

the

GREEN AGENDA

for Jackson Heights



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The Green Agenda brings this diverse community together, across the divides of language, race and class, for a community conversation to help create a greener and more inclusive Jackson Heights. From November 2010 to March 2010, over 400 Jackson Heights residents participated in three community workshops and fourteen 'mini-visioning sessions' which were facilitated by volunteers in living rooms, schools, churches, seniors centers, and at the regular meetings of community-based organizations. Together, Jackson Heights residents imagined their future and crafted this plan to address their ecological, economic and social concerns. To achieve this vision, residents identified strategies for addressing neighborhood issues and building on strengths. For each of the seven topics in the Green Agenda, residents dared to dream big, expressing their wishes for the future, but were also practical: many of the actions identified in the Green Agenda are easily achievable, creative solutions. Most of all, the Green Agenda was created with the recognition that community members need to come together and create the necessary organizations and structures to work toward accomplishable goals. The goals and actions presented in the Green Agenda represent a shared vision for the neighborhood that can become a powerful tool for neighborhood change.



Equitable Community

Build communication, understanding and respect across cultures and ensure future programs and development benefit the whole community, regardless of race, creed, sexual orientation, gender or economic status.

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Green Spaces

Be creative about using limited space to green the community for recreational and ecological purposes.

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Green Mobility

Make trips within, to, and from the community safe, convenient, reliable and enjoyable whether by foot, by bike, by public transportation, or by automobile.

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Affordable, Green Housing

Take a leadership role to green buildings while organizing the community to address housing quality and affordability issues.

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Green Solutions to Trash

Clean our community in an environmentally responsible way, reduce street trash by producing less waste and reuse, recycle and compost the waste we do produce.

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Healthy, Safe People and Places

Green toxic households, make housing healthy both inside and out, and increase security in the community during the day and night.

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Employment and Economy

Create an inclusive economy where residents have access to the education and support needed to succeed in meaningful jobs and to expand local business.

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How Can I Get Involved?

The Green Agenda is a collective effort that needs the support of the whole community to succeed. This document identifies and supports existing community programs and suggests many new actions for continued progress on a range of ecological, economic and social issues. As an individual, as an organization, or as a business, there are lots of ways you can contribute to the community's goals.

Here are some ways you can be involved:

1) EDUCATE

Help us to provide ongoing environmental education that would broaden support for a more sustainable neighborhood while continuing to involve a broad cross section of our community in these efforts.

2) ORGANIZE

There are many community-based organizations in Jackson Heights which are already working towards many of the goals in this document. Volunteer with one of these organizations, or join one of the Green Agenda task forces— contact us to find out how.

3) TAKE ACTION

Take action in your home, school, or community group — there are many simple actions identified in this document that you can do individually or together with your friends to make this a better community.

4) USE THIS DOCUMENT

This document represents the voice of over four hundred community members — take the Green Agenda to your elected officials, the press, and other people in the community and use it to build support for action on the community goals identified in the Green Agenda.

For More Information

Get in touch to find out more ways you can be involved.

Contact Len Maniace at lenmaniace@gmail.com

This document is available online at:

<http://www.prattcenter.net/green-agenda-jacksonheights/>

Visit the Green Agenda on the web:

<http://thegreenagenda.webs.com>

Why the Green Agenda?

At its simplest, sustainability means living gently on the planet and leaving it at least as good as when we found it. Those alive now must make choices and adopt technologies that provide those who follow with the resources (both natural and human-created) to live full, enriching lives.

Many researchers say we face a wide range of emerging environmental problems— including climate change and shortages of energy, food, water and other resources. These forces threaten not only the wellbeing of future generations, but are already being felt in many parts of the globe. Legislative and programmatic initiatives are being introduced almost daily at the city, state, and federal levels to address these issues, including PlaNYC 2030. But these plans and initiatives will not gain the constituency needed to implement them without the essential participation of residents who must be engaged at the neighborhood level. Energy and water use, solid waste management, the use of toxic pesticides, paints and cleaning products, and transportation choices are individual decisions that are often made at the neighborhood level and therefore must be changed at the neighborhood level.

The Green Agenda for Jackson Heights is one of many neighborhood-led efforts to reduce the toll that our city takes on the planet, and to make communities more resilient environmentally and economically.

The recommendations in The Green Agenda go beyond climate change and environmental issues because building a sustainability movement and changing ingrained behaviors requires a positive and comprehensive vision which the residents of Jackson Heights have defined to include a healthier, affordable, friendlier, and more equitable community.

This project is funded by a New York State environmental justice grant, under a program that seeks to reduce the environmental damage faced by neighborhoods with significant numbers of low-income and minority residents. These communities often face greater environmental burdens than more affluent communities- and are more likely to suffer the effects of noise, bad air, lead contamination, exposure to toxic pesticides, poor quality housing, and limited environmental amenities like trees and parks. Low-income residents stand to benefit significantly from improvements in energy efficiency and environmental quality— but they also confront higher barriers than their more affluent neighbors in planning and implementing those improvements. The Green Agenda recognizes that the ill effects of pollution are not borne uniformly. To address this inequity, the Green Agenda set out to create an inclusive process in which the whole community could contribute to a positive vision of a future through actions that will benefit the whole community.



Photo Credit: Len Maniace



Photo Credit: Flickr User Bonddidwhat



Map 1. Jackson Heights is located in northwest Queens, NY, east of the BQE, and south of Astoria Boulevard

Resources Needed to Move Each Idea Forward:

The Green Agenda for Jackson Heights identifies actions, small and large, short term and long term, that individuals, businesses, government and community organizations can take to reduce the neighborhood’s environmental impact while increasing social and economic well-being. The icons to the right are used throughout the agenda to identify resource needs for the actions proposed:

TIME



Short Term



Medium Term



Long Term

FUNDS



Inexpensive



Somewhat Expensive



Funding Needed

PARTNERS



Individuals



Community Groups



Government



Local Businesses

Equitable Community



Shopping at the Green Market

Photo Credit: Len Maniace

GOAL:

Build communication, understanding and respect across cultures and ensure future programs and development benefit the whole community, regardless of race, creed, sexual orientation, gender or economic status.



Photo Credit: Len Maniace

A Wealth of Community Institutions

Jackson Heights' residents celebrate their cultural diversity. It makes the community an interesting and vibrant place to live and visit. The often cited statistic that Jackson Heights is the most ethnically diverse area in New York City (with 63 percent of residents being foreign born, compared to 48 percent Queens-wide) engenders a sense of neighborhood pride reflected in parades, residents' active social lives and community events.¹ Nearly everyone who participated in the Green Agenda identified this diversity as a tremendous strength and called attention to the many religious organizations with interfaith programs, and the schools and cultural organizations that give life to this community and are working to bridge the divides of language and culture. However, we also heard that despite its great diversity, Jackson Heights has racial, language and economic divisions that leave some residents feeling alienated. In some cases, residents feel they've been left out of decision-making processes and local politics. In the worst instances, these divisions have resulted in bias crimes and discrimination.

