



## **Corridor Vision Safety, Equity and Resiliency**

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Eric Adams, Mayor | Ydanis Rodriguez, Commissioner

# **Focus Group Update**

**February 2023**



# Corridor Vision Background

The New York City Department of Transportation (NYC DOT) is actively engaging communities along the BQE corridor in Brooklyn in a BQE Corridor Vision process. The BQE Central engagement process will identify potential alternatives for the City-owned structure from the Atlantic Avenue interchange to the Sands Street interchange. Concurrently, BQE North and South engagement process will identify potential short and long-term projects for the State-owned sections of the BQE north of Sands Street to the Kosciusko Bridge and south of Atlantic Avenue to the Verrazzano-Narrows Bridge, as well as the surrounding neighborhoods. New Federal funds, available through the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law and Inflation Reduction Act, provide an exciting opportunity to upgrade the BQE for the 21st Century.

Overviews of the effort so far, and materials from other components of the outreach process are available at <https://bqevision.com/central/materials>, <https://bqevision.com/north-south/materials>, and <https://bqevision.com/community-partner>.

## BQE Focus Groups Overview

As part of the overall BQE Corridor Vision, NYC DOT and its consultants convened subject area experts in a series of virtual Focus Groups on various topics. Focus Groups were focused on the full BQE corridor in Brooklyn, and included the following topics:

- Safety, Transportation, Traffic, and Mobility
- Connectivity, Accessibility, and Public Realm
- Land Use and Economic Development
- Environmental Justice

Ahead of each meeting, participants were provided discussion questions, which guided conversation at the Focus Groups, as well as publicly-available project background. Project background was also briefly covered at the start of each focus group.

In addition to external subject area experts invited to participate, NYC DOT invited operational and planning staff from the Mayor's Office, relevant City agencies, and internal NYC DOT units to participate. Further, members of the [BQE Corridor Vision Community Visioning Council \(CVC\)](#) and elected officials and their staff for the full Vision corridor were invited to observe the sessions.

# Safety, Transportation, Traffic, and Mobility

Focused on regional transportation planning, street/pedestrian/cyclist safety, public transit, and goods movement.

## January 19, 2023 Participants

- Families for Safe Streets
- NYC Department of Parks & Recreation
- NYC Taxi & Limousine Commission
- New York Taxi Workers Alliance
- Regional Plan Association
- Riders Alliance
- StreetsPAC
- Transportation Alternatives
- Tri-State Transportation Campaign
- Trucking Association of New York
- Representatives from the CVC, Mayor's Office, and local elected officials (in observer capacities)

