

Southern Boulevard

Community Meeting 3 Engagement Summary

Thursday, March 6, 2025

PROJECT INTRODUCTION

Building upon 30 years of transformative work, Youth Ministries for Peace & Justice (YMPJ), in partnership with The New York State Department of State, intends to complete a Nomination Study for an approximately 61.5 acres area with potential brownfield sites that are located on the east and west banks of the Bronx River in South Bronx. The Brownfield Opportunity Area (BOA) nomination study will be developed based on input from the community to ensure the designation accurately reflects the community's vision and goals.

MEETING DETAILS



6.00 pm - 8.00pm
Thursday, March 6



Hybrid Meeting Format

In-Person: YMPJ's Office,
1244 Manor Ave, Bronx
Virtual: Zoom

20 +

Stakeholders
including:

- Residents, and those who work in the area
- Steering Committee Members representing local organizations and city agencies
- Internal team members

The event included childcare services and a catered dinner from the local vendor CaSpanish. Although live Spanish interpretation was available, no Spanish-speaking attendees were present.

MEETING GOALS

- Share updates on project development and engagement conducted to date.
- Gather input on strategic sites concepts and neighborhood-wide frameworks.
- Foster trust and strengthen relationships among stakeholders, YMPJ, and the consultant team.

AGENDA

6:00 pm Welcome

6:10 pm Presentation and Q&A

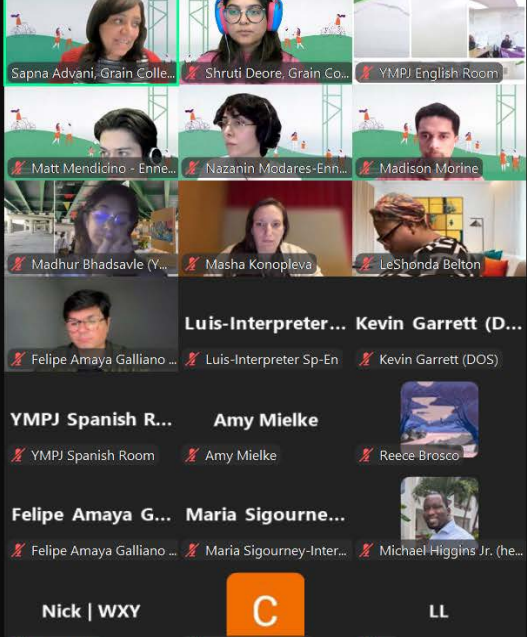
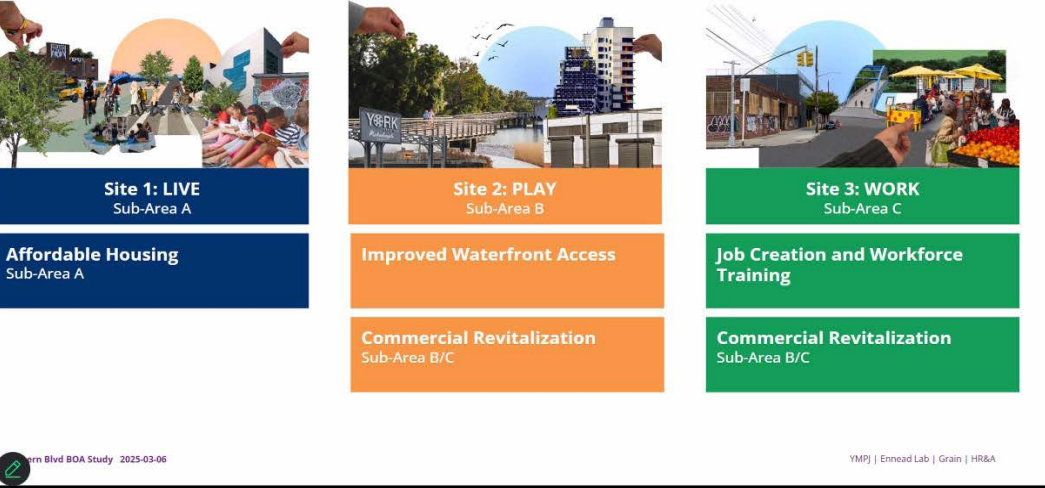
6:45 pm Small Group Discussions

7:45 pm Share-out

7:55 pm Next Steps



Area-Specific Design Strategy Recommendations



Screenshot of the virtual component of the hybrid meeting discussion.

