

Around the World in 40 Blocks:
Small business perspectives on the effects of diversity
on the retail corridor in Jackson Heights, Queens

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Title

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Research Question

How do the priorities of small businesses that offer culturally specific items or services compare to those of other businesses in a multicultural retail corridor?

Abstract

Jackson Heights' small businesses are as diverse as its residents, and with that comes unique priorities for the main retail corridor. This study compared the experiences of businesses that specialize in cultural items, specifically from South Asia, and more general neighborhood businesses. Both categories of businesses valued the role that reputation plays in attracting customers, built over years of operating in the neighborhood, community engagement, or co-ethnic ties. The spatial clustering of South Asian establishments has further enabled those businesses, which are also supported by transnational forces, to draw customers from the same foot traffic. These same advantages become a challenge as the corridor's customers change. These businesses were concerned about staying competitive, citing reduced traffic in recent years and generational changes. Meanwhile, most of the general businesses, especially those near the neighborhood's co-ops, were optimistic. Both categories of businesses expressed a desire for the corridor to modernize and acknowledged that different parts of the corridor seemed to operate independently, with little neighborhood-wide cohesion. Demographics and the built environment helped shaped the current ecosystems of these distinct segments of the corridor and can disrupt them, as well.

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Introduction

From the earliest pushcarts, markets, and shops to a resurgence of street vendors and indoor markets today, New York City has a long-established tradition of small business. And businesses pioneered by immigrant communities are some of the most recognizable; New York bodegas, for example, were first established by Puerto Rican immigrants. Bodegas and other immigrant-owned and -operated businesses have historically responded to a demand for cultural accommodations with specialty products and, often, informal social spaces. Nowadays similar formats are common across neighborhoods, with owners hailing from countries as varied as Bangladesh, the Dominican Republic, and Yemen (Wang, 2017).

“Community life [of immigrants],” writes historian Reed Ueda, “sprang from the self-initiated efforts of newcomers to organize themselves as American ethnic groups” that sustained their traditions within a political framework that did not dissuade private enterprise and assembly (Ueda, 2017, p. 2). According to U.S. Census Bureau (2019) estimates, 37.0% of New York City’s population is foreign-born. And the percentage of foreign-born residents in nearly half of the city’s neighborhoods is higher than this citywide share (U.S. Census, 2018).* Many immigrant neighborhoods are home to ‘ethnic enclaves,’ broadly defined as places with high concentrations of businesses and customers who share a common ethnic identity.

Historically, in minority communities, social and economic exclusion was pervasive. For example, Chinese immigrants, who were subject to immigration restrictions well into the twentieth century, concentrated in and established their own community structures in

*The neighborhoods are delineated by Neighborhood Tabulation Area (NTAs), of which there are 188 in NYC.

America's earliest Chinatowns (Kwong, 1987).^{*} Early ethnic enclaves, typified by a symbiotic relationship between spatially clustered co-ethnic businesses and employees, developed out of necessity. With globalization and economic mobility an increasingly diverse immigrant neighborhood is emerging, transforming the commercial signature of the place as well. How small businesses adapt to and interact in this space will influence their longevity.

This paper studies the main retail corridor in Jackson Heights, Queens, an immigrant neighborhood that exhibits both the qualities of a traditional ethnic enclave and a more general retail strip, and which has been experiencing a demographic shift. It focuses on how small business owners navigate the local retail environment and expectations for their customer base. Through a series of semi-structured interviews, profiles were constructed of two distinct parts of the corridor, identifying their advantages, challenges, and intra-corridor dynamics. In the following sections, the current small business environment in New York City is discussed, followed by a background of Jackson Heights. After that, a review is presented of existing literature on the ethnic enclave theory, neighborhood change, and community-business dynamics in a multicultural setting. The paper then details this study's research methods; discusses the findings; and finally, proposes areas for future research.

Definitionally, the City describes businesses that have fewer than 20 employees as "very small"; these comprise 89 percent of New York City businesses (NYC Mayor's Office of Operations, 2015). These and "small" businesses with fewer than 100 employees employ half of the city's workforce. 48 percent of New York City's small businesses are also immigrant-

^{*}The Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882 banned Chinese labor immigration for ten years. Upon its expiration the moratorium was extended until the 1920s and required Chinese residents in the United States, who were ineligible for citizenship, to register for a certificate of residence. A quota system was also put in place to restrict most other immigration thereafter. Although the Exclusion Act was repealed in 1943, the quota remained until the Immigration and Nationality (Hart-Celler) Act of 1965.

owned; they employ half a million New Yorkers and contribute billions of dollars to the city's GDP (Drogaris & Afridi, 2019). Small businesses comprise food and retail as well as firms and professional services. Much of recent discourse around small business challenges involves storefronts, which are very visible markers of local economy. Reasons for concern are as varied and complex as the businesses themselves, but some have a common narrative. There is the difficulty of sustaining brick-and-mortar retail in the age of Amazon (Wu, 2019); the challenge of accommodating a rapidly changing, often 'gentrifying', neighborhood (Crowley, 2017); and for many, the looming threat of rent increase that can become untenable (Offenhartz, 2017).

Small businesses create local wealth, versus national chains that can cause a neighborhood to "become merely an importer of goods and services" (Wu, 2015). In high-development areas, also at stake is the risk of a perceived "Manhattanization" when a neighborhood has to balance preservation of certain features with growth (Goodyear, 2014). To those who call a neighborhood home, work at a local business or operate one, neighborhood change has far-reaching implications. Often, there are physical markers of change. Vacancies can inhibit a thriving retail corridor, with every shuttered local business a casualty in a fight for the "soul of NYC" (Surico, 2018). Business turnover risks local independent retailers ceding ground to chain stores (in fact, the number of national chains in New York City overall has declined by 3.7 percent from 2018 to 2019, according to Center for an Urban Future). The term 'neighborhood change' also tends to be used to describe the process of gentrification, which can and often does encompass the previous two phenomena and foretells a stark economic and demographic divide. In its influence on neighborhood character, role in community cohesion, and contribution to economic development, small

business is of interest in the discipline of urban planning. Such issues necessitate attention at both the citywide and hyperlocal levels.

New York City's Small Business Climate

The distinction of minority or immigrant-owned and -operated businesses and the retail corridors that support them is a necessary one. Bates, Bradford, and Seamans (2018) identify three criteria that influence a small business's success and which, to minority entrepreneurs, can act as barriers: skill in entrepreneurship, access to debt and equity capital, and access to diverse product markets. Immigrant and first-generation small business owners may face additional stressors. In Jackson Heights, 49 percent of businesses surveyed by the community group coalition Association for Neighborhood and Housing Development (ANHD) expressed that there are not enough City resources in their native languages, and 25 percent also believed that their immigration status has a negative effect on business (Drogaris & Afridi, 2019, p. 13).

A number of City programs, resources, and legislative measures have been implemented to address the needs of small businesses. They include mentorship opportunities for owners of businesses certified as minority- or women-owned enterprises (M/WBEs); multilingual business courses and guides; legal assistance with leases; a streamlined process for tracking regulatory documentation and fines; an expanded definition of tenant harassment; a commercial rent tax* amendment; and on-site visits from business specialists to storefront businesses through 'Chamber-on-the-Go' (SBS, 2015;

*The commercial rent tax (CRT) is applied to businesses in Manhattan south of 96th Street and north of Murray Street who pay at least \$250,000 in rent annually. As of July 1, 2018, the threshold was increased to \$500,000 for businesses that make up to \$5 million (NYC Office of the Mayor, 2017).

Surico, 2019; Law 2019/185; NYC Mayor's Office of Operations, 2015). But rent remains at the forefront as a significant sunk cost.

There is currently no rent cap on commercial spaces. According to the Office of the New York City Comptroller (2019), from 2007 to 2017 average retail rents rose by 22 percent. 20 percent of the total rent paid by tenants is associated with property taxes that landlords pass down (NYC Comptroller, 2019). To allay these costs, tenants may in turn feel pressured to raise prices or lay off employees, decisions that have consequences of their own (Drogaris & Afridi, 2019). Though generally incomparable to Manhattan rates, rents for new leases in the outer boroughs have also started rising recently (NYC Comptroller, 2019). It is a trend that Jackson Heights feels acutely, as property values rise and commercial tenants have reported instances of harassment from their landlords (Drogaris & Afridi, 2019).

