

Plan

QueensWay

For more information on the QueensWay Plan, visit www.thequeensway.org

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QueensWay: Its Origins

For more than 50 years, the old Rockaway Beach Branch Line has lain abandoned. During this time, trees have sprouted and matured along the former right-of-way, creating a dense canopy and a diverse habitat for birds and other wildlife. With little management and care, illegal dumping has become an increasing problem. Trash and remnants of drug and alcohol use litter the ground. Degraded soil and invasive vegetation of railway embankments allow stormwater to flood adjacent homes and backyards.

Many people are unaware of this hidden stretch of trees and dense undergrowth intermingling with the old rails, with viaduct bridges at road crossings providing the rare clue to the 3.5-mile path stretching from Rego Park to Ozone Park. However, over the last 10 years many residents have begun to view this land as a potential new amenity for the people of Queens, in particular for the adjacent neighborhoods of Forest Hills, Rego Park, Glendale, Woodhaven, Richmond Hill, and Ozone Park. By 2011, an advocacy group called Friends of the QueensWay was formed to advance the conversion of the land into a 21st-century linear park for the borough and the City.

The QueensWay Plan

Friends of the QueensWay has allied itself with The Trust for Public Land, a national not-for-profit dedicated to preserving open space and creating parks for people, particularly in and around cities. With funding from the State of New York, The Trust for Public Land has commissioned the QueensWay Plan to assess the challenges and opportunities associated with the conversion of this land into a new public park. WXY and DLANDstudio were hired to lead an interdisciplinary team to analyze the economic, social, environmental, engineering, and transportation dynamics of the site and surrounding area. The team worked closely with local communities to solicit a broad range of input to inform the development of the vision for the QueensWay.

QueensWay Vision

The vision for the QueensWay grew out of five large public meetings, 30 workshops and meetings with community groups, and hundreds of stakeholder discussions. The ideas arising from these sessions as well as the analysis of the site, helped establish the following ambitious yet attainable goals for what the Queensway could be:

- A new kind of neighborhood park that will safely link to and enhance Forest Park
- A showcase for Queens through cultural events and opportunities for local businesses
- A way to connect children with nature and create much-needed new play spaces
- A path to Vision Zero, with safe walking and biking routes to schools, stores, and work
- New open space for neighborhoods that don't have enough parks
- Restoration of healthy, productive ecological systems



The QueensWay Plan is funded by the State of NY Office of Parks, Recreation & Historic Preservation and The Governor's Regional Economic Development Council and Citi Foundation, the Tiger Baron Foundation, the Booth Ferris Foundation, and the Scherman Foundation.

This brochure is focused on six themes that explain the vision for the QueensWay. The maps and drawings on the flip side of the brochure highlight where the QueensWay is located within the borough; what is adjacent to the QueensWay, such as the neighborhoods, subway stops, and restaurants; and what will be the key activity areas within the QueensWay.

Frequently Asked Questions

Who presently owns the QueensWay site?

The QueensWay site is owned by the City of New York. Of the 47 acres planned for reuse as a park, 40 acres are managed by the Department of Citywide Administrative Services (DCAS) and seven acres are dedicated parkland held by NYC Department of Parks & Recreation.

How would this site become parkland?

To implement the QueensWay, the City can transfer all of the land to the purview of NYC Parks & Recreation. This transfer will not require a ULURP (the formal land use review process) since the land is already under City ownership.

How would the QueensWay affect real estate values in the area?

Linear parks across the US and internationally have been shown to increase property values for adjacent homes. The consultant team estimates that home values adjacent to the QueensWay would increase by a 5-7 percent premium over the first six years (the length of a typical market cycle) after the park opens.

How much would the QueensWay cost to build?

This study included a careful structural and engineering assessment, which judged the structure to be generally sound. In addition, the City of New York conducted an initial Phase 1 environmental assessment that did not raise significant concerns about major remediation costs. The cost estimate for constructing the QueensWay, including contingencies and design costs, are approximately \$120 million. This cost includes adding comfort facilities in Forest Park and other QueensWay locations.

Should the QueensWay be reactivated as a rail line?