MEETING CONTENT

Welcome, Sign-In & Ice-Breaker

The meeting began with a welcome and brief overview of the BOA project, including introductions to the project team. Virtual attendees received Zoom instructions and participated in a quick poll to identify Spanish interpretation needs. Participants then joined an interactive ice-breaker—virtual attendees submitted zip codes and shared their connection to the area through live polling, while in-person participants responded during sign-in.

Project Overview & Timeline

An overview of the BOA project was presented, covering the project’s purpose, the definition of brownfields, and the significance of this planning effort. The project team emphasized the role of the Steering Committee and shared the overall project timeline. This meeting marked the third major community touchpoint, with one final report announcement still to come.

Community Engagement Recap

Grain Collective shared highlights from previous community engagement activities, including three pop-up tabling events and an in-person open house held in 2024. Feedback gathered through these events was emphasized as being critical to shape the project’s priorities and direction.

Site Selection & Area Findings

Ennead Lab presented findings on existing conditions of the study area, including land use, transit access, open space, tree canopy coverage, and flood vulnerability. HR&A followed with a presentation on employment trends and demographic data. The team

also introduced area-wide goals focused on health, resilience, improved public space, and community-centered development. Evaluation criteria for strategic site selection were shared, along with three sub-areas identified for potential transformation themed as “Live, Work, Play” hubs.

Q&A Session

A Q&A session provided space for participants—both in-person and virtual—to share feedback and ask questions. The project team and consultants responded to clarify concepts and address community concerns.

Small Group Discussions

Participants divided into small groups to explore the three identified sub-areas and a demonstration site within each. Each group reviewed existing site conditions, examined precedent examples, and responded to prompts focused on community needs and potential site activations. Feedback was captured through polls (via QR codes, digital links, or paper forms). Due to time constraints, only two sub-areas were discussed in detail; input on the third sub-area was gathered through follow-up engagement, led by YMPJ.

Report Out & Next Steps

Groups reconvened to share key ideas and takeaways from their discussions. The session concluded with a summary of next steps and a reminder on how community members can stay engaged and continue contributing their input. The BOA project remains committed to being a community-driven process, shaped by local voices and priorities.

WHAT WE HEARD

Overall Community Priorities and Reflections:

The engagement revealed several themes around ways that the project could better support the long-term wellbeing of the neighborhood.

- Community members were curious about the alignment of the development with the broader Cross Bronx Expressway Study. YMPJ clarified that the BOA study area did not overlap with the boundaries of the Expressway Study and therefore were independent processes.
- There was a strong interest in understanding the types of jobs the project might generate—with many asking whether opportunities would extend beyond short-term construction work to include longer-term employment pathways that benefit residents.
- Many expressed concern about the growing difficulty of homeownership and asked how current residents could be supported to stay in the neighborhood and build long-term stability, especially given the area’s fabric of single-family homes and town homes.
- Residents expressed strong support for small, locally owned businesses, emphasizing the importance of creating opportunities that not only benefit the community economically but also ensure that the positive impacts of development are lasting and deeply rooted in the neighborhood.
- There was a clear call for workforce training programs that lead to real jobs, not just training for training’s sake. Community members stressed the importance of follow-through—making sure that residents who put in the effort are not left behind when the hiring begins.
- Community members appreciated how each sub-area was framed around the themes of live, work, and play, and expressed a desire to see those elements interwoven throughout the entire development. Rather than assigning distinct uses to specific sites, residents envisioned a more integrated and connected neighborhood, where different features—such as housing, retail, green space, and community amenities—could coexist within each area. This approach, they felt, would help foster a more balanced environment and prevent experiences or opportunities from being siloed in individual sites, ultimately supporting a more vibrant, inclusive, and cohesive neighborhood fabric.
- Finally, access to affordable, healthy food was raised as a pressing need. Participants also emphasized the importance of more flexible zoning that would allow for community-driven uses such as street vending, pop-up shops, or other entrepreneurial efforts that reflect local creativity and needs.