In 2018, concern over citywide commercial rent prompted members of the New York City Council to reintroduce a bill, the Small Business Jobs Survival Act (SBJSA), that would apply commercial lease renewal protections for tenants, including minimum 10-year leases and regulated lease negotiations. Dubbed a "rent control" bill by some opponents, SBJSA faced reservations from the De Blasio administration for the potentiality of backfiring on immigrant-owned and small independent businesses that pay by the month or in cash, to whom landlords might then avoid leasing out of caution (Surico, 2018). Advocacy groups and elected officials also critiqued the lack of clarity in what constituted a small business and the unequal playing field in case of arbitration, with a small business on one side and a well-resourced landlord or company on the other (Surico, 2018; Chadha, 2019). Eventually citing a lack of data, the Council passed a bill that enables the City to track vacancies by requiring owners to register, on an annual basis, details about their commercial properties from

square footage to tenancy (Law 2019/157). The postponement of SBJSA, iterations of which have been heard on the floor of City Council 12 times since 1986 (Surico, 2018), and the prioritization of City-led data collection last year suggest that the vacancy phenomenon remains obscure, though anecdotes abound.

Amid concerns about vacant storefronts along vast stretches of New York blocks, the New York City Department of City Planning (DCP) evaluated local conditions in 24 pedestrian-oriented neighborhood retail corridors, including that of Jackson Heights. Vacancy trends were found to be localized and unique to the circumstances and market demands of each neighborhood (DCP, 2019). Corridors designated as “underperforming” based on indicators such as rent prices, disinvestment, and the absence of retail anchors tended to have higher vacancies (DCP, 2019, p. 6).^{*} Meanwhile, “hot” corridors in parts of Manhattan and Brooklyn, like Williamsburg, experienced rent bubbles due to “unrealistic” rent expectations by owners—what has lately been dubbed “high rent blight”—for which a market correction seems to be occurring (DCP, 2019, p. 5-6; Wu, 2015). In comparison, “local stable” corridors like Jackson Heights’ that have a solid local customer base exhibited relatively low vacancy (DCP, 2019, p. 5). In 2017, the citywide retail vacancy rate—vacant retail square footage over total retail square footage—was 5.8 percent, up from 4.0 percent a decade prior (NYC Comptroller, 2019). Rent is but one of a litany of factors—including new competing corridors, zoning restrictions, and delays in acquiring licenses or permits—that can prolong a vacancy.[†]

^{*}The DCP (2019) study notes that of greatest concern are long-term vacancies, as many short-term vacancies can be attributed to business turnover and its processes (e.g. leasing, construction).

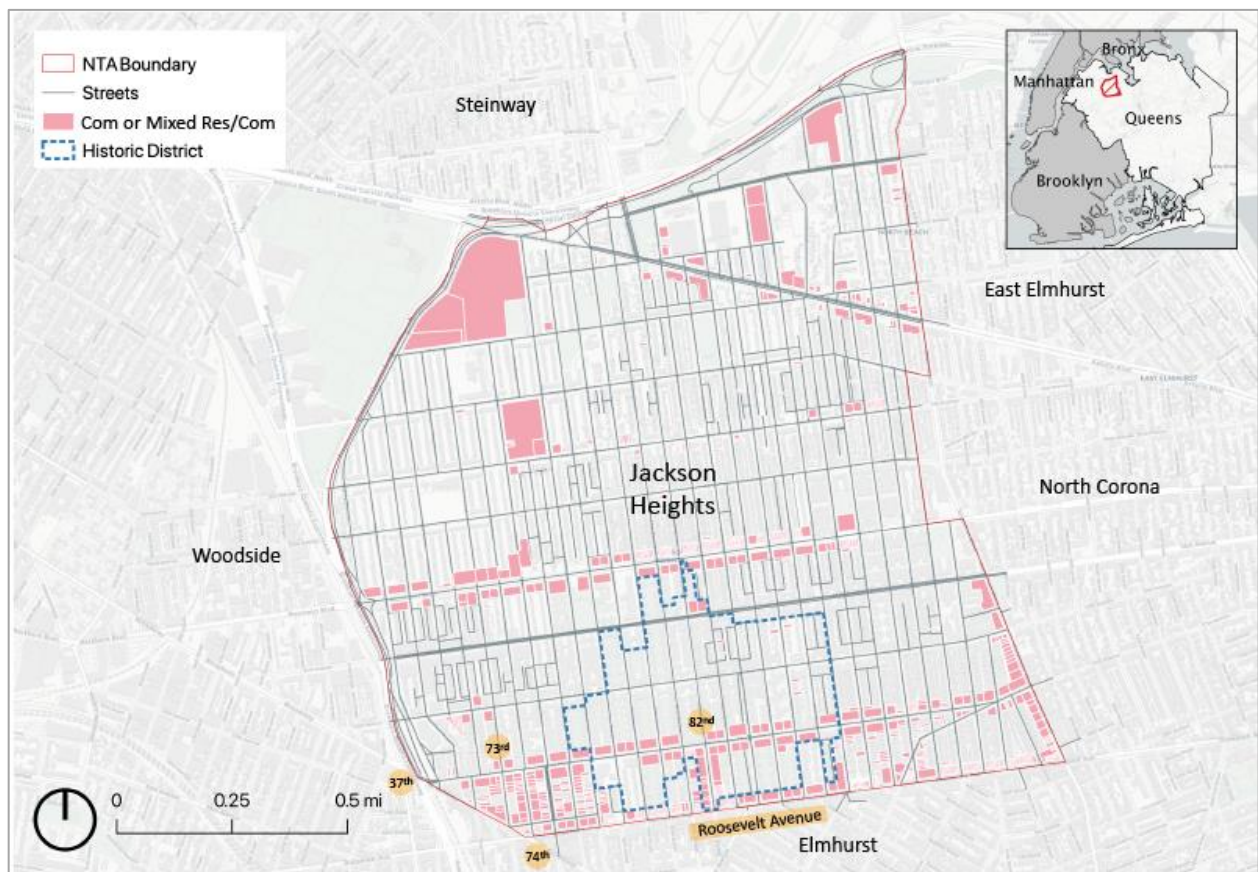
[†]The Office of the New York City Comptroller (2019) found that the length of delay in acquiring approvals of liquor licenses increased from 2017 to 2018 across the five boroughs. The percentage of building alteration permits unapproved after 30 days also rose in the outer boroughs since 2017.

The loss of a key neighborhood small business has implications for local jobs and the community it serves. Food and beverage, services, and other “experiential” formats are gaining ground while brick-and-mortar sales in dry goods—apparel and other consumer goods—are being affected by e-commerce (DCP, 2019, p. 8). From 2012 to 2018, merchants of clothing and general merchandise declined by seven percent and 12 percent respectively; meanwhile, more businesses have opened overall, with the greatest increases being in food, laundry service, and grocery and drugstores (NYC Comptroller, 2019). According to DCP (2019), the fact that many of New York’s retail corridors already comprise more food and beverage establishments than dry goods may soften the impact of e-commerce. And the e-commerce model itself is changing; according to PricewaterhouseCoopers and Urban Land Institute (2019), a new trend is in online retailers’ use of brick-and-mortar locations as showrooms or partial fulfillment centers. Jackson Heights’ classification as a local stable corridor by DCP was partly determined by what has thus far been a stable customer base. But it is also a transitioning immigrant neighborhood that is experiencing an influx of non-immigrant residents and a change to its immigrant population, requiring businesses old and new to adapt to survive (Drogaris & Afridi, 2019). Identifying and addressing localized stressors is critical to ensuring the vitality of the neighborhood’s retail corridor.

An Overview of Jackson Heights

Queens residents hail from over 120 countries, making it the most ethnically diverse county not only in New York but in the United States (NYS Comptroller, 2018). Jackson Heights is one of several immigrant neighborhoods in the borough served by the 7 train, along with Sunnyside, Woodside, Elmhurst, Corona, and Flushing—earning the line the moniker, “International Express.” Today, over 160 languages are spoken in Jackson Heights

and 58.3 percent of residents are foreign-born (SBS, 2020; DCP, 2020). Like its neighbors, Jackson Heights is supported by a substantial commercial corridor. The main retail strips are found on Roosevelt Avenue and 37th Avenue, as well as between those avenues on 73rd, 74th, and 82nd Streets (see **Figure 1**). Jackson Heights has a significant small business presence and an immigrant business presence in particular; the city’s “Little India” and “Little Colombia” are both located in the neighborhood. Jackson Heights is also home to a longstanding LGBTQ+ community.