Building an equitable community means distributing resources fairly, so that the benefits of future development are experienced by all. Residents feel Jackson Heights is not getting its fair share of services and facilities: though population growth in the district has been the highest in New York City, no new facilities have been added to accommodate new residents. Given this imbalance, it is not surprising that most residents in the area

feel there are not enough community centers, indoor recreation centers, multi-cultural community centers, employment centers, arts venues and libraries.² The need for day care is perceived as urgent, and overcrowding throughout the District's school system is also perceived as dramatic.³ During the 2004 - 2005 school year, over 75% of the 21 public schools in northwest Queens were beyond official capacity.⁴ The community has become a service hub for surrounding neighborhoods, placing further demands on services and facilities that are already failing to meet the needs of local residents.

Opportunities to build on programs, activities and events that can unite the community around sustainability issues and foster social change are identified in this document. Without coming together and presenting a united voice it will be impossible to achieve the positive change residents would like to see. The Green Agenda imagines a future where equity and environmental issues are considered together. Equity and fairness both for this generation and for the next must be infused into every initiative the community considers, recognizing that the fundamental needs of the underprivileged, needs that might be taken for granted by those better off and needs that often go unmet, must emerge as community priorities.

1 American Community Survey, U.S. Census Bureau, 2006-2008

2 North West Queens Community Study, Pratt Center, 2006; Green Agenda Visioning Sessions

3 2010 Community District Needs Statement, Community Board 3

4 North West Queens Community Study, Pratt Center, 2006

Equitable Community



- 1. Provide Information in Many Languages.**
Publicize information on community events, environmental and social issues, political meetings, facilities and resources in multiple languages through as many media as possible including radio, internet, text message, community bulletin board, and public access television. Ensure information is accessible regardless of literacy skills.



Medium Term



Inexpensive



Community Groups



Local Businesses

- 2. Create More Public Gathering Spaces.**
Create public gathering spaces. Facilities currently lacking in the community, include daycare centers, a multi-ethnic community center, art venues, and a public pool.



Long Term



Funding Needed



Government

- 3. Facilities that Meet Our Needs.**
Assist community facilities in meeting cultural needs by employing multi-lingual staff, designating places for cultural practices, and engaging their users to self-determine their needs. Lobby local agencies to ensure the community has the schools, day care centers, recreational facilities, and social service organizations it requires to support its growing population.



Long Term



Funding Needed



Government

- 4. Celebrate Cross Cultural Connections.**
Use the arts to stimulate dialog around issues of cultural identity and diversity and explore the connection between these issues and other environmental themes. Possible programs include a cultural market place for food, textiles and music, and a community mural program.



Short Term



Inexpensive



Community Groups



5. Build Understanding and Respect.

Foster positive relations and respect across divides of race, religion and class through youth and adult programs that promote cultural awareness.



Short Term



Community Groups

6. Create Forums for Discussion.

Support and create opportunities for accessible and engaging public discussion of Jackson Heights' present and future, including informal meet-ups and workshops on the other actions enumerated in the Green Agenda.



Short Term



Community Groups

Next Steps

Initiative	Milestones for 2011
1 Provide Information in Many Languages	Make real time translation equipment available at community meetings. Host community board meetings in multiple languages.
2 Create More Public Gathering Spaces	Identify locations for new public gathering spaces, such as the former theater on 82 nd Street.
3 Provide Facilities that Meet Our Needs	Conduct a survey to identify the unmet needs of minority constituents for community facilities.
4 Celebrate Cross Cultural Connections	Initiate conversations among cultural organizations.
5 Build Understanding and Respect	Organize multi-identity discussion nights focused on specific neighborhood issues or concerns.
6 Create Forums for Discussion	Initiate conversations among cultural organizations.

Green Spaces



GOAL:

Be creative about using limited space for recreational and ecological purposes.

It is no secret that Jackson Heights lacks park space: Jackson Heights and its City Council District (District 25) ranks 49th out of the 50 Districts in New York City in the amount of park space per person.¹ This shortage is ironic considering Jackson Heights' origin as a planned green community nearly a century ago.² The apartment complexes of historic Jackson Heights were built with generous front and rear gardens and defined green city development for their era. This plan for a green community faded through the years, as a golf course, ball fields, and other vacant land was lost to development. Apartment-complex gardens remain, but they are private spaces not accessible to the general public. Even for the residents of these apartment complexes, the gardens do not provide space for active recreation.

This parks shortage has long been a concern in the community and residents share a vision of creating new green spaces for play and rest. The benefits of open spaces, outdoor recreation and natural areas in terms of social life, and mental and physical health have been well documented: plentiful parks within easy walking distance can lower obesity rates, reduce mental health risks, promote social interaction, and serve as fitness centers for all ages, especially for the young and elderly, who face limited mobility.³ A park can serve to bring people together across the divides of age, income, language and ethnicity.

Green spaces also serve as “green infrastructure” that cleans the air we breathe, lightens the load on the city’s strained sewer system (by allowing water to naturally infiltrate into the ground), filters pollutants with specially selected plants, and cools urban areas in the summer. By performing these ecological functions, parks reduce the need for expensive engineering solutions.