Key Priorities



Homeownership Models



Support Small and Local Businesses



Job Opportunities and Workforce Training



Access to affordable and healthy food markets

“If they can’t get the jobs once they train, it defeats the purpose.” - Stakeholder

“Are there opportunities for local business ownership?long standing, legacy building work is what I want to see.” - Stakeholder

Sub-Area A: Transit Oriented Housing
Site 1

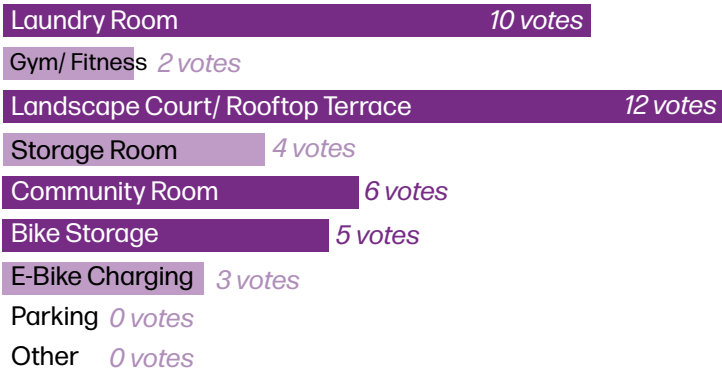
- Feedback from both in-person and virtual groups included a mix of support, concerns and priorities for the proposed development.
- The participants emphasized the need for a community center to serve residents and revitalize the neighborhood, addressing the current lack of accessible services and gathering spaces.
 - In discussions about affordable housing, participants expressed a strong desire to prioritize study area residents, especially seniors and low-income families. Many felt that housing should be prioritized for those already living in the area, with selection based on income levels and neighborhood residency. There were concerns about the true meaning of ‘affordability,’ with some questioning whether new developments would genuinely serve the current community or attract outside residents.
 - A strong focus was placed on ensuring developments align with the community’s needs, particularly through green spaces and sustainable design.
 - When reviewing the two precedent projects, ‘The Eliza, Inwood’ and ‘Jerome Court, Morris Heights’, opinions were divided. The in-person group favored the Eliza development, while the virtual group strongly opposed it. The disagreement stemmed from concerns about the large, modern designs of the precedents, which many felt didn’t align with the character of the building typology, historic to Bronx. There was a shared worry that large-scale developments could overwhelm the neighborhood. Participants emphasized the importance of preserving the Bronx’s historic architecture, particularly its brick buildings, and expressed a preference for developments that respect the area’s identity. The idea of large, impersonal projects was met with resistance, with many attendees advocating for community-focused housing instead.

“I just moved to the Bronx, I walk a lot. I’m in awe - its so beautiful. Bronx is so refreshingly eclectic in terms of architecture” - Stakeholder



- Discussions on zoning and density led to a preference for lower building heights, with many participants suggesting a maximum of 9 stories to maintain the neighborhood’s scale and character.
- To further inform the development, participants were asked to vote on the amenities they most wanted in the new affordable housing.

The top three requested amenities were: landscape court/ rooftop terrace, laundry room, and a community room closely followed by an area for bike storage.



A total of 40 votes recorded.

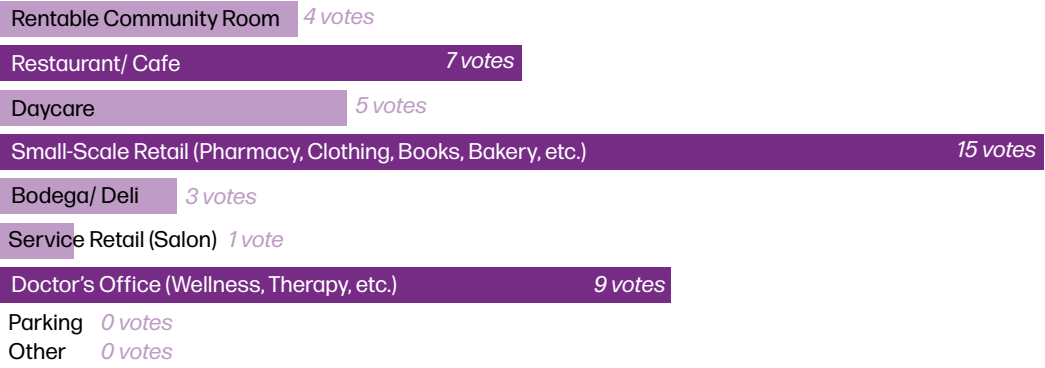
*Though parking was provided as an amenity option, with space constraints and voting restrictions, none of the participants were in favor of it.

A few other precedents were recommended for further consideration, including “Bronx Point” with BronxWorks and the Hip Hop Museum on the ground floor, and “The Peninsula” with Inspiration Point activating the ground floor.