## Major themes for the Safety, Transportation, Traffic, and Mobility Focus Group included:

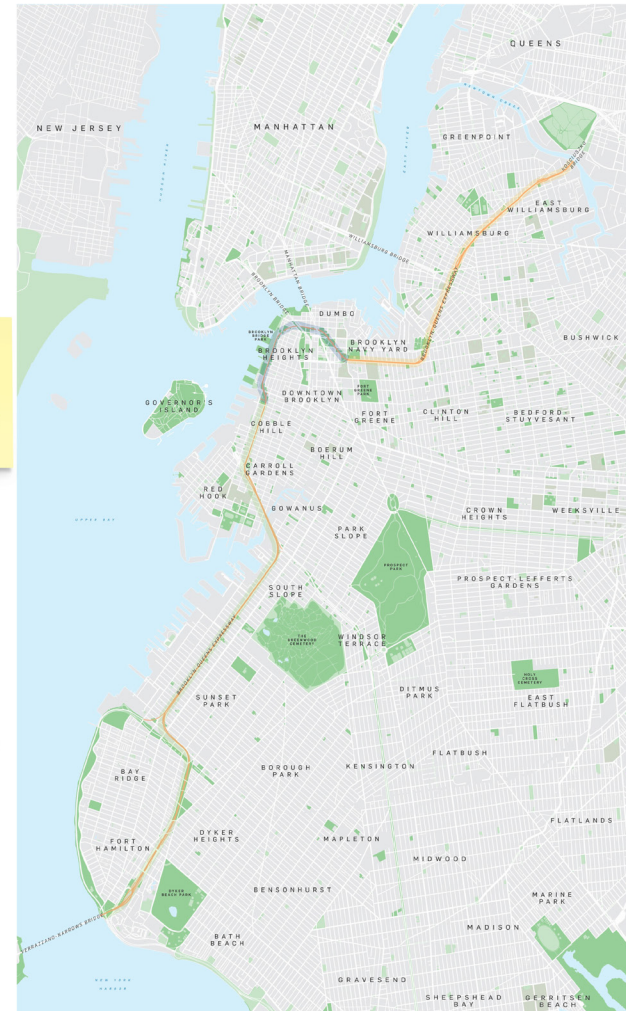
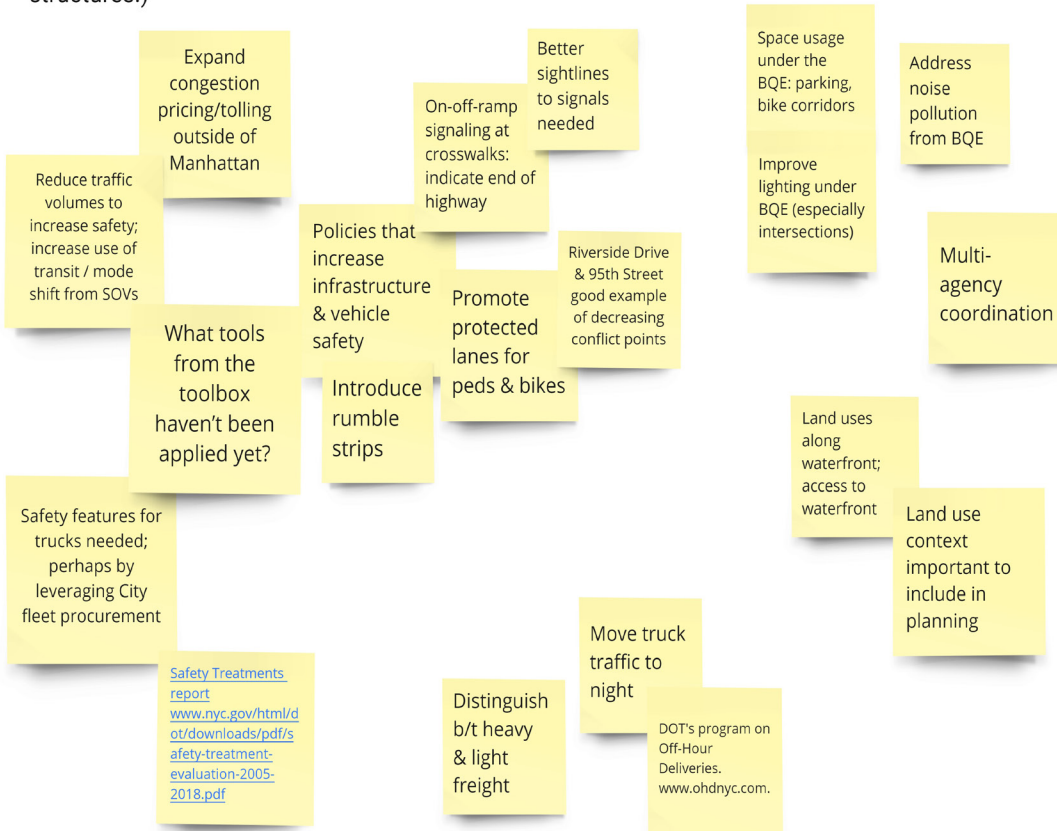
- Importance of freight and need to better organize regional freight movement, potentially through increased nighttime and maritime freight utilization
- Potential for increased demand management through freight-only lanes, or expanded utilization of tolling, while balancing the need to prevent impacts on for-hire vehicle drivers and emergency vehicles
- Thinking comprehensively about the BQE and surrounding areas, including transit planning
- Safety-oriented cyclist and pedestrian planning and enforcement, as well as leveraging City's purchasing powers to influence safer truck design
- Considering big-picture solutions, like reducing the BQE footprint

Considering future evolutions in transportation technology and ongoing changes to goods movement and public transportation networks, how can we think bigger about the role of the BQE as a regional transportation connector? What is most important to prioritize? For example, for bicyclists and lightweight vehicles, public transit, or freight?





How do we increase pedestrian/cyclist/motorist safety in the areas around the BQE? (More specifically, at intersections that connect to on-/off-ramps and roadways under elevated structures.)



# Connectivity, Accessibility, and Public Realm

Focused on accessibility, parks, open space, and the public realm.