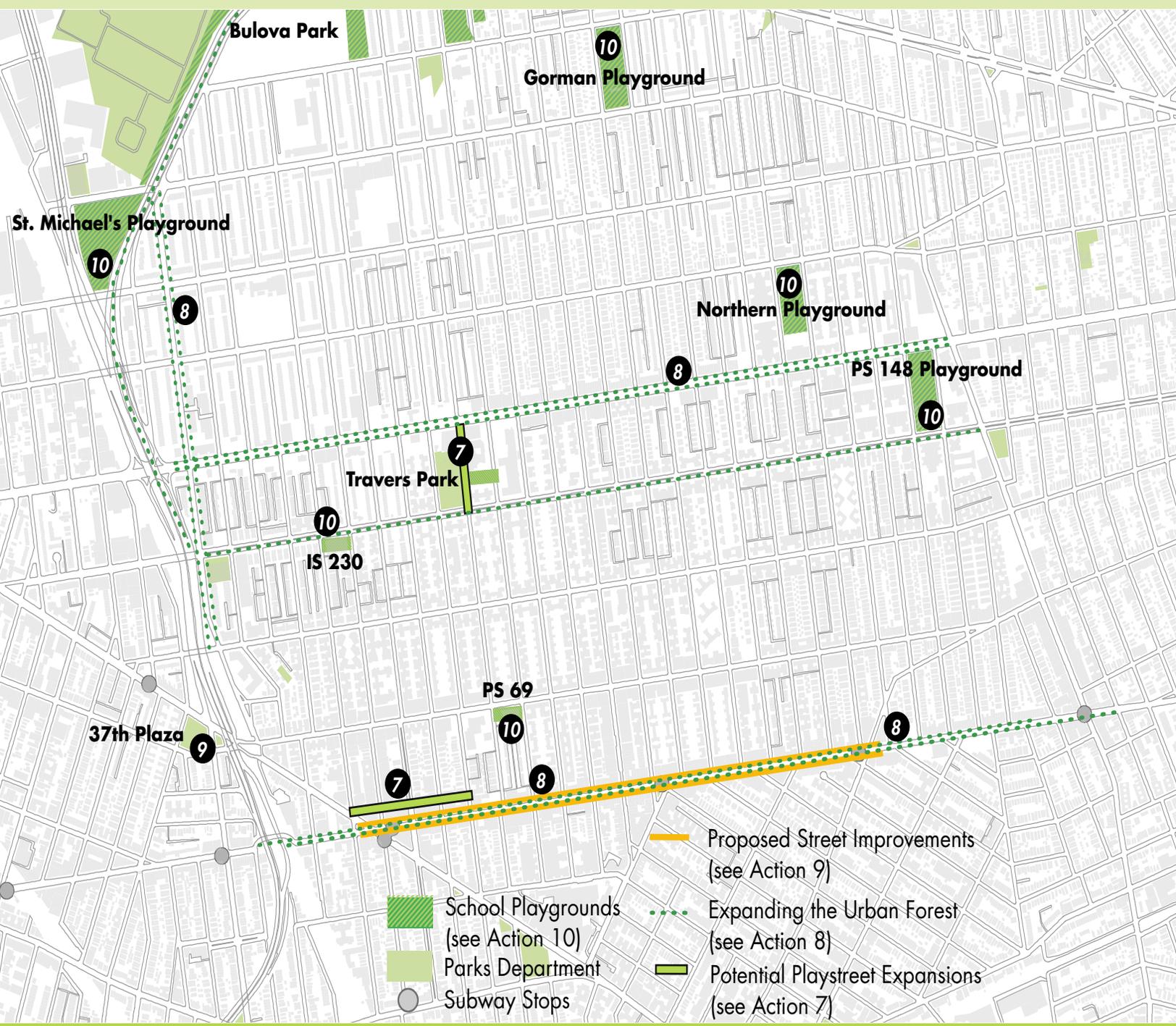
Green spaces can serve economic functions as well. In Jackson Heights, green markets, summer job training programs, and community agriculture that provides healthy, local food are all already being connected to green spaces to create local jobs and opportunities.

Creating and improving green space was identified as a priority by most of the participants in the Green Agenda workshops. The challenge, however, comes in providing new places to play and new green spaces in a densely built environment, with few available locations for new parks. New York City has begun addressing this challenge in creative ways in other neighborhoods, creating pedestrian plazas and reimagining underused buildings and structures as parkspace. Working with strong local organizations already addressing these issues, the Green Agenda process identified actions to improve existing public spaces and to convert selected streets and private spaces for public use.

1 New Yorkers for Parks, Community District Profiles, 2009

2 *Jackson Heights: A Garden in the City*, Daniel Karatzas, 1990

3 “The Health Benefits of Parks.” The Trust for Public Land. 2006



Map 2. Green Spaces Proposals

Green Spaces



“There is a severe shortage of recreation space in Community Board 3. All of our neighborhood parks are fully utilized and there are very few locations where our young people can play.”¹

- 7. Create Car-Free Play Streets.**
Make the 78th Street Play Street a full-time summer play street and later a permanent extension of Travers Park. Explore opportunities to create other permanent or temporary car-free streets.



Short Term



Inexpensive



Community Groups



Government

- 8. Expand the Urban Forest.**
Plant street trees, create tree gardens, and beautify medians throughout the neighborhood, prioritizing 69th Street, Northern Boulevard and the 34th Avenue median. Explore opportunities to green Roosevelt Avenue and increase tree planting to create a buffer along the BQE. Create a tree care volunteer training program to engage community members in maintaining the urban forest.



Short Term



Inexpensive



Community Groups



Government

- 9. Improve Our Streets and Plazas.**
Improve existing public spaces including the 37th Avenue / 69th Street plaza by providing benches and other amenities and by finding locations for vending carts that will reduce congestion.



Short Term



Somewhat Expensive



Community Groups



Government

¹ CB3 Statement of Needs for Fiscal Year 2008



10. Make School Playgrounds More Accessible.

Partner with public schools to plant street trees and to expedite the School Yards to Playgrounds project. Reach out to private schools to open their playground space to public use after school hours or during the summers.



Short Term



Somewhat Expensive



Community Groups



Government



Local Businesses

11. Green Private Spaces.

Improve and create access to privately owned spaces through a voluntary program to green concrete areas in front of apartments and commercial buildings. Support the enforcement of limitations on front yard paving. Work with co-op boards and building owners to increase the number of rooftop gardens and green roofs. Improve access to privately owned green space through a voluntary program.



Medium Term



Inexpensive



Individuals



Community Groups

12. Create New Parks.

Identify and acquire potential sites for the creation of new park space, including vacant and underused land or buildings and parking lots.



Long Term



Funding Needed



Individuals



Community Groups

13. Train Neighborhood Green Teams.

Train local volunteers to maintain and care for street trees and treepits by offering courses in tree pruning, fertilization, and pest control.



Short Term



Inexpensive



Community Groups

Green Spaces



Next Steps

Initiative	Milestones for 2011
7 Create Car-Free Play Streets	Secure funding and permissions to make the 78th Street Play Street permanent.
8 Expand the Urban Forest	Submit requests for additional street trees through Million Trees NYC and identify volunteer tree stewards. Work with Jackson Heights Beautification group and others to adopt trees, remove pavers, and plant and maintain flowers and groundcover.
9 Improve Our Streets	Identify street segments that could be converted to pedestrian plazas and find or create an organization able to maintain plaza spaces.
10 Make School Playgrounds More Accessible	Get involved in the design of planned publicly accessible playgrounds at IS 145 and PS 69.
11 Green Private Spaces	Build partnerships with owners of buildings with private open spaces.
12 Create New Parks	Work with NYC Department of Parks and local elected officials to identify, acquire and fundraise for new projects.
13 Train Neighborhood Green Teams	Partner with Queens Botanical garden, Trees New York and other organizations to offer free local courses in caring for trees.



Having Fun in Travers Park



Summer Playstreet Dance Party

Photo Credit: Len Maniace

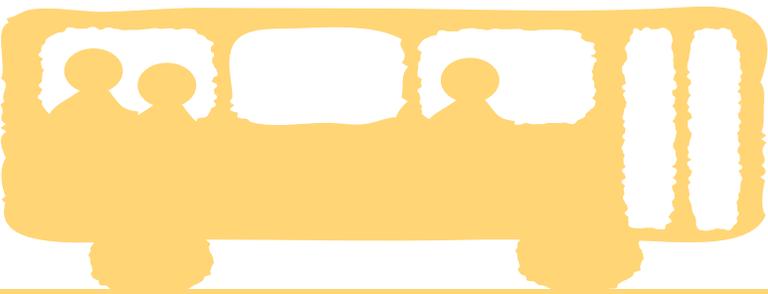
Green Mobility



Photo Credit: Steven Sunshine

GOAL:

Make trips within, to and from the community safe, convenient, reliable, and enjoyable, whether by foot, by bike, by public transportation, or by automobile.



