

# Bronx Metro-North Study Area Fall 2023 Community Engagement Summary Report



NEW YORK CITY COUNCIL  
PLANNING AND LAND USE DIVISION  
COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT DIVISION  
OFFICE OF THE BRONX BOROUGH PRESIDENT


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## Overview


Metro-North service is coming to the East Bronx. The regional rail service is estimated to arrive in 2027 with four new train stations at Hunts Point, Parkchester/Van Nest, Morris Park, and Co-Op City. The stations are part of the Metropolitan Transportation Authority's (MTA) Penn Station Access project, which will connect the East Bronx directly to Manhattan's Penn Station. These new stations could save Bronx riders up to 60 minutes if going into Penn Station or up to 75 minutes if traveling to Connecticut.

Since 2018, The Department of City Planning (DCP) has been working with the local communities to create a transit-oriented development plan, known as the "Bronx Metro-North Station Area Study", to ensure the stations meet the needs of the communities they will serve. This collaboration is intended to ensure the local residents will see the most benefit from these planning efforts through public and private investments in housing, jobs, infrastructure, and more. DCP Recommendations for the station areas were developed with input, ideas and priorities discussed at a series of public meetings, surveys, and small-group discussions.

The proposed Bronx Metro-North Station Area Study will include a number of land use actions that would modify the zoning regulations in order to promote housing and economic development. In order to make any zoning changes, a formal public review process, known as ULURP (Uniform Land Use Review Procedure), must occur. The ULURP process is anticipated to begin in early 2024 and will provide a number of opportunities for the public to provide their feedback on the proposal.

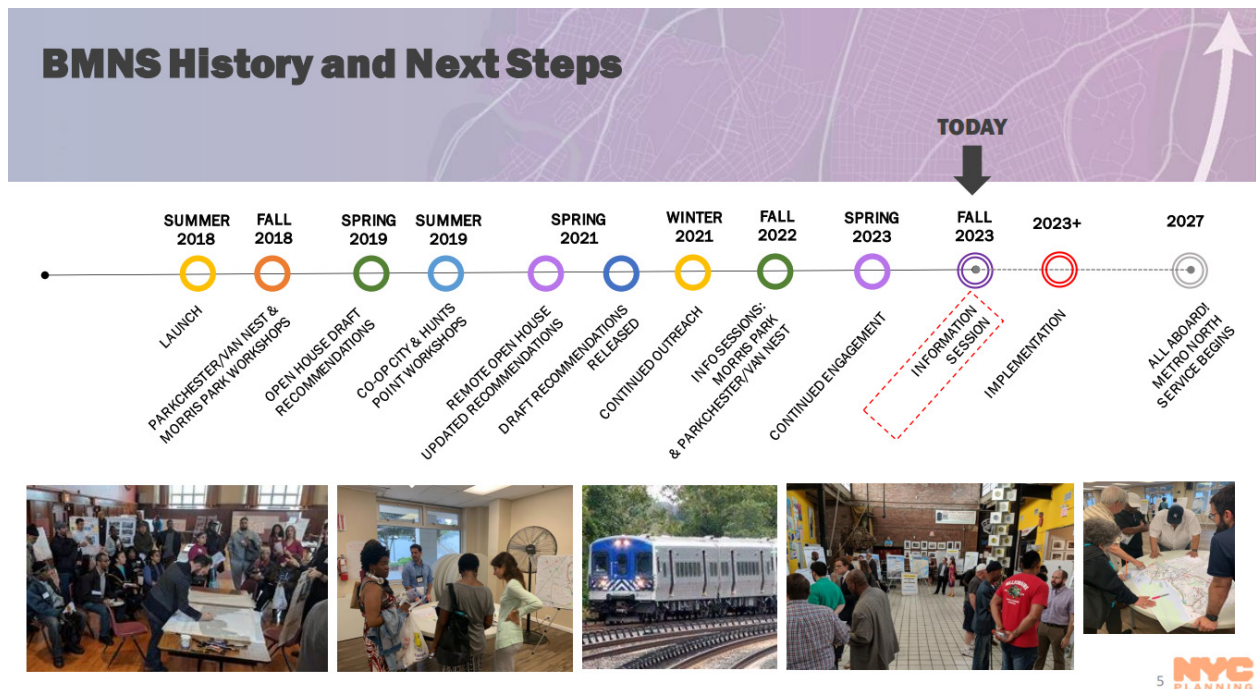


***Thank you to the many people who participated in these events, committing their valuable time and opinions to inform a better outcome for their communities.***



# Bronx Metro-North Area Study (BMNS) Fall 2023 Engagement

In Fall 2023, Council Members Amanda Farías, Kevin C. Riley, Rafael Salamanca Jr., and Marjorie Velázquez, in partnership with the Bronx Borough President Vanessa L. Gibson., sponsored a series of community engagement workshops alongside agency partners to ensure Bronxites are able to speak directly to their elected officials while these planning efforts move forward and prior to public review. There were five total events with one virtual information session and four in-person public workshops, with one public workshop located near each of the four new stations. These workshops were held throughout September and October 2023.