## January 25, 2023 Participants

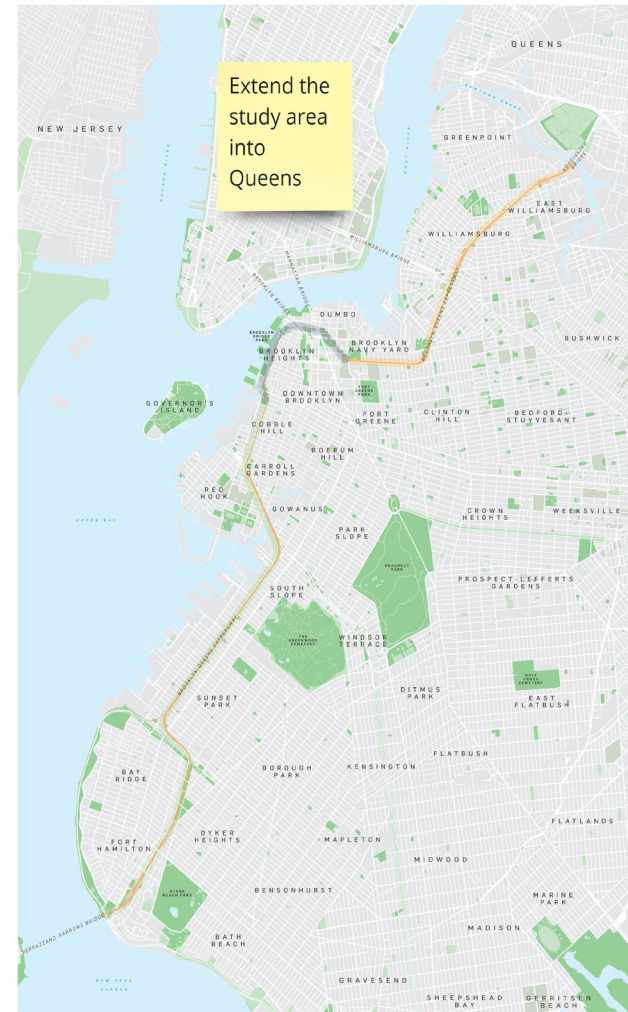
- American Institute of Architects (AIA) New York
- Brooklyn Bridge Park Conservancy
- Brooklyn Chamber of Commerce
- Brooklyn Greenway Initiative
- Center for Independence of the Disabled New York (CIDNY)
- City Parks Foundation/Partnerships for Parks
- Downtown Brooklyn Partnership
- Municipal Art Society of New York
- NYC Department of City Planning
- NYC Department of Parks & Recreation
- NYC Manufacturing and Industrial Innovation Council
- NYC Small Business Services
- New York League of Conservation Voters
- New Yorkers for Parks
- Open Plans
- Urban Design Forum
- Van Alen Institute
- Representatives from the CVC, Mayor's Office, and local elected officials (in observer capacities)

## **Major themes for the Connectivity, Accessibility, and Public Realm Focus Group included**

- Focusing on connecting and greening underutilized spaces, while also recognizing the need to create high-value, usable green spaces (i.e. not immediately adjacent to highway/cars without screening and/or sound attenuation)
- The need for increased lighting, with emphasis on pedestrian/street-level lighting
- Maintenance planning to be central to any and all investments, and for plans to be in place before investments are completed
- Emphasizing reducing or removing the BQE
- Reducing reliance on cars and better freight planning, along with safety-oriented street improvements
- Clarifying jurisdictional oversight and responsibilities for spaces around the BQE, with emphasis on greater State involvement in BQE planning efforts

What are the major public realm and open space opportunities in and around the BQE, including under the highway, around or adjacent to the highway, or over the highway?

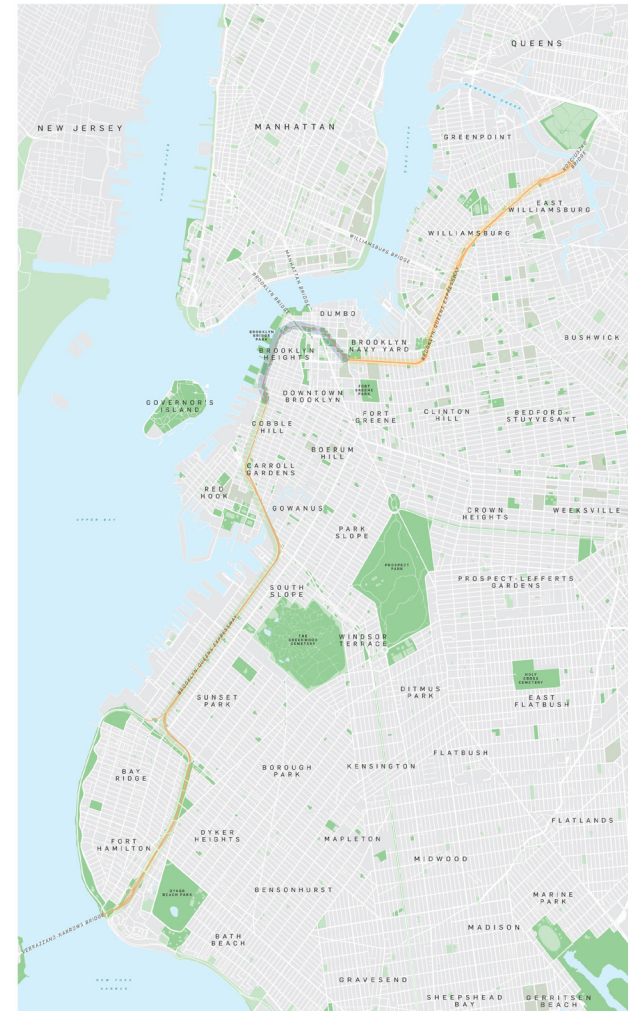
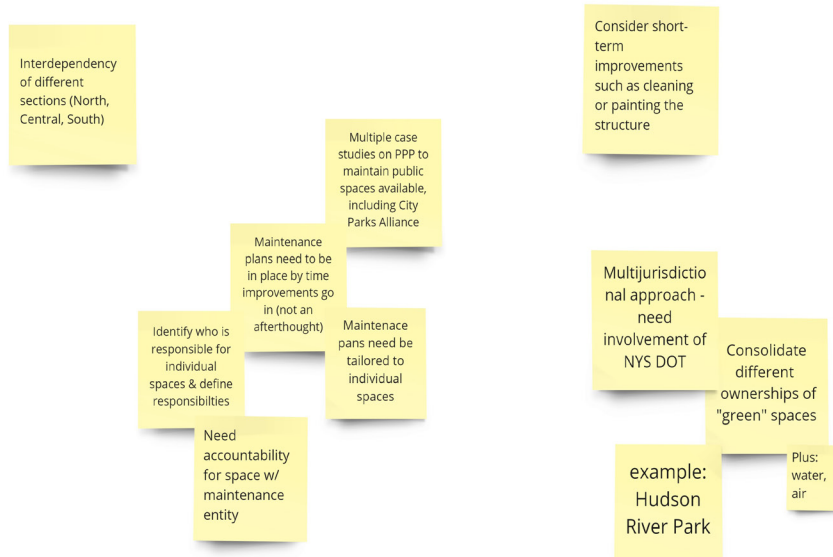
- What type of open space is needed?
- How can these ideas contribute to accessibility, mobility, open space, freight management, community services, business, and other areas of focus?
- What are good examples of these types of spaces in NYC, around the country, and internationally?