The transportation choices we make every day have far reaching consequences. The environmental impacts of our transportation choices are most obvious: automobiles and trucks contribute to global warming and release harmful emissions that cause asthma and other respiratory illnesses. However, transportation also has social and economic impacts affecting easily people can get to jobs, and road congestion can impact local economies and has social impacts on safety and on the cost of living.

In this walkable and transit-centered neighborhood (within the 11372 area code) more than 60 percent of the households do not own cars.¹ This compares to only 34 percent of households without cars across all of Queens.² Because the community is served by a wide array of transit lines, residents can live comfortably without an automobile.

Jackson Heights is not only unique in its dependence on transit, its residents also have unique transit needs: many community members work split shifts, and work at the airports and industrial areas in Queens and Brooklyn. Poor service outside of normal business hours and north-south connections make commuting difficult for these residents. The community's many disabled residents are also ill-served by current transportation as many of the stations are not accessible to them.

Conflicts arise as a result of many users competing for the same space on the road: delivery vehicles, pedestrians, and buses are all trying to get through the same spaces, often with double parked cars and standing vehicles blocking their route. These conditions result in a high level of congestion, frequent pedestrian injuries (especially near Roosevelt Avenue and Broadway where there were 19 crashes involving bikes or pedestrians between January 2005 and December 2007), and unreliable buses.³ Heavily trafficked arterial streets like Northern Boulevard are dangerous, difficult to cross and divide the community. These unsafe conditions and the lack of bicycle lanes are no doubt contributing factors in Jackson Heights' low



Photo Credit: Steven Sunshine

cycling rates: only 8 percent of residents report that they rode a bicycle between 2007 and 2008.⁴

This low rate of automobile ownership, the commuting patterns of local residents and the number of households who are struggling to pay rent (see the Affordable, Green Housing section) make providing frequent, viable, affordable alternatives to automobile travel a critical issue. Better street design and greater attention to the needs of pedestrians, cyclists, and transit vehicles, can address these safety and transportation reliability concerns and result in a range of transportation options that will help reduce air pollution and congestion.

1 U.S. Census, 2000

2 Ibid.

3 NYSDOT Crash Analysis, Jan 2005 – Dec. 2007

4 DOH. Community Health Survey, by UHF Neighborhood, 2008

Green Mobility



14. Make Cycling Safe and Convenient.

Expand bicycle lanes, creating a complete network of bicycle paths. East/west routes on or near Roosevelt Avenue and a north/south lane connecting the LaGuardia Airport to Roosevelt are especially needed. Partner with schools, residential buildings, institutions, and city agencies to provide secure, covered bicycle parking and to identify locations for additional on-street bicycle racks. Prioritize the creation of bicycle parking near train stations and community facilities.



Short Term



Inexpensive



Government

15. Improve the Pedestrian Environment.

Make walking safer and easier by: facilitating pedestrian access across Roosevelt Avenue, especially near subway stations; installing pedestrian refuge islands along Northern Boulevard, especially on cross streets adjacent to schools and parks; and creating a community-wide directional signage program.



Short Term



Inexpensive



Government

16. Pursue New Parking Strategies.

Advocate for the reform of parking policies in Jackson Heights. For commercial streets, explore policies to encourage higher turnover, reduce double parking, reduce standing and identify opportunities for increasing the number of metered parking spaces. For residential streets, work with NYC Department of Transportation to explore potential solutions, including creating residential permits.



Short Term



Individuals



Government



Local Businesses

17. Improve Bus and Subway Service.

Work with the MTA and state and local politicians to improve bus and subway reliability, frequency and safety, and to recognize the need for improved north/south bus routes and additional service during off-peak hours for the community's many night shift workers.



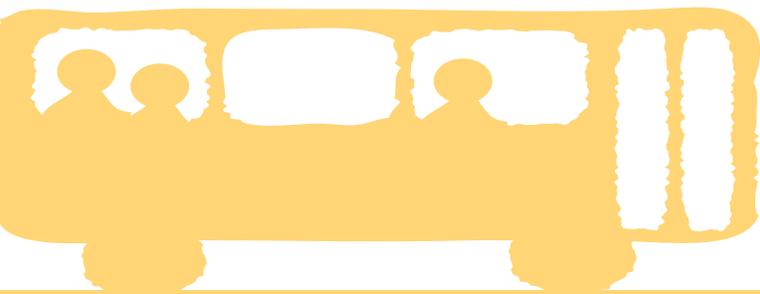
Medium Term



Funding Needed



Government



18. Create New Transportation Options.

Encourage alternatives to vehicle ownership by promoting the availability of off-street parking spaces for carshare vehicles, and assisting residential buildings in creating their own car and bike cooperatives.



Medium Term



Inexpensive



Community Groups



Local Businesses

19. Green Buses.

Expedite conversion of buses to next generation technologies that have less impact on air quality and climate change, including electric, hybrid, and hydrogen.



Long Term



Funding Needed



Government

Next Steps

Initiative	Milestones for 2011
14 Make Cycling Safe and Convenient	Partner with cycling advocates to map existing bike parking, identify locations for new racks and covered facilities, and submit requests to NYC Department of Transportation for additional bike parking. Ensure that expanding bicycle parking is included as a part of DOT's ongoing study of the streetscape in Jackson Heights.
15 Improve the Pedestrian Environment	Install signs on 37 th Avenue and Northern Boulevard to help visitors find the nearest subway stations, and on Roosevelt Avenue to orient visitors exiting the subway system.
16 Pursue New Parking Strategies	Work with NYC Department of Transportation to expand the use of Muni-meters to other commercial streets.
17 Improve Bus and Subway Service	Work with civic groups and elected officials to increase awareness of transit needs in the community and identify funds to reverse planned cuts.
18 Create New Transportation Options	Identify suitable locations for parking car-share or bike-share vehicles.
19 Green Buses	Participate in existing coalitions of environmental and transit activists campaigning for a greener transit fleet.

Affordable, Green Housing



Co-op Apartment Buildings

Photo Credit: Daniel Lim

GOAL:

Take a leadership role to green buildings while organizing the community to address housing quality and affordability issues.



With a large, diverse population living in a small area, Jackson Heights is uniquely vibrant. The density that contributes to this vibrancy, however, also poses housing challenges: the substantial population growth in the neighborhood over the past two decades fueled by the unique community character and the quality of local real estate has begun to put pressure on the real estate market and many residents. Rents and housing costs are rising, and there are few sites available to create new affordable housing. The loss of existing affordable rental apartments to deregulation and growing concern for housing quality, all combine to require new creative solutions for the community to grow while meeting the needs of seniors and low income residents. With the convergence of all of these issues, it is no surprise that a substantial portion of the participants in the Green Agenda vision sessions identified housing as the most important area of concern.

