VISION FOR STATEN ISLAND

Staten Islanders Building Their Future

VISION for STATEN ISLAND

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VISION FOR STATEN ISLAND

WHAT IS A VISION?

What do Staten Islanders want? What would they like their community to be in ten, 25, or even 50 years? What can Staten Islanders do to improve their lives, and the lives of others in the community? These are important questions without easy answers.

A group of local civic leaders who work in the business, philanthropic, and education sectors formed the Vision for Staten Island to encourage Staten Islanders to gather together and talk to each other about our shared future. For many months, in many rounds of dialogue, Staten Islanders reasoned together about how to improve the community. The staff and board of the Vision for Staten Island wrote down every single idea, and brought together Staten Island experts to talk directly with the public about how some of those ideas might be implemented. The very process of having Staten Islanders sit and talk with each other in community centers, schools, and other public places networked people together. Community improvements and solutions must be built on a strong foundation of citizen networks.

There are many ways to find out what people want, and there are many methods that can be deployed to plan for the future. You can take a poll, interview experts, or find out what other communities are doing well that may be applied here. These are excellent tools, but they do not allow citizens to talk and learn from each other. Nor do these passive approaches promote the citizen engagement and learning that community improvement requires.

The Vision for Staten Island took a different approach. We collected thousands of ideas about how to improve life on Staten Island from over 900 people who live and work in the Borough. We organized the ideas into policy areas, and moderated discussions between experts and the public about the viability of the many ideas that were generated. Finally, we gathered local experts to offer recommendations about how the public's ideas could be translated into real-world action. While these community-planning strategic techniques are commonly used in other parts of the country, they are not often used in the Northeast. However, pieces of the process felt familiar to anyone who has participated in a planning event sponsored by an employer, a not-for-profit organization, or a city agency.

The Vision for Staten Island presents in this report and on its Website each step of the process: the raw ideas, the colloquy between the public and experts, and the recommendations of the experts about how to turn ideas into action. We hope there is something here from which everyone can profit. Some readers might find the recommendations of local experts very compelling and run with them; others might find the raw ideas collected from the public at the initial meetings as a better starting point. We hope the data collected at each point of the process is useful for committed citizen-activists, and that grass-roots "little platoons" across the Borough are influenced, informed, or even inspired by the information presented here.

The Vision for Staten Island's approach was informed by the view that the long process of face-to-face discussion that the Vision employed cultivated a sense of civility and commitment among those who participated in the process. Indeed, many of us who worked on the project were struck by how often those involved in the process expressed the desire to meet again. (In fact, many working groups are meeting to continue the discussion.) The supposition of the Vision for Staten Island is that a transparent and participatory process generates the goodwill and engagement needed to carry out the local expert recommendations that reflect the preferences of the public.

492K VS. 5.8%

Much of what Staten Islanders find challenging about public affairs is tied up in the fact that the Borough is so big, and yet so small.

With 492,000 people (2010 U.S. Census estimate), Staten Island is larger than many major U.S. cities. Portland, Las Vegas, Atlanta, and Sacramento have roughly the same population as Staten Island. This Borough shares with these other cities many urban challenges, yet most places have layers of government representation (a mayor and city council) and a local municipal bureaucracy tailored to conform to local demands for services. Staten Island does not. The second number noted in this section—5.8%—is the source of difficulty. The percentage represents the Staten Island share of the total New York City population of 8.4 million.

Many people with whom we spoke enjoy their "dual citizenship" as Staten Islanders and New Yorkers. And dual citizenship has its advantages. But to the rest of the City and metropolitan area, Staten Island is no more than a big neighborhood in a huge metropolis. It is difficult to get the attention of policymakers in City Hall and the municipal bureaucracy.

In 1898, Staten Islanders voted to join a government, the consolidated City of New York. Visionaries in the metropolis argued that it was the only way that the region could keep up with growing cities in the West, such as Chicago. More pragmatically, Staten Islanders were promised infrastructure upgrades, access to clean water, and new ferry boats. By a five-to-one margin, Staten Islanders voted to join the other urban counties to create the new city—among all the boroughs, Staten Islanders were the biggest boosters of the new government.

Over time, however, the relationship changed. City Hall came to view Staten Island as its big backyard, and assigned to the place its government functions that it wanted to keep out of view—like the City's garbage dumps. Staten Islanders felt that they were not getting good government services in exchange for their tax dollars. Discontent with the City of New York was at its height in the early 1990s, when the Fresh Kills Landfill bulged with garbage. In this same decade, the Borough lost its seat at the government table when the U.S. Supreme Court declared unconstitutional the equal representation of New York's five counties in the City's most important governing body at the time, the Board of Estimate. Many Staten Islanders supported a plan to create an independent city. While that effort failed, over the past two decades, much effort has been devoted to carving out a place for Staten Island, to regain some lost ground.

Many civic groups and local officials have been working to articulate and advance Staten Island's interests. The challenge in a busy metropolis is for the "mega-neighborhoods" of the City of New York, like Staten Island, to generate civic capacity to solve public problems, and improve on Staten Island's many virtues. Planning the future, and generating civic capacity to move from blueprints to real-world results, is tough sledding, but many civic and government organizations have been working hard on these questions, including the Staten Island Chamber of Commerce, the Staten Island Economic Development Corporation, SINY: Staten Island/New York, and the Downtown Staten Island Council, among many other dedicated organizations.

Staten Island has a long tradition of citizen-activists working together to make the community a better place. Some of this work inspired people in other parts of the country. Environmentalists saved open space from highways in the 1960s, preserving the Greenbelt from development. Local citizens and leaders shut down the massive Fresh Kills Landfill in the 1990s. More recently, citizens have rallied in support of improved roadways, protested cuts in Borough transit service, and mobilized to save Pouch Camp from development. A coalition of grassroots groups, elected officials, and institutions on Staten Island have worked to promote tolerance and inclusiveness in the Borough.

On the government side, task forces have examined transportation and development, and City agencies have conducted planning work on the Fresh Kills Landfill site and the West Shore of the Island. Borough Hall and local legislators have sponsored much of this research, often with the support of the local colleges. This list is not meant to be comprehensive, but illustrative of the efforts of local political and civic leaders to attempt to compensate for some of the deficiencies of a vast municipal government that is often at a remove from the daily concerns of its neighborhoods and boroughs because of its enormous size, and its tradition of central control of policy and planning.

The Vision for Staten Island locates itself in this tradition, and its contribution to the debate about the future of the Borough is its method. The Board and staff of the Vision for Staten Island labored to be as inclusive as possible. Its outreach included the participation of over 900 people. The process was open to anyone willing to take the time out to participate. (The Board and staff got the word out to the community through the media and networks of civic organizations.) The Vision sought the views of young people, a full range of residents in Staten Island neighborhoods, and members of historically underrepresented groups. The Board and staff sought out the opinions of over 100 local experts so that they could offer suggestions about bringing the ideas that Staten Islanders raised to reality.

VISION FINDINGS (CENTRAL THEMES)

1. Defining and Defending Staten Island's Unitary Interest

Staten Islanders want a fair share of resources from City Hall and Albany to support government functions, particularly in the fields of health, education, social service, and cultural support. The public suspects, and the experts confirmed, that Staten Island does not get what it needs and deserves. The networks of social service and health care organizations and cultural institutions do not have the resources they need to meet the demands of the clients and patrons they serve. The public would like better analytics and targeted advocacy to help Staten Island's elected officials carry the argument to the municipal and state governments.

2. Deepening Community Engagement

Participants in the process expressed great pride in place. Many said that Staten Island was a "hidden gem" in the metro-politan area. Civic pride can be cultivated from the inside out by improving relationships among residents and neighborhoods in the Borough, and celebrating Staten Island through community events and festivals that bring people together. Improvements in education, and bridge-building among Staten Island's neighborhoods, will only come through deeper forms of engagement. Across almost every policy in the report, the public and experts realized that improvements only come when citizens take ownership of the issues. Civic pride is the residue of community involvement.

