

MAY 2004

DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK

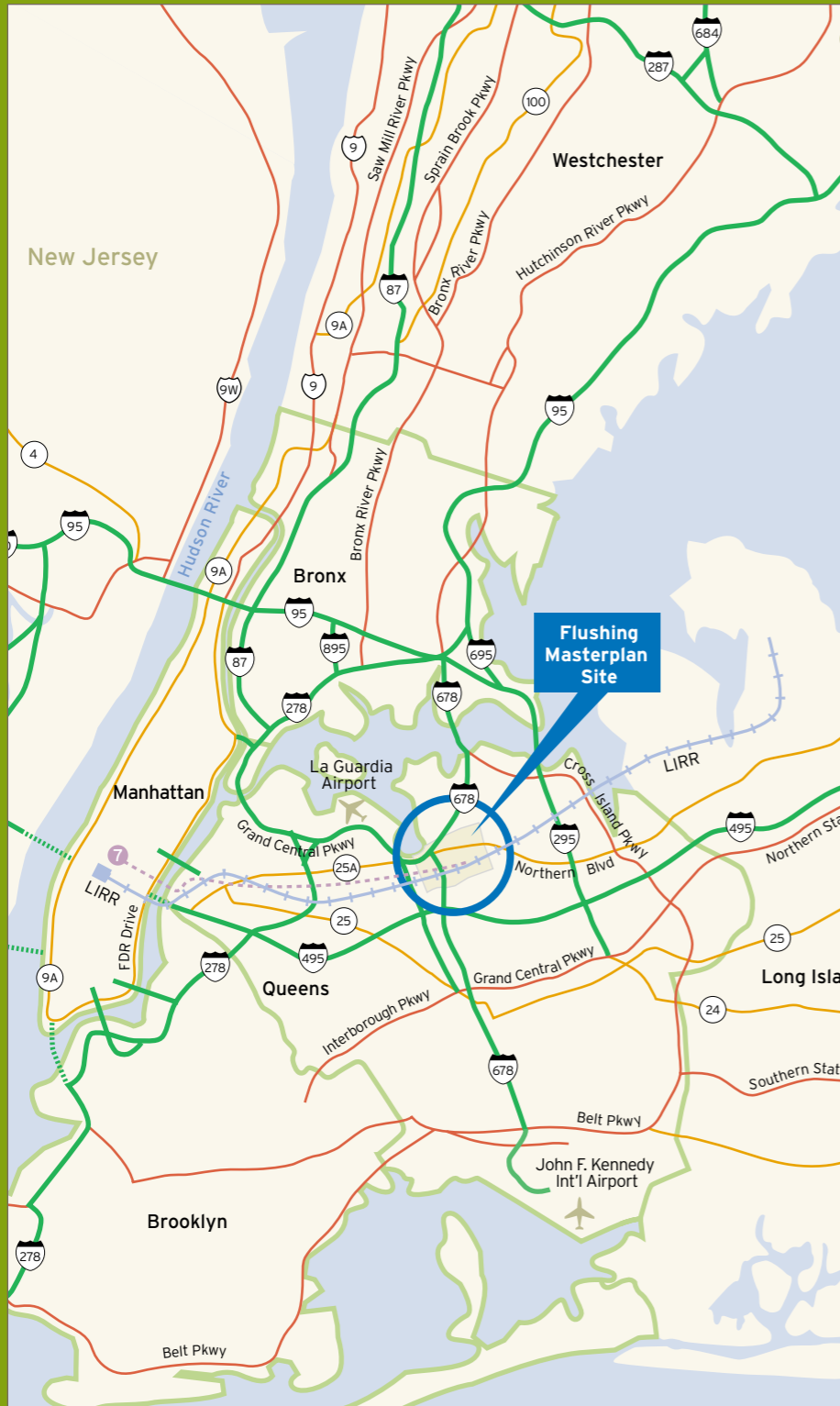
Downtown Flushing



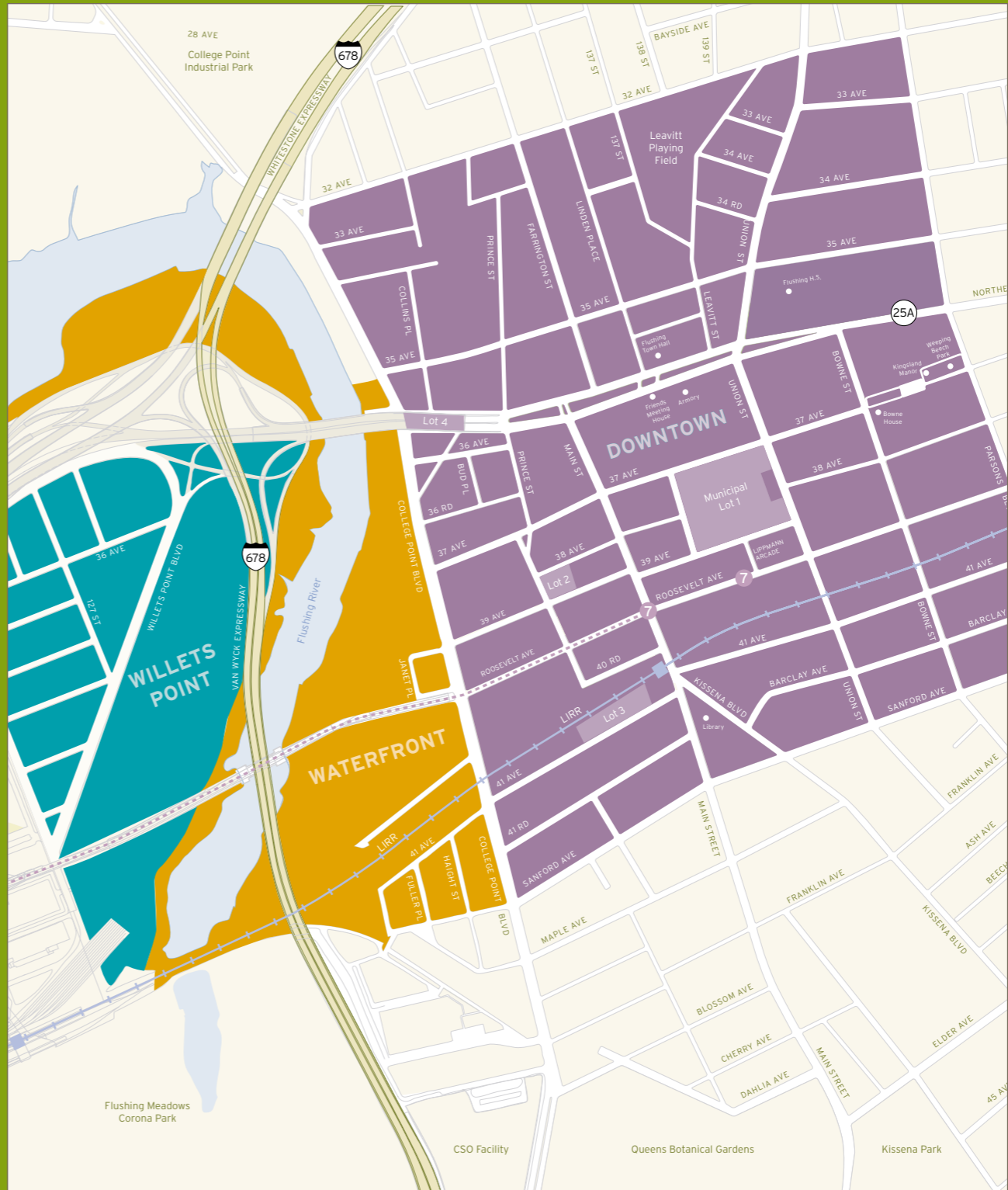
Michael R. Bloomberg, Mayor of the City of New York
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New York City Economic Development Corporation
New York City Department of City Planning

CONSULTANT TEAM

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Redeveloping Flushing is a critical part of the Mayor's 5-borough strategy to invest in regional economic centers.