Sources: Landmarks Preservation Commission (2019), New York City DCP (2020); base map is Carto Positron (2014)
Map created in May 2020

Figure 1. Jackson Heights

Contrary to its current diversity, the neighborhood was originally conceived as an “elite” suburban residential haven constructed in the spirit of Ebenezer Howard’s Garden

City model (Miyares, 2004). In 1898, citing what he viewed as an imbalance in the overcrowding of urban areas while rural areas were losing people, Howard proposed a new model for city—or more accurately, ‘anti-city’—building. The Garden City model joined the most valuable features of both town and country—the town’s society and wages, the country’s low rents and pastoral ambience—to construct a working class community arranged in rings wherein the outer ring had industry, the innermost ring had a garden bordered by civic buildings, and wards were arranged in between, separated by boulevards. Jane Jacobs, a steadfast critic of master planners, characterized Howard’s Garden City as “paternalistic, if not authoritarian,” contending that “he simply wrote off the intricate, many-faceted, cultural life of the metropolis” (Jacobs, 1961, p. 19).

Jackson Heights’ mid-rise garden apartments, for which the neighborhood’s historic district was designated, adapted the main premise of the garden city movement—compact buildings with uniformity in the public realm and a central courtyard in the private realm, with self-contained amenities—to make possible a suburban lifestyle near Manhattan. The completion of the Queensboro Bridge in 1909 followed by the expansion of public transportation, including the extension of the IRT (now 7) line, greatly increased access between Queens and the rest of New York. The borough’s population increased from 152,999 in 1900 to over 1 million by 1930 (Queens Historical Society, n.d.). Jackson Heights was originally less a neighborhood and more a development project conceived by a real estate company, Queensboro Corporation, to capitalize on opportunities in the newly ‘unlocked’ borough. Historically, the area that would become Jackson Heights had been a British army encampment and a country estate for the wealthy; by 1925, what was now the Queensboro Corporation’s property had paved roads and housed over 1,500 families (Antos &

Theodosiou, 2013). As a planned community, it was also exclusive; homeownership applications required references, a pretense for the Queensboro Corporation's active preference for upper-middle-class Anglo-Saxon Protestants (Antos & Theodosiou, 2013).*

The Great Depression and post-war suburbanization did not do to Jackson Heights what it had to many other urban neighborhoods. In the economic downturn Jackson Heights was opened to rentals and subsequently the community was buoyed by tenants, existing homeowners, a historic preservation movement, and immigration (Kasinitz, Bazzi, & Doane, 1998). The Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965, which opened America to highly skilled immigrants and made family reunification possible, ushered in the "largest and most heterogeneous" waves of immigration in the nation's history at that time and, in Queens, an influx of immigrants from Asia and Latin America (McGovern & Frazier, 2015, p. 11).† A *New York Magazine* profile of Jackson Heights from 1973, at a time when citywide 'white flight' was already underway, noted an influx of middle-class Latinos and opined that, "With good luck, the area can remain, as it now seems to be, one of the city's rare stable interracial neighborhoods" (Starr, 1973, p. 34).

From 1960 to 2010, Jackson Heights had gone from a 98.5 percent White-majority neighborhood to a diverse plurality in which more than half the population was Hispanic or Latino and 22 percent were Asian (Kasinitz, Bazzi, & Doane, 1998; DCP, 2017). Middle-class Latino entrepreneurs, starting with Colombians and Cubans in the 1950s, established

*As Kasinitz, Bazzi, and Doane (1998) also point out, Jewish and African American residents were specifically barred until the late-1940s and 1968 after the Fair Housing Act was passed, respectively. For African Americans, social division persisted such that Junction Boulevard, which bounds Jackson Heights to the west and Corona to the east, was dubbed a 'Mason-Dixon line' (Gregory, 1998).

†Prior to the Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965 (also known as the Hart-Celler Act), the Immigration and Nationality Act of 1952 (McCarran-Walter Act) repealed the exclusion of Asian immigrants and established preference-based immigration criteria for the first time while maintaining restrictive quotas that, in reality, severely limited non-Western European immigration.

businesses that would contribute to the formation of the first immigrant communities in the neighborhood (Miyares, 2004). “Little India” on 74th Street began to form in the 1980s as Indian entrepreneurs leased vacant storefronts and opened culturally specific businesses; one restaurant that had opened in 1980 as a general diner is still standing today—as a popular Indian buffet spot (Miyares, 2004). With the contributions of early entrepreneurs and their capital, the neighborhood actually remained true to Queensboro Corporation’s vision of a middle-class community, albeit a “hyperdiverse” one (Miyares, 2004). Jackson Heights today epitomizes the multicultural neighborhood, a reality that can be traced back to immigration policy and rent affordability.

The evolution of the neighborhood from something akin to a gated community to a multicultural, multigenerational, multi-class neighborhood did not come without its tensions and controversies. Roosevelt Avenue has long struggled with crime, including gang activity. Kasinitz, Bazzi, and Doane (1998) describe “Little Colombia” as having developed in parallel to the “tough and seedy” avenue even as White residents sought to distance Jackson Heights from the latter reputation (p. 166). Early on, the Indian community did not live in the area so much as own and patronize businesses there; Indian immigrants were less spatially concentrated than other groups and tended to settle in mixed neighborhoods (Kasinitz, Bazzi, & Doane, 1998; Khandelwal, 2002). The group could not be considered a monolith either, diverse as it was in class—highly-skilled Indian immigrants in the 1960s and 1970s and more recent arrivals, who were less so—and region. Their Jackson Heights businesses therefore drew customers from around the city and the suburbs, disrupting a “formerly sleepy commercial strip” and raising tensions between the businesses and Irish, Jewish, and

Italian American and Latino residents over parking, sanitation, and rising commercial rents by an 'outsider' group (Kasinitz, Bazzi, & Doane, 1998, p. 167; Khandelwal, 2002).

The Jackson Heights Beautification Group (JHBG), which was established in 1988, occasionally had accusations of bias raised against it for its insistence on homogeneity in street signage and implications that certain parts of the neighborhood were inconsistent with the Jackson Heights aesthetic. In 1990, a JHBG protest of sanitation in the area had attracted enough anti-Indian sentiment that the city's Human Rights Division's Crisis Prevention Unit got involved (Khandelwal, 2002). Subsequent steps were taken to include Indian merchants in the JHBG board and meetings with Community Board 3. Today, two main business associations operate in the cluster of South Asian businesses, both formed along ethnic lines: the Jackson Heights Merchant Association, which was founded in 1989 by Indian business owners to advocate for safer, more livable streets in the corridor (Khandelwal, 2002), and the Jackson Heights Bangladeshi Business Association (JBBA). As reported in local news, both have been involved in politicking as well. In 2010, irregularities in the election of the Jackson Heights Merchant Association board of directors was escalated to the State Supreme Court (Dolnick, 2010). Meanwhile, in 2016 the local advocacy group Desis Rising Up and Moving (DRUM) organized a demonstration that, in part, protested vendor harassment by the JBBA (Prashad, 2016).

Businesses in the "Little India" and "Little Colombia" clusters are more accurately multiethnic, with firms more often sharing a common region than co-ethnicity. "The businesses [on Roosevelt Avenue] are taking advantage of the combination of transportation access and the use of Spanish as a common trade language to ensure economic success," writes Miyares (2004). Much of Roosevelt Avenue east of 78th Street is dominated by Latino

businesses. Although Jackson Heights' 74th Street from Roosevelt to 37th Avenues is most recognizable as "Little India," a name first proposed by the Jackson Heights Merchant Association in 1992 to attract tourism, the block and its adjacent blocks have a significant concentration of a variety of South Asian and Himalayan establishments (Khandelwal, 2002; DCP, 2013).

Jackson Heights' proximity to Manhattan, once used to market co-ops, has fostered a working- and middle-class neighborhood in which many residents work in Manhattan (Marshall, 2000). Although neighborhoods may have certain physical qualities that contribute to their identity—Jackson Heights' co-ops are an example—the neighborhood boundaries are rather more fluid when considering the retail corridor, which is within walking distance from parts of Woodside, Elmhurst, and Corona.* The findings of NYC Small Business Services' Community District Needs Assessment (CDNA) for Jackson Heights, which identified needs and opportunities for growth and improvement in the area's commercial corridor, found that 63 percent of shoppers walk to Jackson Heights and 65 percent shop daily—suggesting that the majority are local.

In the Department of City Planning's vacancy study of the 24 neighborhood corridors, Jackson Heights had the lowest storefront vacancy rate at an averaged 5.1 percent, within the threshold of 5 to 10 percent vacancy that DCP (2019) specified as still being "healthy" (p. 17). The Jackson Heights corridor today is supported by residents who have a disposable income and a commercial market "relatively insulated from the influx of investment and rapid rent" experienced in Manhattan and Brooklyn (p. 32). However, anecdotally, business

*One way that the New York City Department of City Planning delineates neighborhoods is through the use of neighborhood tabulation areas (NTAs), a spatial unit that aggregates Census tracts for the purpose of population projections. Thus, such boundaries are not definitive.

owners note that rents have not only risen but are comparable to Manhattan, and a planned Target has lately pitted community organizations against developers and DCP (Khafagy, 2019). The neighborhood, where the median household income is \$57,015, has lately seen housing rents increase as well (DCP, 2020). In 2017, about one third of households spent more than half of their incomes on rent (Furman Center, 2018).