3. Youth/Young Adults a Particular Concern

Participants worried about younger Staten Islanders. They are not connecting with the community. (This is a familiar theme. The SIEDC's *SI 2020* report observed that the Borough's young adults are leaving town, and the Social Capital Survey conducted by the Center for the Study of Staten Island at CSI noted young adult disengagement and cynicism were stronger here than in other parts of the country.) Local professionals in the fields of education and social services suggest tightening linkages between schools and the community as a way to combat youth estrangement.

4. The Transformative Possibilities of Education

Staten Islanders value education across many dimensions.

Educating the Public—Improvements in quality of life often come about because of changes in individual behavior. Individual behavior can be changed through public education campaigns: smoking secession and preventative health care; community tolerance; and a spirit of giving to those in need are just some of the issues that are influenced by raising consciousness.

Advancing New Ideas—There are many innovative ideas referenced in the Vision discussion regarding such issues as protecting the environment, managing development, and upgrading the skills of the local workforce.

Supporting Educational Institutions—Schools were viewed as the vital pivot toward improving the community.

5. Reaffirming and Building on Core Commitments

In the discussions, Staten Islanders reaffirmed and recommitted to core values. Among them: Staten Island's small-town feel, the commitment to parks and open space, and the activism of dedicated service providers. Participants often appre-ciated the role that the *Staten Island Advance* plays in knitting the Borough together with local news and opinion. In an increasingly expensive metropolis, the Borough is still a preserve for middle-class life and working families.

Members of the Board and others who staffed Vision for Staten Island events were struck by the positive, constructive tone of almost every one of the conversations. There is real work to be done, but many participants felt they were building off of the legacy of excellent work of previous generations, and the work of many committed people in the present.

6. Recognizing and Supporting the Island's "Umbrella Community-based Organizations"

Both local experts and the public want to build stronger, deeper networks across policy areas, both to increase information exchange and enhance advocacy and outreach efforts. There were calls for more informed analytics, studies, cataloguing, and dissemination of information. The Environment, Parks, and Recreation group called for an inventory and prioritization of open space parcels. Health experts suggested better coordination and information sharing among health care providers. Many local policy experts who gathered to analyze public comments expressed a desire to meet regularly.

Organizations like the Chamber and SIEDC do this sort of work routinely in Economic Development. Organizations developed to support not-for-profit activity, like the Council on the Arts and Humanities for Staten Island (COAHSI) and the Staten Island Not-for-Profit Association need to be supported, and new coalitions are needed to sustain policy coalitions in education, community cooperation, and other fields where coalitional activity across organizations would be useful.

7. Two Huge Issues: Transportation and Governance

Transportation concerns are threaded throughout all of the policy areas. For example, those interested in the parks wanted to see more public transportation to locations in the Borough. The public wants more "walkable town centers" on the Island that are pedestrian friendly. One of the challenges of deepening civic engagement on Staten Island is the fact that long commute times prevent Staten Islanders from attending community meetings after work. Political governance is another major challenge facing Staten Islanders as well. Government is remote in the crowded metropolis. Most communities in the United States that are the size of Staten Island make their own taxing and spending decisions and control decisions about their roads, land, and schools. But Staten Island is part of New York City. The perennial challenge for Staten Island across all of the policies discussed by residents and experts is getting the attention of policymakers in City Hall and Albany to address local problems with ingenuity.

THE DIFFICULT TASK OF SOCIAL CHANGE

There are some new ideas in this report; much of what we heard reaffirmed that the efforts of civic and political leaders are on the right track as well. Change requires deep commitment and resources.

The most fundamental fact derived from the Vision is that Staten Islanders have a desire to continue the conversation and do the work required to make Staten Island a better place to work and live.

VISION FOR STATEN ISLAND

Staten Islanders Building Their Future

Throughout the fall of 2009 and the spring of 2010, groups of topical experts gathered to review the results of the community idea-gathering sessions, and the "reality check" exercises. This third round of review was intended to "refine and enlarge" public comment by taking into account practical considerations related to policymaking.

A typical working group meeting included anywhere from six to 12 experts in a given field, a professional facilitator, a note taker, and a Vision for Staten Island Board member. The groups met for three hours. The experts offered comment on the staff summary of the public's ideas, and also offered strategic directions for the future.

Three issues areas—Government Services, Marketing and Economic Development, and Transportation—were excluded from the third-round review. We have carried over the findings of the second-round "Reality Check" exercise to this section. The Board of the Vision for Staten Island concluded that these issues, while very important to Staten Islanders, were well-covered by previous reports. Also, the challenges of these three foundational issues, as the reader will see, inform most of the others.

ISSUE AREAS

ARTS AND CULTURE

The public's goals are to cultivate grassroots activity, expand institutional resources for the arts, and build a stronger arts community through the development of coalitions on and off of Staten Island.

1. Cultivate Arts at the Grassroots

Participants in the public forums discussed the importance of cultivating a local audience for the arts. Part of this work involves bringing arts education to the schools and using social networking technology, such as Facebook and Twitter, to get the word out about cultural happenings. Teachers are important transmitters of information about the arts in the community. An interactive Website and strategically placed kiosks could do some of this work as well. Some of the more exciting events in the arts are taking place in the North Shore communities; creation of a cultural district in St. George and Stapleton would also serve an important economic development function.

▶ *Local Experts Suggest*

Technology is important, but it is not the most important element. An old-fashioned kiosk inspired by an innovative local artist is better than a high-tech version. More research is needed regarding the kiosk idea. Using the Ferry Terminal space to support the arts is very difficult because of the limitations that the NYC Department of Transportation imposes on the space.

Get restaurants involved in the arts with shows and party rooms for performances. Appeal to the restaurant associations and the economic development organizations to support meaningful arts in the community effort: dinner packages, contests, use of free space for struggling artists.

2. Provide More Resources for the Arts

Artists need space to create, perform, and live. Participants suggested various ideas including a new, consolidated cultural center to attract international artists in residence; the renovation of vacant apartments in St. George reserved for artists; and the development of a new school for the arts. The arts on Staten Island need better marketing and branding. The Council on the Arts and Humanities for Staten Island's (COAHSI) work should be more visible. Island economic development organizations need to put the arts on equal footing with other business sectors.

Staten Islanders said that the Borough can and should build on its strong and unique base of cultural institutions. Staten Island's proximity to Manhattan is an advantage. Efforts should be devoted to making the experience of attending an arts event as pleasant as possible. To that end, good information and parking options reduce the frustrations of patrons. Marketing of the arts deserves more attention. A famous spokesperson or the appointment of a poet laureate would bring notice. Excursion packages and dining out packages should be promoted.

▶ *Local Experts Suggest*

A package of programs and approaches is needed to cultivate an arts community on Staten Island. Government programs should encourage landlords to sign long-term (ten-year) leases with artists. Small businesses like bars and restaurants sustain arts neighborhoods like Williamsburg with space to perform. Artists in Stapleton and St. George need venues to provide more rehearsal and performance space. A lively street life is needed to create a hive of activity in Stapleton/St. George, including late-night restaurants. A safe and authentic NYC street life should be the goal.

Staten Island should be more mindful of its history—the great urban performance tradition that once existed from St. George to Clifton. Don't fixate on bringing an off-Island audience in; cultivate Staten Islanders, and sometimes brings art and performances to the Mid-Island and South Shore communities.

3. Build Arts Alliances On and Off Staten Island

Citizens at the public forums said that Staten Island's cultural institutions need to speak with a unified voice. Connections need to be built between Staten Island and off-Island institutions too. Partnerships with national and international organizations to bring performances and exhibitions to Staten Island should be pursued.