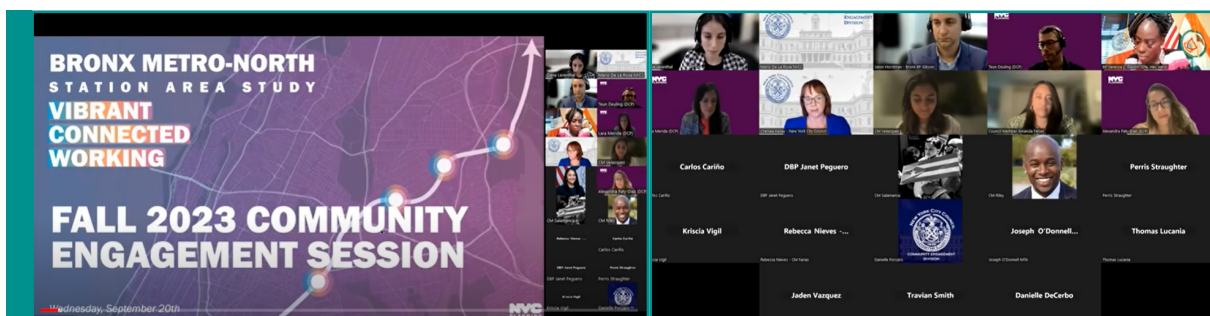
New York City Department of City Planning, October 2023

The following is a summary of community feedback which includes the most frequent comments and recommendations from workshop participants. Although the summary does not reflect each and every point raised during workshop discussions, a fully comprehensive report of all comments, questions, and recommendations was compiled for each of the elected officials.

## September 20, 2023 - Virtual Information Session

### 124 attendees

A virtual information session was held on Zoom on September 20, 2023. This information session was moderated by Chelsea Kelley, Deputy Director of the Planning and Land Use Division at the New York City Council, and featured a presentation by Teun Deuling, Senior Planner at DCP, as well as responses to frequently asked questions from Council Members Farías, Riley, Salamanca, and Velazquez, Bronx Borough President Vanessa L. Gibson, Deputy Borough President Janet Peguero, Joe O'Donnell (Director of Public Affairs at MTA Construction & Development), Alexandra Paty-Diaz (Deputy Director at DCP Bronx Office), and Lara Merida (Senior Director of Community Planning and Civic Engagement at DCP). A recording of the virtual info session can be found on the New York City Council YouTube channel.



## October 3, 2023 - Community Visioning Workshop: Parkchester / Van Nest

**Location: P.S. 106 Parkchester Elementary School at 1514 Olmstead Avenue**

### 76 attendees

#### Recommendations and Concerns from Participants:

- East Tremont Avenue needs more streetlights, trees, street benches, and open spaces.
- The north side of East Tremont Avenue currently does not have sidewalks and is lined with overgrown weeds, leaving only the south side of the corridor accessible for pedestrians.
- A desire for bike share stations along White Plains Road, East Tremont Avenue, and at the upcoming Metro-North station entrance.
- More public facilities, such as a recreation center, youth programs, and community gathering spaces.
- Important to maximize affordability, while still balancing building heights with the existing neighborhood context, and a preferred a mix of 40% and 30% AMI units.



## October 16, 2023 – Community Visioning Workshop: Hunts Point

**Location: The Point Community Development Corp at 940 Garrison Avenue**

**29 attendees**

### **Recommendations and Concerns from Participants:**

- Concerns about crossing Bruckner Blvd – it's dangerous for pedestrians due to heavy vehicular traffic.
- The area around the new station is badly in need of more trash cans and streetlights. This area has a unique need for additional streetlighting due to shadows from elevated expressways. The top requested locations for additional streetlights are underneath the Sheridan Expressway, along Lafayette Ave, and along Seneca Avenue.
- A need for more pedestrian crosswalks across Bruckner Boulevard.
- Flooding is the biggest challenge during and after extreme weather events.



## October 18, 2023 – Community Visioning Workshop: Co-Op City

**Location: Section 5 Community Center at 135 Einstein Loop**

**189 attendees**

### **Recommendations and Concerns from Participants:**

- Need for the narrow streets such as DeReimer Avenue, Erskine Place, and Palmer Avenue to be widened to accommodate increased traffic from the upcoming Metro-North station.
- Need for increased infrastructure dedicated to parking.
- Traffic congestion is a major obstacle to getting around the Bronx, especially along the I-95 Bruckner Expressway, and specifically the access to Ramp C plays a vital role in reducing commute times.
- Need for more public transportation connections to Pelham Bay.
- Desire for improved bus service.
- Increase frequency of Bx23 arrivals.
- Restore Bx29 bus service to Co-Op City.
- Traffic lights should replace stop signs along Stillwell Avenue, Erskine Place, DeReimer Avenue, and Boller Avenue.



