



An Analysis of the Kingsbridge/Broadway Retail Corridor

Bronx Borough President Ruben Diaz Jr.

New York City Council Member Andrew Cohen

New York State Assemblyman Jeffrey Dinowitz

Bronx Community Board #8

Bronx Overall Economic Development Corporation



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HISTORY OF KINGSBRIDGE

Kingsbridge was a separate village on the east bank of the Harlem River whose roots go back to the Dutch days. It took its English name from the King's Bridge that spanned the Spuyten Duyvil Creek in Revolutionary times. It (the village) was annexed to New York City in 1874. This was a Weckguasgeeck Indian name for present-day Kingsbridge was Paporinemo, which was then an island formed by twin branches of the Mosholu River (Tibbett's Brook) and Spuyten Duyvil Creek. The name meant "Place of False Starts," alluding to the double tide caused by the Hudson and Harlem Rivers.

This former Kingbridge was located at West 230th Street and Kingsbridge Avenue. It was the main passage from the island of Manhattan to The Bronx mainland. It was built and owned by Vredryck Flypsen (Frederick Philipse) in 1693, who made it a toll bridge onto his lands. During the Revolutionary War, it was the main military artery for both sides, and was under continuous attack. The bridge fulfilled its duties until 1916 when the Spuyten Duyvil Creek was filled in.

The communities of Kingsbridge, Riverdale, Fieldston, Spuyten Duyvil, and Mosholu, grouped together in the northwest corner of The Bronx, share a rich and varied history. Riverdale, occupying the highest ground in Kingsbridge township, wasn't an ordinary village; it was strictly residential, home in the 19th century to those prominent in New York City's political and mercantile life. Kingsbridge village came into existence in 1847 when the Macomb property was surveyed and cut into city lots. Its main roads were lined with boat houses and feed stores. The area known as Fieldston took its name from the Delafield estate, broken up into lots in 1893. Mosholu was a tiny hamlet centered around Broadway and West 242nd Street; earlier, it was known as Warnerville.

Spuyten Duyvil's identity as a community was defined by the Isaac Johnson Iron Foundry. In the 1850s, Johnson established his foundry at the base of the bluff; the village was laid out on the hill above. It was essentially a company town and was basically the only site of heavy industry in the greater Kingsbridge area.

RECENT DEVELOPMENTS



In recent years, Kingsbridge has seen an increase in attention for real estate brokers and media alike, as the neighborhood continues to strengthen its reputation as an authentic New York City enclave tucked between neighboring Riverdale and the Manhattan communities of Washington Heights, Inwood and Marble Hill.

In 2012, New York Magazine declared Kingsbridge among “The Achievables,” neighborhoods in New York City that balance affordability and desirability. They noted that the neighborhood “has a lively retail corridor along Broadway, with pleasant pubs and a surprising stock of amenities.”

In 2014, AM New York profiled the community, noting its working-class character and numerous amenities. They added that Kingsbridge residents are tremendously proud of their neighborhood and its residents, noting that, “People most familiar with the 0.75-square-mile neighborhood use words like ‘beautiful,’ ‘booming,’ ‘diverse’ and ‘home’ to verbalize their Kingsbridge pride.”

The neighborhood has access to tremendous transit options, including the 1 subway line, Metro-North in Marble Hill and numerous buses; and is adjacent to Van Cortlandt Park, a gem of the city’s parks system. WalkScore.com rates that neighborhood at 92, calling it a “walker’s paradise.” In fact, a 2012 profile of Kingsbridge in The New York Times made specific mention of the area’s numerous “step streets” and the walking culture they have engendered in the community.

MAJOR NEW PROJECTS

Kingsbridge's anchor is Broadway, running north from West 230th Street to West 238th Street. This well-known commercial corridor has seen two new retail shopping centers open at each end in recent months, and is slated for more retail and commercial development at the site of the former Loehmann's as well as a sizeable lot directly across the street, the site of a former pub.