▶ *Local Experts Suggest*

Alignment with national organizations is very useful. The Island's waterfront and proximity to Manhattan has not been sufficiently tapped. (The Craft Fair in Rhinebeck, Dutchess Co., was cited as a model.) The economic development community has not yet figured out how to develop the infrastructure needed to sustain an arts district in the St. George/Stapleton district. Movement so far has been organic—an essential, but ultimately insufficient, movement.

Some said that getting the Island's business establishment to really appreciate the importance of the arts in the local economy was really important, while others maintained that artistic independence would be jeopardized if artistic endeavors are reduced to their most instrumental "market" elements.

Staten Island has been hurt by changes in the funding formulas in recent years from the NYC Department of Cultural Affairs. Artists need support from elected officials to bring about equity. Smaller organizations need more help with grant applications.

4. Build Connections to the Schools

(This last item was added by the local expert group members. They felt that education issues were separate and distinct from grassroots work in the community.)

▶ *Local Experts Suggest*

The arts community could use an organization that provides a central clearinghouse function for information about schools, programs, curriculum, and points of connection. Outreach to school principals under the new governance system that is emerging at the Department of Education is essential. The essential element is that the arts community must connect with the demands of the curriculum in the schools. Parent/teacher leadership teams are an important point of connection to keep the arts alive.

Recommended Strategies for Change

1. **Establish St. George as a Cultural Center**. Workshop participants said that the district will thrive if there is an increase in affordable residential and work space for the creative communities. St. George needs to attract economic stakeholders to invest in the community. This can happen if grassroots organizations unify behind the goal of promoting arts and culture on Staten Island. Explore the possibility of a cultural district designation. Certainly develop the qualities of a good cultural district: a lively street life, reasonable rent, space, and venues for local artists. Peekskill, NY was referenced as a potential model. Pursue festival opportunities that bring food and the arts together.

2. **Explain the Economic Impact of the Arts to the Community**. Workshop participants said that the arts sector is an untapped economic engine for growth on Staten Island. The arts community should present tangible data demonstrating the impact of the arts in the Borough to the institutions that focus on economic development, both in the Borough and the City. Some reservations about this approach were expressed by some who felt that the value of the arts transcended such an instrumental approach. All agreed that "quality of life" arguments were equally powerful.

3. **Lobby Government Agencies for Staten Island "Fair Share" Support**. Staten Island has been losing ground in the struggle with other boroughs and New York State cities for government support. A goal should be a lobbying effort intended to garner arts support in proportion to the Island's population. An initiative could be a yearly legislative forum. Much of this information and analysis has been documented by the arts umbrella organizations.

DIVERSITY AND COMMUNITY COOPERATION

The public values diversity and multiculturalism, and wants to see a more united Staten Island, knitted together through acts of civic responsibility.

1. Embrace Diversity and Multiculturalism

Public input indicates that Staten Island residents are acutely aware of the demographic changes that are taking place in the Borough, as well as the challenges associated with them. There was much discussion of the importance of respecting diversity, learning about different cultures, and bringing an end to racism and discrimination. Participants expressed the need to enhance multiculturalism in a variety of areas—including creating more ethnically diverse neighborhoods and workplaces, and bringing more cultural diversity into arts and education programs.

The issue of immigration was a very prominent topic. Residents discussed the importance of welcoming immigrants and providing services to help them integrate into the Staten Island community. English literacy is deemed to be particularly important, and several ideas pointed to the need to expand access to ESL (English as a Second Language) programs. Other suggestions include the creation of one-stop multicultural centers that would provide a variety of services to Staten Island's immigrant communities.

The status of two groups—the LGBT (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender) community and people with disabilities, stood out. Participants said they would like to expand activities and social gathering places for LGBT residents, and protect them from discrimination. Participants would also like to address accessibility issues to ensure that residents with disabilities have full access to transportation, jobs, housing, parks and recreation facilities, and health care.

Ultimately, participants underscored the importance of fostering acceptance and inclusion among all Staten Island residents—regardless of age, class, race, gender, ethnicity, ability, or sexual orientation.

▶ *Local Experts Suggest*

There are some model programs/best practices that could be implemented on Staten Island. The Eagle Academy in Harlem and the Bronx specifically targets Black males to ensure high success rates, starting in kindergarten. Intra-cultural racism must also be addressed. The socioeconomically disadvantaged and recent immigrants are often targets of this type of discrimination.

Religious institutions, such as churches, synagogues, and mosques, could be one resource. Religion plays some role in each of the communities we've mentioned. The problem is that churches preach to the same congregation—they can't necessarily access the broader community.

Arts and cultural activities might be another way to get people engaged. For example, one organization on Long Island provides free salsa lessons and incorporates learning about Latino countries. Food is another point of access—for example, students could try Ethiopian food and learn more about the culture. It's important to personalize the experience of different cultures—food, arts, and music are a great way to do this. We need to address this issue in a broad way—with multiple activities in locations around Staten Island that everyone can access. Staten Island is very decentralized. It's hard to bring people up from the South Shore to the North.

2. Encourage Civic Responsibility

Participants presented a variety of suggestions for promoting more civic responsibility and community engagement among Staten Island residents. Volunteerism is recognized as being an important area to expand, as is membership in various neighborhood groups and community organizations. Participants would like to get more Staten Island residents involved in keeping their neighborhoods safe and clean, through initiatives such as anti-littering campaigns, graffiti removal, community gardens, and neighborhood watch programs.

Several ideas pointed to the need to promote common courtesy and polite interaction among all residents. This desire for elevated civility is also reflected in ideas related to reducing road rage and confrontations among drivers.

▶ *Local Experts Suggest*

There has been a recent drop in the number of young people who are members of civic organizations. Possible contributors include lengthy travel times, lack of emphasis on volunteerism in schools, and/or family dynamics. Children ask "what's in it for me?"

We need to expand partnerships among community-based organizations (CBOs) to find more ways to get people involved. We can use volunteer opportunities as teachable moments—put the effort into context, talk about why we're doing it, and incorporate notions of diversity and community.

3. Send a Message of Unity

The public recognizes that communication and cooperation will be crucial to the future of the Borough. One specific idea that arose frequently was the need to strive for unification between the North Shore and South Shore. Fundamentally, individuals and groups will need to work together in order to share resources, implement the vision, and achieve their desired future for Staten Island. Several ideas pointed to opportunities for greater collaboration and partnerships among non-profits, community organizations, churches, and cultural organizations. Participants would also like to see more opportunities for multicultural and multigenerational interaction.

Some participants emphasized the need for improved police-community relations in order to stop gang violence and ensure greater public safety on Staten Island. Several people said that residents would appreciate having opportunities for more public involvement in decision-making, including regular town hall meetings.

▶ *Local Experts Suggest*

The Borough President's office and the Staten Island Advance *are important actors in Borough communication efforts. They are two resources that make Staten Island distinctive. The Borough President can engage in moral persuasion—the occupant of the office can help accomplish things across party lines, such as closing Fresh Kills, developing the Greenbelt, the boardwalk, etc. There's a small town feel on Staten Island, where individuals can reach out and be heard.*

Young people use Facebook and Twitter. Unfortunately these communication modes are not Island-centric. The group was not particularly optimistic about the possibility of unification between the South and North shores. The highway is the dividing line—it splits the Borough. There are serious geographic and cultural barriers between the two sides.

4. Nurture Community Pride and Identity

Participants expressed a desire to challenge some internal and external perceptions about Staten Island. They want to see Staten Island residents take more pride in their community and establish a sense of unity throughout the Borough. Several people suggested that one way to do this would be to expand participation in community events and festivals, and bring together residents from a variety of different backgrounds.

The public input also addressed Staten Island's identity, in particular its relationship to New York City. On one hand, several participants suggested that Staten Island should accept and celebrate the fact that it is part of New York City. On the other hand, Staten Island residents want to strive for more independent decision-making at the borough level. This complex relationship with NYC is reflected throughout many of the vision topics.