## October 26, 2023 – Community Visioning Workshop: Morris Park Workshop

**Location: The Lubin Center at Montefiore Einstein School of Medicine**

**27 attendees**

### Recommendations and Concerns from Participants:

- Traffic congestion is a major issue.
- Desire for more parking infrastructure.
- More options for micro-mobility alternatives, including increased e-scooter and bike share service.
- Desire for bike lanes along Morris Park Avenue, Pelham Parkway, Williamsbridge Avenue, and Eastchester Roads.
- More traffic safety measures such as speed cameras and speed bumps are necessary to discourage drag-racing along Seminole Avenue.
- Locations that would benefit from more streetlighting include Pelham Parkway near the 5 train station entrance, Westchester Road, and Narragansett Avenue.
- More schools and adequate playgrounds for children are needed.
- Participants expressed a desire for height limits on new developments and preferred a mix of 60% and 70% AMI units.



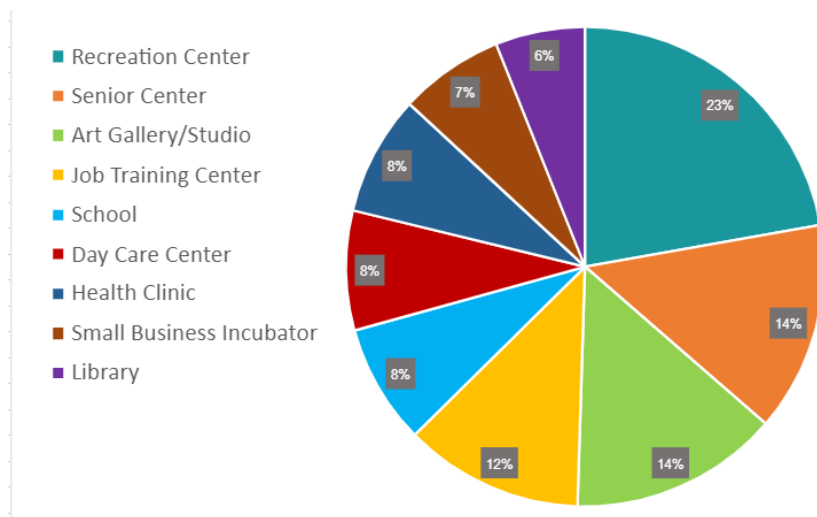
# Survey Results: All Responses

In addition to the public events, there was a survey that ran for 6 weeks, from **October 3** to **November 15**. Here are the results of the survey.

## ► All Responses: 174 Total Survey Responses

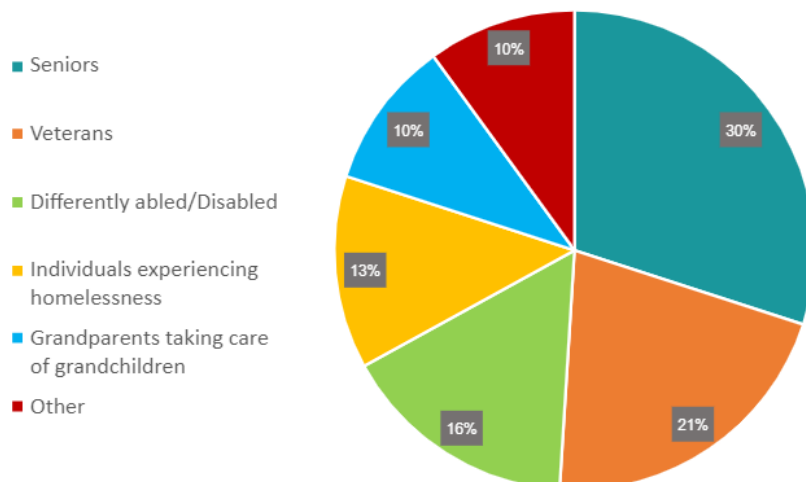
- **The top community facilities that East Bronx residents want to see in their neighborhoods:**

1. Recreation center (23%)
2. Art gallery/studio/performance space (14%)
3. Senior center (14%)



- **The top responses for what groups affordable housing should be set aside for:**

