak to the needs of the whole community, 3) engage with as many property owners and tenants as possible, and 4) ensure an transparent and communicative platform with the community

WHY BAY STREET?

The BID will center around businesses along Bay Street. The reason Bay Street is positioned to support a BID is because Bay Street is historically the civic, business, and cultural hub. It is the main street that stitches the neighborhoods of St. George, Tompkinsville, and Stapleton, and is home to over 300 businesses.



3
Neighborhoods

12,700
linear store front
square footage

300+
Businesses

- Bay Street
- 1 Borough Hall
- 2 NYC Business Solutions Center and Workforce Career Center
- 3 St. George Library
- 4 Stapleton Library
- 1 New York Wheel
- 2 Empire Outlet
- 3 Lighthouse Point
- 4 Urby
- 1 Regus
- 2 Launchpad & CSI Tech Incubator
- 3 Office at 76 Bay
- 4 SIEDC North Shore Incubator
- 5 Techbox
- 6 Staten Island Artist Building Corporation
- 7 Staten Island Makers Space
- 1 Staten Island Yankees Stadium
- 2 Staten Island Museum
- 3 St. George Theater
- 4 Staten Island Arts Culture Lounge
- 5 National Lighthouse Museum
- 6 Flagship Brewery
- 7 5050 Skate Park

WHY A BID?

Over the years, several attempts have been made to establish merchant organizations to address challenges facing the area. None have lasted because all of the work and expense lands on the shoulders of a small group of volunteers. There is never reliable funding or capacity to make sustainable change. However, a BID, once established, provides a reliable stream of income that allows for dependable services. Establishing a BID in DT Staten Island brings the community 3 key benefits.

First, it provides a Sustainable, steady source of funding for uplifting and supporting the DT SI businesses that have incredibly rich histories and grassroots ties.

Second, the pandemic highlighted the need for small business support in this area, and the BID is a tool for business owners to look within their own community for resources and support rather than relying on agencies that have previously deprioritized North Shore needs.

Finally, the establishment of a BID is not a silver bullet to solving all the planning issues in the North Shore, but it provides the mechanism for the community to empower and support the local businesses.

**Financial
Sustainability**

**Post-pandemic
Recovery**

**Community
Empowerment**

BID AS A FRAMEWORK

In summary, we are proposing the formation of a BID as a framework for our recommendations, because we believe that the BID represent the true stakeholders of the future of the neighborhood; they will serve as a local entity that champion their own local planning concerns, and by taking back agency, we can tap into the strength of the local community.



NEIGHBORHOOD

Summer Bon Fire

VIEW OBSTRUCTION

FAST FERRY
(maybe go to the east side too?)

Yoga @ Empire outlets in Summer

view of the waterfront (bring it back!!)

low density

children museum

OPEN GYM!
again!

Wadsworth ch

Smug Harbor

USIN HOUSE

Green market!

thrift shop

near to the biggest church in SI

FORT HILL
CIRLE
(Prettiest St ms)

STEINYS BAR PUB

"everything goes" books, thrift, family

affordable housing

BUSES here!

Spanish bodegas up Victory Blvd

NEW ASHA

SERIOUS ABOUT PLANNING!

SA

SERPENTINE ART & NATURE

SA
LDEN

The Richmond

Van Briesen Park
Bay/Hudson St
100 Road

NOBLE
MODERN

cultural entertainment theatre (CS), H George

local musicians @ Cottage row

PEOPLE! Flowers

Traffic lights

4

COMMUNITY CONCERNS

This section will highlight community concerns and inputs from the residents that helped in shaping the recommendations for this project.

During our public engagement activities, we learnt that the residents of Staten Island have a very strong sense of a community and belongingness, not only for the place but also for the people. This makes their issues and concerns even more personal. One of the major points that was brought up during our discussions with the residents was about the city treating Staten Island differently than other boroughs. The agencies do not prioritize Staten Island's issues over others. They do not take into consideration the residents' concerns for borough wide developments, such as for new upcoming projects, or even for completing previously proposed projects. Hence, there is a mutual disappointment amongst the residents for no actions being taken to accommodate the destruction the series of incomplete projects have caused in their daily lives. A few of the key conversations from our engagements are quoted here, like "we don't have Trader Joe's here", "the city doesn't keep its promises", "we have a beautiful waterfront but we cannot enjoy it due to construction barriers" and so on.

COMMUNITY VOICES

“ Staten Island is the City's dumping ground.”

“ It's the **best borough** in the whole of New York City”

“ The nearest **Trader Joe's** is in Manhattan.”

“ We have a beautiful waterfront but we **can't enjoy it**”

“ Wherever you go around the neighborhood, you see **familiar faces**”

“ The City and developers **never listens** to our perspectives!”

“ We had so many mega projects lined up but they were all just **broken promises**”

COMMUNITY CONCERNS

The engagements and conversations with our client, city agency experts from HPD, EDC, DCP, SBS and most importantly the community gave us an extensive list of concerns and recommendations. We grouped them into six broad categories, namely transportation/ connectivity, new projects, public spaces/ public realm, quality of life, businesses/ economic development, and miscellaneous.

Transportation/ Connectivity:

- Bike share
- More parking
- Use parking meter money to improve transportation
- Non-functioning parking meters
- Free shuttle buses from Snug Harbor to Fort Wadsworth
- Protected bus lanes
- Better transport systems connecting all shores and New Jersey transit
- More express buses to Brooklyn
- Subway to Manhattan
- Fix the MTA services in Staten Island
- More traffic lights (because of accidents in Bay St)
- Free MTA buses in Staten Island
- Open North Shore rail line that went through Port Richmond to Staten Island Ferry
- Create a railroad connecting a train from New Jersey to Staten Island
- Too many parking meters
- Shorter commute to Manhattan
- Subway connections to Manhattan
- More subway and tunnel connection to Manhattan
- Protected bike and scooter lanes
- Drivers should obey speed limit, slow down and yield to pedestrians

New Projects-related concerns:

- No homeless shelter near Tompkinsville Park
- Control density to protect views of the waterfront
- Women and children's shelter should not be right next to drug hotbeds
- Stop building big constructions next to the waterfront
- Infrastructure for new homeless shelter
- More amenities
- More density
- More affordable housing
- Mixing and integration for homeless shelter; not concentrated

Unregulated hotels and buildings bringing drug use, and shady activity
 No WIN shelter

Public spaces / Public realm related concerns :

- Make veterans park bigger
- More green parks
- More third spaces and open spaces
- More places to sit outside (benches) around the neighborhood
- Open and expand Liotti Ikefugi park
- More playgrounds
- Football field on Empire outlet mall rooftop
- Have more flowers and butterflies
- Public indoor pool
- More indoor activities and recreation
- More parks in low-income neighborhoods
- More beauty, trees and flowers
- A dog run/ park
- Cleaner streets
- No trash on the streets
- More places for children to play
- No dog poop on sidewalks
- Waterfront access
- Waterfront cleanup volunteer day
- Connected waterfront
- Better advertising on activities at the Terminal
- Improve/ support street infrastructure to meet growth
- Sanitation trucks to collect the trash at the same day
- Better street lighting
- Sanitation and beach cleaning
- Compost station in a permanent location
- Education on climate action by experts
- More dance and yoga studios
- Bigger farmers market
- Permanent public market with various shops, craft, coffee and foods
- Shops on ground floor along the street
- Cultural center to be more inclusive
- Cinema at the Empire Outlet Mall
- Megavenue at Empire Outlet Mall to activate
- Architectural preservation