According to the CDNA, the corridor's main challenges pertain to the environment and streetscapes as well as outreach efforts to merchants and vendors that are stymied by language barriers. Regarding the former, the report cites street and sidewalk congestion, litter and unclean sidewalks, an unwelcoming environment under the elevated tracks, and insufficient public space—issues that the corridor has been grappling with for decades (SBS, 2020; Khandelwal, 2002). Addressing these issues through maintenance, temporary street activation, and engagement will require a community stewardship approach. Local community development corporation Chhaya CDC received a multi-year SBS grant, Avenue NYC, to support these efforts.

Table 1. Jackson Heights storefront inventory (n = 1,053)

Top 7 Type of Use	% of Storefronts
Professional Services	11.7 %
Limited- and Full-Service Restaurants	11.5 %
Clothing, Shoes, and Jewelry Stores	9.5 %
Salons and Barbershops	9.4 %
Medical Services	8.5 %
Pharmacies, Opticals, and Other Health	6.4 %
Electronics and Cell Phones	5.1 %

Source: NYC Small Business Services (2020)

The Jackson Heights corridor has over 1,000 storefronts, the majority of which are service based, and 101 street vendors. **Table 1** lists some of the top uses from the CDNA's storefront inventory. The report estimates that approximately \$1.15 billion per year is being lost in retail leakage, in other words being spent on retailers outside the trade area. Only two markets, shoes and health and personal care, had a retail surplus, interpreted as possibly drawing customers from beyond the trade area.

Based on a survey of 118 businesses, the CDNA reported that the average business has been in operation for 11 years, with 46 percent having opened within the last five years. 92 percent were tenants. 36 percent said that business has decreased, but over half said that they plan to remain in the area in the year to come, suggesting that they are optimistic. Marketing and lease support and access to financing were the most requested resources. The CDNA surveyed shoppers as well, and the results reveal a slight dissonance in what merchants and customers believe would attract more people to the corridor. Nearly a third of the surveyed merchants said that parking would help, while customers' recommendation was improved sanitation (20%) followed by parking (18%). Merchants were also more concerned about safety (10%) than customers (2%) were. 41 percent of the customers had other recommendations, including more public space and street furniture, and for the community to "feel more welcoming" (SBS, 2020).

Together with the review of the city's business climate, for Jackson Heights this conjures an image of a neighborhood that, long accustomed to shifting population compositions and a history of local entrepreneurship, is at the cusp of change once again. Thus, today's local businesses must appeal to an ever-broader customer base while also competing with e-commerce and changing tastes. According to the Association for

Neighborhood and Housing Development, older immigrant businesses in particular “must modernize” to attract new customers while newer businesses “need to educate themselves on the broader community’s needs and norms” (Drogaris & Afridi, 2019, p. 12). As DCP’s study of vacancy in the city’s retail corridors also notes, business stressors can come not only from rent burden but from circumstances like competing retail corridors—a fact of any immigrant community as the diaspora grows.* And all this amid an environment where, as the recent CDNA found, language barriers remain a challenge in outreach efforts to small businesses in the neighborhood. Through conversations with small business owners in Jackson Heights’ diverse landscape of culturally specific and more general businesses, this study investigates to what extent the neighborhood’s businesses operate on a business-as-usual basis, whether these trends have unearthed anxieties, and if efforts are being made to actively respond.

*New York’s Chinatown is one such example; today there are larger ‘satellite Chinatowns’ in neighborhoods like Flushing in Queens and Bensonhurst in Brooklyn.

Literature Review

Chicago School sociologists borrowed from the process of ecological succession—whereby environmental factors lead to changes in the species composition of an ecological community (Thompson, 2009)—to conceptualize neighborhood succession, wherein one group replaces another (McKenzie, 1924). Ethnic succession was characterized within the context of ‘white flight’ from neighborhoods and racial conflict between subsequent groups competing for ‘resources’ like housing, employment, or political power (Herman, 2008). In this model of neighborhood transition, advanced by the Chicago School’s Ernest Burgess and Robert E. Park in the 1920s, the influx of new groups initially begets conflict followed by cooperation and assimilation (Sanders & Nee, 1987). This trend ascribes to a view that is less probable in today’s global cities. There is ample literature on immigrant entrepreneurship and ethnic enclaves in general with focus on specific ethnic groups. Scholars have also studied the spatial distribution and typologies of small businesses in neighborhoods turning over from one group to another or which have a large proportion of minority residents (Luk & Phan, 2005; Fong, Anderson, Chen, & Luk, 2008). This paper focuses on the latter paradigm of multiculturalism in a corridor that has well-established immigrant communities and considers the perspectives of small business owners who are navigating changes.

The great ethnic enclave theory debate

A large body of literature exists around the topic of entrepreneurship within an ‘ethnic enclave’ (hereafter referred to as ‘enclave’), itself an evolving term that has been debated and reconceptualized over the past three decades. In everyday parlance, the term might be used to describe an area with a high concentration of an ethnic group and its co-ethnic businesses, whose specialized goods and services may extend beyond just necessities

to providing “symbolic ties” to a shared background (Kim, 2018, p. 280). Demands for goods and services are met by co-ethnic businesses that can thrive precisely because they have a reliable source of labor and customers (Portes & Jensen, 1989; Fong, Chen, & Luk, 2012).

Historically, some groups assembled thus out of necessity, as a consequence of government policies—and societal prejudice—that restricted settlement options or access to the general labor market (Kwong, 1987). Self-employment in an informal business and employment in a co-ethnic firm are still pursued as pathways to entrepreneurship. To a lesser degree, entrepreneurship is also pursued in response to ‘blocked mobility’ whereby immigrants are unable to immediately compete in the labor market because of nontransferable skills or credentials (Raijman & Tienda, 2000). Motivations are influenced by people’s previous circumstances—educational attainment, business experience skills. Expectations about the longevity of the business also vary, being an intergenerational endeavor to some groups and a mechanism for socioeconomic mobility to others.

The sociological definition of ‘enclave’ has referred to both place of residence and place of work. The treatment of this distinction in evaluations of the enclave economy hypothesis put forth by Portes and Wilson (1980) has yielded mixed results and is one of the field’s most enduring, and at times controversial, debates. As per Portes and Wilson’s (1980) study of Cuban immigrants in Miami, the hypothesis posits that the economic benefits of working in an enclave—defined as the location of a co-ethnic, vertically integrated market with “sympathetic sources of supply and consumer outlets” (p. 301)—are comparable to that of the ‘central’ labor market. But while enclaves have been found to exhibit cultural ties, a perceived trust in co-ethnic employees, and a social network for jobs and other resources, there can also be perpetual disadvantages if people are trapped in low wages, have few

opportunities to grow their human capital, or are limited to certain sectors (Bloch & McKay, 2015). When it comes to “mainstream” businesses, minority business owners may also encounter a systemic barrier that Bates, Bradford, and Seamans (2018) attribute to “white stereotypes about suitable roles for minorities in U.S. society” (p. 417). To that end, Sanders and Nee (1987) tested the enclave economy hypothesis under place of residence, given “the economic cost traditionally associated with immigration and segregation” (p. 747). Their comparative study of Cuban immigrants in Miami and Hialeah and Chinese immigrants in San Francisco found that among enclave residents who were private employees, earnings as a function of human capital were less than those of non-enclave populations.

In the subsequent back-and-forth that ensued over methodologies (Portes & Jensen, 1989; Sanders & Nee, 1992), and in the many years since, studies testing the hypothesis have continued to produce mixed results. Zhou and Logan (1989) employed the enclave definitions of place of residence, place of work, and additionally, overrepresented sectors in New York’s Chinatown. All three cases yielded positive returns among male earners, irrespective of whether they were self-employed or private employees. Davis (2004) and Aguilera (2009) found that their study populations—Cuban immigrants and self-employed Cuban and Mexican immigrants, respectively—earned less within enclaves than they would have beyond them. There is a degree of self-selection or extenuating circumstance in considering wages; education, economic class, and clustering can all vary across a single population. As Davis (2004) notes regarding the Cuban diaspora, in the 1960s the U.S. government sponsored the relocation of individuals with “higher levels of human capital” beyond Miami (p. 464).