Are these spaces managed by the State or City? How are these types of public spaces managed and maintained? What are the challenges of existing management and maintenance structures?

Are there models that should be looked at? Who is currently involved in their management and maintenance? Are there appropriate commercial uses and what might those be?



# Land Use and Economic Development

Focused on local and small business and land use.

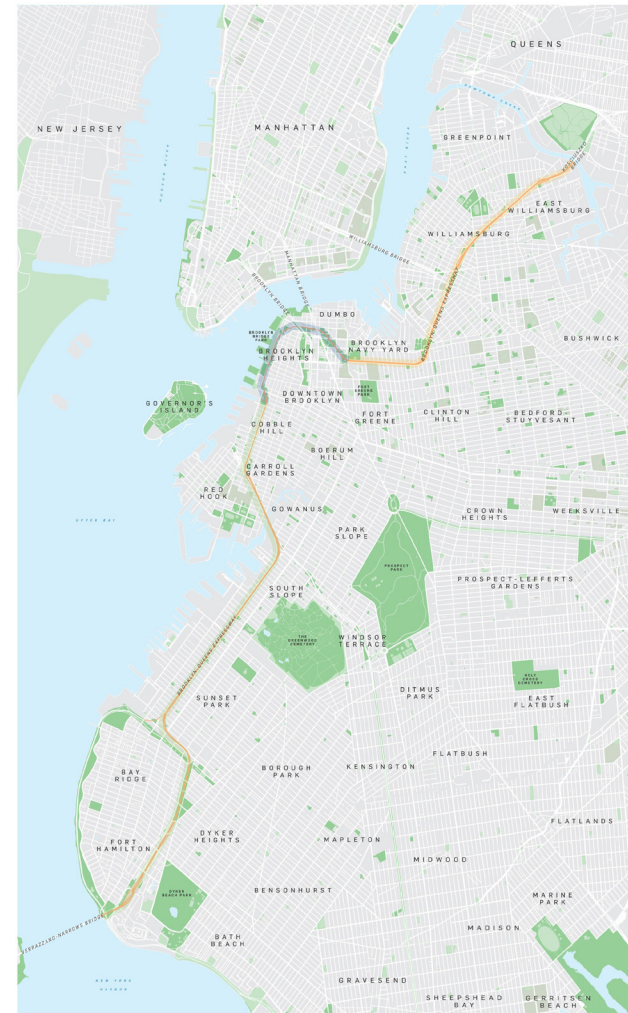
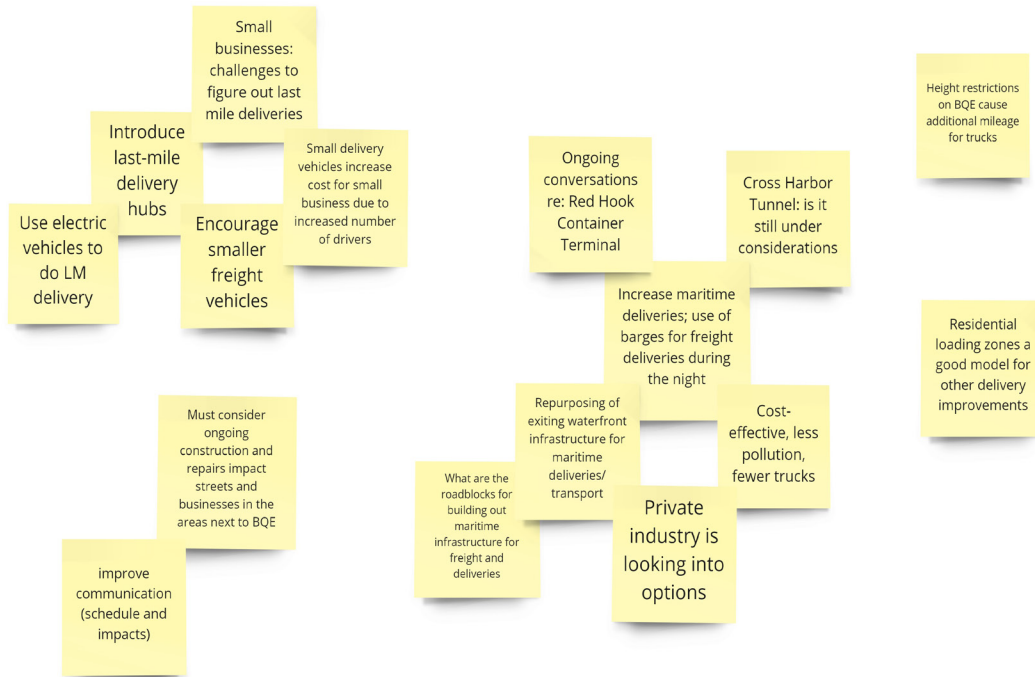
## January 31, 2023 Participants