The Development Framework is a land use planning strategy for the future growth and sustainability of Downtown Flushing, the Flushing River waterfront, and the Willets Point peninsula. This comprehensive vision considers opportunities for high quality mixed-use development, improved connections with adjacent regional destinations, enhancements to public open spaces and streetscapes, and transportation and parking strategies.

For more information, please visit our website at www.downtownflushing.com or contact us at downtownflushing@nycedc.com.

Executive Summary

VISION | Downtown Flushing will be a center of urban activity that retains the feel of a small town. It will be where people come to experience the best of Queens.

Introduction and Overview

The Downtown Flushing Development Framework is the result of a year-long investigation into planning, design, and economic issues affecting Downtown Flushing. The Framework identifies opportunities for an improved pedestrian environment, new open spaces, and new high quality residential and commercial development. Rationalizing traffic and improving the pedestrian environment will raise the quality of life throughout the area. Activated east-west streets will lead residents and visitors to a developed waterfront and new open space along a cleaner Flushing River. In the future, the river will provide the gateway to a redeveloped Willets Point that unites rather than divides the two sides of the waterfront. Redeveloping the waterfront and Willets Point will also help connect Downtown with important neighboring amenities such as Flushing-Meadows Corona Park, Shea Stadium, and the Queens Botanical Gardens. Overall, the Framework builds on Flushing's religious, political, and cultural diversity in articulating a vision for a vibrant urban center with a high quality of life.

The New York City Economic Development Corporation (NYCEDC) and New York City Department of City Planning (DCP), under the leadership of Mayor Michael R. Bloomberg and Deputy Mayor Daniel L. Doctoroff, have guided the Development Framework initiative. Recognizing that removing some of the constraints to growth and enhancing the area's quality of life would require strategic and coordinated public and private investments,

Deputy Mayor Doctoroff organized the Downtown Flushing Task Force in the summer of 2002. The Task Force is comprised of various city and state technical agencies, Flushing developers and business owners, Queens Community Board #7, and local elected officials. The Task Force recognized that having a plan endorsed by the community as well as key agencies would be instrumental for implementing recommendations. Accordingly, the Framework is intended to create a practical, realistic, and definitive path on which to move forward. The intended result is a vibrant Downtown Flushing that reinforces Mayor Bloomberg's strategy to guide investment to regional economic centers in all five boroughs of New York City. In order to achieve this goal, the City selected a consultant team led by Cooper Carry Inc. and Economic Research Associates and including Jeanne Giordano, Ltd, Eng-Wong, Taub & Associates, Thomas Balsley Associates, and Geto and de Milly, Inc. The team, collaborating closely with the City, engaged with the community and key city and state agencies to create a consensus on guiding principles for Downtown Flushing. The highlight of this consultation process was a two day planning workshop that was held on February 20th through February 21st at Flushing Town Hall and was attended by over 700 people.



DOWNTOWN FLUSHING AND WILLETS POINT

Study Area Opportunities and Constraints

Flushing's many great assets ensure that the area is poised for improvement and expansion. However, significant challenges must be addressed if Flushing is to achieve its full potential. A comprehensive existing conditions analysis of the area, supplemented by community input, was done as part of this study. Existing conditions were divided into several key areas, including land use and urban design considerations, transportation issues, and real estate market conditions. The City and consultant team also analyzed past studies and efforts in an attempt to create a full history of successes and failures. By creating an accurate portrait of the past along with an up-to-date analysis of the present, the team formed a basis for the recommendations in this Framework.