Affordability and Overcrowding

More than one third of Community District 3's renters spend over 50 percent of their income on rent and may therefore have trouble paying for other essentials like food, clothing, health care, and transportation.¹ Many families in Jackson Heights are "doubling up," sharing the rent burden between more people, and as a result are living in apartments that are too small and crowded for their families. Community District 3 also has a larger share of tenants living in severely overcrowded housing (with more than 1.5 people per room) than any other neighborhood in New York City.² Between 1990 and 2000, as much as 73 percent of the new housing in Queens was created through the illegal conversion of one and two family homes to three or more unit dwellings. Because these units are not registered with city agencies they can pose safety issues.³ They indicate a dire need for affordable housing.

1 Housing New York City 2005. NYC Department of Housing Preservation and Development.

2 Furman Center State of the Communities Report, 2004 (citing 2002 data from NYC Housing and Vacancy Survey)

3 Citizens' Housing & Planning Council (2003), New York's Underground Housing, The Urban Prospect, June/July. Volume 9, Number 2.

Quality and Safety

1.5 percent of Jackson Heights' households have 'severe' quality issues – units that have five or more health and safety problems like rats or roach infestation, unsafe wiring, holes in walls and ceilings, or other issues⁴.

Green Agenda participants saw an opportunity not only to address these critical issues of housing affordability and quality, but also to connect these issues to environmental initiatives, identifying buildings and projects that can install green roofs, or produce renewable energy and retrofitting buildings to reduce their energy use and energy cost. Jackson Heights' Brulene Co-Op apartments on 94th Street have already lead the way by becoming the first building in New York City to receive New York Energy \$mart loans to retrofit their building. These improvements pay both environmental and economic dividends. They can reduce air pollution generated by Jackson Heights' buildings, many of which burn dirtier types of heating oil.⁵ The improvements can also yield significant cost savings for building owners, helping to make housing more affordable. Energy costs can be a significant financial burden for low-income households and weatherizing existing homes or using alternative energy sources to reduce energy costs can therefore have substantial benefits for the community in terms of better air quality and fewer emissions, and result in more affordable housing opportunities.

Jackson Heights' housing is meeting the needs of some residents, but there are serious issues that are not being addressed and opportunities for innovation that the community would like to take immediate action on.

4 Furman Center State of the Communities Report, 2004 (citing 2002 data from NYC Housing and Vacancy Survey)

5 Environmental Defense Fund, 2009. http://www.edf.org/documents/10085_EDF_Heating_Oil_Report.pdf

Affordable, Green Housing



20. Organize Tenants and Owners.

As a first step to further action, create an association of tenants and owners to advocate and act on behalf of the neighborhood. The association will help ensure existing safety and heating regulations are enforced, help tenants negotiate with landlords, and provide superintendents, owners and co-op boards with the assistance in making their buildings healthier and less energy intensive.



Short Term



Community Groups



Inexpensive

21. Increase Awareness of Housing Issues.

Launch a public awareness campaign to draw attention to housing issues and conditions in Jackson Heights. Hold workshops on tenants' rights that encourage the reporting of safety, heating and health issues. Provide politicians with information on the need for legislation that will preserve existing affordable units.



Short Term



Inexpensive



Community Groups

22. Create Affordable Units.

Explore funding, incentives and partnerships for the development of low income and senior housing.



Medium Term



Funding Needed



Community Groups



Government

23. Protect Affordable Units.

Identify ways to protect and improve the safety of affordable housing units.



Medium Term



Government



24. Green Existing Buildings.

Find partners for green building initiatives such as green roofs, reflective roofs that reduce cooling costs, weatherization, energy retrofits, solar panels and other renewable energy opportunities. Potential partners include contractors, labor unions, home owners, superintendents, co-op boards, renters and landlords. Connect partners to skills training programs that provide the information needed to make buildings greener.



Medium Term



Somewhat Expensive

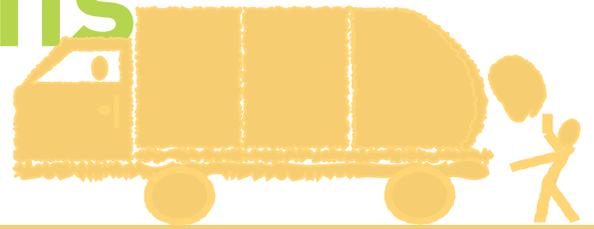


Local Businesses

Next Steps

Initiative	Milestones for 2011
20 Organize Tenants and Owners	Convene interested residents and homeowners to create a tenant and homeowners association.
21 Increase Awareness of Housing Issues	Compile resources and research on housing issues in neighborhood and make printed pamphlets and electronic documents available.
22 Create Affordable Units	Convene a volunteer board to further discuss the goals and structure of a community development corporation.
23 Protect Affordable Units	Conduct a census of non-registered residential units to more accurately gauge the scope of the issue in the community.
24 Green Existing Buildings	Using available information on building age, energy type and demographics, identify and map target buildings with high energy costs that may be eligible for retrofit or alternative energy incentives and tax credits.

Green Solutions to Trash



Overflowing Garbage on Roosevelt Avenue

Photo Credit: Steven Sunshine

GOAL:

Clean our community in an environmentally responsible way, reduce street trash by producing less waste and reuse, recycle and compost the waste we do produce.



Photo Credit: Steven Sunshine

Only 14% of Our Garbage was Recycled in 2009.

Litter and sanitation came up a lot during Green Agenda discussions. It is not the first time trash has been identified as a problem in Jackson Heights: waste—whether household garbage, or litter in public places—has been targeted as a priority by the Community Board. Waste on the community's streets make the area less pleasant for pedestrians and has caused rodent and pest infestations in some areas.

Recognizing that leaving the challenge of garbage to future generations is not an acceptable solution, the Green Agenda looks beyond increasing garbage cans and pickups and convening clean up crews. Our trash has economic value that can be recovered by well-designed recycling, composting and other resource-recovery programs. Without these programs, trash and its final disposal become an economic and environmental messes. Trucking waste to distant landfills in Virginia, South Carolina, Pennsylvania and Ohio is an expensive proposition which has resulted in the doubling of the Department of Sanitation's budget since 2007.¹ Trucking trash to these landfills burns enough fuel to keep half the city's taxi fleet rolling around the clock and releases 55,000 tons of carbon dioxide annually.²

Recycling could produce significant savings. Trash disposal costs

the city \$93 per ton compared with \$40 per tons for recycling.³ The city never realizes this savings, though, because low levels of recycling make curbside recycling inefficient to collect.⁴ New York City residents currently recycle only half of the items accepted in the curbside recycling program, and recycling rates in Jackson Heights are lower than in the city as a whole, and are declining. In Community Board 3 in 2009 14 percent of all garbage was recycled (compared to 16% city wide and down from 15.5 percent in 2005).⁵

Despite these challenges, green solutions for trash in Jackson Heights have grown in recent years. A community composting program operates at St. Mark's Episcopal Church; GrowNYC introduced a textile recycling program at the local Greenmarket, and the Lower East Side Ecology Center brought successful electronic-waste collection events to the park in 2009 and 2010. These popular programs suggest support for green solutions for trash in Jackson Heights, which, when coupled with educational efforts to challenge the culture of waste, could boost recycling, composting and reuse, while significantly cutting the amount of trash hauled to distant landfills.