- 86th Street Bay Ridge Business Improvement District
- Association for a Better New York (ABNY)
- Brooklyn Bridge Park Corporation
- Brooklyn Chamber of Commerce
- Brooklyn Chinese-American Association
- Brooklyn Navy Yard Development Corporation
- Downtown Brooklyn Partnership
- DUMBO Business Improvement District
- Graham Avenue Business Improvement District
- Grand Street Business Improvement District
- Industry City
- Myrtle Avenue Brooklyn Partnership
- NYC Department of City Planning
- NYC Economic Development Corporation
- NYC Manufacturing and Industrial Innovation Council
- NYC Small Business Services
- Partnership for New York City
- Red Hook Business Alliance
- Southwest Brooklyn Industrial Development Corporation
- Teamsters Local 817/New York City Central Labor Council
- Yemeni American Merchants Association
- Representatives from the CVC, Mayor's Office, and local elected officials (in observer capacities)

## **Major themes for the Land Use and Economic Development Focus Group included**

- Looking at ways to encourage smaller delivery vehicles, such as last mile distribution centers
- Maximizing utilization of maritime freight movement
- Ensuring that construction impacts are well-communicated, with emphasis on reducing impacts to small businesses
- Focusing on connecting and reconnecting areas around the BQE, with particular emphasis on increasing connectivity and safety for pedestrians and cyclists
- Lighting, painting, maintenance, and quality of life improvements
- Reducing parking to minimum-levels needed for local business operations and the community, and addressing excessive or illegal parking placards
- Taking a bigger-picture look at zoning along the corridor, capitalizing on appropriate opportunities for new development and sustainability planning while protecting industrial zones and uses

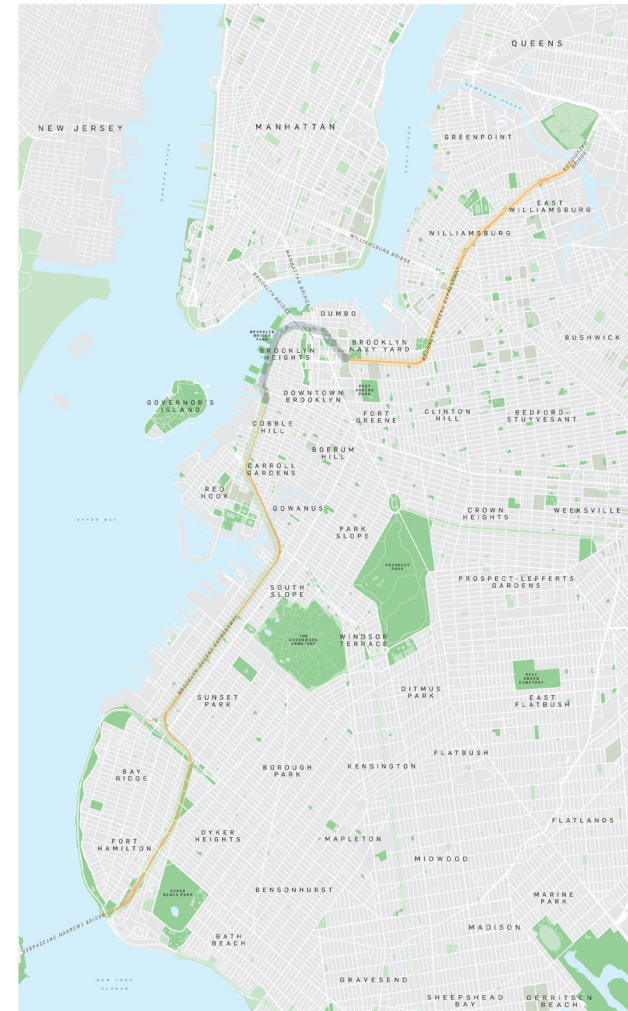
How can the BQE better support local businesses and economic development directly along the corridor (beyond its role as an essential freight corridor)?