▶ *Local Experts Suggest*

There is a dual identity, a split between Staten Island and NYC. There is already a lot of pride on Staten Island. The question is, how do we link pride to civic responsibility?

Recommended Strategies for Change

Convene a Civic Task Force to Bridge Community Divides

Workshop participants called for the creation of a task force to foster a spirit of collaboration and offer a unified voice as "friends of diversity" on Staten Island. Members would meet regularly to discuss critical community issues. The task force can research best practices to develop a climate that is supportive of diversity and multiculturalism, and tap into existing organizations that have a national presence, and bring their expertise and approaches to Staten Island.

Over time, individual task force members can spin off events that support diversity and a sense of community on Staten Island. Activities can range from large-scale, high-profile events (such as major festivals), to smaller-scale contributions (such as arts and cultural activities) that promote interaction among diverse groups and help personalize the idea of a multicultural Staten Island.

EDUCATION

Staten Islanders view education as the key to bringing about social cohesion and economic growth.

1. Promote Community Engagement in Education

At its core, the notion of community engagement focuses on breaking down barriers between communities and schools. The public emphasized the importance of engaging local businesses, cultural institutions, and community organizations in the school system. They promoted the idea that mentoring, internships, and cultural programs can help students overcome obstacles, gain work experience, and enrich their education. Participants also discussed the importance of parental responsibility in ensuring educational success. Suggestions ranged from offering parenting workshops to encouraging more interaction between parents and teachers to developing leadership programs that give parents a stronger voice in the school system.

The public also noted that Staten Island schools offer resources that can support their communities. Participants suggested that school facilities could be used to support community programs, activities, and events during non-school hours. One participant suggested that school buildings and grounds should be seen as a "hub of the community." Others suggested that a Website should be used to present a calendar of school-based events and programs. From a community education standpoint, these ideas point to a particular need for English as a Second Language (ESL) courses, adult literacy programs, and computer classes.

▶ *Local Experts Suggest*

Another useful step would be to integrate government services with education—including Family Court and Administration for Children's Services.

Kids are missing the connection between education and their future. Community engagement through site visits, shadowing, and skill inventories can help kids to better understand the purpose of education. Business has a role to play too—through one-on-one or small-group advisory sessions with students.

We need to close the achievement gap, which typically correlates with class. The need for parental responsibility really resonates. Immigrant parents in particular do not know how to navigate the education system. Programs like PIQE (Parental Institute for Quality Education) may be an option to consider. But just holding a workshop won't attract the people who need to come. Schools are shifting, and student needs are different. Instruction needs to focus on the application of knowledge, not replication. The community needs to play a proactive role, and be an advocate in preparing students for the 21st century.

2. Increase Educational Innovation

Staten Islanders are interested in ensuring that they receive equitable funding from the City of New York. One participant called for greater transparency in public spending. Other participants looked at the possibility of generating educational funds from other sources. For example, Staten Island's local foundations could sponsor creative educational initiatives, and its local businesses could invest in school equipment upgrades.

A dominant theme that surfaced from the public was the need for additional schools. Many residents would like to eliminate overcrowding, and see smaller schools and smaller class sizes. Several respondents suggested the need for greater school choice through the creation of more alternative schools, charter schools, and magnet schools on the Island. Several people also recommended extending the school day and the school year.

Public input reflected the desire to enhance school facilities. Participants noted that better-designed schools could better serve their students and surrounding communities.

▶ *Local Experts Suggest*

We need to research the question—How is the Fair Student Funding formula crafted? Is it fair to Staten Island, considering it is the fastest-growing borough? Resources to support arts and cultural programs are insufficient. We need to consider the issue of school size. Research supports the idea that smaller schools are better for children. We can take large schools and break them down into academies, or team structures, without building any more schools. The downside of smaller schools is that they also have reduced resources (enrichment programs can suffer due to smaller budgets and smaller staffs).

3. Develop Curriculum and Values

The public emphasized the notion that schools should play a formative role in helping young people become healthy, productive members of the Staten Island community. There were ideas stressing the importance of a core curriculum (that is, reading, writing, and arithmetic). Many recommendations pointed to the importance of instilling key values in Staten Island's students. These include sensitivity, tolerance, and respect for diversity; health and wellness; commitment to community service; creativity and appreciation for the arts; and a commitment to lifelong learning and respect for the environment. Other curriculum-related suggestions included teaching life skills (such as parenting and financial literacy) and providing additional remedial and special education services.

▶ *Local Experts Suggest*

Right now, a lot of resources are going into testing. Teachers have given up instruction to drill for tests. We've left teaching values up to the discipline code—but it doesn't work. We spend more money on implementation of the discipline code than we do on being proactive. Let's involve kids in discussion, problem solving, and engagement with the community.

4. Provide More Higher Education and Training Services

While higher education was not as heavily emphasized as K-12, it still represents a distinct theme within the topic of education. Several participants suggested that the Borough needs a greater variety of higher education and training opportunities tailored to the skills and interests of students. Recommendations range from introducing new technical and vocational schools, to offering free job skills training, to establishing a new community college on the Island. Others suggested expanding the quality and scope of academic programs at the College of Staten Island.

▶ *Local Experts Suggest*

We need to help kids and parents understand what the possibilities are, and start investigating them from an early age. Bring high school and middle school students to visit a college and think about what they might want to do there.

Public institutions of higher education should serve the public good. The College of Staten Island has a goal to increase service learning, and help students learn by volunteering in the community. Wagner is promoting similar initiatives.

Some kids graduate from high school but are not ready for a college program. We have very few resources for kids who want to develop skills, but not go to college. They have to leave the Island.

Every skilled job requires some level of training, especially in the 21st Century. How do we meet the needs of students who don't want to go to college, but want training? How do we help adults retool/retrain? There are SUNY/CUNY-run Educational Opportunity Centers (EOCs) around the City and State. They focus on adult education, literacy, GED programs, and programs that help bridge high school students to work. Staten Island does not have an EOC.

Recommended Strategies for Change

Build an Education Coalition

Convene a Staten Island Education Policy Group that will take the lead in advancing Staten Island's education agenda. Part of this work will include an examination of equity issues in terms of Staten Island's capital funding from the Department of Education. The coalition could begin petitioning for changes in the Fair Student Funding formula. The policy group could examine the latest research related to optimal school size and instructional delivery models. In addition, school buildings could be designed in a flexible manner that allows for the development of smaller learning communities.

Another task force could organize an awareness-building campaign that highlights Staten Island's critical education needs, with emphasis on the evolving challenges of the 21st Century. The campaign should focus on raising community awareness and finding good best-practice models.

Specific coalition activities might include

- Publishing a series of articles about what Staten Island students need to do to prepare for the 21st Century;

- Conducting presentations and community dialogue events regarding 21st-Century education challenges;

- Marketing schools as hubs for community activities and developing a Website to share information about school-based and community activities;

- Hosting an annual education event that convenes businesses, schools, legislative representatives, and community organizations to discuss local education issues, share information, and look for opportunities to collaborate;

- Expanding Staten Island residents' awareness of state-funded Educational Opportunity Centers (EOCs), and advocate to get an EOC on Staten Island;

- Establishing education benchmarks to monitor success;

- Convening existing funders to leverage resources and collectively strategize ways to integrate cultural institutions and education. Target funding for additional cultural programs and after-school activities;

- Expanding parental education/training programs and providing economic incentives for parents to attend. Research best practices and explore potential models such as PIQE (Parent Institute for Quality Education).

ENVIRONMENT, PARKS, AND RECREATION

The public commitment to environmentalism and the Borough's tradition of open space preservation was reaffirmed. Participants in the public forms want to: 1. Strengthen the commitment to protect and expand open spaces, 2. Find the balance between open space protection and economic growth, 3. "bring people to the parks/bring parks to the people."