Quality of life related concerns:

- Less drug issues
- Crime and drug use reform
- Socio-economic equality and public safety
- More food options
- More grocery stores
- More sit down breakfast places
- Bring whole Foods
- More restaurants
- Affordable food options
- More fresh food options
- Bring Trader Joes
- More school capacity
- Safer schools for children
- Create more computer related classes
- New reading + writing classes for advanced learners
- Safety for kids
- Facilitate education for students in public schools
- Open a new library for adults and college students
- Community center for students
- More coffee shops
- Make recreation center more affordable
- Food desert!

Businesses / economic development related concerns:

- Short-term rentals for Empire Outlet Mall
- Better maintained rentals
- Bay St BID
- Build low (in terms of height) for the BID to not block the waterfront views
- Boost the economy
- Entertainment in Empire Outlets

Miscellaneous concerns:

- More community involvement/ engagement
- Continued weekly community engagement
- Cohesion; sources to be involved in civic work (strengthen the culture of taking charge)
- Wish people could get more involved
- More loving people
- Stop hate, more love

Better image
No political balance
Eclectic
More marketing programs to promote Lighthouse
Open up secrets and forgotten history
NYPD needs to hire more veterans than civilians

A few of the most repeatedly mentioned issues and concerns are connectivity and transportation, fragmented waterfront, safety and sanitation, obstructed views of Downtown Manhattan due to construction barriers of incomplete projects, affordable housing, the area being a food desert, climate related issues, lack of grocery stores and supermarkets in the area, and so on.

COMMUNITY CONCERNS

CONNECTIVITY AND TRANSPORTATION

OBSTRUCTIONS TO WATERFRONT VIEWS

AFFORDABLE HOUSING

PROTECTED BUS OR BIKE LANES

AFFORDABLE FOOD

INCREASED COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

CLEANER STREETS

REDUCE CRIME

ARCHITECTURAL PRESERVATION

SAFETY

PUBLIC MARKETS

MORE GROCERY STORES

CONNECTED AND ACTIVATED WATERFRONT

INTEGRATIVE APPROACH TO HOUSING THE UNHOUSED

REDUCE C

MORE FLOWERS ON SIDEWALKS

PUBLIC REALM

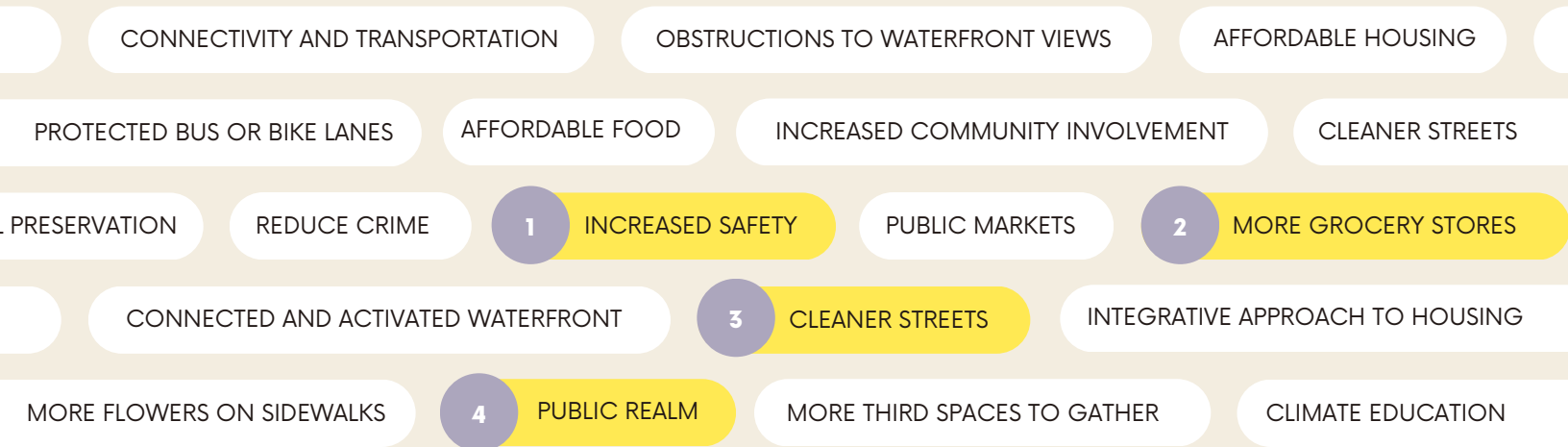
MORE THIRD SPACES TO GATHER

CLIMATE EDUCATION

There are four key concerns from the list that align directly with the existing BID services. These concerns can be incorporated to be addressed in the new BID proposal. The four concerns are increased safety, cleaner streets, more grocery stores and improved public realm. The following sections will further detail out specific recommendations for each of these concerns.

COMMUNITY CONCERNS

RELEVANT TO THE BID





5

ADDRESSING
PLANNING
CONCERNS
THROUGH THE BID



With the motivation to reclaim agency to local stakeholders, our recommendations to the Client to address community and planning concerns will be framed through the upcoming Downtown Staten Island BID.

The recommendations will be categorized into three sub-sections:

1. The first set of recommendations are focused on BID services that have already been publicly proposed by the Downtown Staten Island BID Formation Committee on their outreach engagement website, forming the basis of the BID action plan. These recommendations offer more innovative approaches to traditional BID services that can address concerns raised by the local community.
2. The second set of recommendations include our recommendations on value-added services that can be incorporated into the BID action plans. In forming these recommendations, our team consulted strategies undertaken by other BIDs in New York City.
3. Finally, in recognizing that the Downtown Staten Island BID will serve as an entity empowered to represent local businesses and residents, our third set of recommendations relate to larger planning issues that the BID can advocate for. We provide visions of how the larger neighborhood can be improved through interventions by city agencies, and provide a roadmap for the BID to facilitate or advocate for such changes.





5

ADDRESSING PLANNING CONCERNS THROUGH THE BID

5.1

Detailed
recommendations for
already proposed BID
services

PROPOSED OFFERINGS



The current Downtown Staten Island BID outreach engagement details the following services that the BID is envisioned to provide.