The concept of reactivating the QueensWay as a rail line—as was the case prior to 1962—is not being considered in this study. Both the MTA and the Port Authority have previously studied rail reactivation and concluded that it is not feasible due to cost, low ridership projections, environmental concerns, and opposition from directly adjacent communities. In addition, rail reactivation would require procuring and replacing seven acres of parkland where the corridor passes through Forest Park, a process requiring an act of the State Legislature. Furthermore, the anticipated development of Special Bus Service from the Rockaways along Woodhaven Boulevard to Queens Boulevard and the Woodside LIRR station will go a long way in addressing transportation needs in the Rockaways and Central Queens.

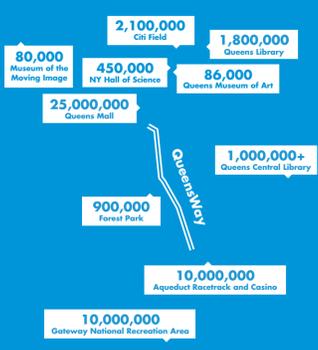
Connections to Queens-wide Destinations

The QueensWay is a connector. At its heart is Forest Park – Queens' third-largest park. To its south lies Gateway National Recreation Area and the Jamaica Bay Greenway, and to its north Flushing Meadows-Corona Park – two large regional parks that are a short on-street bike connection away. At present, about 70 percent of Forest Park's more than 900,000 visitors arrive by car, partially due to the dangers of walking and bicycling across major thoroughfares to reach the park.

Many of Queens' commercial corridors intersect or adjoin the QueensWay – Austin Street, Metropolitan Avenue, Myrtle Avenue, Jamaica Avenue, Atlantic Avenue, 101st Avenue, Liberty Avenue, and Rockaway Boulevard – and there are several major Queens destinations nearby. Seven subway lines are within walking distance of the QueensWay from three major street corridors, including the express F and E trains on Queens Boulevard.

Furthermore, there are 12 schools within a five-minute walk and two Little League field complexes directly adjoining the QueensWay. Many of these places are currently difficult to get to without using a car or navigating dangerous roads

Annual Visitors



Connections + Neighborhoods

A Small Number of Acres Reaches a Lot of People with Linear Parks



322,000 people live within a mile of the QueensWay.

368,000 people live within a mile of Prospect Park.

436,000 people live within a mile of Flushing Meadows Corona Park.

by bike or on foot. The QueensWay will bolster the City's new Vision Zero Program by providing an alternative for bikers, walkers, and runners to Woodhaven Boulevard, New York City's second-deadliest street.

QueensWay Neighborhoods

In addition to being a connector, the QueensWay can be a gateway and introduction to the borough's diverse communities. Central and Southern Queens are among the most culturally diverse areas in the world.

The New York City Department of City Planning statistics show that two of the three Community Boards surrounding the QueensWay (Community Boards 9 and 10) are the most diverse in all of New York City (NYU's Furman Center).

The QueensWay will provide recreational activities for these communities and will offer opportunities for the borough's cultural diversity to be experienced beyond these intimate neighborhoods.



The QueensWay will have exercise stations at key activity areas. There is an opportunity to have elevated multi-use courts and event space at the park's southern end.

Play + Health

Recreation for All Ages

The QueensWay connects two Little Leagues – Forest Hills and Glendale – along its length, providing an opportunity to create the "QueensWay Series." Four schools that are right next to the park can use the QueensWay as an outdoor classroom and recreation area. Play spaces, proposed at several locations along the QueensWay, include adventure playgrounds and tot lots that use natural materials as sculptural elements for climbing and swinging. In addition to walking and biking paths, there will be adult exercise stations at key locations. The Elevated Zone will have spaces for skateboarding, basketball, bocce, chess and game tables for all ages.

Year-Round Activities

The QueensWay will be a park for all seasons. Cross country skiing, snowshoeing, and sledding will be possible during the winter months. Plantings for all seasons are proposed to provide splendid colors every month of the year. Recreational programs will be developed in partnership with local senior centers, youth organizations, and other community groups.