From a development perspective, what are the trade-offs involved in challenging long-term projects like decking and overbuilds and when are those types of projects financially feasible and successful?

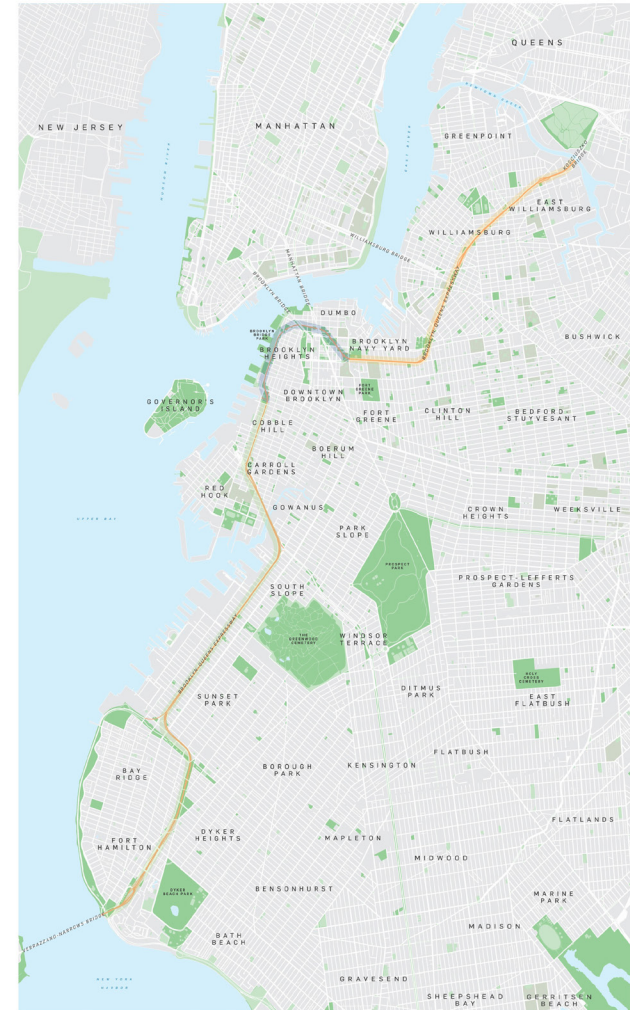
What models should our team be referring to in thinking through high impact, long-term ideas?





What is the current land use and development context along the BQE? Neighborhood studies and rezonings? Development mapping over the past 20 years?

Why are some areas seeing significant development in and around the BQE (i.e., Greenpoint-Williamsburg), while others are not (i.e., Bay Ridge)? Where are we seeing new development emerging (i.e., Sunset Park)?



# Environmental Justice

Focused on equity, sustainability, health, and correcting historic environmental injustice.