Kim (2018, p. 279) notes that few areas achieve all three of Portes and colleagues' conditions qualifying 'enclaves': (1) co-ethnic employers and employees, (2) concentration of entrepreneurs and labor opportunities, and (3) proximity to specialized sectors. Aguilera (2009) observes that while "defining ethnic enclaves in terms of the spatial concentration addresses the structural advantages associated with having [co-ethnic] owners, suppliers, and workers," comparisons between enclaves are challenging because boundaries are ambiguous, hence a reliance on clustering. Businesses do not operate in isolation; Davis (2004) notes that interrelationships between businesses within an enclave and beyond "[make] it difficult to clearly delineate enclave participants from non-enclave participants" (p. 455). Thus, for the purposes of that study, all of Miami-Dade County, which in 1990 had 65 percent of all Cubans residing in America, was an enclave.

Recent scholarship has expanded the traditional definition of an enclave. Globalization has transcended physical boundaries, giving way to transnational interactions whereby immigrants have increased access to their home countries and foreign investment, affording communities more resources than historically was the case (Fong, Chen, & Luk, 2012; Fong, Anderson, Chen, & Luk, 2008). Transnational ties can create what Kim (2018) calls a "transclave"; in New York's Koreatown, the influence of transnational investment and cultural exchange has produced an "ethnically themed" commercial hub that transcends the traditional function of an enclave as a supportive mechanism for commerce (p. 277). Transnational ties also play a role in 'ethnoburbs,' multiethnic clusters of suburban residential and business districts that "[lack] a specific ethnic identity" even though one ethnic group may be highly concentrated (Li, 1998, p. 482).

The formation of the ethnoburb in the Li (1998) case study—a suburb outside Los Angeles from the 1960s to 1990—developed out of global, national, and local factors, such as post-Fordist restructuring of industries amid the Vietnam and Cold Wars, a loosening of U.S. policies around immigration, and ‘white flight.’ Though the ethnoburb comprised residents from countries in the “Chinese diaspora” as well as 29 other countries, the Chinese community resembled that of a traditional enclave—a “city-within-a-city”—but with global connections that greatly benefited some people while supplying local jobs (Li, 1998, p. 483-484). Social stratification within what the author describes as members of the Chinese diaspora—Chinese born in mainland China, Hong Kong, Taiwan, as well as southeast Asian countries—also manifested, with the groups occupying different suburban neighborhoods and occupations.

The phenomenon of different groups occupying separate enclaves within proximity to one another is found in New York City today. McGovern and Frazier (2015) suggest that in the borough of Queens, which is perhaps the most ethnically diverse place in the world, ethnic self-segregation was partially facilitated by a geological peculiarity: an Ice Age era ridge called the terminal moraine that divided Queens in half by elevation, and which Robert Moses used to his advantage to construct highways. Years later, the built environment also physically separates East Asian and South Asian communities. But even within these communities, subgroups have developed in line with socioeconomic status, with wealthier groups settling further east in Queens, where the typology leans more suburban.

On neighborhood change

Neighborhood change has as of late been used to describe gentrification, wherein higher-income people begin to move into a neighborhood, affecting housing prices as

demand increases. With it is a perceived change in the types of local businesses, available neighborhood services, and the demographics of residents. There is no single formula for such neighborhood change. Hum (2010) observes that when it comes to advocating for changes in a community, as the community diversifies political engagement and investment can be affected by class divisions and property ownership not only beyond ethnic groups but within them. Thus, co-ethnic gentrification is a phenomenon that can arise as a byproduct of transnational investment and disparities in economic and social class within a group.

Turnover can and does take place between immigrant groups as well. When Irish, Italian, and other immigrant groups began to settle in Queens, they formed separate communities (McGovern & Frazier, 2015). McGovern and Frazier trace new multicultural neighborhoods at that time to intermarriage and shared faiths. While Queens today is arguably the most diverse place in the world, turnover from one majority ethnic group to another in some of the most well-known immigrant neighborhoods did not come without its tensions. In their case study, McGovern and Frazier present this through the evolution of Flushing. Once a “White-dominated” neighborhood, Flushing experienced an influx of Black, Chinese, Korean, and Latino residents and is now known as one of New York’s satellite Chinatowns (McGovern & Frazier, 2015, p. 20; Ueda, 2017, p. 3). During the transition, signage in other languages, specialized businesses and services, and competition for housing created conflict between the older, European community’s sense of place and the new one being established by newcomers, ultimately resulting in ‘white flight’ as recently as the 1990s (McGovern & Frazier, 2015). As the authors also point out, in other neighborhoods that have been historically European, racial tensions arose with the opening of certain businesses or aesthetic changes to private homes.

Frazier (2015) further expanded on the contemporary tensions of “place remaking,” through which the meaning of a place is redefined or reinterpreted. Ethno-architecture represents a new group through cultural or religious “cues” against which locals may have a reactionary response “triggered by perceived changes in local places with embedded and nostalgic meanings” (Frazier, 2016, p. 46). This can manifest in design decisions that are reminiscent of the built environment elsewhere. In Queens Village, which has a large Indian population, McGovern and Frazier (2015) point to characteristics such as pastel colors and the use of marble to transform houses that were originally constructed in a European style to “symbolic representations of the [owner’s] homeland” (p. 20). Because ethno-architecture can run contrary to the norms set in place, there is often an expectation or demand in these cases for the new group to assimilate instead. Naturally, to the new group this response feels hostile. Thus, local preservation interests—preservation in layman’s terms—and place (re)making gives way to ethnic tensions (Frazier, 2016).

Sense of place is not just spoken about in the urban context. Says Vogt (2011) about conservation efforts amid recent trends toward exurban housing and amenity-based development and tourism: “By itself [preserving what makes a place special] can lead to...a future unresponsive to economic and social trends, rooted just in preservation of certain idealized features and values...” (p. 107). Thus, preservation for the sake of preservation can be counterproductive. Toronto’s Chinatown, despite being historically ascribed to Chinese businesses and retaining an identity as Chinatown, was characterized by Luk and Phan (2005) as having a growing and thriving Vietnamese business community that benefited from cultural adjacency to the previously dominant group.

Ueda (2017) notes “new forms of entrepreneurship, consumerism, art, and entertainment,” which are present in today’s multicultural communities: ethnic grocery stores that carry regional products, fusion cuisine at restaurants, and music and films from around the world (p. 5). Another is of generational changes that can expand a community’s network: “While their parents had formed communities organized around regional antecedents, the children of immigrants created ethnic American communities...built upon broader commonalities of ‘Americanized’ lifestyle and popular behavior” (Ueda, 2017, p. 8). At some point, there is engagement with the ‘mainstream’ market, the moniker of which implies a stark distinction from one’s ethnic community or cultural sphere.

Community-business dynamics

Debates around assimilation today challenge theories attesting that gradual assimilation yields social mobility. Crul (2016) notes that these theories originated during a time when American society was less diverse and more segregated; particularly in today’s “majority-minority” cities where there is also “diversity within diversity” (p. 58), assimilation—and ‘integration’—require new models of evaluation. This is demonstrated among many immigrant communities today. “Middleman minorities,” write Zhou and Cho (2010), “are those ethnic entrepreneurs who trade between a society’s elite and the masses” (p. 85). They fill a gap in disinvested or poorly resourced neighborhoods, serving the community but not living in it, and thus may have limited involvement in said community. “Enclave entrepreneurs,” meanwhile, tend to be socially embedded in their co-ethnic communities. Amid rising multiethnicity, some people play a double role, as an enclave entrepreneur to co-ethnic customers and a middleman minority entrepreneur to others in the neighborhood (Zhou & Cho, 2010). If there is a strong network of co-ethnic organizations

or institutions and social spaces supporting an enclave, economic development from the capital and social investment of its entrepreneurs into their communities can, among other things, attract both co-ethnic and non-co-ethnic middle-class customers (Zhou & Cho, 2010). In Los Angeles' Koreatown, this framework helped generate a variety of professional services, retail, dining, and entertainment options that "clearly target a middle-class clientele who does not live there, while serving the needs" of the mostly Hispanic residential population of the broader neighborhood (Zhou & Cho, 2010, p. 89).

New models of community-business dynamics have developed. One is of "multicultural hybridism," wherein immigrant entrepreneurs expand beyond the enclave economy (Arrighetti, Bolzani, & Lasagni, 2014). Capacity building has been attributed to a such a firm's successful introduction into the 'mainstream' market; although there is still some reliance on the ethnic community network, business relationships are built beyond them as well (Arrighetti, Bolzani, & Lasagni, 2014). In examining immigrant firms in Italy, Arrighetti, Bolzani, and Lasagni (2014) also found that a business's maturity and local language skills were drivers for these changes while educational attainment and participation in local associations were not. As the very composition of enclaves is redefined, local businesses accustomed to co-ethnic customers could be forced to adapt to changing dynamics, and their maturity and sector of expertise may play a role in their longevity.