1. Strengthen the Commitment to Protect and Expand Open Spaces

The public reaffirmed Staten Island's longstanding tradition of protecting open space–we must protect properties already saved. This will depend on steady enforcement of laws and codes, and educating the public, particularly students, about the importance of the environment. This work can be embedded in institutions, such as schools and colleges, and promoted through public access to green spaces. A civil dialogue should be promoted regarding the environment. In addition, efforts should be made to reach new residents through such innovations as multi-lingual information signs at environmental areas.

Specifically, participants in the public sessions recommended protecting the freshwater and tidal wetlands of Arlington Marsh; property acquisition to add to the Huguenot Bluebelt; the purchase of Goodhue Woods; and the demapping of Richmond Parkway.

▶ Local Experts Suggest

Protecting open space requires significant community involvement. There are many open space areas on Staten Island that do not have protected status. The committed activists need more support from the public. This support may be generated by raising awareness and through more education. Working through local churches and ministers may be particularly fruitful.

It is very important to generate a sense of connection and ownership between citizens and a park. The local experts thought that engagement of young people and people from new immigrant and minority communities was particularly important. It is important as well to raise awareness among funders, elected officials, and community leaders regarding the challenges facing open spaces, and bring resources to support parks as well. They stressed the need to move beyond access to deeper forms of engagement (volunteerism, advocacy, planning, environmental education programming).

There should be an even more ambitious open spaces protection agenda that includes properties like Pouch Camp, Mariner's Marsh, etc. The preservation of private, historic cemeteries as a means to obtain open space is particularly promising.

Research is needed across a variety of dimensions (open space, brownfield remediation projects) to generate a list of priority items by reviewing all contemporary studies (such as the Wetlands Task Force Study, the North Shore Study, etc.)

2. Find the Balance between Open Space Protection and Economic Growth

Participants said that new industries should rehabilitate current industrial properties rather than spread out into undeveloped land. Green technologies and using Staten Island's rich natural history to promote ecotourism should also be on the agenda. Environmentally responsible development should be rewarded.

▶ Local Experts Suggest

Economic development and environmental/open space protection can be mutually supportive through the use of imaginative community agreements (for example, the New York Container Terminal's proposal to clean up Arlington Marsh and Mariner's Marsh for new industrial use, while also leaving a portion of the land as an open space resource with public access where appropriate). The important goal should be to limit sprawl: Economic growth should be focused on existing roadways.

Protecting open space depends on developing transportation policies that limit the growth of the road network. Mass transit and alternative modes of transportation, such as biking and walking, are essential.

The NYC Department of Environmental Protection's Bluebelt Plan is a very good way to get support for much of this agenda. Developing a plan for the South Shore and Midland Beach area to account for the expected rise in sea level, a function of climate change impact or the result of hurricane storm surge, is an essential task.

3. Bring People to the Parks/Bring Parks to the People

The public said that Staten Islanders need more small, neighborhood parks. They noted specific places that are underserved, including the historic communities along the Kill Van Kull and the Park Hill neighborhoods. Other ideas included a survey of needs in the Borough.

Funding was identified as an essential element in all of this work. To that end, the community and elected officials should be educated about the importance and significance of specific locations. Community groups should be mobilized so that they will take ownership of their parks, and do some grassroots fundraising as well. Grants and partnerships should be secured between community organizations and businesses to support the parks.

▶ *Local Experts Suggest*

Working group participants emphasized the need to establish a constituency for parks. Citizens establish quite a bit of loyalty to their local vest-pocket parks. Volunteerism is very important. A challenge is cynicism and lack of awareness about the importance of these issues.

The "Friends of" model works. It is essential to create multi-tier volunteer opportunities with multiple points of entry and levels of intensity. Staten Island has great active use at its parks. Access to Staten Island's parks is not optimal, since people have to drive to many facilities.

Increase the City Parks Foundation presence on Staten Island.

Recommended Strategies for Change

1. **Bring New Advocates to the Table**. Workshop participants said that a new generation of change agents–grassroots advocates, volunteers, and planners–are needed to protect and expand open spaces. An outreach effort to new immigrant communities is particularly important. Networking the environmental community with new immigrant and youth groups should be a high-priority strategy. Programmatically, parks and open space plans, and environmental initiatives, geographically adjacent to schools and in immigrant neighborhoods, would be an excellent strategy to create a new constituency.

2. **Develop a Strategic Plan to Protect Land Parcels**. The local experts said that a review of current research and studies was in order to indentify and prioritize protected and unprotected parcels of land for more vigorous protection, acquisition, and/or development.

3. **Increase the Stock of Protected Land**. Repurpose, acquire, and develop open spaces and facilities for public use, prioritizing underserved communities. The financing could come from government sources. Land acquisition intended to protect vulnerable ecosystems or mitigate climate change might be easier to finance.

4. **Strengthen the Local Commitment to Environmental Issues**. Raise awareness among community leaders, funders, and local officials regarding the challenges facing open spaces in the Borough. The financing could come from government sources. Land acquisition intended to protect vulnerable ecosystems or mitigate climate change might be easier to finance.

5. **Encourage Commercial and Industrial Growth and Revitalization that Supports Environmental Protection, Mitigation, and Open Space Access**. Workshop participants said that we need to move past "environment versus development" debates, and focus on the development of green technologies and the rational use of land.

Staten Islanders are unhappy with the City's efforts in the provision of health care services. They want better health care facilities and funding for the Borough.

1. Improve and Fund Heath Care Facilities on Staten Island

The most prominent theme to emerge from the public sessions was the need for another hospital on Staten Island, specifically the need for a public hospital. At the heart of this concern is the issue of equitable funding from New York City. The public emphasized the fact that Staten Island does not receive the level of funding that it should. One participant said, "Don't allow the City to shortchange Staten Island." Another emphasized that Staten Island should "demand its fair share of the City's health care funding."

Under the theme of funding, another ambition is more efficient allocation of health care funds. The public said that there are shortages and excesses of funding in the Borough's health care system. Participants recommended allocating resources and delivering services based on community needs.

Finally, participants in the public forums expressed their concerns about reimbursement practices, especially from insurance companies. They mentioned that there is currently no meaningful reimbursement for preventive care and health education. Participants said that hospitals receive insufficient funding to cover the mandated care that they provide to a large number of uninsured residents. On a more positive note, the New York City Health Commission was credited for supporting reimbursement based on positive outcomes and prevention.

▶ *Local Experts Suggest*

A primary health care system must be tailored to meet the unique needs of Staten Island. The two existing hospitals (Staten Island University Hospital and Richmond University Medical Center) offer a sufficient bed-to-patient ratio to meet community needs. What they lack is public operational funding to enhance access to primary care for all Staten Islanders—including uninsured and underinsured residents. Detailed policy objectives include:

- *Community-based, permanent primary health care centers throughout Staten Island that emphasize preventive care;*

- *Incentives (such as subsidies and loan forgiveness) to encourage primary care practitioners to come to Staten Island;*

- *An integrated care model for subspecialists on Staten Island, which includes support such as grants, operational subsidies, and indemnity insurance;*

- *Measures to reduce Staten Island's historic funding inequities. For example, secure funding from the Health and Hospitals Corporation for a voucher system to cover services for the uninsured and underinsured.*

2. Offer More Health Education

Health education for the public was a dominant theme in public discussions. Participants expressed a desire to promote health literacy and wellness among residents of Staten Island. They emphasized the need for campaigns to promote better nutrition, encourage physical activity, support smoking cessation, and reduce teen pregnancy in the Borough. A commenter critiqued the "culture of excess among the youth in Staten Island."

While it is important to educate the public about health issues, the public also discussed the education of health care practitioners. For example, one commenter suggested that teaching programs for medical residents and students should be designed to focus on preventive care. Participants also introduced the notion of educating doctors through cultural competence training. Such training would enable health care workers to better address the needs of immigrant populations, and improve communication about health issues, given Staten Island's expanding cultural diversity.