1 The New York Times, April 28, 2010, "Power From Trash," A25

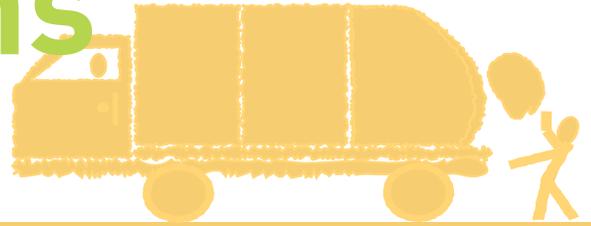
2 Ibid.

3 New York City Independent Budget Office, Inside the Budget, No. 150, May 1, 2007

4 Ibid.

5 My Neighborhood Statistics, 2009

Green Solutions to Trash



25. Coordinate the Community to Reduce Trash.

As a first step to further action on waste, create a community organization to coordinate and improve sanitation. This group can identify sources of local, state and federal funding for community cleanliness initiatives and act as a clearing house for information on recycling and waste reduction for businesses and residents.



Short Term



Inexpensive



Individuals



Local Businesses



Community Groups

26. Change Attitudes Towards Waste.

Facilitate a culture change in the treatment of waste through a public education campaign to discourage littering and increase recycling, composting, and waste reduction through demonstrations and workshops.



Short Term



Inexpensive



Individuals



Local Businesses



Community Groups

27. Make Recycling and Reuse More Convenient.

Increase the number of recycling stations in supermarkets, parks and in public spaces and expand existing programs for recycling and exchanging of electronics and household goods. Provide signs for buildings that clearly explain recycling rules graphically and in multiple languages. Work with local schools, tenants, co-ops, superintendents, businesses, organizations and government agencies to implement these measures.



Short Term



Inexpensive



Individuals



Community Groups



Government



Local Businesses

28. Find Simple Solutions to Street Trash.

Request more garbage pick-ups and waste bins through the Department of Sanitation, while working to eliminate the most common litter. To reduce litter, encourage the use of reusable shopping bags and install wind and waterproof boxes for newspapers. Seek business partners for a sidewalk-cleanup and litter-removal program to augment existing community clean up efforts.



Short Term



Inexpensive



Community Groups



29. Implement Neighborhood Composting.

Partner with institutions and local schools to establish composting locations throughout the neighborhood, following the example of the St. Mark's Church Compost Program. Assist building residents, owners and managers in setting up and maintaining compost programs.



Short Term



Inexpensive



Individuals



Local Businesses



Community Groups

30. Reduce Waste.

Launch a neighborhood-wide "waste challenge" for businesses, organizations and individuals with prizes for meeting waste reduction targets. Conduct waste stream audits (which inventory the types of waste produced) in large institutions and businesses to determine opportunities for waste reduction that can save businesses money. Create a "Green Agenda for Jackson Heights Seal of Approval" to recognize businesses that work to reduce waste and packaging.



Medium Term



Somewhat Expensive



Individuals



Government



Community Groups

Next Steps

Initiative	Milestones for 2011
25 Coordinate the Community to Reduce Trash	Convene an action committee comprised of residents and businesses.
26 Change Attitudes Towards Waste	Hold workshops on recycling and waste reduction.
27 Make Recycling and Reuse More Convenient	Commission designers and translators to create signs illustrating recycling procedures and distribute them to local buildings.
28 Find Simple Solutions to Street Trash	Work with businesses to increase the use of reusable shopping bags.
29 Implement Neighborhood Composting	Identify schools and other partners to participate in compost demonstration programs.
30 Reduce Waste	Create an outreach database and solicit businesses, organizations and individuals for participation in a neighborhood waste-reduction challenge.

Healthy and Safe People and Places

Police



Toxic Products That Can Pose Safety Issues

Photo Credit: Steven Sunshine

GOAL:

Green toxic households, make housing healthy both inside and out, and increase security in the community during the day and night.



Childhood lead exposure rates in this health district in 2006 were 75 percent, the highest level in Queens and Brooklyn.

Jackson Heights has more than its share of health issues: the Brooklyn Queens Expressway, the Grand Central Parkway, LaGuardia Airport (one of the nation's 20 busiest), local traffic congestion, and fossil-fuel plants in Astoria all pose significant health risks.¹ Unhealthy food options, few recreational opportunities, and household toxins also pose health challenges. Most of all, the community's buildings and homes are degrading air quality, and endangering the community's children: there is a high concentration of buildings burning the least clean heating oil, and childhood lead exposure rates in 2006 were 75 percent, the highest level in Queens and Brooklyn.² Residents are extremely vulnerable to the effects of these toxic households—only 57 percent of residents had health insurance in 2007, the lowest rate in New York City.³

Safety is also an issue: crime in Jackson Heights is statistically lower than in other neighborhoods, but as we heard in the Green Agenda workshops, many residents do not feel safe.⁴

1 Environmental Defense Fund, 2009.
http://www.edf.org/documents/10085_EDF_Heating_Oil_Report.pdf; New York City Community Air Survey. Results from Winter Monitoring. 2008 to 2009

2 DOH Blood Lead Testing in 1 and 2 Year Olds by UHF Neighborhood, 2006

3 DOH Community Health Survey, 2007 (collected by UHF Neighborhood)/

These residents called attention to incidences of drinking and drug dealing in public, and felt particularly threatened at night in low-lit areas such as Travers Park and Bulova Park and on public transit. Improvements in community policing could help address some of these issues—in spite of large increases in population from 1990 to 2000, the number of police officers has remained the same.⁵ Truly increasing neighborhood security, however, requires a comprehensive approach that includes both good community-police relations, and other prevention strategies like increasing youth programs and planning community events. In order to both be and feel safer the whole community needs to get involved. A sense of community and strong relationships with neighbors is the most important step towards a safer environment for everyone.

Without meeting the basic needs of safety and health, progress on economic development and environmental improvement will be difficult. The following action items identify ways to improve air quality, reduce household toxins and ameliorate relationships between the community and police.

4 My Neighborhood Statistics, Police Precinct Statistics, 2009; Claritas, 2008

5 Community District Needs Statement, 2010

Healthy and Safe People and Places

Police

31. Publicize Public Health Information.

Publicize data from air quality monitoring stations and other sources to increase awareness of public health risks such as asthma rates and air pollution caused by vehicles and burning heating oil.



Short Term



Inexpensive



Individuals



Community Groups

32. Clean Up Toxic Households.

Develop a household assessment program and toolkit to measure lead exposure, indoor air quality and household toxins on a house-by-house basis and recommend inexpensive strategies to increase the health and wellness of the home including non-toxic approaches to pest management.