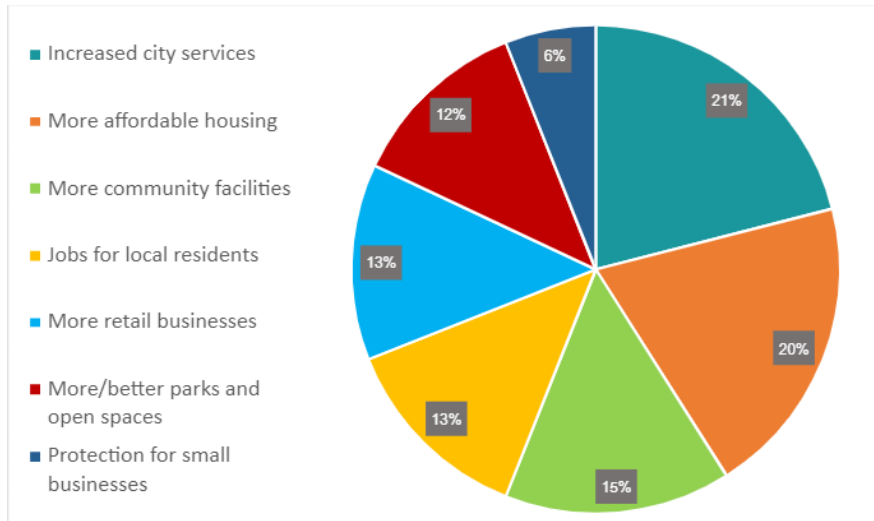
1. Seniors (30%)
2. Veterans (21%)
3. Differently abled/Disabled (16%)





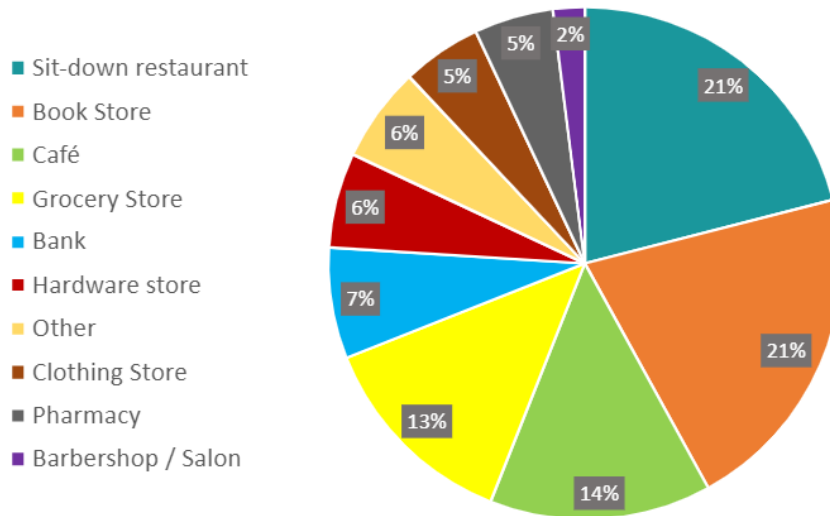
- **Respondents indicated that their top community benefits are:**

1. Increased city services (21%)
2. More affordable housing (20%)
3. More community facilities (15%)



- **The top types of retail that East Bronx residents want to see in their neighborhoods:**

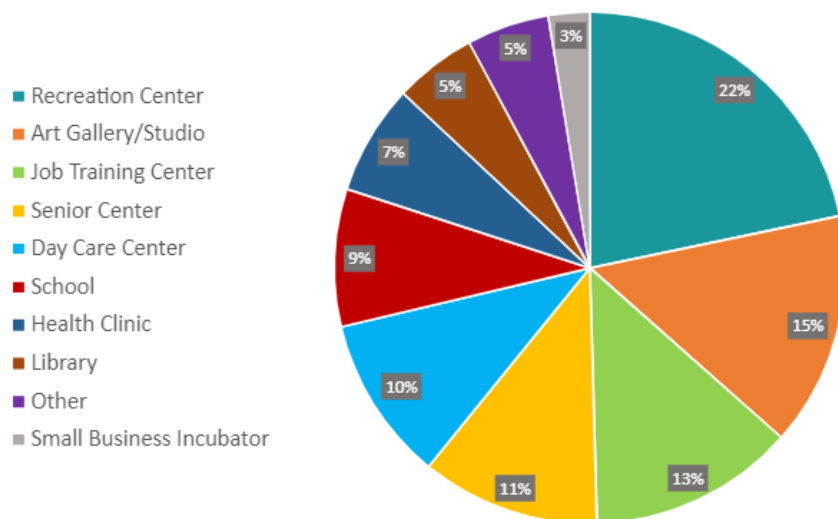
1. Sit-down restaurants (21%)
2. Bookstores (21%)
3. Cafes (14%)