▶ *Local Experts Suggest*

Expand health education on Staten Island to address personal health and wellness issues and help people understand how to use the health care system.

Work with hospitals to spread messages about key community health concerns. Incorporate approaches such as speaker's bureaus, peer counselors, and training programs for practitioners and residents. Work with schools to promote positive health practices among youth. Cooperate with foundations and other institutions to develop preventive health education programs. Conduct an anti-stigma campaign on behalf of mental health, addiction, and developmental disability issues.

3. Increase Access to Care

The public sees a need for more primary care physicians, and policies designed to attract and keep more primary care physicians on Staten Island. The public expressed the desire to invest in the Borough's primary care infrastructure, specifically identifying the need for permanent, community-based primary care facilities that enhance residents' access to care.

Staten Islanders noted that they have restricted access to special needs services, specifically mental health and substance abuse treatment. These services are particularly inadequate for teens. Community support for these services is critical, and participants citied concerns about the closing of existing addiction centers and housing for the mentally ill. Other special needs issues were not discussed in detail, but came up multiple times in discussion, including services for the disabled, as well as for people with HIV/AIDS.

The public identified a variety of other factors that diminish access to care on Staten Island. These include the problem of uninsured or underinsured residents, transportation barriers that prevent people from accessing services, and language barriers that impede clear communication between doctors and patients.

4. Developing Partnerships and Information Sharing

The public expressed enthusiasm for encouraging partnerships and information-sharing among health care providers. Community health centers and hospitals could partner to coordinate their activities related to preventive care. The public acknowledged the extraordinary potential that exists on Staten Island due to the "committed, community-minded groups, hospitals, agencies, and individuals involved in health care." Staten Island's health care providers should cooperate, not compete. For example, one participant said that "Medicine should be based on needs, not [finding the] competitive edge," while another participant indicated that providers should "work together to develop and not duplicate services."

Technology improvements are seen as a key tool in promoting better-coordinated health care on Staten Island. Specifically, participants recommended the linking of electronic medical records through a uniform database.

▶ *Local Experts Suggest*

The creation of a Health and Mental Hygiene Coordinator position. This position will act as a liaison between Borough Hall, City Hall, Albany, and all health care and specialty providers on Staten Island. Improve coordination among insurance companies, primary care practitioners, and specialty care practitioners, with an emphasis on improving access to disease treatment and ancillary providers.

Recommended Strategies for Change

1. **Jumpstart Primary Care Strategies**. Establish community-based, permanent primary health care centers throughout Staten Island that emphasize preventive care and create incentives (such as subsidies and loan forgiveness) to encourage primary care practitioners to come to Staten Island. Develop an integrated care model for subspecialists on Staten Island, which includes support such as grants, operational subsidies, and indemnity insurance.

2. **Reduce Staten Island's Historic Funding Inequities**. Take measures to reduce Staten Island's historic funding inequities. Secure funding from the Health and Hospitals Corporation for a voucher system to cover services for the uninsured and underinsured.

3. **Develop and Implement Health Education Strategies**. Work with hospitals to spread messages about key community health concerns. Incorporate approaches such as speakers bureaus, peer counselors, and training programs for practitioners and residents.

PLANNING, PRESERVATION, AND HOUSING

Participants in the public forums argued that Staten Island must do a better job of preparing for future growth and the Borough's changing demography.

1. Bring Smart Growth to Staten Island

The public said that the Borough needs denser, mixed-use development that takes advantage of existing mass transit infrastructure like the Staten Island Railway (SIR) and other rail systems that may be built in the future. In less-urbanized sections of the Borough, town centers should be developed. The area around the Staten Island Mall, the Port Richmond community, and the entire North Shore waterfront could use particular attention. The public wants a master plan that ties new housing with infrastructure development. Participants want transit-oriented communities with walkable neighborhoods.

▶ *Local Experts Suggest*

In terms of smart growth and planning, we need to expand community awareness of the planning efforts and studies that are already taking place on Staten Island. We also need to make sure that actions follow the planning efforts—for example, several neighborhoods have plans in place, but they stay on the shelf. We need to reach an agreement on what a master plan would entail.

Ultimately, we need a master vision for where new growth is going to go, and how we're going to accommodate new housing. Then we need implementation steps to support the vision. Infrastructure and services (roads, sewers, schools, health care, etc.) must be adequate to support new housing.

It might be better to continue to plan on an area-by-area basis (like the North Shore and West Shore plans). Identify zoning, special districts, financial incentives. Find pockets of growth to model elements of master planning.

In terms of planning for town centers, there isn't one common solution. But the train stations might be the first thing to examine. Staten Island does not have density near the stations. The railway is a major underutilized resource, and it's free. It comes back to an education process. The public and elected officials need to understand the value of locating higher-density development near train stations. How do we craft zoning that allows for more density? Town centers should be developed as neighborhoods where people can walk to services. Not everyone has a car, and walkability is a gift. We need walkable, mixed-use development — residential, commercial, retail.

2. Develop Beautiful, Clean, and Well-Managed Town Centers

Participants said that the Island needs to maintain its links to the past through stronger protections for the Island's architectural gems. Many called for the development of a Borough plan for preservation. The City's landmark process needs to be streamlined and expedited. Utility lines need to move underground. Development of small parks in underserved areas would spruce up neighborhoods.

▶ *Local Experts Suggest*

There's a desire to streamline and expedite the landmark process, but it's politically complicated. Everyone wants land-marking for someone else, but they don't want restrictions on their own property. People believe that property value will plunge, and it will be too costly to do any repairs or modifications. These are all myths. We need to increase awareness and dispel myths about landmark designation.

3. Build Better Housing Integrated into the Community Setting

Denser, more economical forms of development can promote housing affordability. Participants discussed ideas like building residential development over street-level retail and creating incentives to build apartments and multi-family homes.

The construction of adequate housing for low-income residents can be promoted with effective tax policies. The promotion of mixed-income communities should be a goal of urban planners. Community involvement should take place at the neighborhood level. Landlords need more incentives so that they will be more likely to accept Section 8 vouchers. Programs should be developed that keep seniors in their homes and promote "aging in place."

▶ *Local Experts Suggest*

Given the economic changes that have occurred since the recession started, there are at least three additional issues that need to be addressed in terms of housing on Staten Island: energy affordability, lending institutions and access to loans/financing, and foreclosure prevention, including the various services needed to help people maintain and remain in their homes.

We need to address the issue of aging housing stock and the decline in the quality of housing. There is a higher cost to maintaining older homes, and these homes are often occupied by lower-income residents. The existing weatherization program has been on Staten Island since the 1980s. It deals with energy conservation, but it's also about preserving the integrity of housing. It ends up being a good tool for maintaining affordable housing. The Division of Housing and Community Renewal also provides funds to address this issue. Energy efficiency should be a basic consideration for any new development that takes place, including affordable housing. New affordable housing projects should be LEED certified. We need to create standards for new housing that address energy efficiency.

We need to develop advocacy in the form of merchants associations. This is critical to managing beautiful town centers. Let's create more Business Improvement Districts (BIDs). Currently there is only one BID on Staten Island.

Recommended Strategies for Change

1. **Develop a Conceptual, Values-Based Master Plan for Staten Island**. The plan should incorporate public input, include a comprehensive needs assessment, and provide a conceptual framework for future development.

2. **Create Housing that Allows all People to Live in all Neighborhoods on Staten Island**. Ensure geographic diversity, so that all types of housing—including senior housing, special needs, supportive housing, working poor, and workforce housing—are available throughout the North and South shores.

SOCIAL SERVICES AND AGING

Participants in the public meetings focused attention on three initiatives: 1. improve the quality and availability of services for at-risk/underserved groups, 2. improve the quality of life for seniors, and 3. develop helping-centered strategies for clients of social services.