Medium Term



Somewhat Expensive



Community Groups

33. Green Commercial Cleaning Practices.

Help local supermarkets and other businesses to source and use non-toxic commercial cleaners.



Short Term



Inexpensive



Local Businesses

34. Clean Local Air.

Encourage local building owners to switch polluting oil burning furnaces to natural gas. Work with car dealerships to reduce exhaust emissions into public gathering places.



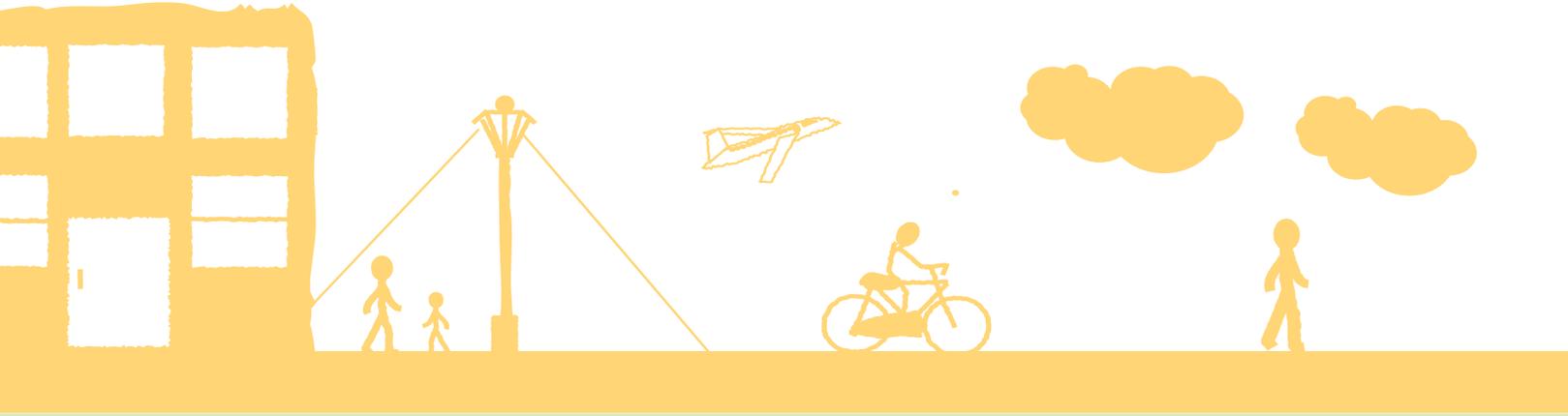
Medium Term



Somewhat Expensive



Community Groups



35. Enhance Night Time Safety
 Improve street and park lighting and program evening events to increase safety after dark.



Medium Term



Somewhat Expensive



Community Groups

36. Improve Community Policing.
 Improve community policing by requesting additional police presence and encouraging residents to communicate with police if they see suspicious activity. Organize “know your rights” training sessions to inform participants of their legal rights if they encounter police and communicate effective strategies for interaction between residents and police.



Short Term



Somewhat Expensive



Individuals



Government



Community Groups

Next Steps

Initiative	Milestones for 2011
31 Publicize Public Health Information	Work with schools and organizations to enable “citizen scientists” who will research and publish local environmental information periodically.
32 Clean Up Toxic Households	Promote awareness of the availability of free home lead-testing kits available through the Department of Environmental Protection.
33 Green Commercial Cleaning Practices	Create a list of greener cleaning products and their cost and availability and distribute to local businesses.
34 Clean Local Air	Identify buildings with polluting oil burning furnaces. Calculate costs and benefits of switching oil furnaces to natural gas or other fuel sources and distribute this information to co-op boards, building owners and tenants.
35 Enhance Night Time Safety	Work with NYC Department of Transportation and other agencies to include lighting improvement projects as part of their 2010 study of the streetscape in Jackson Heights.
36 Improve Community Policing	Designate a community-policing liaison to represent the community and begin exploring opportunities for increased community involvement in local policing.

Employment and Economy



Day Laborers Waiting for Work

Photo Credit: Steven Sunshine

GOAL:

Create an inclusive economy where residents have access to the education and support needed to succeed in meaningful jobs and to expand local business.



Photo Credit: Planning Magazine, April 2006

The Laguna Beach Hiring Hall in California provides a safe venue for employers and employees to meet, leading to improved conditions for laborers.

For many in Jackson Heights, economic conditions are getting more challenging, and with the dearth of jobs in the construction industry, job opportunities are increasingly limited. While these concerns echo the larger economic context, there is evidence to suggest that Jackson Heights is particularly impacted: at 9.9%, unemployment was 2.2 percent higher in this Community District (CD3) in 2008 compared to Queens as a whole, and this Community District has a greater number of workers in service and construction jobs compared to the rest of Queens (see Figure 1 on the following page).¹ Day laborers, who depend primarily on construction jobs with contractors, have been especially vulnerable in the economic downturn, and interviews suggest that many in Jackson Heights are at risk of homelessness.²

Despite these troubling conditions, Jackson Heights remains a commercial hub for northwest Queens, is home to residents from across the globe with strong skills, and is also home to a substantial concentration of writers, artists, musicians and others working in creative fields.³ The affordable local businesses, regionally renowned restaurants and the local farmers markets and green markets are all strong economic assets. Nurturing these existing skills and enabling this creative energy can help generate new economic activity.

Creating new “green” jobs and industries that don’t degrade

the environment for future generations and that benefit the entire community has become the focus of the federal government’s job strategy, and many communities are seeking to benefit from new investment in green jobs. Recognizing the connection between economic development and environmental improvement, many communities are creating new programs, funding green industries (such as manufacturing solar panels) and creating green jobs. Retrofitting homes for energy efficiency, for example, provides quality jobs helping homeowners reduce their heating, cooling and electrical bills by reducing air leaks, insulating, and introducing other energy saving measures. 124,000 new green jobs are expected in construction alone in New York City between 2009 and 2019 resulting from new legislation requiring building retrofits.⁴ To benefit from these new construction jobs and other emerging opportunities in areas such as urban forestry and green product development, residents need a “job-readiness infrastructure”: a well trained workforce and certification and training will be “absolutely necessary”.⁵

The actions identified here seek to improve conditions for Jackson Heights’ most vulnerable workers, provide the training and skills needed for meaningful jobs, work towards securing jobs for local residents in emerging green sectors, and expand and green existing local businesses.