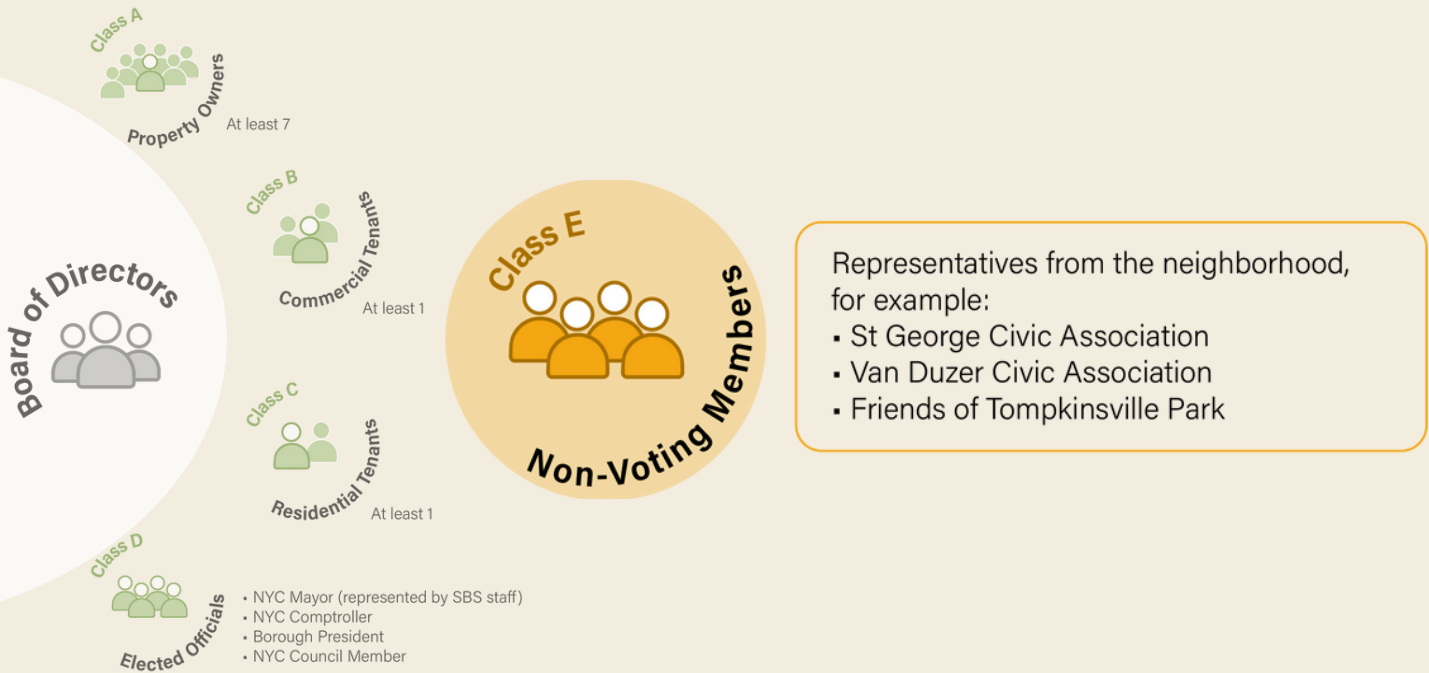
First, the BID will have an organization and funding structure that will represent and support the local business and resident community.

Second, the BID will provide additional sanitation services and public safety solutions to the Bay Street Corridor to supplement existing city services.

Finally, in terms of branding and beautification, the BID will be in charge of overall marketing and events, bring in Holiday Lighting during the festive periods, improve landscaping and horticulture, as well as banner production & installation for better wayfinding.

1 BID STRUCTURE

1.1 Inclusion of Class E Members to the Board of Directors



We propose the Downtown Staten Island BID voluntarily include a Class of Non-Voting Members to their Board of Directors. This class will comprise representatives from the neighborhood, such as members of civic associations and community based organizations. As a baseline, we recommend including representatives from the Civic Associations of the three neighborhoods in this Class.

This inclusion of aims to ensure equal representation from every stakeholder and continued community engagement by the BID. Through our engagements, we understood that each association had different concerns and expertise within their organization, which can allow for more comprehensive decision making.

1 BID STRUCTURE

1.2 Additional funding sources

In recognizing the size of the overall assessment for the Downtown Staten Island BID and the breadth of services it will be responsible for, our team looked into other sources of funding that can be tapped into the bridge any financial gaps.

First, we recommend that the BID apply to become a 501(C)(3) non-profit organization, such that it can accept charitable donations from external parties.

Second, as the assessment value of the Downtown Staten Island BID is lower than \$600,000, they qualify for the Small BID Support Grant Program by the Department of Small Business Services. There are two categories of grants that the BID can apply for, namely the Single District Grant or the Citywide Grant.

- The Single District Grant is meant to address commercial corridor recovery, management, and growth, providing funding up to \$100,000.
- To apply for the Citywide Grant program, the Downtown Staten Island BID can apply with Forest Avenue BID for funding dedicated to the collective development and deployment of technical assistance programs, capacity building resources, and back-office services. Funding from this grant can reach up to \$300,000.

We also recommend that the BID explores sponsorships for its events. Funding can come from nominal entrance tickets to cover basic costs, or through even sponsors such as utility companies, banks, local hospitals, or healthcare providers. Some specific suggestions include collaboration with Staten Island Arts, to sponsor for movie nights through their CinemaConnex program. Finally, the BID can engage Food Festival event organizers for sponsorship to bring festivals such as Japan Food Festivals to Downtown Staten Island.



2 SANITATION

2.1 Service Provider

We propose that the Downtown Staten Island BID work with The Doe Fund or other similar organizations for sanitation services throughout the BID.

The Doe Fund is a non-profit organization that works towards ending cycles of homelessness, recidivism, drug addiction, and economic injustice through paid transitional work and supportive services. The issues that The Doe Fund works towards resolving are key issues that Downtown Staten Island is facing. Through this partnership, the BID can work towards providing gainful employment that can make impactful changes to the community.

The Clean Team provided by The Doe Fund will provide daily maintenance and upkeep to the BID, paying special attention to streets and flower beds.



2 SANITATION

2.2 Tompkinsville Stewardship

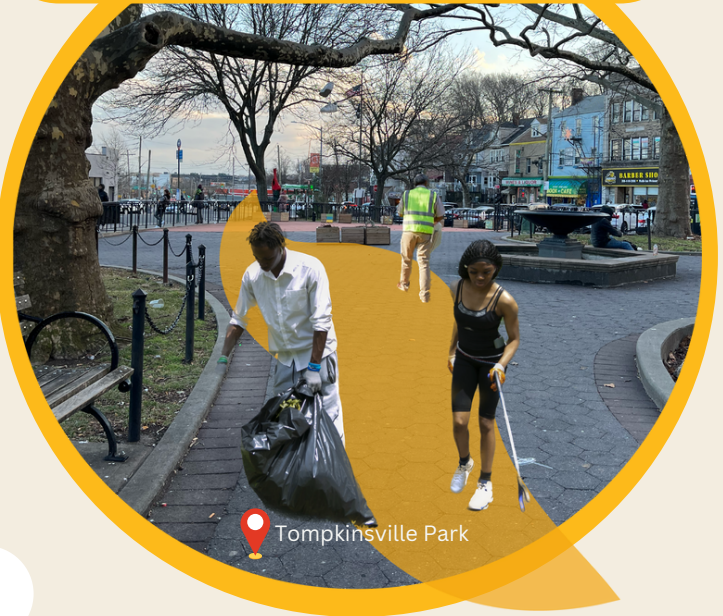
Designated Clean Team to collaborate with Friends of Tompkinsville Park to maintain the park everyday as regular stewards.