1. Improve the Quality and Availability of Services for At-Risk/Underserved Groups

The public process identified holes in the community's safely net for the youngest and oldest Staten Islanders. The challenges of special needs children and their families received much attention in public discussions. Teenagers and young adults need services tailored to help them manage life's challenges, among them: pregnancy, violence at home and school, and drug and alcohol abuse. Struggling young families and single parents need affordable child care options and parent education. Senior citizens need housing support and access to supportive health and recreational services.

In addition to the generational concerns, there was much discussion of the difficulties facing economically disadvantaged Staten Islanders and the struggle to find healthy food, affordable housing, and the broad array of health care services that people need. Immigrant and undocumented workers often need English-language training and the provision of vital services in their native language.

There was focus too on the infrastructure needed to provide essential services: community centers for seniors and youth, food pantries and public homeless shelters for the poor, and supportive housing facilities for vulnerable groups, including the mentally ill and developmentally disabled.

▶ *Local Experts Suggest*

Staten Island has the highest rate of drug and alcohol abuse among the boroughs. While the problem cuts across socioeconomic classes, there are fewer options for middle-class kids to receive services. More resources have been developed for poor kids. For middle- and upper-class kids there is an assumption that parents will connect them to activities and resources. But parents are usually working, and aren't around to help them. One quality of life issue is that kids and families need places to go. There's a need for more OST (out of school time) programs. Lots of kids have special problems—like asthma, diabetes, obesity—but they are not considered to be "special needs." Special needs are educational issues and developmental disabilities, not health issues. On Staten Island, there's such an issue with special needs that the other significant areas (like obesity) get minimized.

There's an imbalance in the distribution of City resources. For example, NYC funds 5,000 supportive housing units for people with HIV; Staten Island has about ten of these. We're dependent on City agencies and the government to address issues in our community.

2. Improve Quality of Life for Senior Citizens

The public process indentified a number of ways to enhance the quality of life for seniors. Ideas included support to defray the costs of housing, taxes, and transportation; services to improve the physical accessibility of homes; and improvements in senior medical and nutritional care.

Participants suggested raising awareness regarding the challenges facing seniors through education, outreach, and publicity. Services for seniors would be enhanced with better training for professional staff and better funding. Seniors need better housing options and senior centers.

Senior housing support is a very significant need. Along with housing comes the need for additional supports, including transportation, assistance with entitlements, etc. Seniors need support to remain in their homes. It is important to use data to support our recommendations. (One example among the boroughs, Staten Island has the highest level of injury among seniors.) Sometimes our perceptions are off, and it's good to question why. A potential data resource can be found in the City's vision for seniors from the New York Academy of Medicine.

3. Develop a Helping-Centered Ethos

Participants in the public process said that Staten Islanders must understand that there are sizable numbers of at-risk people in the Borough who need help. People often don't like these sorts of reminders about their obligations to help their neighbors, so education about these issues is essential. Infrastructure development is an important piece — the City needs to build a homeless shelter and more affordable housing for seniors on Staten Island, for example. Funding and programs for underserved groups need to be dedicated, targeted, and distributed equitably; the problems facing an array of at-risk groups should be addressed. Changing land use and zoning policies to allow for the development of social service facilities and the construction of various forms of affordable housing is an important step.

▶ *Local Experts Suggest*

We know how to do our work, but there's never been the public opinion/political will/investment to do it right. In terms of changing public opinion, the area of developmental disabilities presents a profound model for change.

Everyone was united because of the Willowbrook scandal. We need to unite people for change. Government will take us more seriously if we speak as a larger group. The question is—What do you do when the community is mobilizing against you? How can we get people to be proactive about something that everyone supports? One example is Meals on Wheels. It's not just about delivering meals, it's about delivering health. Let's identify cross-cutting issues that everyone can get behind. For example, health and wellness for seniors and children—promote exercise, nutrition, etc. Other ideas include: senior housing, raising healthy children, promoting the health and wellness of all Staten Islanders, creating the best quality of life for seniors across the economic and social spectrums. Note: We have not done a good job including some populations, such as LGBT, HIV-positive, homeless, and immigrant populations.

Recommended Strategies for Change

1. Develop a Staten Island Interagency Coalition that Encompasses all Social Service Providers on Staten Island
(e.g., aging, disabilities, substance abuse, immigration, mental health, youth, etc.).

2. Undertake a Data-driven Process to Assess Gaps in Social Services on Staten Island.

The public wants to offer a richer array of educational and professional opportunities for young people so that they may become productive, fully engaged, citizens. Specifically, the public participants want to: 1. develop a broad array of youth activities, 2. provide employment opportunities for youth, and 3. provide support for at-risk youth.

1. Develop a Broad Array of Youth Activities

The most prominent notion to arise from the public input is that Staten Island youth need places to go that are safe, fun, and designed for their needs. Several participants suggested building youth centers that offer a variety of activities and services for youth of all ages. Major interests include arts and cultural activities, as well as sports and recreation. Participants discussed the need for affordable, diverse, and adaptable programming that can accommodate a variety of evolving youth needs. Timing is significant, since youth are primarily looking for after-school and summertime activities.

Participants recognize that certain resources will be required to effectively enhance activities for youth. Expanded funding is desirable, as well as more effective collaboration among youth service agencies, community centers, NYC Parks and Recreation, and others. Participants also noted that youth activities must be marketed in a manner that appeals to young people and attracts their participation.

▶ Local Experts Suggest

Most of the suggestions discussed above are already available. Every agency is doing a good job, but people are not necessarily aware of this. Communication and marketing are major issues–we need to get the word out to parents and principals. Many schools run their own latch-key/after-school programs. There may be opportunities for youth agencies to run these programs at a lower cost to families.

School facilities are a significant resource. We need more facilities for youth activities, and schools are the logical places. They're located in the neighborhoods, and are easy to access. While schools are a significant resource to pursue, let's not look at them exclusively. Some families have had negative interactions with the schools. We need other local facilities that are available to them. Other potential facilities include arts and cultural centers, colleges, libraries, and the SI Yankees facility. Activities don't have to take place on a daily basis — once a week or once a month can be just as valuable. However, parents are often fearful about sending their kids to institutions outside the neighborhood. Community Board 2 has a large youth committee. Students come to the monthly meetings and feel like participants in the community. They address problems, write letters, plan events, and raise funds. We can try to get the other two Community Boards on the same path.

2. Provide Employment Opportunities for Youth

Ideas gathered from the public strongly suggest the need for more job opportunities for youth on Staten Island — particularly after school and during summers. Participants also noted that youth could get more involved in their communities through volunteer opportunities. One individual suggested creating a "youth corps" that would engage teens in volunteer work throughout the Borough. Several ideas dealt with preparing youth for college and/or the workforce. Suggestions ranged from mentoring programs, to career counseling initiatives, to providing more opportunities for vocational training.

▶ Local Experts Suggest

Many programs already exist. Examples include New Dorp High School and Bay Terrace collaborate on a volunteer teacher's aide program; Port Richmond High School teaches older students how to lead performing arts programs; Curtis students are working on a radio show at the Urban League; United Activities Unlimited helps teens find employment through the Summer Youth Employment Program (for which funding is expected to be cut); several high schools require community service credits to graduate. Some kids have to work and make money. Can we work with major businesses on Staten Island (Target, Home Depot, hotels) to develop formal paid internship programs? Is there a role for the Chamber or SIEDC?

We need programs to help kids learn how to get jobs—understand what to wear, how to write résumés, how to behave, the importance of showing up on time, etc. We could create a certification program, led by non-profits. Can we tie in our efforts with the Education Work Group? They're proposing a 21st-Century Skills strategy.