## Survey Results: Parkchester/Van Nest: 62 Responses

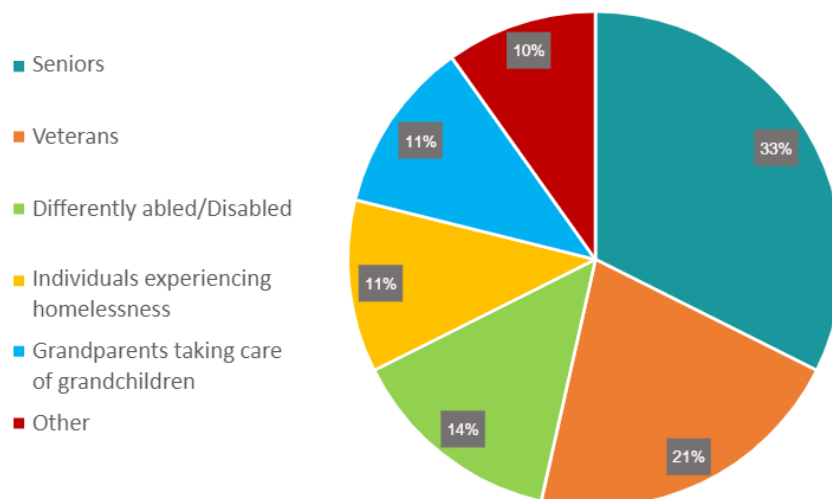
- **The top community facilities that residents near the Parkchester/Van Nest Station want to see in their neighborhoods:**

1. Recreation center (22%)
2. Art gallery/studio/performance space (15%)
3. Job training center (13%)



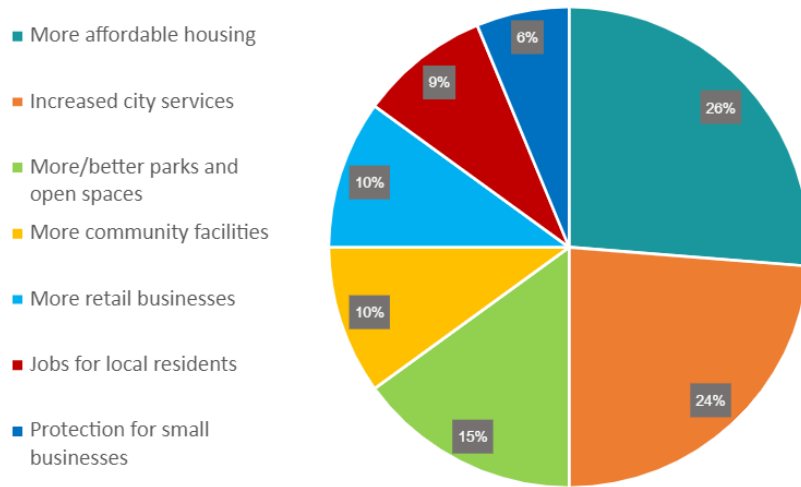
- **The top responses for what groups affordable housing should be set aside for:**

1. Seniors (33%)
2. Veterans (21%)
3. Differently abled/Disabled (14%)



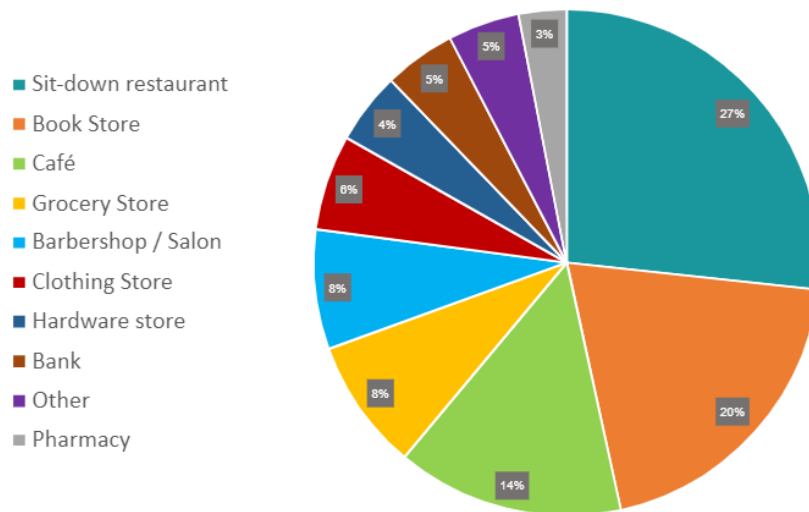
• **Respondents indicated that their top community benefits are:**