In recent years, the term 'majority-minority' has been used to characterize a projected demographic shift away from a non-Hispanic White majority in the United States population in the next two decades (Devine & Ortman, 2014). That is only truly accurate if all minority groups are considered as a monolith. In the case that no one group comprises more than 50 percent, it would be more accurate to characterize the U.S. population as a

plurality of different groups. Fong, Chen, & Luk (2012) found that Chinese businesses in diverse neighborhoods hire beyond their co-ethnic community, while earlier immigrants are more likely to engage with small businesses and seek jobs beyond their co-ethnic networks than newcomers. There is also an implication that small businesses may choose to locate in visible minority neighborhoods where a greater proportion of residents do not speak the dominant language (i.e. English) because of the expected cost savings from offering lower wages for lower-skilled workers (Fong, Chen, & Luk, 2012).

Ethnic enclaves have traditionally described physical spaces where ethnic businesses and services are visibly concentrated, and wherein the actors—business owners, employees, and customers—tend to share the same ethnic background. This creates a symbiotic environment in which the different components of the enclave economy are bolstered by the community's social network. For immigrant-owned businesses, there is a tradeoff; they may forgo reaching a broader community in favor of a smaller but stable and known customer base. But as the literature has also shown, the concept of the traditional enclave is increasingly challenged. There are instances of enclaves successfully operating within a community that is diverse in ethnicity and economy; the crossover makes any perceived boundaries rather more fluid. Jackson Heights is not experiencing a turnover from one majority group to another, but rather, has a growing plurality. This paper research explores how business owners confront a neighborhood that is increasingly diverse by considering to what extent the members of the corridor in Jackson Heights adhere to or diverge from the traditional 'enclave' behavior observed by scholars, and to what effect.

Methodology

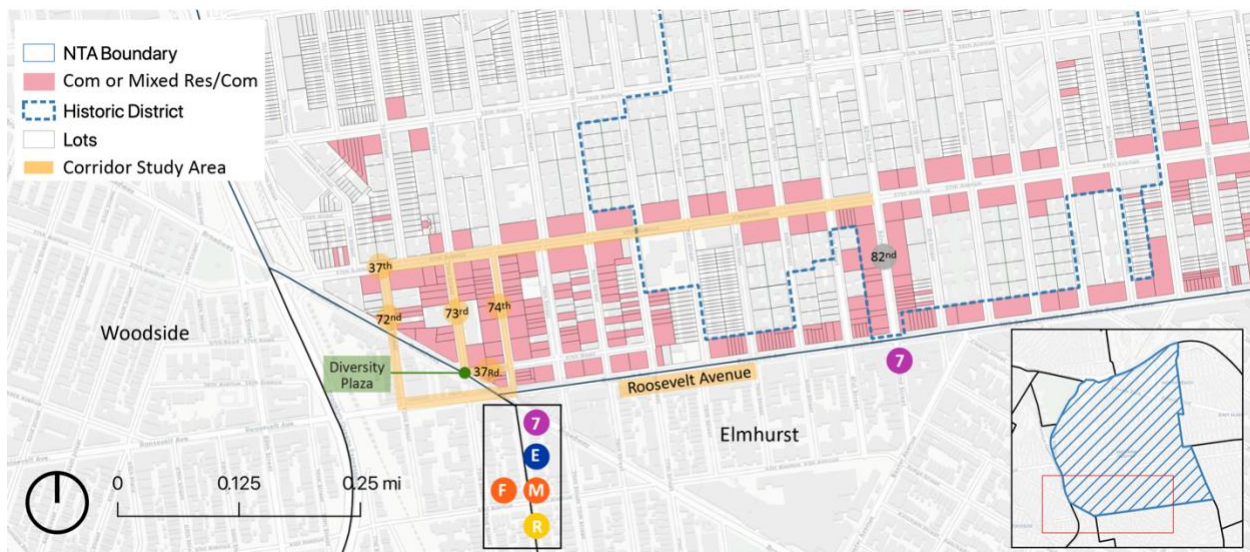
Jackson Heights' composition of long-time groups and more recent arrivals, its concentration of immigrant businesses, and its characterization as a stable corridor (DCP, 2019) made it a good candidate for further study. A case study approach was taken to analyze the small business-to-community dynamics in Jackson Heights' main commercial corridor through a qualitative interview process and analysis. Consideration was given to the costs and benefits of operating a business that offers products specific to a certain country or culture amid the broader multicultural community. Thus, the following research question was formulated: *How do the priorities of small businesses that offer culturally specific goods or services compare to those of other businesses in a multicultural retail corridor?*

Study area

Jackson Heights is an immensely diverse neighborhood, with a retail corridor that reflects that; different clusters of ethnic businesses can be observed in the course of over a dozen blocks. The identity of one segment of the corridor discussed in this research encompasses a broad geography as the destination for products from the South Asian subcontinent and the Himalayan region. These businesses are primarily located within 73rd to 74th Streets and 37th to Roosevelt Avenues, with many also interspersed among the blocks surrounding that core. This paper focuses on those businesses in the corridor that were originally conceived to meet the needs of the South Asian community through the offering of specific products or accommodations, as well as general businesses like pharmacies and hardware stores. Together, they offer a comparative look into intra-corridor dynamics.

Interview subjects were drawn from businesses on 72nd to 74th Streets from Roosevelt to 37th Avenues (where businesses dealing in culturally specific goods and

services are largely concentrated) and the 37th Avenue thoroughfare from 75th to 82nd Streets (which has a greater share of general neighborhood businesses) (see **Figure 2**). Neighborhood delineations are generally administrative; when it comes to local customers, spillover is not only expected but assured. For example, on 70th Street and Roosevelt Avenue is the first of a cluster of Filipino businesses that comprise “Little Manila” in Woodside, while south of Roosevelt is Elmhurst, also recognized as one of New York’s satellite Chinatowns. This study conformed closely to the NTA delineation for the neighborhood, the one exception being that the whole of Roosevelt Avenue on 72nd Street was included.



Sources: Landmarks Preservation Commission (2019), New York City DCP (2020); base map is Carto Positron (2014)
Map created in May 2020

Figure 2. Study Area

Qualitative interviews

Qualitative data was collected through semi-structured interviews with the representatives—owner, manager, or employee—of 22 small businesses within the study area over the course of a month and a half. Best efforts were made to engage with a similar number of businesses that offer specific cultural items within or in very close proximity to the core ‘enclave’ on 73rd/74th Streets (12) and general businesses (10), of a broad variety

(see **Table 2**). Small businesses were identified as those that are non-franchised (per Drogaris & Afridi, 2019) and independent—which the NYC Comptroller (2019) specifies as having “no more than five locations in New York City and five outside the city” (p. 23). All but two of the businesses were ‘very small’—defined as having fewer than 20 employees. Businesses of interest were also population-serving and had a storefront location. In consideration of temporality, business owners had to have operated in the neighborhood for at least five years, whether with their current business or a previous one.

Table 2. Overview of the businesses interviewed

Businesses that offer culturally specific goods or services (12)	(3) Clothing [saris, kurtas, etc.] (3) Grocery [Bangladeshi origin] (3) Jewelry (1) Eatery (1) Electronics (1) Printing, Supplies, and Shipping
General businesses (10)	(3) Specialty [e.g. gifts, florists, hobby] (2) Eatery (2) Pharmacy, Optical, and Health (2) Hardware and Home Improvement (1) Electronics

Note: In order to respect the privacy of interview participants, the categories of certain businesses have been generalized to ensure anonymity.

Businesses that met the criteria were approached in person or by email and an interview was requested. Challenges in recruiting subjects included occasional language barriers as well as schedule conflicts. In several cases, the request for an interview was also refused. Taken together, these conditions determined a self-selection bias in the study. Circumstances beyond anyone’s control affected the study scope as well. In early March, New York City began to experience cases of COVID-19, a novel coronavirus, which was declared a pandemic by the World Health Organization not long after. Public health efforts around

managing community spread necessitated an early conclusion to data collection.* Ultimately, some contacts were made via reference, and most through cold calls. Interviews were conducted in English for all but two cases, which were conducted in Bangla ('Bengali'). Save for one interview by phone, the rest were in-person. Most of the interviews ranged from 15 minutes to a half hour. Half of the subjects consented to their interviews being recorded for the purpose of analysis; for the other half, handwritten notes were taken.