Health Impacts

While Central Queens has Forest Park, the neighborhoods to the south – particularly Richmond Hill and Ozone Park – lack accessible open space. Increased access to park space and new recreation resources on the QueensWay will encourage healthy lifestyles. The National Institute of Health found that people who live within one mile of a park are four times more likely to visit the park once a week or more, and they have an average of 38 percent more exercise sessions per week than those living further away. In addition, the increase in people travelling to Forest Park and other destinations by bike and foot will reduce car usage and have a beneficial impact on air quality.

Park Space per 1000 People

2.50 acres NYC Department of City Planning benchmark	0.21 acres QueensWay's southern neighborhoods
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Learning Landscapes

The QueensWay will transform an inaccessible, trash-strewn site into an arboretum-like setting and active learning environment. Outdoor classroom spaces, group walking tours, and interpretive signage will create a range of educational opportunities for students, local residents, and visitors. Teaching environments with restored native plantings and seasonal variety, clearly labeled to make information accessible, will be placed near schools.

Walking along the QueensWay to Forest Park, visitors will encounter a variety of environments and learn about plants, geology, stormwater management, and natural habitats for urban wildlife. Sand, rocks, and boulders deposited across the site are remnants of glacial paths as they rolled across Central Queens, creating the ridge line

There are **12** schools within a **5** minute walk of the QueensWay.



The northernmost section of the QueensWay will provide a woodland playground and paths as well as bioswales and a diverse habitat to help manage the stormwater in the surrounding area and on the nearby Little League fields.

A Cultural Greenway

The QueensWay can be a greenway unlike any other in the world by tapping into the borough's rich traditions and cultures.

QueensWay Cuisine

The corridors that cross the QueensWay are destinations for local food, activities, and daily necessities. When the QueensWay is completed you will be able to ride a bike from Liberty Avenue, starting out with a roti at Trini Delite; bike to Jamaica Avenue for pollo a la brasa at El Anzuelo Fino; stop at the proposed Glendale ballfields concession area for food truck treats; check out Wafa's on Metropolitan for shawarma; and roll up Austin Street to Pahal Zan for falafels.

Working with the Queens Chamber of Commerce, the QueensWay can host seasonal food festivals that will draw people to experience the borough's cuisines, with special priority provided to neighborhood entrepreneurs. Key spaces along the QueensWay can have food stalls, with adjacent areas such as the Metropolitan Expeditionary Learning School's parking lot used as food festival venues

that runs through Forest Park. Plant varieties reflect not only restored native habitats, but also "hitchhiker" and invasive species along the corridor. Myriad songs and flashes of colorful feathers reveal the many bird species that travel along the Atlantic Flyway every year through the site. Strategic placement and addition of diverse native plantings will attract an even greater diversity of birds and butterflies and enrich the overall ecosystem.

Green Infrastructure Strategies

The QueensWay can become a green infrastructure showcase for the borough and a resource for meeting the City's stormwater management goals. By capturing runoff through bioswales and rain gardens, the QueensWay will reduce flooding into adjacent homes, backyards, and Little League fields. Green infrastructure strategies such as micro-swales and strategic plant placement will provide water to the plantings on site to help them thrive.

In many areas, unstable embankments will be reinforced with engineered soils to reduce erosion and provide healthy plant habitat. Pruning and removal of selected trees combined with removal of non-native and invasive vegetation will make the landscape healthier.

Culture + Economic Development



The QueensWay offers many opportunities for community events. Here is a possible food festival along Jamaica Avenue beneath the QueensWay.

Commercial Opportunities for Businesses

when school is not in session. Culinary events and spaces will serve as a tasting menu of the borough's restaurants, encouraging visitors to dine at these restaurants on return trips.

Commercial Opportunities for Businesses

Visitors to the QueensWay will bring new business to restaurants and small shops in the adjoining neighborhoods. Partnerships and strong physical connections to commercial corridors will draw attention to local businesses.

Flexible Platforms for Arts and Events

The gathering spaces on the QueensWay, particularly in the Elevated Zone on the viaduct and within the Forest Park Grove, will offer platforms for performances and public art. In addition, there is an opportunity for adaptive reuse of underutilized buildings, such as the LIRR substation on Atlantic Avenue. New public art will add color, interest, and vitality to the park.

Reuse of Railroad Infrastructures

The industrial structures of the old rail line, including trestles, bridges, and railway towers, will be restored and accentuated through dynamic lighting. These elements will inspire the materials and construction methods for the QueensWay and will make the park a landmark in the borough.