1. More affordable housing (26%)
2. Increased city services (24%)
3. More/better parks and open space (15%)



• **The top types of retail that residents want to see in their neighborhoods:**

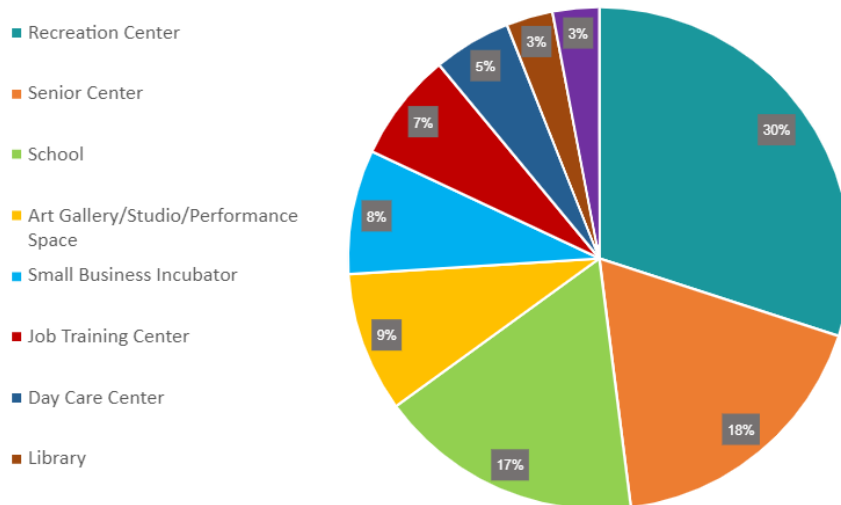
1. Sit-down restaurants (27%)
2. Book stores (20%)
3. Cafes (14%)



# Survey Results: Morris Park: 39 Responses

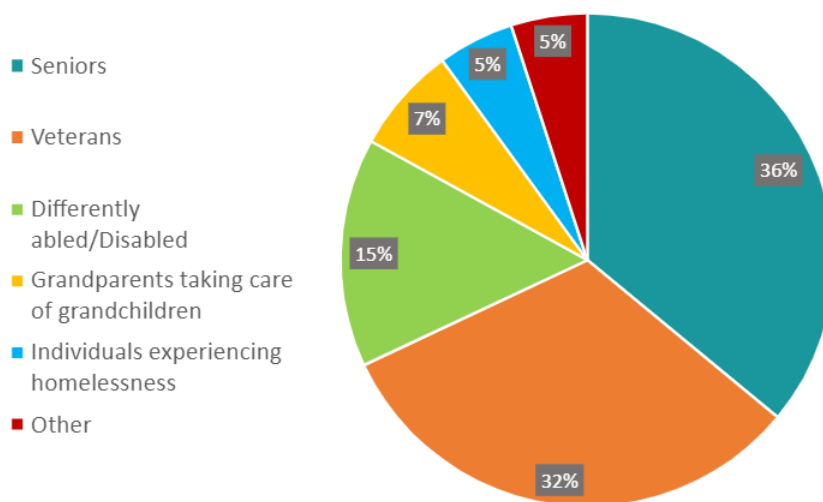
- **The top community facilities that residents near the Morris Park Station want to see in their neighborhoods:**

1. Recreation center (30%)
2. Senior center (18%)
3. School (17%)



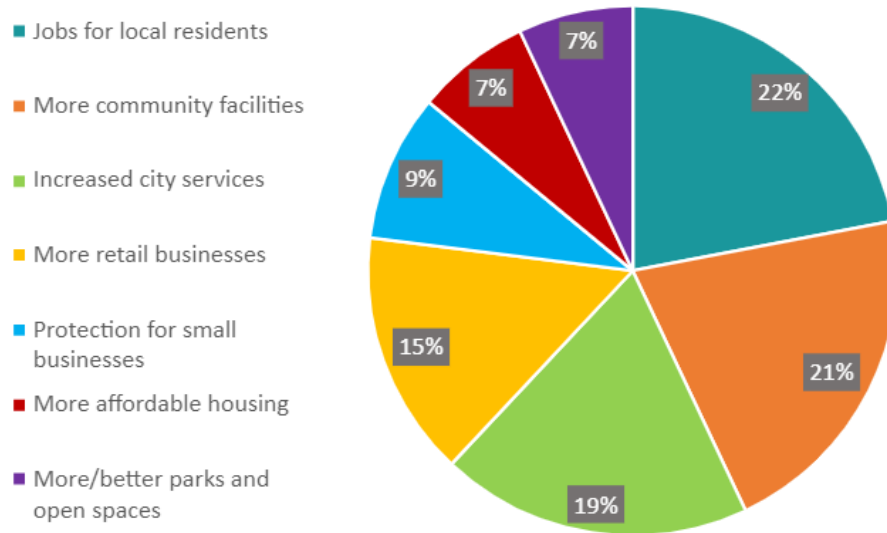
- **The top responses for what groups affordable housing should be set aside for:**

1. Seniors (36%)
2. Veterans (32%)
3. Differently abled/Disabled (15%)



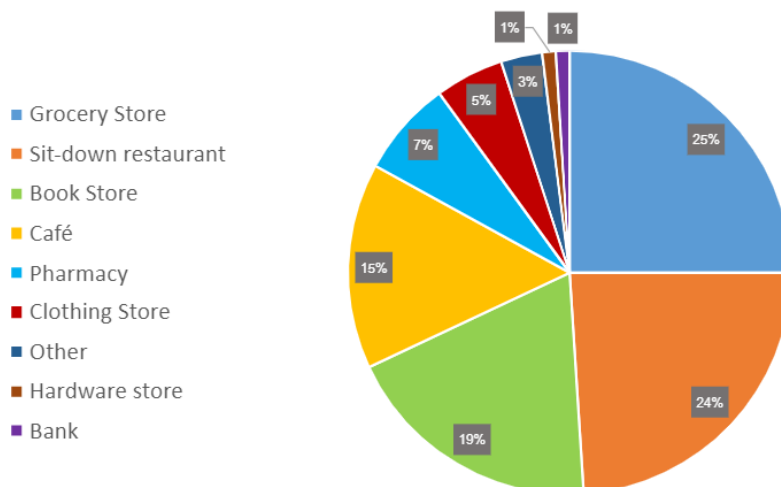
• Respondents indicated that their top community benefits are:

1. Jobs for local residents (22%)
2. More community facilities (21%)
3. Increased city services (19%)



• The top types of retail that residents want to see in their neighborhoods:

1. Grocery stores (25%)
2. Sit-down restaurants (24%)
3. Bookstores (19%)

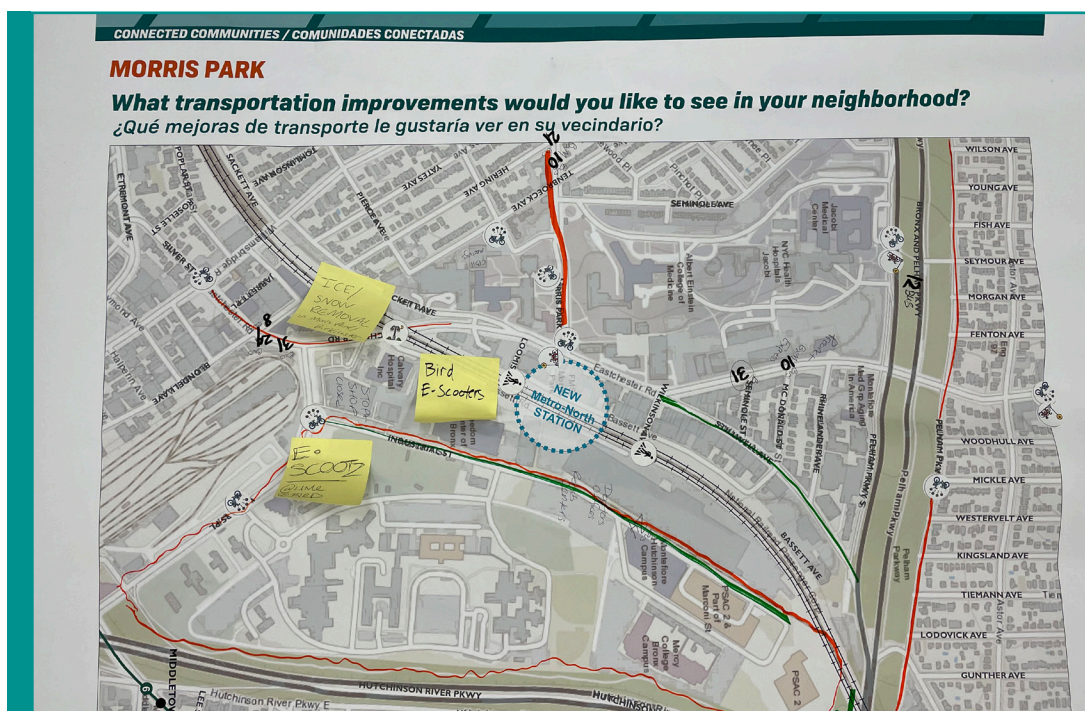


## Summary of Workshop Activities

To ensure the workshops were as inclusive as possible, all activities were available in both English and Spanish. Language translation services were available upon request when registering for the workshops. Bangla interpreters were available for the Parkchester/Van Nest workshop.

### ► Transportation and Open Space Mapping Activity

For this activity, the station area map was used to help attendees orient themselves around the upcoming station location. Attendees were prompted to discuss transportation, streetscape, public safety, and open space improvements that complement the upcoming Metro-North service. People placed their feedback on the maps based on the location of where the improvements were being recommended by using post-it notes and stickers that represented improvements and streetscape amenities such as trashcans, crosswalks, streetlights, bike lanes, and more. This activity included facilitators to guide small group discussions.