The Broadway Plaza retail development, located at Broadway and West 230th Street at the southern edge of this shopping district, officially opened in October 2014, creating approximately 200 new jobs. The two-story development, which activates an 80,000 square foot parcel, represents a private investment of approximately \$54 million into the area from the developer, Equity One, in order to build the facility and accompanying covered parking spaces on 230th Street between Broadway and the Major Deegan Expressway. Anchor tenants include TJ Maxx, Sports Authority, Party City and Aldi.

At the northern edge of the shopping district, at Broadway and West 238th Street, is Riverdale Crossing. This new shopping center was developed by Metropolitan Realty Associates, and tenants began to open in early 2015. The plaza has created more than 500 jobs, and features tenants such as BJ's Wholesale Club, Buffalo Wild Wings, Petco, Bank of America and Subway.

CONCERNS

With the opening of these two brand new shopping centers, and with at least two more major developments on the way, elected officials, Community Board #8, local businesses, residents and others have expressed concerns about the condition of Broadway's retail corridor, and the need to ensure that Kingsbridge is as attractive as it can be to welcome new visitors and shoppers from other neighborhoods taking advantage of these new malls.

In 2014, Bronx Borough President Ruben Diaz Jr. convened a working group to discuss the future of Broadway and the Kingsbridge retail corridor. In partnership with Council Member Andrew Cohen, Assembly Member Jeffrey Dinowitz, Bronx Community Board #8, the Bronx Overall Economic Development Corporation and other stakeholders, this group has identified issues affecting the corridor and are putting forth the following recommendations, which we believe will help maintain Broadway/Kingsbridge's status as a vibrant, active and relevant shopping corridor for both local residents and those beyond.

RECOMMENDATIONS

EXPAND “GRAFFITI FREE NYC”



GFNYC is the City’s first ever, full-time, street-by-street graffiti removal program and is a service provided by NYC Economic Development Corporation (NYCEDC) on behalf of the City of New York. The program provides NO COST graffiti removal to affected commercial, residential and industrial properties throughout the five boroughs.

By completing a “Forever Graffiti Free” form, property owners will authorize NYCEDC program staff to enter their property for the purposes of cleaning any accessible graffiti found on the property exterior. The one-time authorization covers all future graffiti at the specified location until consent is removed or property ownership is transferred.

A PDF version of the enrollment form can be found at:
<http://on.nyc.gov/1xmts7x> (in English)
<http://on.nyc.gov/19Fa0Ip> (in Spanish)
<http://on.nyc.gov/1C5XoVo> (in Mandarin)

An online form can be found at <http://on.nyc.gov/1BcafR4>

STANDARDIZE AREA STREET FURNITURE/TRASH RECEPTACLES



A major key to ensuring a traditional “main street” look and feel to any shopping district, street furniture, trash receptacle and other public objects must conform to one standard. Current street furniture is varied, and does not contribute to the uniformity that is typically expected of a connected shopping district.

Local stakeholders should commit to uniform street objects, and select a matching style that best complements the existing shopping corridor.

Additionally, the Department of Transportation should install “wayfinders” along Broadway and the adjacent streets, similar to those currently installed along the Grand Concourse and East 161st Street. These objects will help guide new visitors through the neighborhood as to nearby attractions, such as Van Cortlandt Park.

GREATER MAINTENANCE OF MTA PROPERTY/EXPANDED LIGHTING

Since all of Broadway is located directly underneath the elevated 1 subway line, it lacks natural light. Stakeholders should identify key areas--such as beneath the subway at the West 231st Street intersection, and seek greater lighting opportunities either through the city, MTA, or a combination of both.

Additionally, the undercarriage of the subway should be repainted, and measures should be taken to prevent birds and other wild animals from living within the elevated tracks and stanchions.

CREATE “POCKET PARK” ON ALBANY CRESCENT

The overhang over the Major Deegan Expressway on Albany Crescent, north and south of West 231st Street, is unsightly, covered in garbage and has been seen as an eyesore by the local community for decades. In addition to a thorough clean-up, these two pieces of property should be converted into “pocket parks,” complete with new planters and green amenities. Not only would this lead to a cleaner street and neighborhood, it would also provide the community with a nicer view than the highway.