Downtown Flushing Development Framework

Analysis of the area's opportunities and constraints led to dividing the study area into three sub-areas; the downtown core, the waterfront, and Willets Point. The downtown core is a vibrant and successful commercial center. This success has attracted increased volumes of pedestrian and vehicular traffic that need to be better organized to ensure that the core continues to grow and attract people. There is a significant opportunity for growth along the Flushing River waterfront where several large parcels of land remain vacant and are opportunities for both large scale development and waterfront public access. It is clear that this waterfront, however, is currently negatively impacted by industrially developed Willets Point which borders Downtown Flushing to the west, across the Flushing River. Redevelopment of Willets Point is an opportunity for new development that compliments a renewed Downtown and a revitalized waterfront. The Framework, thus, is divided into the following three interconnected themes, relating to these three identified sub-areas.

1 RECONNECT AND RENEW DOWNTOWN

2 REVITALIZE THE WATERFRONT

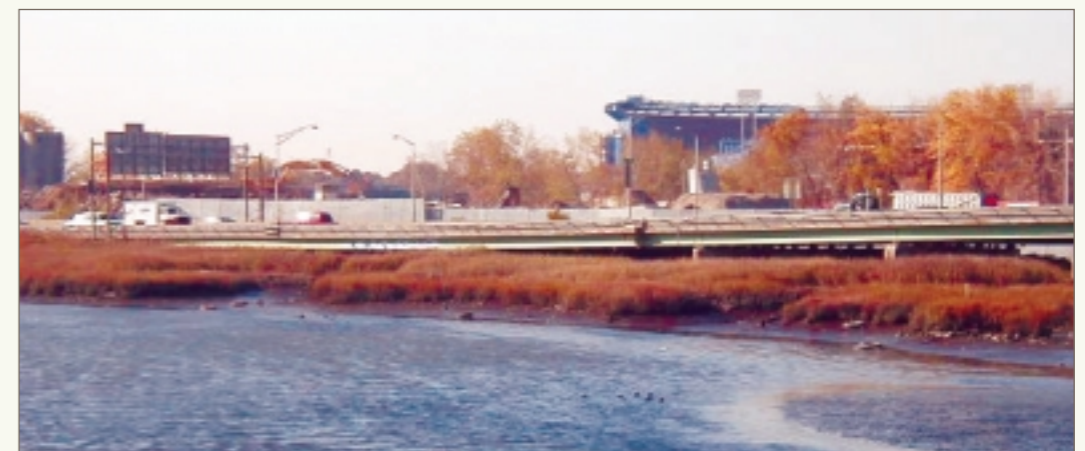
3 REDEVELOP WILLETS POINT



RECONNECT AND RENEW DOWNTOWN



REVITALIZE THE WATERFRONT



REDEVELOP WILLETS POINT

Reconnect and Renew Downtown

A dynamic and diverse mixed-use community of high quality design with significant public spaces and strong connections to the riverfront.

Enhance Pedestrian and Retail Experience Downtown

A comfortable and engaging pedestrian experience is fundamental to the future success of Downtown Flushing. Central to the Framework vision for Downtown is a comprehensive urban design program to improve the quality of the public realm and raise its profile as a place people want to visit. This program works hand-in-hand with a strategy to enhance the retail options Downtown and market the area as a regional urban center.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Build on the momentum of the Downtown Flushing Pedestrian Project to implement more comprehensive streetscape improvements.
- Encourage façade upgrades to make Downtown even more attractive as a retail destination.
- Highlight gateways to Downtown Flushing with urban design interventions at key intersections.
- Initiate a coordinated marketing program.

Set a New Standard for Quality Development

Zoning regulates the scale of new development and mix of uses. Through its requirements it can have a significant influence on neighborhood activities and quality of life. It is essential, then, that Downtown Flushing's zoning facilitates quality new development in support of the overall vision for the area.

RECOMMENDATION

- The City should undertake a zoning study of Downtown to identify ways to promote a higher quality of development.