Tompkinsville Park is most in need of tender loving care



Heavily trafficked due to bus routes

Key site with shops and upcoming WIN Shelter



Our team observed that Tompkinsville Park is in most need of tender loving care across the whole BID. The park is currently inactive and associated with crime and drugs.

Yet, this tiny park is vital to the life of the BID. There are 16 bus lines that run around the park, and many Staten Island residents alight from their buses here to transfer to a different route. The Park thus serves as an informal bus interchange for the neighborhood. Furthermore, the park is surrounded by many small shops whose businesses have been impacted by the lack of park activation. Businesses and residents have also expressed that the upcoming WIN Shelter for the homeless will likely create more social issues in the Park. Finally, Tompkinsville Park is a sensitive area for the community -- this is the site where the killing of Eric Garner took place.

Our team recommends forming a designated Clean Team to maintain the park every day, collaborating with Friends of Tompkinsville Park to serve as regular stewards of the park and ensure a safe environment. With regular maintenance and park stewardship, we believe the Park will feel safer to the community, allowing for greater park usage and activation. This will also allow for the community to start a collective healing process.

3 PUBLIC SAFETY

3.1 Temporary Street Furniture

Public Safety is an important concern expressed by the community. In our recommendations, our team feels strongly to explore alternative ways of improving safety that does not involve increased police activity. The first recommendation is to install temporary street furniture in the BID boundaries in the warmer months that will be maintained by the Clean Team. Many residents expressed the lack of public seating options in the neighborhood, and this would address such concerns immediately. Street furniture will provide varied options for rest and increase street activity. People can watch the world go by, while looking out for other pedestrians.



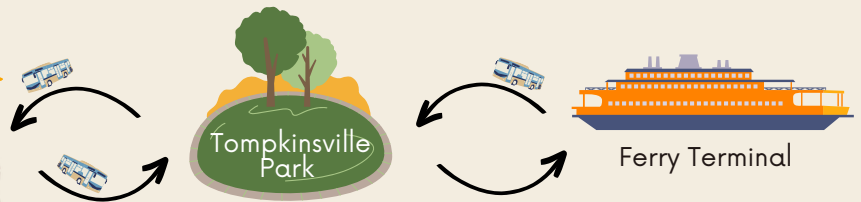
3 PUBLIC SAFETY

3.2 Volunteer Ambassadors

We propose that the BID recruit volunteer ambassadors to serve as local guides. Through our engagement, we were impressed by how much history and stories the local community had to share with us and believe that this is a valuable resource that the BID can tap into. This strategy can also help to showcase the warmth and hospitality of Staten Island residents, helping to reshape the existing stereotypes of the Borough.

The volunteer ambassadors could provide wayfinding directions and also lend a human touch to the neighborhood. The BID can work with the local civic associations, local schools like CUNY College of Staten Island and St John University, as well as senior centers in the neighborhood for recruitment.

Our Downtown Ambassadors could situate themselves at the St George Ferry Terminal, Tompkinsville Park, and Tappen Park to guide people coming off the ferry into the heart of the BID. They can serve as additional eyes on the street to increase a sense of public safety.



4 MARKETING & EVENTS

Our proposed Marketing and Event plan is designed to create a vibrant and welcoming atmosphere for residents and visitors. We suggested five action plans that we believe will make a significant difference in improving the BID area.

1. OPEN STREET EVENTS

Firstly, we suggest a frequent Open Street event incorporating active play elements. Adding play elements in Open Street will not only liven up the streets in the BID corridor but also encourage community engagement. With the recent announcement of designated open streets in the BID area, such as Water Street and Minthorne Street, we also suggest that the BID management work with the DOT to expand Open Streets to other parts of the BID. For instance, Central Avenue near the junction of Hyatt Street can become the potential location for Open Street, considering the low traffic in the area.

The BID can tap into StreetLab collaboration through the SBS Department for event programming. StreetLab is a nonprofit organization that creates and shares programs across New York City. StreetLab provides various Pop-up programs such as a pop-up reading room, open-air art studio, obstacle course, hands-on puzzle station, street chalking, hands-on nature exhibit, and open-air writing studio. Creating pop-up events that bring unique experiences to the BID area could increase business activities and attract more pedestrians to walk along the neighborhood.

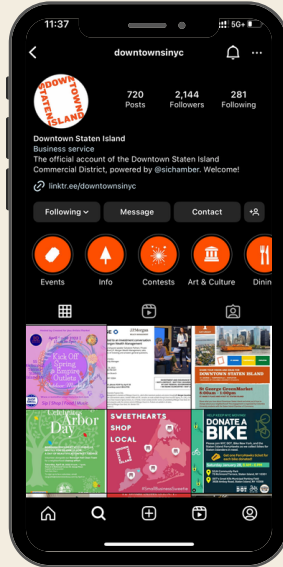




4 MARKETING & EVENTS

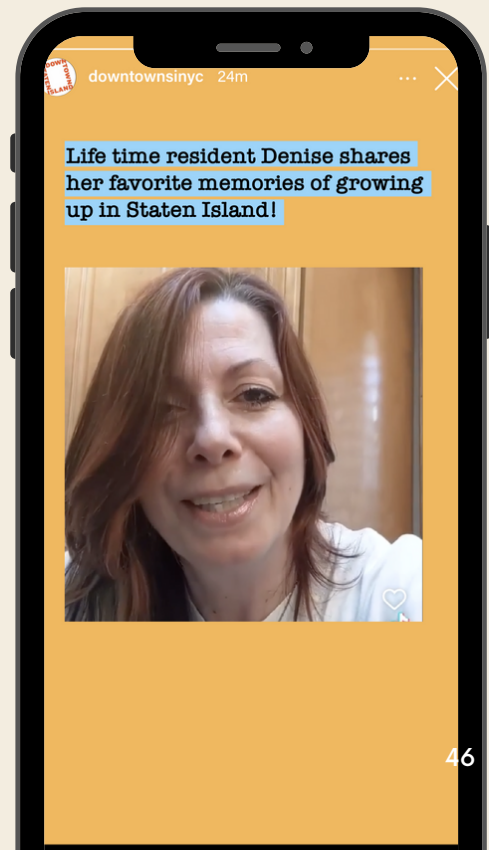
2. SOCIAL MEDIA

As part of our proposed Marketing and Event plan, we recognize the importance of communication through social media as an impactful marketing tool. Social media platforms such as Instagram and TikTok have become powerful tools for businesses and organizations to reach their target audience.