1 Neilsen Claritas, 2008

2 The New York Times, “In the Shadows, Day Laborers Left Homeless as Work Vanishes,” <http://www.nytimes.com/2010/01/02/nyregion/02laborers.html>

3 Fractured Atlas and Queens Museum of Art

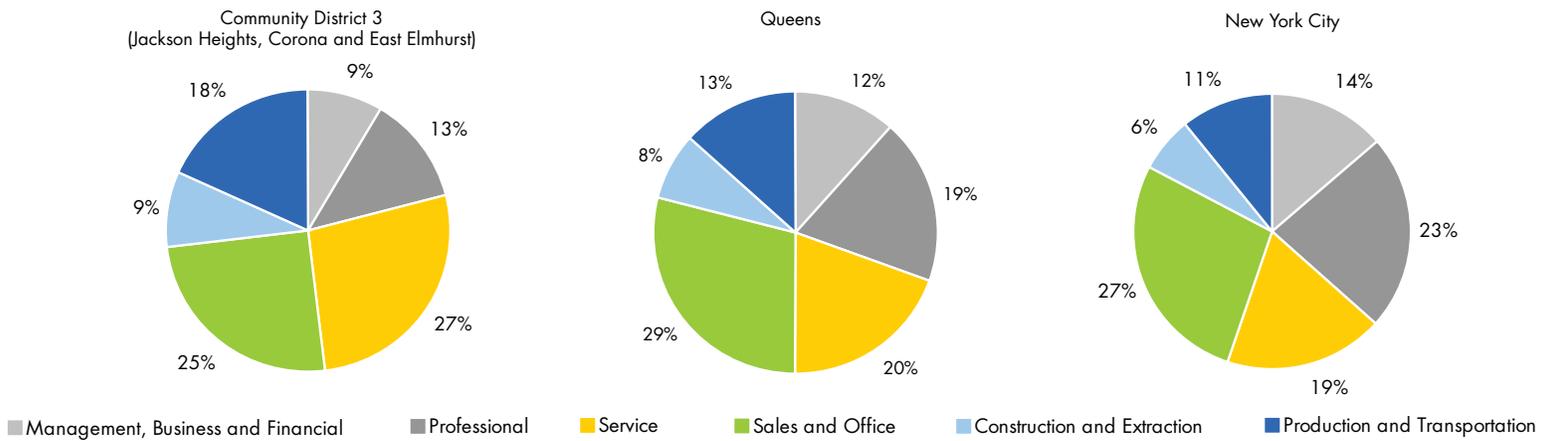
4 New York City Green Collar Jobs Roadmap, Center for American Progress, October 2009, <http://www.urbanagenda.org/roadmap/pdf/nycGreenCollarJobsRoadmap.pdf>

5 Ibid

Employment and Economy



Figure 1: Employment by Industry in Jackson Heights Compared to Queens and New York City: Jackson Heights has a higher percentage of workers in sales, service, and construction jobs than the rest of the borough.



37. Plan for Jobs and Businesses. Forge a broad coalition of merchants, property owners, residents and community leaders to develop an economic plan to create local employment for residents and bolster local businesses.

-  Short Term
-  Community Groups
-  Government

38. Promote Our Businesses. Promote Jackson Heights' unique shops, dining experiences, and services to attract more visitors and customers for local business. One approach might be to develop a local "community guidebook" that catalogs local businesses and highlights unique shopping opportunities. In the future the guidebook could highlight affordable environmentally friendly products available locally to encourage the use of green products and stimulate the local economy.

-  Short Term
-  Community Groups
-  Local Businesses



39. Green Existing Businesses.

Assist businesses in greening their operations. Conduct energy audits and connect businesses to incentives for energy retrofits to help owners and commercial tenants in reduce their energy costs.



Medium Term



Local Businesses

41. Provide Services for Day Laborers

Explore the creation of a hiring hall for day laborers, providing a designated waiting area for job-seekers.



Medium Term



Somewhat Expensive



Government



Community Groups

40. Develop Skills.

Establish an employment center that links job seekers to resources, maintains a bulletin of jobs available in Jackson Heights, offers career counseling, and connects people to other groups in the community offering language courses. An employment center can create life-long learning opportunities by offering training programs in 'green job' skills, connecting residents to emerging job fields such as energy audits of residential buildings, installing green roofs, retrofits and renewable energy.



Medium Term



Somewhat Expensive



Government

42. Foster Entrepreneurship Close to Home.

Create flexible, creative office and work spaces that encourage freelancers and entrepreneurs to conduct business close to home and provide affordable rents for newly established businesses. Work with local banks to provide small loans to help finance these new community businesses.



Medium Term



Somewhat Expensive



Individuals



Government

Employment and Economy



Next Steps

Initiative	Milestones for 2011
37 Plan for Jobs and Businesses	Assess interest on the part of merchants and businesses in investing resources to create an area-wide economic plan.
38 Promote Our Businesses	Identify a partner organization to catalog local businesses as an initial step towards creating a community guidebook.
39 Green Existing Businesses	Connect with nonprofit organizations working to assist business owners with energy reduction measures.
40 Develop Skills	Identify partners and funding sources for the creation of an employment center and providing training such as Small Business Services' Workforce1 program and local community colleges.
41 Provide Services for Day Laborers	Identify funding and partners for the creation of a hiring hall and designated waiting area for day laborers including funding through local elected officials.
42 Foster Entrepreneurship Close to Home	Inventory existing spaces in the community that can function as affordable office and work spaces and convene a volunteer task force to explore opportunities for creating new space.



Photo Credit: Daniel Lim



Photo Credit: Daniel Lim

Who Was Involved in this Plan?



Queens Community House:

Is a community-based social service provider housed in 21 sites throughout Queens, offering a variety of programs and services for people of all ages. The programs provide educational, recreational and social opportunities for a diverse population. Additional services include housing, community organizing and immigration assistance. Anna Dioguardi and Mary Abbate, led the community organizing and outreach for the Green Agenda for Jackson Heights.



Friends of Travers Park, a Committee of Jackson Heights Beautification Group:

Is a 21 year old, all-volunteer, nonprofit group that works to improve life in Jackson Heights and to encourage civic involvement. Activities include: successful support for creation of a neighborhood New York City Historic District, graffiti removal, park improvements, open-space advocacy, candidate forums, walking tours, concerts, Halloween parades and two local history books. Special Acknowledgement to Len Maniace of the Jackson Heights Beautification Group for initiating the Green Agenda Project and for the countless hours he devoted toward the project.



Pratt Center for Community Development:

Works for a more just, equitable and sustainable city for all New Yorkers, by empowering low- and moderate-income communities to plan for and realize their futures. As part of Pratt Institute, it leverages professional skills – especially in city planning, architecture, real estate and public policy – to support community-based organizations in their efforts to improve quality of life, create economic opportunity and advance sustainable development. Michael Epp provided technical assistance and project management for the Green Agenda.

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Participating Organizations:

Over 400 people participated and contributed to this plan, including members of the following community groups and institutions:

Ecuadorian International Center
Islamic Center of Jackson Heights
Jackson Heights Beautification Group
JH Green Alliance
JH Seniors Center
Make The Road New York
North Queens Homeowners Civic Association
Queens Community House

St. Joan of Arc Youth Council
St. Mark's Church
Storm Water Infrastructure Matters
The Center of Cultures
The Ethical Humanist Society
Transportation Alternatives Queens Committee
Working Families Party North Central Queens Club

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Residents Make Their Own Park on Park(ing) Day

Photo Credit: Len Maniace



Envisioning Jackson Heights

Photo Credit: Melissa Umberger