3. Support At-Risk Youth

While there was no single dominant recommendation under this theme, several individual ideas addressed the needs of at-risk youth on Staten Island. Suggestions ranged from in-school tutoring and mentoring programs to peer education initiatives and drug awareness programs. Individual ideas gathered from the public also addressed the need for providing temporary housing for youth, as well as offering services for pregnant teens.

▶ *Local Experts Suggest*

There are many challenges in reaching out to youth. There are more single-parent families, or families where both parents work. Some kids are just idle, and will claim there's "nothing to do," while others have specific issues related to drugs, disability, or criminal history. Kids are very technologically advanced—they're used to instant messaging, they don't understand delayed gratification, and texting is eroding their reading and writing skills. We should focus on the "average" Staten Island teenager—not the drug abusers and criminals. The "in crowd" is a hard population to reach. They're not interested in programs; it's not cool to volunteer. There are big problems among affluent youth—suicide, peer pressure, minimal parental involvement. Many parents are reinforcing negative behaviors. Kids need a place to hang out. The YMCA hosts a very popular teen night at the South Shore center. There's such a large turnout that they need to overstaff. Parents need parenting skills. Teen parents are particularly in need of mentoring from older mothers and fathers. The good news is that Staten Island has a strong leadership base that can help address these issues. Many communities don't have this type of baseline.

Recommended Strategies for Change

1. Convene School Principals and Youth Program Providers to Explore Opportunities.

2. Tightly Link Youth and Education Initiatives.

Inventory all youth activities/programs available on Staten Island, including arts, education, job readiness, and sports activities. Create a map to show the location of all programs, and develop a marketing strategy to publicize them. Establish an online "virtual youth meeting place" to connect kids to activities and job opportunities. Develop public service announcements to spread the word about youth activities and resources, and publicize the virtual youth meeting place.

GOVERNMENT SERVICES, ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND MARKETING, TRANSPORTATION

Government services, economic development, and marketing and transportation are an extremely important set of concerns on Staten Island. On the government side, many Staten Islanders feel that they are not getting a fair share of resources and attention from City Hall. Local quality of life suffers as a result. Developing economic opportunities locally is a critical piece so that more Staten Islanders can work close to home, and younger adults who were raised in the Borough can develop their careers here. Staten Islanders are almost in universal agreement that it is very difficult to get around the Borough, and to get to other places in the metropolitan area. The fact that they have to pay pricey tolls and fares only adds to the aggravation.

This section will summarize the results of the public meetings (that is, the idea-gathering sessions) and the dialogue between experts and the public (the reality-check meetings). However, the Board of the Vision for Staten Island decided not to press these issues forward to the recommendation stage. The Vision for Staten Island Board realized that with this particular set of issues, a good deal of planning has already taken place. The Board felt that energy should be devoted to policy areas that have traditionally received less attention. However, members of the Board think that the information these efforts have generated will be useful for the coalitions involved in this work.

The public did offer some interesting comments on government services, economic development, and marketing and transportation, and readers are encouraged to consult the list of thousands of ideas that the public generated on the Vision for Staten Island Website. Below is a summary of public comments (idea-gathering sessions) and the dialogues that were held between the public and experts (reality-check meetings).

GOVERNMENT SERVICES

Staten Islanders want to be treated fairly by the state and municipal government. In the idea-gathering sessions, many taxpayers expressed the idea that they are not getting good return on their investment. The clearest expression of this view was found in the number of times participants in the public sessions talked about Port Authority and Metropolitan Transportation Authority bridge tolls. Participants were very unhappy with the cost of using Staten Island's bridges. This sense of outrage carried through because the bridges provide vital access to other parts of the metropolitan region. Quite realistically, Staten Islanders were most interested in freezing toll increases, rather than reducing real dollar costs.

More broadly, participants in the idea-gathering sessions argued for a **fair share for Staten Island**. The idea here is that Staten Islanders should receive in services what they pay in taxes. (Many recommendations along these lines are carried over in other policy areas where the process generated specific recommendations—fair thinking informed the review of the Arts and Health sections, for example.)

Some suggested decentralization, or at least better coordination, of the delivery of municipal services on the borough level to improve responsiveness to citizen input. A few people wanted to spark up a new secession movement from New York City.

Participants would like to see better code and law enforcement of quality of life issues. On the road, police and traffic officers should ticket for driving violations, illegal parking, car cell phone use, and reckless driving. Traffic enforcement should be used as a tool to reduce auto accidents. Other important suggestions included attention to beautification of Staten Island, including cleaning up trash and clearing graffiti, and a beefed-up law enforcement presence in the Borough to police against street crime, gang activity, and drug violations. Some suggest that police/community relations needed improvement.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND MARKETING

Staten Islanders want a vibrant and diverse local economy. To promote that goal, participants believe that small businesses need focal points, such as town centers, to encourage development, and the creation of more support structures, such as Business Improvement Districts, for businesses to thrive. Many thought that a streamlined state and municipal regulatory process will help small businesses prosper. Staten Islanders would like to see improvement in retail offerings in targeted neighborhoods like St. George, and a broader array of retail on the Island that will keep local shoppers from having to travel to Manhattan and New Jersey. Participants in the public sessions thought that the promotion of tourism on the waterfront was a useful endeavor. There were calls to develop new industries on the West Shore, as well as proposals to provide wireless Internet connectivity throughout the entire Island. The public suggested that the Borough colleges host conferences that would bring developers and entrepreneurs to Staten Island, so that they will be encouraged to invest here.

Infrastructure is a foundation for strong economic growth. Many public participants and experts discussed the importance of the North Shore and West Shore rail projects as the foundation for future growth. Many also supported the cultivation of green industries.

At the reality-check meetings (the point of interaction between experts and the public) there was a focus on the relationship between land use and economic development. Some "grand sorting" is needed to locate places where industrial and mixed-use development can occur. Brownfield remediation was identified as an important piece of the economic development story, as well.

Participants in the public meetings want the world to know more about Staten Island. They expressed pride in the Borough's parks and green places, and they want more focus on, and revitalization of, waterfront areas. Staten Island is a place with affordable, family-friendly cultural attractions. Its good schools, safe streets, and rich history were all points of great local pride.

The reality-check meetings generated several marketing themes for the Borough, including: "Staten Island: Affordable NYC," targeted to potential investors and newcomers and "Come Back to Staten Island," targeted to highlight local history and quality of life.

TRANSPORTATION

On Staten Island, nothing stirs the passions more than transportation policy. The difficulties of getting around are experienced both by car owners and mass transit users alike (and many Staten Islanders fall into both categories). Transportation was a prominent issue in the public meetings. Local organizations are well aware of the problems on this front, and many Staten Island elected officials devote their attention to keeping State and City agencies accountable to Borough residents.

Participants in the public meetings want to see innovations in mass transit, including the construction of light rail and bus rapid transit systems. They want access to locations in New Jersey, especially transportation hubs like Newark Airport and the Metropark train station (served by Amtrak). They want more frequent service to Manhattan and Brooklyn (including a 24-hour service option) and a web of bus service that connects the town centers of Staten Island.

Some suggested the reorganization of bus routes to capture new growth in the Borough, and implementing new technologies to increase the speed of bus service, including "smart traffic lights" that signal buses through, ahead of other traffic. Bus lanes on the Staten Island Expressway should be extended even further.

The toll bridges are a source of discontent for participants in the public meetings. There were all sorts of suggestions ranging from the complete elimination of collections, to a toll wavier for Borough residents, to indexing the cost of tolls to the inflation rate.

One goal for mass transit was to set a 45-minute standard for trips into Manhattan.

There were many traffic and road suggestions, including "right of red," and increased attention to pothole repair.

Pedestrians and cyclists offered suggestions too. They asked for access across the Verrazano-Narrows Bridge, something that could be facilitated if the MTA were to permit bike racks on some of its buses. Efforts should be made to guarantee safety with a better system of bike paths and wide sidewalks with well-marked crosswalks for pedestrians.