Improve Transportation and Parking

Downtown Flushing's significant transportation assets must be better leveraged to enhance mobility and support the quality of life improvements proposed within the Framework.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Enhance mobility and reduce vehicular and pedestrian conflicts.
- Improve the efficiency and capacity of parking Downtown for commercial and residential use.
- Reduce transit-generated congestion Downtown and enhance mass transit proximity to the waterfront.
- Achieve a significant improvement of the pedestrian environment, including increased sidewalk capacity where feasible and increased pedestrian safety and amenities.

Redevelop Municipal Lot 1

Municipal Lot 1 ("The Lot") is an approximately five-acre site in the heart of Downtown Flushing. The Lot, which currently combines commuter and short-term shopper parking, represents one of the City's most significant redevelopment opportunities, and has attracted substantial interest from the private sector. As the largest City-owned property in Downtown Flushing, the Lot is an opportunity to achieve important public objectives such as facilitating high quality mixed-use development, incorporating a town square, and continuing to provide competitively priced short-term parking.

THE MIXED-USE DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM SHOULD ADDRESS SEVERAL IMPORTANT PUBLIC GOALS FOR DOWNTOWN FLUSHING, INCLUDING:

- Creating a town square-style open space that will be a center of community activity
- Enhancing the pedestrian environment with street-level retail to attract shoppers east of Main Street
- Helping to meet housing demand and stabilize the retail market by establishing a new residential community Downtown
- Maintaining competitively priced parking on-site
- Serving as a clear example of high-quality, sustainable design and construction that will raise the standard for private investment in Downtown Flushing

Revitalize the Waterfront

An infusion of open space and waterfront development that attracts residents and visitors to Flushing and serves as a connection to activity on Willets Point.

The Flushing Riverfront is the strongest potential unifying element in the Framework. A vibrant, clean, and active waterfront would become a new destination in Flushing and tie together all the parts of the study area. The Framework envisions an infusion of open space and mixed-use development that will attract residents and visitors to the waterfront, which will serve as a connection to activity on Willets Point. Realizing the vision will require a sustained redevelopment effort coordinated between the public and private sectors.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Improve the environmental quality of the river and the surrounding wetlands.
- Facilitate the creation of an esplanade along the eastern shore of the Flushing River that will form the heart of a new waterfront open space system.
- Introduce a new community open space at the northern anchor for the esplanade.
- Improve access to the waterfront and create a continuous open space system around the Flushing River.



SHEA STADIUM

Redevelop Willets Point

A large-scale development that provides a significant economic benefit to the area and transforms Flushing into a true super-regional destination.

Willets Point represents a clear chance to create a large-scale economic impact and transform the Flushing area into a true super-regional destination. Achieving the redevelopment goals for the Flushing River waterfront and Downtown Flushing requires improving the visual experience of Willets Point, upgrading its environmental quality, and expanding its role as an economic driver in the area. In many ways, the improvements and recommendations set forth for Downtown Flushing east of the Flushing River can be fully realized only as Willets Point is also upgraded. The goal is to create a larger, expanded Flushing core, where the River itself links the two dynamic halves to its east and west, making a cohesive whole.

RECOMMENDATION

- A Request for Expressions of Interest should be issued to solicit a range of compelling proposals that help further the land use and economic development guidelines outlined in the Framework.
 - › The development should knit together the two sides of the Flushing River through use and design.
 - › Land use and development should enhance the environment and reflect the sensitive nature of its waterfront setting.
 - › The development should mitigate traffic and parking impacts either through infrastructure improvements or timing of critical traffic flows while optimizing the current roadway and parking infrastructure.
 - › The development should complement and enhance the existing and adjacent recreational and sporting facilities.
 - › The development should create substantial net incremental economic value for the City to cover public debt service.
 - › It should be a source of more and better jobs in the area.
 - › It should be compatible with, and enhance economic growth, in Downtown Flushing and Corona.
 - › It should advance the strategic economic interests of the City of New York, as well as the vision for Downtown Flushing.