A second poll was launched to understand community priorities for the ground floor uses. Overall, the community was united on preserving and providing a diversity of retail options to activate the ground floor usage. There was strong support for a mix of small-scale retail, including pharmacies, clothing stores, and bakeries, as well as doctor’s offices and rentable community rooms. Some interest was also expressed in having restaurants, cafés, or daycares. However, the idea of a rentable community room received mixed reactions, with some participants suggesting it would be better replaced by an active café or retail space to attract foot traffic.

Below is a detailed break-up of the votes received for the options presented.



A total of 42 votes recorded.

There was strong interest in a dedicated farmers’ market site, as accessing fresh produce currently requires travel. Participants also envisioned a community-driven food-growing space—indoor or outdoor—where residents grow produce tailored to the area’s cultural and dietary preferences. The community also prioritized streetscape improvements, including better lighting, upgraded roads and sidewalks, public art, tree canopy, seating, climate change strategies, bike lanes, safety enhancements, and accessible open spaces. Overall, participants wanted development to prioritize local needs, preserve historic character, and support community-driven solutions.

“An empty community room would be shame, much better to have an active cafe or retail space that can be rented out briefly for a gathering space.” - Stakeholder

“I would love areas where we can get fresh wholesome food to avoid traveling to Manhattan.....Just cause we live in the Bronx, don’t we deserve to live well?” - Stakeholder

“Affordability should be consistent with incomes most appropriate to the neighborhood while also encouraging some higher income tenants to spur economic spending in the area.” - Stakeholder

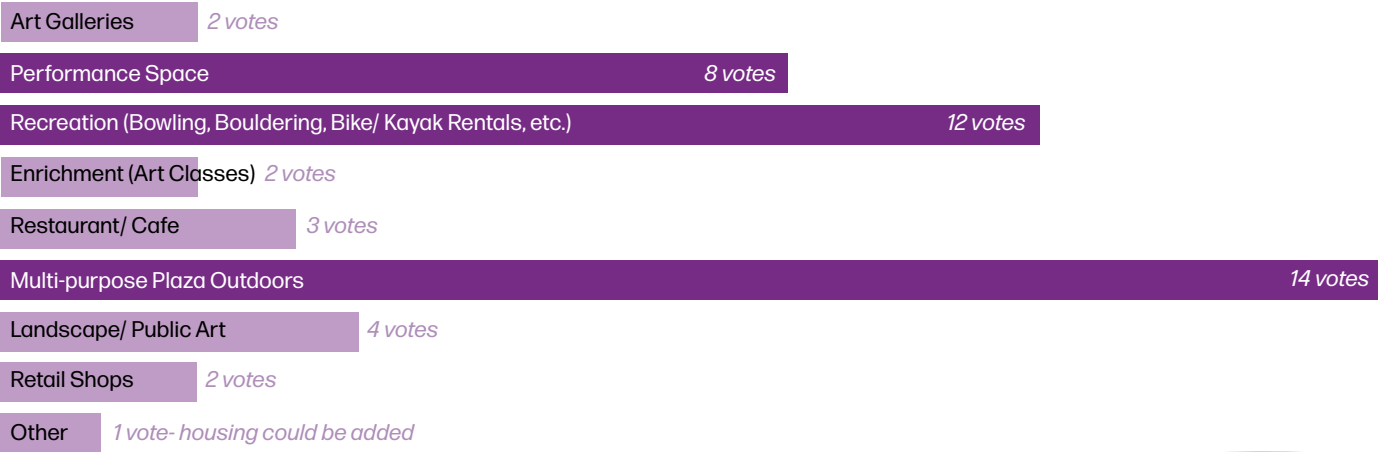
Sub-Area B: Waterfront Activation
Site 2

Due to its proximity to the Bronx River, this sub-area was presented as an opportunity to expand waterfront access with new public amenities and facilities. Improved pedestrian safety and overall cleanliness were additional themes highlighted in this area.

- Participants expressed strong support for ideas for this site and were excited by its potential to become a vibrant, multi-purpose destination. They envisioned this sub-area as a dynamic, accessible community hub that offers diverse services such as cafes, self-care, and wellness amenities to meet the needs of Bronx residents while also attracting visitors from beyond. Ideas like a hydroponic food market and destination spaces offering sustainable and community-focused amenities were particularly well-received.
- Stakeholders emphasized that manufacturing areas are vital for the City, and other ideas heard for this sub-area included creating a dynamic industrial-arts park inspired by places like the Industrial Arts Brewing Company in Beacon, NY, the Factory Arts District in Indiana, and The Steel Yard, which features warehouses for crafts such as steel and ceramics alongside open art spaces. Incorporating waterfront access and recreational amenities was also proposed, drawing inspiration from the Yonkers Waterfront and St. Pete's Warehouse Arts District.