The interview structure was adapted from McDaniel and Drever (2009) and Arrighetti, Bolzani, and Lasagni (2014) as well as recommendations for future research by Wang (2012). Three thematic modules or units comprised the focus of the interviews, the contents of which are analyzed in the findings. The interviews in this study are not intended to be representative of the business community as a whole. Rather, the businesses possess unique characteristics and experiences that can be considered thematically in order to analyze commonalities and contrasting experiences in Jackson Heights.

Interview unit 1: Business background

Location and timeliness are key considerations for any business. For culturally specific businesses in particular, insight into why they chose their location, what products they offer, and when in the corridor's history they opened inform the evolution of the corridor. The purpose was to understand changes in the business environment from the perspective of the small business owner. Implicit in the discussion is whether the business and its success or failure is viewed as being tied to the community it serves or to the place.

*As of this writing, New York is the epicenter of COVID-19 in the United States. Nonessential businesses statewide have been ordered to remain closed while food and beverage businesses are allowed only takeout and delivery. The breadth of the economic and financial losses has yet to be determined, but the impacts are already being felt by small businesses. The interviews discussed herein reflect a time before this unprecedented incident.

The following prompts were used:

- *How did the business come to be, and why did you choose to locate here?*
- *How has the community changed since the time that the business first opened?*
- *Has there been a generational shift?*

Interview unit 2: Challenges

In considering the benefits versus the costs of running a business in an 'ethnic enclave'-like environment, the business's characterization of challenges sets the context for identifying factors that are critical to success. The strategies employed by these businesses to maintain or grow their customer base and the challenges that they have experienced are also notable in how they compare to that of general businesses, which by nature of the products or services offered have a larger customer base.

These follow-up questions were employed to dissect this unit:

- *Have you had to change the way you do business?*
- *Is that something that you have considered at all?*
- *Are there other challenges in running a business here that concern you?*

Interview unit 3: Community

The final thematic consideration was of the subject's impression of business-community dynamics and outlook for the near future. Although businesses in an immigrant community may benefit greatly from engaging with customers with whom they share a similar background, it is also the case that, with time, diasporas are diffused. Smaller such communities may form and grow elsewhere, offering its residents, businesses, and visitors a similar retail environment.

To that end, the following questions were considered:

- *Have you interacted with local business/community associations, or the City in any way?*
- *Is there something new that you would like to see in the neighborhood?*
- *How do you imagine the future of this corridor and the neighborhood? Are you optimistic?*

Discussion

“Even [in] New York City, especially New York City, anyone sticks to one [group], they cannot survive. You have to focus on what customer you’re getting, day by day... You have to put all these things together to survive this moment in New York City.”

—*Bangladeshi business owner in “Little India”*

“You can’t put anyone in a niche. And you shouldn’t... I don’t size anyone up. I talk to people and everyone is a new face, a new challenge. But I don’t niche anybody. I don’t care what race, color, creed... I don’t have a prejudiced bone in my body. If you do, you can’t be in business.”

—*American business owner in the historic district*

For businesses located in and adjacent to the block known as “Little India,” demographic changes in the neighborhood over the past three decades have engendered mixed feelings about the longevity of the businesses there. All of these interviewed businesses have maintained some presence in the neighborhood for many years. The oldest ones had been in Jackson Heights since the 1990s, when they were among the first of their peers to offer their respective products—saris and other garments, traditional food staples—affording them a reputation that has lasted to this day. Even the ‘newest’ businesses, two of which had opened within the past five years, were owned by people who had been involved in other businesses in Jackson Heights prior, and who carried their reputations and knowledge of the market with them to their new ventures.

Merchants credited their businesses’ reputations for continued patronage. Citing the strength of word-of-mouth, few considered digital marketing to reach a greater pool of customers even as they spoke about declining foot traffic. While some business owners were optimistic about Jackson Heights’ continued place as a destination for cultural items, the majority expressed trepidation at the smaller crowds, rising commercial rents, and competing corridors. Merchants who dealt in dry goods also had to contend with e-

commerce; while customers still came to shops when the quality of an online product could not be vouched for, one clothing shop owner said that “they have taken away 10-15 percent of our business.”

Many of the general businesses that were interviewed were even older than those mentioned earlier—the oldest had been in the owner’s family since the 1970s—and also cited reputation as a factor in their longevity. Where the culturally specific businesses benefited from a sort of symbiotic ecosystem of like businesses that were clustered such that they shared much of the same foot traffic, some of the businesses on 37th Avenue benefited from their proximity to the co-ops and the customers therein, and certainly from the advantageous position of being situated between a key public transit hub and a dense residential area. These general businesses expressed fewer worries about demographics shifts but had different challenges, such as that of offering multilingual customer service or adapting to different styles of interactions.

Twenty-two businesses in Jackson Heights were interviewed for this study. They deal in products ranging from saris to prescription eyeglasses and self-identified as coming from a variety of backgrounds. Some were family businesses run by multiple generations or spouses, while others were independent ventures or business partnerships. There were owners with formal education or experience in business and those who worked in other sectors before becoming entrepreneurs. And about half are either locals or were so in the past. Despite their involvement in different markets, sometimes with different priorities, and certainly different journeys in establishing their shops, business owners from “Little India” to the historic district exhibited similar dynamics buoyed by a reliable customer base and a

long-established corridor, as well as both anxieties and hopes regarding demographic changes.

Transnationalism and forms of ethno-architecture

“People used to buy electronics from here to take back home because it wasn’t readily available back home at that time. Now it is, so not as many people buy it. But still, we serve that community because there are a lot of people who take things home as gifts... It’s just easier, plus, ooh, that person bought it from overseas. They still like that.”

—*Owner of an electronics shop*

The first Indian businesses in Jackson Heights and their customers, in the 1980s, were generally not local to the neighborhood but nonetheless established 74th Street as a destination for traditional dry goods and cuisine. Transnationalism encompasses migration, the transfer of money through investments and remittance payments, and the act of buying imported cultural goods (Lee, 2015). Many immigrant communities are transnational in nature, and the South Asian community is no different in that regard. On the reception among Indian immigrants when his business first opened in Manhattan in the 1970s, selling synthetic, wash-and-wear saris from Japan, one merchant commented: “Nobody expected us to do that type of business but people were really hungry for those types of goods... They’d never seen these kinds of fabrics. We started doing good business right away.”

People not only shopped for themselves, but they also bought gifts to take back to India, where this product was then a novelty. The market for buying gifts to send or take back to one’s homeland was a big one in the early years of these Jackson Heights businesses. Around the time the clothing merchant’s business relocated to the neighborhood in the 1990s, the retail block had several electronics shops that sold imported 220V appliances, a popular import to America that was then sent by immigrants to their families abroad. Area

businesses have since slotted themselves into different roles in the local economy. There are several international money transfer services in the neighborhood that retain storefronts and advertise exchange rates for different currencies. The owner of one electronics shop sells luggage to complement customers’ international-bound purchases. Another local business offers shipping services and referenced gift-giving as a reason for the business’s conception. The businesses in this study that deal in culturally specific products or services originated from three different circumstances that facilitated the consumption of goods (see **Table 3**).

Table 3. Reasons for locating business within proximity to 74th Street (“Little India”)

Reason	Selected quotes*
An existing customer base	<p>“The neighborhood was Desi-oriented. There were Indians and Punjabis. It wasn’t clear that it would become Bangladeshi, but it was similar.” <i>—Grocer, on when the first Bangladeshi businesses opened in the 1990s</i></p> <p>“I knew there was lots of community-based [business] but is my community enough to support my expenses, you know? Will I be able to do enough business where my expenses will be met? But once I opened the business it proved that yes, there is.” <i>—Business owner on deciding to locate in Jackson Heights when the Nepalese community was new</i></p>
An established market	<p>People from other states know that there is an Asian market for gold jewelry in Jackson Heights. <i>[Jewelry]</i></p> <p>It was the only Desi community for shopping [in the 1990s]. <i>—Owner of traditional clothing shop</i></p>
Met a need in the community	<p>“People in this community—a lot of Indian, Bangladeshi, South Asian people—they like to send gifts to their family. Many people staying here alone, family not here.” <i>[Printing & Supplies]</i></p> <p>The community was small at the time and there was no business like this here. <i>—Employee of a shop that used to sell Bangladeshi media</i></p>

*Responses paraphrased for interviews that were not recorded, as indicated by the lack of quotation marks.

Forty years on, the retail strip has not only endured but it has grown—from the first businesses on 74th Street to the adjacent blocks—though its core customers may have changed. While the physical movement of goods can be seen as a boon, at least for the clothing shop mentioned earlier, globalization also caused both a shift in business and an unexpected opportunity:

“Slowly, slowly...India started to make synthetic saris in India. So, what happened is the Indian population stopped buying these saris from us. We were in a big dilemma of what to do. Who’s gonna buy? ...And then luckily, what happened is the Bangladeshi people came in, you know? ...Slowly the Nepalese came in, and of course the Pakistanis were there. And the Indians were there also. But these were the people who helped us, you know, go back to doing good business. The Bangladeshi people.”