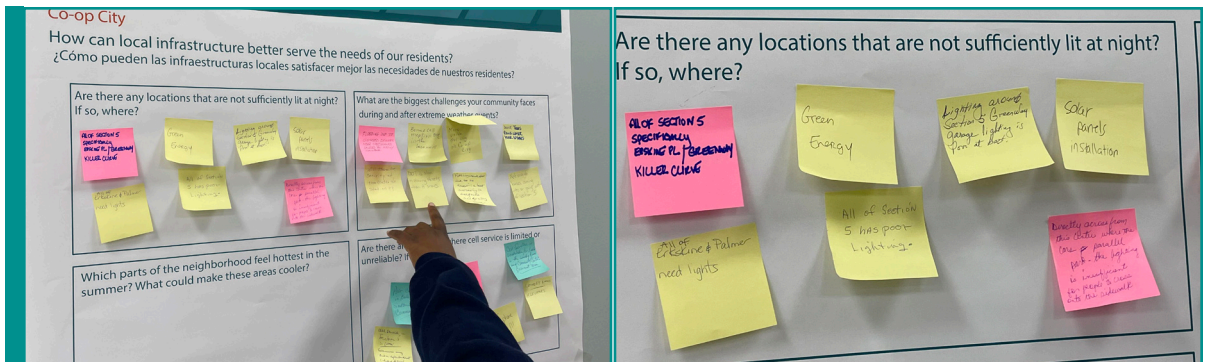


### ► Infrastructure and Community Facilities Activity

This activity included poster boards with the following questions prompts listed below. Attendees responded on sticky notes with their feedback.

- Are there any locations that are not sufficiently lit at night? If so, where?
- What are the biggest challenges your community faces during and after extreme weather events?

- Which parts of the neighborhood feel the hottest in the summer? What could make these areas cooler?
- Are there any locations where cell service is limited or unreliable? If so, where?
- Are there any locations where the sidewalk is in poor condition or is not ADA accessible (i.e. in need of curb cuts, pedestrian ramps, pedestrian islands, accessible pedestrian signals, etc.)? Can you identify specific areas in need of improvement?
- How can public facilities better serve the needs of residents (schools, libraries, day care services, police, and fire services)?



► Affordable Housing Activity

This exercise was available at the Parkchester/Van Nest and prompted participants to consider the trade-offs involved in developing affordable housing by “building” a development using sticky notes that represent varying levels of affordability, while other sticky notes represented market-rate units.

Participants were asked to choose the mix of units that best reflect their preferences regarding rent levels and affordability.



**TRADE-OFFS: AFFORDABILITY, HEIGHT + DENSITY**  
Privately-Owned Land in Morris Park

On privately-owned land, market rate units must be built in order to build affordable units without additional subsidy.

**MARKET RATE UNIT**  
Each post-it represents 3 building stories, and 15 units  
The AMIs (Area Median Incomes) are rounded off and for a family of three  
Monthly rents are based off of two-bedrooms

<b>80% AMI UNIT</b> \$2,542 monthly rent \$30,504 annual income	<b>60% AMI UNIT</b> \$1,908 monthly rent \$22,896 annual income	<b>40% AMI UNIT</b> \$1,272 monthly rent \$15,264 annual income	<b>30% AMI UNIT</b> \$953 monthly rent \$11,436 annual income
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Income Averages grouped roughly by census ACS Census 2017-2021 5 year estimates data proxy

**1st CHOICE BUILDING**      **2nd CHOICE BUILDING**      **DREAM BUILDING**

**STEP 1:**

- Use post-it notes to “build” a building in these rectangles.
- Choose the mix that best reflects your preferences regarding rent levels/affordability.
- Follow the rules marked on each post-it to the left of this worksheet.
- You do not have to build up to the maximum height.

**STEP 2:**

- Forget the rules in STEP 1 and use whatever combination of post-its you think is the best fit for the neighborhood.
- Remember to think about height!

Approximate Average Incomes\* CBS 9,10,11

- 34% @ 30% AMI or below
- 12% @ 30-40% AMI
- 17% @ 40-50% AMI
- 12% @ 60-80% AMI
- 25% @ 80% AMI or above

**PARKCHESTER BUILDING:** 8-13 Stories

**ELEVATOR BUILDING:** 4-8 Stories

**WALK UP BUILDING:** 3-4 stories

### ► Survey

The Bronx Metro-North Study Questionnaire was available both in print and online. Each workshop included a station for participants to complete and submit their survey. The survey topics encompassed public art, supermarket access, community facilities, housing, transportation, retail market, and commuting experience.

### ► Video Booth

For this activity, participants were prompted with the question “what do you want the future of your community to look like?” and responses were filmed and compiled into a short video. Please visit [council.nyc.gov/land-use](https://council.nyc.gov/land-use) and click on the Bronx Metro North Area Study page to hear participants share their vision for their communities. This video can also be found on the New York City Council YouTube channel.



### **Acknowledgements**

Thank you to everyone who had a role in making these events happen:

City Council’s Planning and Land Use Division  
 City Council’s Community Engagement Division  
 Office of The Bronx Borough President Vanessa L. Gibson  
 Office of Council Member Amanda Farías  
 Office of Council Member Kevin C. Riley  
 Office of Council Member Marjorie Velázquez  
 Office of Council Member Rafael Salamanca Jr.  
 Department of City Planning  
 Metropolitan Transportation Authority  
 Youth Ministries for Peace and Justice  
 SAPNA NYC

...and a special Thank You to everyone who participated!