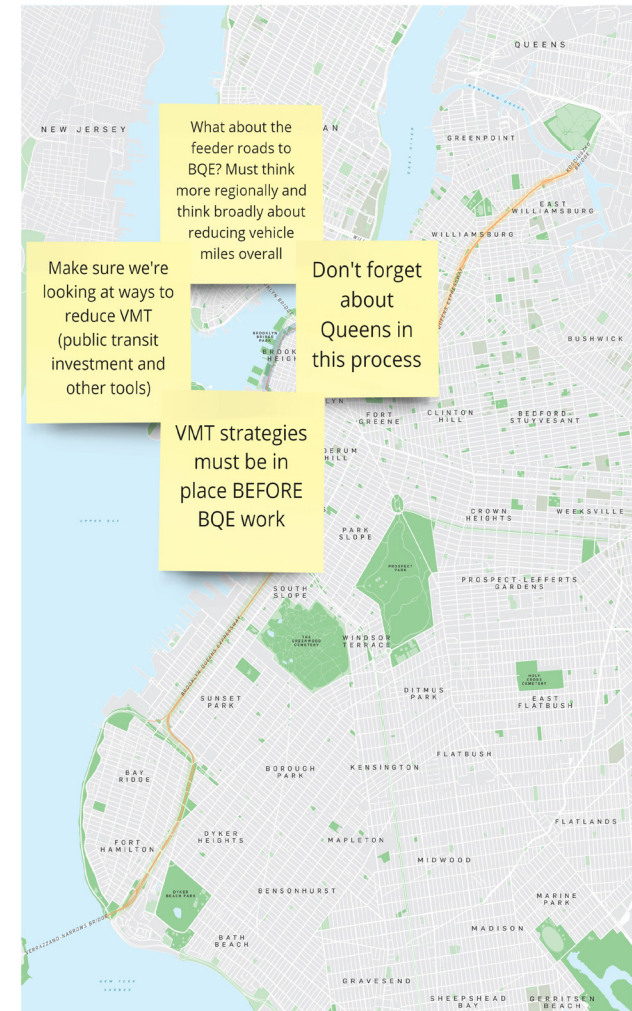
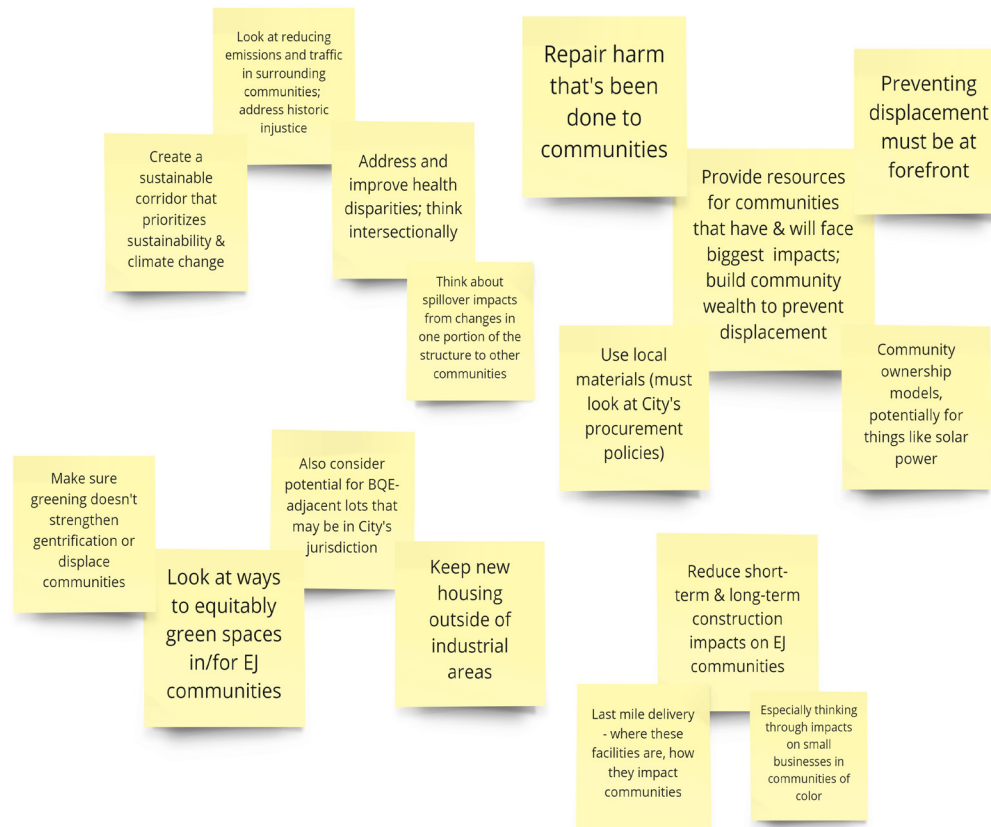
## February 9, 2023 Participants

- City Parks Foundation/Partnerships for Parks
- El Puente
- NYC Department of Health & Mental Hygiene
- NYC Department of Parks & Recreation
- New York City Environmental Justice Alliance
- NYC Housing Authority (NYCHA)
- NYC Mayor's Office of Climate and Environmental Justice North Brooklyn Neighbors
- Tri-State Transportation Campaign
- UPROSE
- Representatives from the CVC, Mayor's Office, and local elected officials (in observer capacities)

## Major themes for the Environmental Justice Focus Group included

- Correcting historic inequity, and centering marginalized communities and immigrants in planning efforts, as well as people with disabilities and seniors, since these communities have and will experience disproportionate environmental impacts
- Reducing the prevalence of trucks and truck routes in environmental justice communities, as well as reducing vehicle miles traveled more broadly
- Community wealth-building for impacted communities, including through using local materials (which may require changing City procurement practices), and community ownership models for new green infrastructure and jobs, and green space
- Ensuring any new investments are done in a way that they do not encourage gentrification
- The need for intersectional planning, and a more regional planning effort that includes Queens and neighboring communities; expanding the reach of outreach efforts, including with students and schools, and public housing residents
- Ensuring construction impacts on small businesses are reduced or prevented, especially since small businesses in environmental justice communities are often owned by people of color
- Importance of providing overviews of feedback received, and reporting back on how that feedback is being incorporated into planning

How do we address/reduce the pollution impacts of the BQE on our communities? What are the major causes of these externalities and how can they be mitigated? Freight? Congestion?