To further the discussion of precedents and potential ways to activate this site and sub-area, a poll was launched to gather community preferences. *The top three responses were in favor of the out-door multi-purpose plaza that fosters retail opportunities and brings in local vendors, recreational activities like bouldering and kayak rentals and the idea of a enriching performance space open to the public to activate the waterfront.*

Below is a breakdown of the votes for additional options presented.



A total of 43 votes recorded.



"I think this could be such a special site. West facing- and a place to enjoy a view of the river and the city together" - Stakeholder

"We would like to have reputable cafes, where we can invite people from anywhere, have brunch." - Stakeholder

Providing waterfront access and recreational amenities on the Bronx River is important. "I am a fan of a brewery with a nice restaurant along the Bronx River where visitors can eat, drink, and enjoy the views would be great." - Stakeholder

"The site could be proposed for a MX district. Mixed use can be useful for funding waterfront access"- Stakeholder*

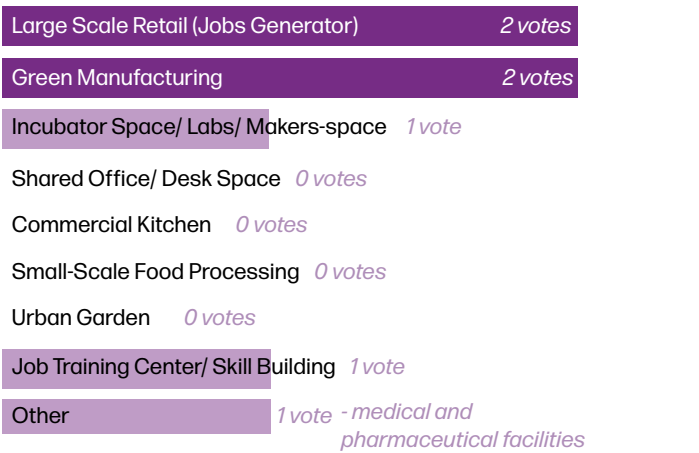
Sub-Area C: Economic Mobility Hub
Site 3

Due to time constraints, stakeholders were not able to provide input on this site at the meeting. The input below was captured through follow-up emails.

This sub-area is characterized as an 'economic mobility hub' due to its general industrial character by major roadways, its proximity to the Soundview Economic Hub, and the nearby schools and was presented as means to foster new businesses and job training in various fields while connecting the community to local job opportunities.

With an introduction to the overall vision for this site and on reviewing the precedents, the stakeholders were presented with potential programming choices to activate this sub-area. *The top choices out of the nine presented included- green manufacturing, and large scale retail as means to generate jobs in the neighborhood.*

Below is a breakdown of the votes for additional options.



A total of 3 votes recorded.

"This site presents a great opportunity to bring in an anchor tenant who can create jobs and activate this site. With York Studios and a school across the street this site could be a manufacturing or service provider for the film industry and some educational component for students" - Stakeholder



- Participants envisioned leveraging the site's proximity to York Studios and a nearby school to attract an anchor tenant, potentially creating jobs and activating the area as a manufacturing or service hub for the film industry, possibly including an educational component for students. Some stakeholders also proposed transforming the East Side of the Bronx River, anchored by the Soundview Economic Hub, into an Industrial-Arts District, integrating incubator spaces, light industrial and manufacturing jobs, warehouses, and arts/ cultural amenities, with York Studios as a central element.
- Key enhancements identified to make the area more accessible and welcoming included improved lighting, streetscape improvements with trees and bike lanes, and clear signage.

It was also suggested that the site could be rezoned to MX to allow for a wider range of programming and activation possibilities.*

** MX - Special Mixed Use District, as defined by the Department of City Planning (DCP). The goals of this district regulation aim to promote public health, safety, and welfare by encouraging investment in areas that blend residential and industrial uses. They support mixed-use development, allow people to live near their workplaces, enhance neighborhood vitality, and ensure land use aligns with thoughtful planning to maintain property values and protect tax revenue.*



NEXT STEPS

The next steps on the project are:

- Community input from this visioning session will be absorbed to help inform the design strategies and recommendations for the BOA Study.
- As depicted in the timeline graphic below, the project team will continue to meet with the Steering Committee to develop and review recommendations and implementation strategies.
- Updates on the projects will continue to be shared via the [project website](#).