REPAIR AND REPLACE SIDEWALKS

The current sidewalks along Broadway and the adjacent streets are mismatched and uneven. The city must give consideration to their replacement.

CSX MAINTENANCE

The right of way of the CSX railroad, which runs alongside the Major Deegan Expressway, is overgrown, covered in litter and has not been maintained in a proper fashion. Because of this, the community looks unappealing to driver’s traveling by car along the highway.

Though a plan for the future recreational reuse of the Putnam Trail is supported, CSX still maintains control of this property. The company should be compelled to clean and maintain their property.

REMOVE NON-FUNCTIONING PARKING METERS, ADDITIONAL PARKING

Despite the installation of “muni-meters” along Broadway, in many places the non-functioning former parking meters still exist. This is confusing for drivers looking to park, as well as unsightly for the neighborhood streetscape. They should be removed.

In addition, the two new developments at either end of Broadway--Riverdale Crossing and Broadway Plaza--have led to the loss of some critical parking spaces. Broadway Plaza was constructed on a former municipal parking lot, and Riverdale Crossing’s curb cuts along West 238th Street have caused the loss of several parking spaces on a commercial street where parking was already at a premium.

In order to make the remaining parking spaces work better for neighborhood stores and vendors, parking meters along Broadway and the adjacent streets should expire later in the evening. This would foster greater turnover of customers, and therefore bring more commerce to local businesses.

In addition, in order to make up for a lack of parking on West 238th Street and to keep neighborhood businesses competitive with the new shopping plaza, parking meters should be extended across the Major Deegan Expressway overpass on the southern side of the street.



ADD CITIBIKE

Though Citi Bike does not currently exist anywhere within The Bronx, it has undergone significant expansion in other boroughs. Stakeholders should begin to scout potential locations for Citi Bike now, so that expansion can be handled quickly and smartly when the program inevitably expands to the adjacent Manhattan communities of Washington Heights and Inwood.

STEP STREET MAINTENANCE/BEAUTIFICATION



One of Kingsbridge's defining features are its step streets. This includes an especially magnificent example on Broadway north of West 231st Street, which currently features a striking Celtic art feature. These step streets and their shoulders must be cleaned and maintained on a regular basis. In addition to the removal of graffiti, planters should be installed to beautify these areas.

In addition, new funds are available for businesses to make necessary improvements to beautify their own façades and overall properties. In March 2015, State Senator Jeff Klein, Bronx Borough President Diaz and Bronx Overall Economic Development Corporation (BOEDC) President Marlene Cintron announced the creation of the Bronx Revolving Loan Fund, a new small business lending program administered by BOEDC.

This fund has nearly \$500,000 in loans available to local small businesses -- of all sizes and sectors -- across The Bronx, including Kingsbridge. The loans, ranging from \$2,000 to \$50,000, can be used as working capital, for the purchase of machinery or equipment, inventory and accounts receivable. More information on the program can be found at <http://on.nyc.gov/1F8rnO0>, or by calling the BOEDC at (718) 590-6252.

ADVERTISING & ART OPPORTUNITIES

Local stakeholders, including the MTA, should identify sites appropriate for art installations, such as the stained glass objects that are installed in local subway stations.

In addition, neighborhood bulletin boards should be installed at both West 231st Street and West 238th Street. Such boards could feature appropriate advertising as well as neighborhood and community announcements, and funds from those advertisements could be used to fund programming and other initiatives within the business district.

CONCLUSIONS

The Broadway/Kingsbridge shopping corridor is strategically located between Riverdale and Northern Manhattan, as is uniquely positioned for considerable growth. Major new developments are poised to draw thousands of new shoppers to the area, and enacting these recommendations will make the area more attractive to shoppers and residents alike, leading to repeat business for area businesses as well as a better quality of life for community residents.

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