One of the ways we can use social media to promote the BID area is by initiating a social media takeover by local businesses. A social media takeover is a great way for to increase their publicity and showcase their products or services. This can help encourage people to visit their shops and create a sense of collaboration between the BID and local businesses.

Another way to leverage social media is by featuring the stories of residents in Staten Island. By sharing the stories of residents, we can showcase the diversity and unique character of the BID area. These stories can highlight the experiences of residents, their favorite shops, and their favorite activities in Downtown Staten Island.





4 MARKETING & EVENTS

3. FARMERS MARKET & FLEA MARKET

In response to concerns from the community about the lack of retail and fresh food options in the BID area, we recommend that the BID team prioritize hosting bigger farmers' markets and flea markets. This can help to address existing retail gaps and provide residents with access to fresh, healthy food options.



We suggest collaborating with GrowNYC, a non-profit organization that operates Greenmarkets throughout the city, to enrich the merchant list for the farmers' market. By collaborating with GrowNYC, the BID can ensure that the farmers' market is well-stocked with a diverse range of goods that meet the needs of the local community.



In addition to the that, we recommend organizing flea markets to provide residents and visitors with access to vintage items and local crafts. By collaborating with local businesses such as Every Thing Goes Book Cafe and Old Beginnings Antiques and Consignment shop, the BID can create a unique market experience to attract a diverse range of vendors to the flea market.



4 MARKETING & EVENTS

4. THIRD SPACES

We suggest creating "third spaces" for SI residents as interstitial places between work and home. Residents expressed that there is a lack of safe public open space with exciting programming. Opening up plazas as hangout spots can meet the community's needs and further increase business activity in the BID. Some locations we think can be potential third space are Inspiration Plaza and the steps in front of Borough Hall. The BID can supply board games or plan activities for the residents.



Inspiration Plaza, Tompkinsville



Borough Hall, St. George



5 HOLIDAY LIGHTING

Our fifth action plan for BID services is to add customized holiday lightings. The holiday lighting should reflect and celebrate the diverse cultures in the BID. For example, knowing that Tompkinsville has one of the largest Sri Lankan communities in New York City, the BID can include Day or Diwali in their holiday schedule. The BID can tap into the SBS Commercial District Lighting Grant.



Other holidays and events to be celebrated:



Spring Festival



Thanksgiving



Halloween



Ramadan



Veterans Day



Día de Muertos



St Patrick's Day



Christmas



Pride Parade



Diwali



Hanukkah



Chinese New Year



6 LANDSCAPING & HORTICULTURE

Residents have voiced their love for more flowers around the neighborhood to beautify it and attract more butterflies. We suggest using potted plants to tie the neighborhoods together.

The BID can use existing flower beds as community gardens. To support the maintenance of these flower beds, the BID can integrate a stewardship program such as a rain garden stewardship program from NYC DEP. This program provides training to volunteers to care for rain gardens and bioswales, including planting, weeding, and watering. By engaging the local businesses in the maintenance of the flower beds, the BID can create a sense of ownership in the area.

The BID can play a role in providing flower bulbs and mulch to the community. Additionally, the BID's cleaning team can water the plants as part of their regular maintenance routine.



7 BANNER PRODUCTION & INSTALLATION

For wayfinding, we suggest incorporating feedback from our community engagement on places that the residents love to visit.



We recommend grouping businesses in the BID areas into categories such as Local Hang Outs, Niche Crowd, and Long-Standing Institutions. This can be incorporated in wall signs and window decals to further provide marketing.

District wayfinding maps of Downtown Staten Island can be printed as window decals and placed on vacant storefronts near transit areas—for instance, this empty storefront across Tompkinsville Park.





5

ADDRESSING PLANNING CONCERNS THROUGH THE BID

5.2 Beyond Direct Services

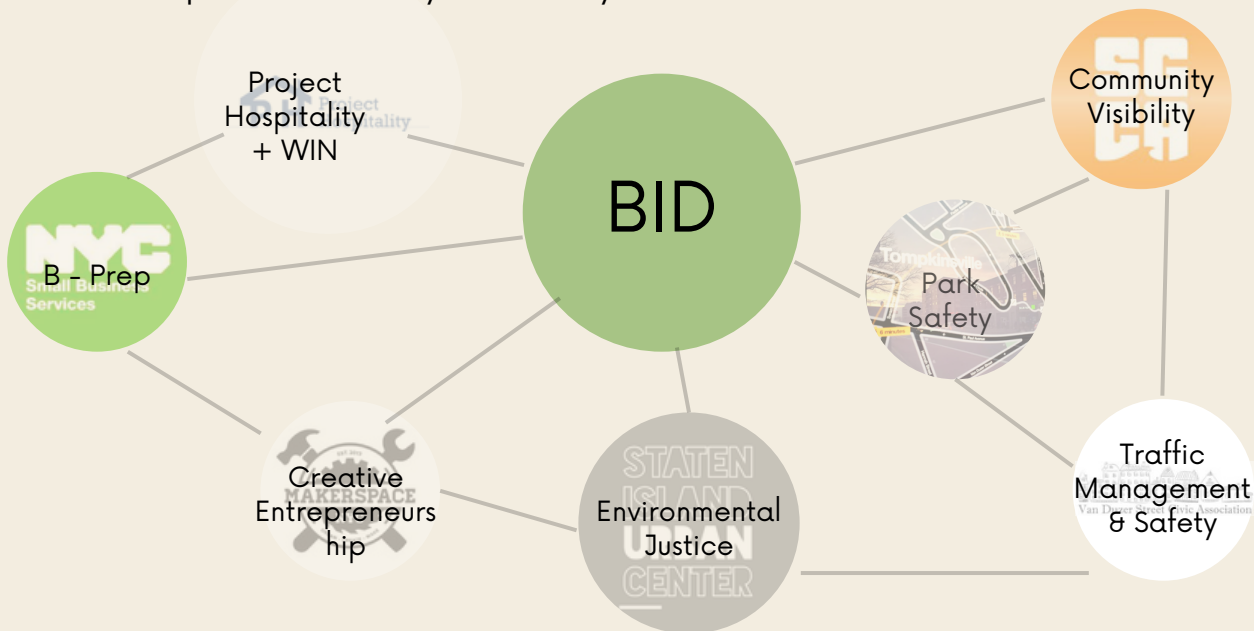
COALITION BUILDING

Beyond the direct BID service recommendations, the BID has the power to serve as a champion for coalition building. The North Shore has several active non profit and civic organizations, but these groups operate independently with little to no cohesion. Through stakeholder interviews, we have seen that many of these organizations are working towards the same planning goals. There is an opportunity for the BID as an entity that spans across the three neighborhoods to identify synergies and advocate for aligned missions as an anchored institution.

For example, each neighborhood has a strong civic association with goals like park and transportation safety. These concerns were brought up in our client’s commercial district’s needs assessment. The desired outcomes of the local residents would also enhance the business district along Bay Street.