Visitor Economic Impacts

1,000,000 Annual visitors projected

\$7 – \$21 Spending per visit by non-neighborhood visitors

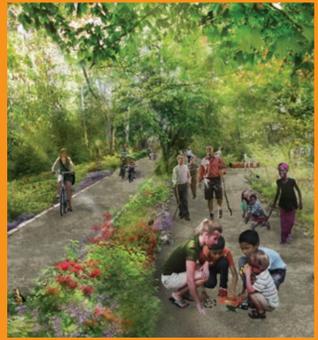
Meeting the Needs of Users

The QueensWay will provide for the needs of all ages and abilities, including several ramped entries, comfort stations at the four main activity areas, and benches along the QueensWay for resting points. In addition, the QueensWay path will be carefully designed to avoid conflicts between walkers and cyclists. This approach will include a number of long stretches where the path will separate for the two modes of movement.

Privacy for Adjacent Homes

The QueensWay is designed to maximize safety and privacy for neighbors while also providing good visibility for park users.

- Activity spaces are located away from adjacent homes and sited near existing non-residential amenities and highly-used public thoroughfares.
- Pathways that run by homes are designed with vegetated buffers at the top of the embankment as well as secure fencing at the property line to physically and visually separate backyards and homes from visitors.
- Where the QueensWay embankment is near private



Separated trails provide cyclists and pedestrians with their own paths so everyone can enjoy the park safely.

Safety + Comfort

homes, the pathway can be lowered by excavating the embankment, decreasing any visual connection between the QueensWay users and adjacent homes.

Buffers Between QueensWay Path and Homes



Other Security Measures

- To ensure safety and security for neighbors and park users, the QueensWay will have gates at all entrances. The park will close at dusk except during winter months, when it will remain open slightly later

to accommodate commuters.

- NYC Parks "Police Enforcement Patrol" (PEP) officers will be hired to patrol on bicycles. PEP Officers are empowered to issue summonses and make arrests, and coordinate closely with local police.
- Video cameras can be installed. Specific locations for security cameras and monitoring protocols will be determined at the final design phase for each QueensWay section.

Lighting Strategies

Lighting strategies will be developed to minimize light pollution for neighbors while focusing light along pathways for the safety of park users. Lighting at activity spaces will be designed to ensure wide visibility across the park, and the viaduct section may employ additional lighting to allow for evening hours. The rail line trestles will be illuminated along the length of the park. In the areas without activities, lighting will be lower in height and more focused on pathways. Lighting at entrances will be positioned and designed to draw visitors to the QueensWay.

Care + Stewardship



The QueensWay will have an organizational structure, such as a conservancy, to run programs and to help maintain the park.

Next Steps and Implementation

The park implementation will take several years. City, State, and Federal elected officials, Community Boards, City agencies, the Queens Borough President's Office, and the Mayor's Office will consider the findings of the feasibility study and the conceptual vision. The community will be engaged through a continued public input process to ensure the park and design meet local needs.

Phasing

The construction of the QueensWay will be phased based on the local conditions and funding streams.

Governance and Maintenance/Operations

The QueensWay can be a City-owned and managed park, under the governance of the Department of Parks & Recreation (DPR), pending further discussions with the agency. Capital improvements and daily operations

and maintenance will be managed by DPR. A new QueensWay Conservancy (with support from Friends of the QueensWay and The Trust for Public Land) will be established to manage programming and outreach for park events and philanthropic fundraising. Opportunities for on-site revenue generation include food concessions, bike rentals, event space rental, and overpass advertising.

How to Get Involved

You may find ways to get involved with the QueensWay by visiting us at: www.thequeensway.org

You may also visit us and follow us through social media:

- Search @Friends of the QueensWay www.facebook.com/TheQueensWay
- Search @TheQueensWay www.twitter.com/TheQueensWay

All images were created by WXY and DLANDstudio.