How can we create a more welcoming, inclusive, and accessible space for all New Yorkers along the BQE that is inviting and used by current residents and businesses?

Must center historically marginalized communities & immigrants

Reframe question: How can we create a more livable/thrivable space for historically marginalized communities and immigrants along the BQE that is inviting and used by current residents and businesses?

Address City policies that reinforce inequity, (i.e. Open Streets disallowed on truck routes)

Must reduce truck routes in EJ communities and their associated safety, health, and livability challenges

Seniors and people w/ disabilities also critical

Environmental Justice needs to be centered in ALL conversations

Bring in schools & education entities (look at D15 diversity planning as model), housing orgs, NYCHA developments

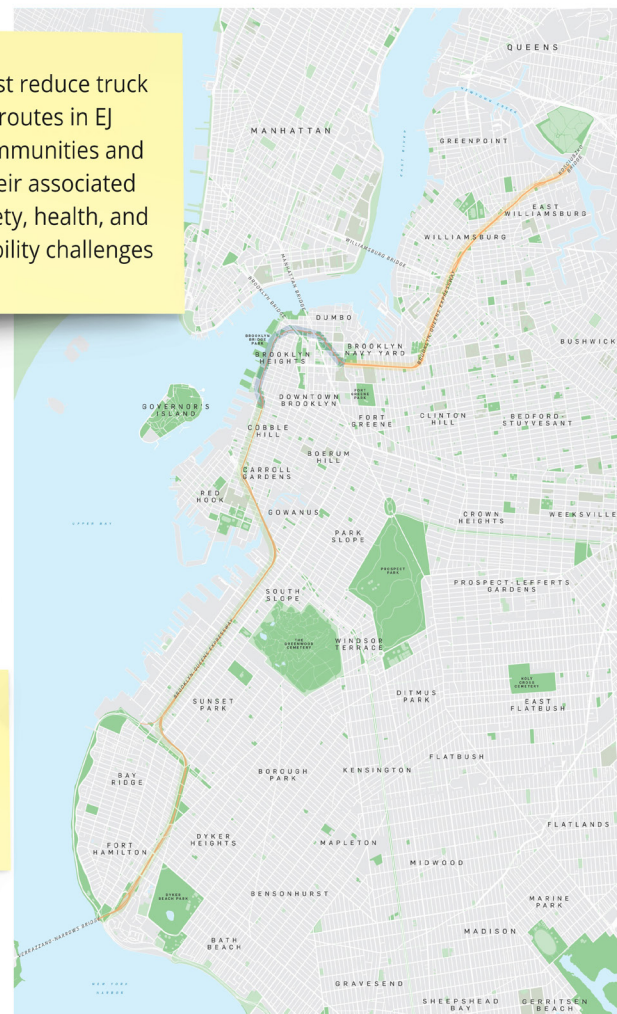
Go to where people are for engagement (show up at schools for example)

Ask people about their availability for meetings; have follow-up meetings recapping feedback and highlighting how it's being incorporated

Community wealth-building, especially by focusing on sustainable, green infrastructure

Street safety investments critical; 3rd Ave study important to this

This type of infra also safer for vulnerable populations (children, seniors, etc)





# What's Next

Community Partners began their parallel engagement efforts in January 2023, and a BQE North & South survey was available through February 28, 2023.

On February 28, 2023, Round 3 of the BQE Central Workshops will begin, through which NYC DOT will focus on “Refining The Vision,” informed by previously-shared public feedback. Prior to this, NYC DOT and its consultants also convened a BQE Central CVC meeting to help inform planning of BQE Central Round 3 engagement.

Similarly, in March 2023, the team will begin Round 2 of BQE North and South engagement to begin “Shaping A Vision” for these sections. This will include sharing preliminary conceptual designs for community feedback, and a transparent explanation and discussion of NYC DOT’s choices in moving forward with these preliminary conceptual designs. At the same time, NYC DOT is identifying City-led projects responsive to Round 1 and 2 feedback that can be implemented starting in 2023.

## Upcoming public meetings:

- February 28, 2023, 6:00-8:30pm: BQE Central Workshop Round 3
- March 2, 2023, 6:00-8:30pm: BQE Central Workshop Round 3
- March 21, 2023, 6:30-8:30pm: BQE South Workshop Round 2
- March 23, 2023, 6:30-8:30pm: BQE North Workshop Round 2
- March 27, 2023, 6:30-8:30pm: BQE North Workshop Round 2
- March 30, 2023, 6:30-8:30pm: BQE South Workshop Round 2

The project website [www.bqevision.com](http://www.bqevision.com) outlines upcoming meetings, opportunities for engagement, methods to share feedback, and contains project materials.

**Note:** This document reflects the feedback from the meetings in summary format and is not a full transcription of feedback received.