Similarly, the nonprofit groups complement the BID’s work. The Staten Island Urban Institute and The Makerspace are groups supporting entrepreneurs. In conversations with these folks, they shared that there is a vibrant community that exists outside of a traditional Brick and Mortar framework like ecommerce, home businesses and more. We see the potential for the BID to work with these groups to support a diverse array of business owners.

Lastly, the BID can connect with city agencies like SBS to make services known like B-Prep that provide commercial lease assistance in emergencies. The BID can serve as a platform to unify community voices.



1 COALITION BUILDING IN PRACTICE



We recommend four strategies to make coalition building a reality for the Business Improvement District.

First, we suggest quarterly meetings with all coalition partners

Next, we propose having collaborative events bringing together multiple groups. For example the St George Civic organizes graffiti clean ups, and the Van Duzer Civic beautifies businesses' storefronts with planters.

The BID can create a weekly newsletter sharing the events and work of its coalition partners. This is so important because we don't want community groups to work in silos.

Lastly, to make this coalition a reality, it must be integrated into the daily operations of the BID management team. Marketing and Outreach employees can work with folks on the ground like street cleaners to gauge business district changes and needs.



2 BUSINESS RETENTION AND ATTRACTION

36%

VACANT OR NON-ACTIVE STOREFRONTS

● Vacant storefront



Beyond coalition building, The BID plays a role in attracting and retaining businesses on Bay Street. Our studio team updated the Chamber of Commerce’s business directory, mapping vacancy rates and business categories.

We found a shocking commercial storefront vacancy rate of 36% and a disproportionate split of business categories - like the absence of accessible grocery stores. The BID can serve as an entity to address for gaps in the commercial landscape.

2 BUSINESS RETENTION AND ATTRACTION

We recommend the BID uses its platform to attract a grocery store. After site analysis, we believe the vacant lot between Bay Street and Canal Street is the perfect candidate for a grocery store, because of its square footage and central location. As you can see from this map it would service the existing fresh food desert. Providing fresh, accessible healthy foods supports the local economy, minimizes retail leakage, and promotes healthy lifestyles.



2 BUSINESS RETENTION AND ATTRACTION

We also recommend the launch of a short-term rental program, partnering with property owners to transform unused storefronts into startup spaces for small businesses and entrepreneurs, like home-based businesses or artists. The BID can work as a facilitator between property owners and entrepreneurs, negotiating for shorter lease terms and lower or no rent. The key benefit to property owners would be a nominal income generated from their properties that would otherwise sit vacant, while activating the street that can benefit their other properties. Entrepreneurs can benefit from having a temporary brick-and-mortar shop that can provide a platform to increase patronage, and also get a chance to experience the daily operations of maintaining a shopfront, accelerating their business growth.

This recommendation draws inspiration from the Department of Small Business Services' partnership program with ChaShaMa, Enliven NYC: Storefront Startup. The BID could potentially work with this organization or develop a similar model that is contextual to Downtown Staten Island.





5

ADDRESSING
PLANNING
CONCERNS
THROUGH THE BID

5.3

Planning issues the BID
can advocate for

INTRODUCTION

Our engagement with the residents of St. George, Tompkinsville and Stapleton revealed several concerns, many of which pertained to urban planning themes (a full list of community concerns, organized thematically, can be found in the "Community Concerns" section). We envision the BID to be an advocate and central anchor for addressing these issues in and around their study area.

Out of these wide ranging concerns, we are highlighting three main concerns, which we will address through targeted, place-based strategies.

1 CONNECTIVITY AND TRANSPORTATION

OBSTRUCTIONS TO WATERFRONT VIEWS

AFFORDABLE HOUSING

PROTECTED BUS OR BIKE LANES

AFFORDABLE FOOD

2 CONNECTED AND ACTIVATED WATERFRONT

CLEANER S

REDUCE CRIME

ARCHITECTURAL PRESERVATION

SAFETY

PUBLIC MARKETS

MORE GROCERY STORES

INCREASED COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

PARKS

INTEGRATIVE APPROACH TO HOUSING THE UNHOUSED

REDUCE

MORE FLOWERS ON SIDEWALKS

3 PUBLIC REALM AND RECREATION

MORE THIRD SPACES TO GATHER

CLIMATE E

While several of these issues have been addressed in the past through plans and strategy documents created by different organizations, our site visits revealed that these issues still persisted on ground, hampering the daily urban experiences of Staten Island residents.



1 CONNECTIVITY AND TRANSPORTATION

1.1 TWEAKING THE FERRY SCHEDULE



St George



DOT; NYC Ferry / Hornblower



There is a need to eliminate redundancy in the ferry system, as the fast ferry leaves just 5 minutes after the main ferry. If it left every 15 minutes instead, it would not be redundant and would provide regular ferry service."

STAPLETON RESIDENT, VAN DUZER CIVIC ASSOCIATION

Our conversation with this member of the Van Duzer Street Civic Association prompted us to recommend changes to the ferries leaving from the St George ferry terminal. Currently, there are two ferry lines connecting Manhattan with Staten Island - the Staten Island ferry and the fast ferry - with the fast ferry leaving just 5 minutes after SI ferry in a different location. We propose to re-align the schedule so that there's a ferry leaving every 15 minutes instead of every 25 minutes, increasing the service frequency of the ferry.

	Staten Island Ferry	Fast Ferry
EXISTING SCHEDULE	8:30	-
	8:45	8:35
	9:00	9:05
	9:30	9:35
	10:00	10:05
	...	10:35
PROPOSED CHANGE	8:30	-
	8:45	8:35
	9:00	9:15
	9:30	9:45
	10:00	10:15
	...	10:45

Every 25 minutes
to every 15
minutes



1 CONNECTIVITY AND TRANSPORTATION

1.2 STATEN ISLAND RAILWAY IMPROVEMENTS



During our site visits, we made several observations about the Staten Island Railway. One was that trains were too infrequent, arriving only once every 30 minutes, which led to its reduced utilization. In response, we propose changes to the train schedule to increase its frequency of arrival, such that there is a train arriving once every 10-15 minutes instead of 30 minutes.

	Leaves St George	Arrives at St George
EXISTING SCHEDULE	10:06	9:13
	10:36	9:43
	11:06	10:13

PROPOSED SCHEDULE	10:06	9:13
	10:21	9:28
	10:36	9:43
	10:51	9:58
	11:06	10:13
	11:21	10:28



Another observation was that the train stations needed improvements for better accessibility and safety, for which we propose the following additions:



1 CONNECTIVITY AND TRANSPORTATION

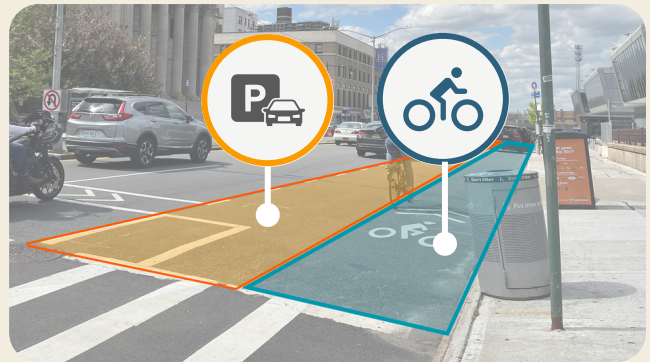
1.3 IMPROVING BIKE SAFETY



DOT, SI Borough Commissioner

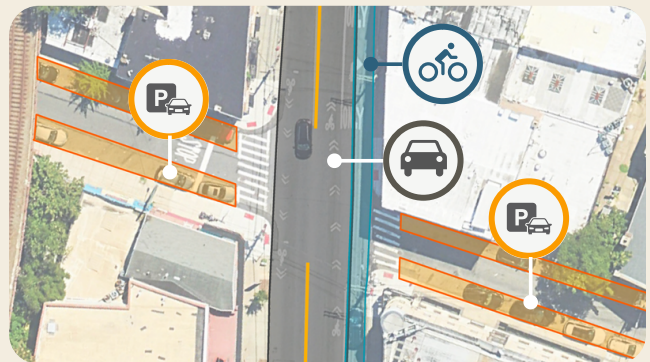
Considering that the residents of Downtown Staten Island are highly transit-dependent, we propose making safety improvements for pedestrians and bikers along Bay Street. Bay Street has two sections with different widths and rights-of-way, and we've redesigned the two sections keeping these differences in mind.

Section 1: Hyatt St to Baltic St



This section of Bay St is broader with multiple lanes, on-street parking, and unprotected bike lanes, the latter creating an unsafe mobility environment for bikers. To resolve this, we propose switching the parking lane with the bike lanes, so that the parked cars serve as a buffer protecting bikers from fast-moving traffic.

Section 2: Between Baltic St and Broad St



This section of Bay St is a narrower stretch, with the biking lane overlapping with the vehicular lane and contributing to an unsafe biking and pedestrian experience. To improve safety and the Bay St pedestrian experience, we propose moving street parking to the side streets and reserving the carriage way for vehicular and bike traffic.



1 CONNECTIVITY AND TRANSPORTATION

ACTIONABLES FOR THE BID

Improving pedestrian and biking safety along Bay St is crucial to the success of the BID, as accessibility and a sense of safety are important for the consumer experience of the street. Here are some recommendations for how the BID can support these improvements:

Advocacy

- 1 **Advocate to DOT and the SI DOT Borough Commissioner**
The BID can advocate for street safety improvements to city transportation agencies and concerned representatives.
- 2 **Conduct their own traffic study/pilot programs for safety improvements**
Similar to SoHo-Broadway Initiative's "SoHo Broadway Public Realm Framework + Vision Plan" and Union Square Partnership's District Vision Plan, the BID can conduct its own safety assessments and pilot interventions to improve safety along the BID corridor.
- 3 **Collaborate with civic associations for advocacy and streetscape improvements**
Organizations like Van Duzer Civic and the Staten Island Urban Center are closely involved in street safety improvement efforts, advocacy, and streetscaping, which the BID can support and collaborate with.

Grants and governmental programs

Due to its non-profit and community-based organization status, the BID can apply/support in applying for several grants to make these changes:

- 1 Neighborhood 360 grants
- 2 New York State Main Street grants
- 3 CitiBike community grants

2 CONNECTED AND ACTIVATED WATERFRONT

2.1 A PEDESTRIANIZED WATERFRONT



Front St



EDC, DCP

In our site visits, we walked along Front St, the waterfront street along our study area. Desolate, with few green spaces, fences, and parking, we saw the potential to transform it into a pedestrianized and activated street that could become an amenity for the BID and the greater community.

We propose converting the waterfront into a green pedestrianized space, with biking and walking paths, active spaces for play and exercise, and a protective natural barrier.



2 CONNECTED AND ACTIVATED WATERFRONT

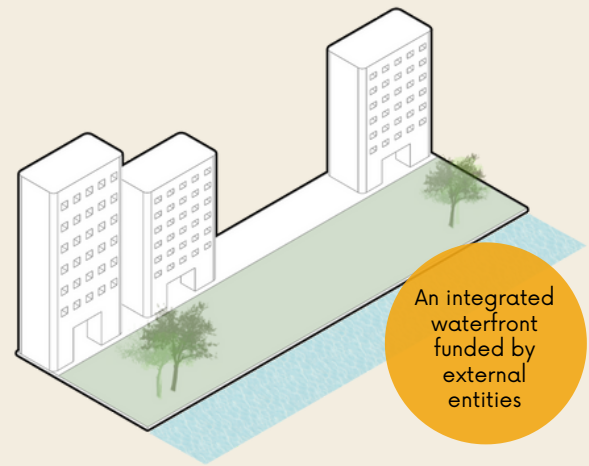
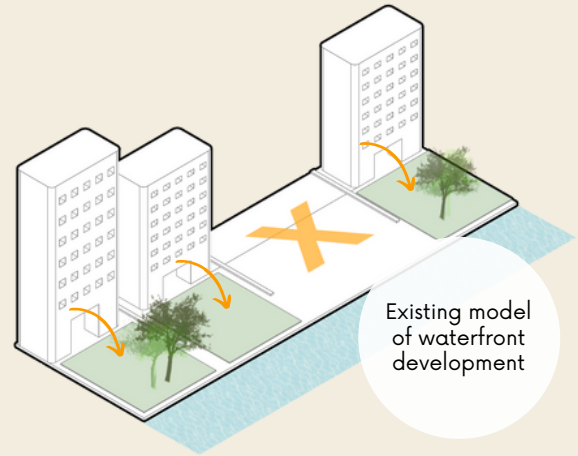
2.2 A CONNECTED WATERFRONT

One of the reasons for a fragmented waterfront is the current model of waterfront development, which relies on individual private developments to develop the waterfront portion in front of their buildings. One example of this are the Public Access Requirements of NYC's Waterfront Zone, wherein developments are required "to provide and maintain public open space at the water's edge with pedestrian links to upland communities". However, this results in interruptions to a continuous waterfront experience, when development does not occur on certain waterfront parcels.

To counter this, we propose the creation of a community-centered waterfront alliance to bridge community needs and priorities with new waterfront spaces and to leverage other funding sources to create a cohesive waterfront.


Front St

EDC, DCP



Potential funding sources

- 1 Transfer of development rights**
From waterfront regions to transit nodes
- 3 NYC Proposition 1 funds**
Study area is an eligible zone.
- 2 Federal agency funds**
Land and Water Conservation Fund, FEMA grants
- 4 NYC Waterfront Revitalization Program**
Investment to create a cohesive waterfront



2 CONNECTED AND ACTIVATED WATERFRONT

2.3 INTERIM PLAN FOR UNDER-CONSTRUCTION SITES



Front St



EDC, DCP



Megaprojects like the NY Wheel have blocked our access to the waterfront, especially to public spaces like the North Shore Waterfront Esplanade, which was a community favorite..."

ST GEORGE RESIDENT, ST GEORGE CIVIC ASSOCIATION

We also observed several fenced-off and inaccessible sites under construction next to the waterfront, which were also a major community concern. Over time, multiple of these stalled or failed projects have led to a lack of trust between the local community and the agencies behind these plans.