History of the QueensWay Site

The QueensWay travels through the six Central Queens neighborhoods from Burns Street and 63rd Street at the northern end to Liberty Avenue and Rockaway Boulevard at the southern end, with Forest Park at its center. Forest Park was designed at the end of the 19th century when the surrounding area was still mostly farmland and Queens was not yet a borough of New York. In the decades that followed, a series of distinct neighborhoods in Central Queens emerged along the old Rockaway Beach Branch Line. The boom of the 1930s doubled the population of Queens to over one million in less than a decade.

Geological Formations and Dynamic Terrain

During the Ice Age, the Wisconsin Glacier moved across Long Island and created a ridgeline of sand and rock called a terminal moraine. The QueensWay cuts through this hill in Forest Park, creating the feeling of being within a lushly vegetated ravine as the land slopes up to either side of the trail. Fill excavated from the terminal moraine was used to form the embankments in the northern end of the QueensWay. The landscape of Queens is punctuated by glacial fill and rocks carried by glaciers from far-away origins. Farmers used these rocks to define property boundaries in the 17th and 18th centuries. The QueensWay design includes walls and retaining structures inspired by these historic landscape features.

Native Plants and Urban Wildlife

The QueensWay is an overgrown landscape where invasive plants choke out native species in many areas. Removal of noxious vegetation will help revive this ecosystem. The project will also remove unhealthy trees, allowing longer-living trees space to mature in healthy and attractive ways. The understory will be replanted with species that enhance beauty and biodiversity to attract many species of birds and butterflies. The enhanced ecology will become a learning landscape for visitors, the community, and local schools.

Planning the QueensWay: Six Zones

The QueensWay Plan envisions six distinct zones of the park, each with a different character, reflecting the diverse surrounding communities. The North and South Passages (described below) are neighborhood-focused, with quiet pathways to bike and walk through the landscape. With adjacent homes and backyards, these areas are designed to screen the path from homes while also remaining open so that visitors feel safe on the trail. Other zones are more active, with the inclusion of play spaces, exercise equipment, and environmental, educational, and cultural features. These active zones are located near such

neighborhood hubs as existing ballfields, commercial corridors, and schools.

The Clearing (63rd Street and Burns Street to Fleet Street). The Clearing will be adjacent to the existing Little League ballfields and will use the wide area to the north of them for hosting woodland activities and play spaces for children.

North Passage (Fleet Street to Metropolitan Avenue). The North Passage will provide separate paths for biking and walking within a woodland context, including planted and fenced buffers at the edges of the former right-of-way to provide privacy. A gathering space at Yellowstone Boulevard will have a small playground with both ramp and stair access.

Metropolitan Hub (Metropolitan Avenue to Union Turnpike). North of Forest Park, adjacent to a high-use commercial area, the Metropolitan Expeditionary Learning school complex, and the Glendale ballfields, the Metropolitan Hub will offer many active learning and recreational spaces. In partnership with local institutions, there will be outdoor nature classrooms near the school; food concessions, batting cages, and bleachers for the Glendale ballfields; and space for temporary food stalls and a farmers market in or adjacent to the high school complex.

Forest Park Grove (Union Turnpike to Park Lane South). At the center point of the QueensWay within Forest Park, this zone will be a new gateway to both the QueensWay and Forest Park. A pavilion at Victory Field with a health café and an exercise facility connects the QueensWay with existing sports activities. Within the QueensWay, a climbing wall, outdoor exercise equipment, and winding path connections will help revitalize Forest Park.

South Passage (Park Lane South to Atlantic Avenue). Similar to the North Passage, this zone will provide separate paths for biking and walking within a woodland context to allow visitors to move swiftly through this zone, including planted and fenced buffers at the edges of the former right-of-way to provide privacy for adjacent residences. At the Jamaica Avenue overpass, visitors can look out from the bridge and connect to shopping and other street-level activities.

The Elevated (Atlantic Avenue to Rockaway Boulevard and Liberty Avenue). Unlike the other zones, the elevated viaduct has no significant trees growing on it. The openness of the viaduct will allow park users to have vistas across the surrounding buildings and Southern Queens. The zone will offer cultural, educational, and recreational activities, including multi-functional spaces for sports, games, performances, movie screenings, and environmental education uses that highlight sustainable plantings, stormwater capture, and photovoltaic technology. Given its substantial width, this section offers a special opportunity to showcase the diverse cultures, arts, and cuisines of the surrounding neighborhoods.