As these agencies pivot to a more community-centered approach in their planning, we propose that the concerned agencies give continual updates about the status of these projects as well as an actionable timeline through a public portal and engagement activities with civic associations. We also propose that these agencies create an interim plan for the use of these sites, enabling public access through pop-ups and temporary installations. An example of a public redevelopment project that took a long time to complete, but activated its under-construction sites through public uses in the meantime, is Carlsberg City in Copenhagen.





2 CONNECTED AND ACTIVATED WATERFRONT

ACTIONABLES FOR THE BID

As an active waterfront with sweeping views of the Manhattan and Brooklyn skylines, the Downtown Staten Island waterfront is an incredible asset to the BID and the surrounding community, especially considering that Bay St has direct pedestrian and vehicular connections to Front Street. The BID can help activate waterfront spaces through programming, especially supporting the interim programming for under-construction sites to build community ownership of these spaces.

Public space activation

- 1 **"Restaurant Week on the Bay"**
Waterfront food festival with Bay St restaurants
- 2 **Health and wellness-focused activities**
Open-air yoga, dance classes
- 3 **Farmers Market 2.0**
Waterfront farmers' market
- 4 **Interim events on currently-occupied sites**
Festivals and holidays, block parties

Advocacy

- 1 **Support the creation of a DSI Waterfront Alliance**
With EDC and other agencies to bridge community needs with new waterfront plans

3 PUBLIC REALM

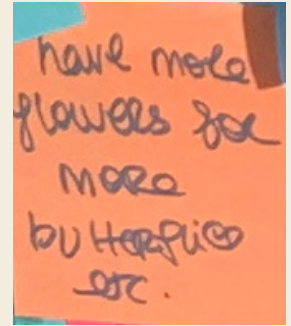
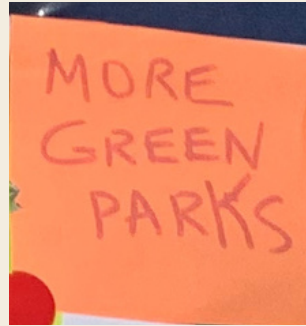
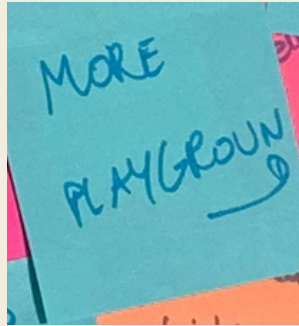
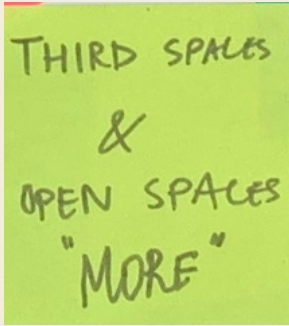
3.1 ACTIVATING PARKS



Tappen Park



DPR



One major community recommendation was to activate existing parks in our study area to improve the public realm experience. We recommend: active uses like fitness corners for outdoor workouts and exercise sessions, more playgrounds for children creating inclusive public open spaces for people across all age groups and more barbecue pits and picnic tables with permit requirements which will be taken care of under the department of parks and recreation, maintaining the safety and sanitation of the park as well. Tying the activities to the community sponsored events will help further activate the space.

Fitness corners for exercise and active use

More playgrounds for children to create inclusive public spaces

Barbecue pits and picnic tables for varied uses



3 PUBLIC REALM

3.2 STREET BENCHES

Bay Street DOT

We also recommend that the Department of Transportation repave the pedestrian portions of Bay Street overlooking the Bay Street landing, protecting pedestrians from fast-moving cars and buses. Additionally, we suggest more seating spaces along the street, creating more outdoor destinations for people in the neighborhood, along with the activation of barren spaces like Hyatt Street. Finally we recommend having more street lights at the intersection of Bay Street and Cross Street and also on Minthorne Street for increased safety and better visibility in the dark.

Re-paving the streets to improve pedestrian safety



Bay Street overlooking Bay Street Landing

More seating areas along the street for rest and enjoyment



Hyatt Street

Activate barren streets with additional uses

More Street and Pedestrian Lighting



Bay Street intersection with Cross Street

Improve visibility and sense of safety



Minthorne Street

3 PUBLIC REALM

ACTIONABLES FOR THE BID

Public spaces are at the heart of the urban experience - they attract visitors, improve safety, and contribute to social cohesion and inclusivity. By strengthening its public spaces, the Bay St BID can provide an improved retail and commercial experience to its visitors, transforming the street and its surrounding spaces into "third spaces" where Downtown Staten Island residents can work, play, and connect with their community.

Advocacy

- 1 Use existing studies to advocate to DPR on park improvements.**
The BID can use existing studies, such as the study by New Yorkers for Parks, to advocate to the Department of Parks and Recreation to improve the active uses and user experience of the park.
- 2 Engage DOT to conduct an updated Illumination Study for the BID.**
The BID can also engage DOT in conducting an updated illumination study for Bay St and implement lighting improvements, as the last study was conducted in 2019 with no action taken ever since.

Governmental programs

In order to make these recommendations actionable, the BID can tap into or guide civic associations and park groups to apply for stewardship funds.

- 1 DOT CityBench Program for more benches along the street**
- 2 DPR Adopt-A-Bench and Dedicate-A-Tree**
- 3 New York State Parks, Recreation, and Historic Preservation Grant**
- 4 NYC Green Fund and Capacity Fund Grant for park stewardship**
- 5 DOT Plaza Program fund**

CONCLUSION

Including these recommendations in the formation of a new BID will reimagine the traditional role of Business Improvement Districts, transforming them from being commercial improvement entities to a strong force for neighborhood transformation.

With this, The Chamber can create an entity that truly represents the community voice, addressing issues that have not been executed in previously proposed plans.



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Matthew Bauer, Faculty Advisor

Calvin Brown, Faculty Advisor

Ali Estefam, Teaching Associate

Janet Dugo, Project Manager for the Downtown Staten Island Commercial District

Douglas Woodward, Adjunct Professor and Associate Director, Professional Development and Practice for Urban Planning, GSAPP, Columbia University

John Louisi, Member, St George Civic Association

Eileen Harrington, President, St George Civic Association

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Rose Uscianowski, TA Staten Island Organizer and member of Van Duzer Civic

Richenda, Member, St George Civic Association

Nina Flores, Executive Director, Forest Avenue BID

George Todorovic, DCP

Judd, Adjunct Professor at NYU and member of Van Duzer Civic

Noah, Member, St George Civic Association

Kevin Parris, Director of Queens & Staten Island Planning, NYC HPD

Kelly Vilar, founder and CEO of SI Urban Center

Matt Janeczko, Executive Director & CEO, Sisters of Charity Housing Development Corporation

Jackie, Member, St George Civic Association

Amy Obonaga, Urban Designer for SI, NYCDPCP, and many others!



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