Tastes for the product had not changed so much as technological advances had reconfigured the flow of goods, and a new group, Bangladeshis, was primed for their turn in the transnational market. Bangladeshis had experienced significant growth in the last three decades; according to DCP (2013), they went from being the 42nd largest immigrant group in 1990 to 17th in 2000 to 11th in 2011. By 2011 their population had exceeded that of Indian immigrants in Queens. The Immigration Amendments of 1988, in addition to increasing visa allotments to people from countries “adversely affected” by the 1965 Act—like Europeans, for many of whom family reunification no longer applied—also issued visas to people in countries underrepresented by current immigration trends (DCP, 2013). These diversity visas were made permanent in 1990, and in the new millennium Bangladesh became the top country to receive diversity visas (DCP, 2013). Today, many of the shops on 73rd Street between Broadway and 37th Street are Bangladeshi-owned.

Therefore, these Jackson Heights businesses challenge the traditional definition of an enclave as a network of co-ethnic firms and customers. **Table 4** summarizes the core

customers of businesses that had originally formed to serve a specific community, as identified by the interviewees. Business owners who experienced a shift from mostly Indian customers to Bangladeshi customers seem to have found that transition to be easy. One jeweler described it as “comfortable,” and another estimated that 75 percent of his customers are now Bangladeshi. The clothing merchant introduced earlier also cited today’s multicultural ties, as people of different backgrounds come to shop for Indian weddings. Another business that specialized in Bangladeshi media at its conception has since pivoted to selling and repairing electronics, and now sees a greater variety of customers. According to a shop employee, the evolution was necessary and inevitable for the business’s survival; a “community-based business” alone, he believed, would not work anymore.

Table 4. Customer base of businesses within proximity to 74th Street

Category of shop	Main customers*
Clothing (South Asian garments)	Bangladeshis, Indians, Pakistanis; some Nepalese, Americans, and Hispanic groups
Grocery	Mostly Bangladeshis; area restaurants; some other locals from different backgrounds
Jewelry	Bangladeshis, Indians, Pakistanis, Nepalese; some Puerto Ricans and Africans
Eatery (Nepalese and Tibetan cuisine)	Nepalese, Tibetans; a lot of locals from different backgrounds
Electronics	Bangladeshis, Indians, Pakistanis, Nepalese
Printing, Supplies, and Shipping	South Asians, Southeast Asians, Americans, South Americans

*As described by the interviewees.

Even with regional similarities, no two cultures are identical. Business owners noted subtleties in customer preferences, such as vegetarian food preferences among some groups, halal among others. The owner of an eatery that specializes in Nepalese and Tibetan cuisine

gave this perspective as both a business and as a customer himself, referencing Patel Brothers, an Indian supermarket chain that started in Chicago in 1974 and now has 52 locations around the country:

“There used to be one or two that sell Nepali items. Now there’s tons of them which are selling goods. With Nepali restaurants we need certain things that few shops sell.... Now you can see. Especially Patel Brothers. You will see a lot of items imported from Nepal. The community is changing so you have to attract them by putting some items.”

Groceries and supermarkets seem well situated to accommodate and adjust. A Bangladeshi entrepreneur observed that at his other grocery location in Parkchester, in the Bronx, where a smaller Bangladeshi community has formed, his customers are diverse, and he stocks shelves accordingly. He expressed interest in expanding his Jackson Heights “community-based” business—by which he meant the Bangladeshi community—to one that meets the household needs of South Asians more broadly while maintaining his religious observation in selling halal products. “It’s a few things that I have to avoid,” he explained. “All other things are there. All is there... I can compete at the same time.” To move beyond his core products, he said that he would need the space—square footage—to do so, which a supermarket might be able to fulfill better than a grocery.

In Sen’s (2016) analysis of Patel Brothers, the Indian supermarket chain, he deconstructs the notion of immigrant businesses as obscure and atmospheric in American popular perception by noting that the success of these businesses “represent how immigrants skillfully manipulate the marketplace by carefully calibrated, rearranged, and packaged items, producing the ethnic grocery store as a managed interior” (p. 153). The act of shopping in an ethnic grocery, with its sounds, visual cues, and smells, can be a nostalgic experience; and to the regular shopper, a habitual one. In that way, the act of shopping is

engagement with ethno-architecture, the establishment of a sense of place (Sen, 2016). Thus, the Bangladeshi business owner's desire to open a like business like Patel Brothers—a supermarket with a variety of products, but with specific cultural identifiers—is an act of placemaking, of declaring his and his customers' identities in the physical space.

The reputation and location advantage

“The only way for small businesses to succeed is to have a relationship with people. We've been with our customers through deaths, births. We offer a service, that's the main thing. Whatever nationality you are, there is a sense of community. We have people working here who are Spanish, Indian. People relate to that.”

—*Owner of a neighborhood pharmacy*

Businesses across the study area cite their reputations as the key to strong patronage. For businesses with a culturally specific focus, reputation was built by way of customers that share similar backgrounds. The Bangladeshi grocer quoted earlier opened his first business, a halal butcher shop, in Astoria in 1996, and came to Jackson Heights as his customers started to move there after being priced out of Astoria. He attributed his long-time presence in the Bangladeshi community as helping him in his business. Zhou and Cho (2010) describe this as a characteristic of an enclave economy; “Relationships between co-ethnic owners and workers, as well as customers, generally transcend a contractual monetary bond and are based on a commonly accepted norm of reciprocity” (87). On the one hand, some business owners contribute to co-ethnic community causes that grow their reputations as members of said community and make it less urgent for them to dedicate time to conventional marketing strategies. On the other hand, the societal pressure to contribute to fundraisers can feel like a burden. The following two quotes highlight these contrasting experiences:

“And especially me and my wife, we are very much involved with the community... So, they know us very easily and we do get respect also. At the same time, we contribute

[financially] also because we own a business... It's very easy to promote our business [at the] same time... I do believe this generation is a digital generation, so I still do the marketing and all stuff. But not aggressively maybe, but whatever is required."

"If you don't do blah blah blah, what happens? One mouth, it's gonna be in everyone's ears. That's the biggest fear. You make one mistake, you are done... It's not easy at all, especially in your own community. The good thing is, I know their natures."

"One mouth to everyone's ears" can be a boon or a bane to business, and one that applies across businesses to different degrees. This is perhaps why business owners put a premium on trust built up over years of service to their community. Cultivating a reputation by word-of-mouth has become the modus operandi for newer businesses as well. As with the Bangladeshi entrepreneur, the owner of another business, a specialty shop on 37th Avenue, also opened a location in Jackson Heights after Astoria because customers—in this case, people with young children—had started to move there. As a business that opened within the last five years, building up a reputation as a newcomer entailed community engagement as well: "If you donate to the schools, someone who hasn't heard of [the shop] or has an unfavorable opinion of it might have a more favorable opinion."

Said the business owner on operating a general business in a multicultural neighborhood, "If you're able to provide to everybody, you have a good chance of succeeding. It's not guaranteed, but it's a chance at survival." This mechanism may be a source of anxiety for those in more 'niche' markets whose business is slowing. For purveyors of traditional clothing and jewelry, there was an acknowledgement of the challenges but also, to some degree, acceptance of any limitations. "I sell Indian things," said one merchant when inquired about whether they will seek new customers. A jeweler described receiving some Puerto Rican and African customers, but that they typically shop around for the best price. This behavior, though certainly not unusual for someone who is making a large purchase,

nonetheless upends the reputational advantage of the firms by nature of customers' unfamiliarity with the market and products. There is also the business owners' unfamiliarity; said one, "Other people come but don't buy much. You have to work harder to make a sale, build up to it."

There is a conflict here between cynicism—traffic is down and rents are too high, which make for an ominous future—and hope in the continued reliability of the more familiar customer base. Along the 37th Avenue corridor, perhaps because the thoroughfare is more diverse by nature of having general businesses that attract most everyone—pharmacies and other health stores, craft supplies, florists, variety stores, coffee shops—having to 'work harder to make a sale' is standard practice. Said one business owner:

"Pakistanis and Indians, they come from a bargaining... You know, everything, with them, you have to bargain down. So, you've got to know how to talk with them and you give them a little something and you get the job... It's just different, I can't explain it. Listen: I'm a salesman. Even though it's my business and I know my job. When I'm talking to someone, I'm a salesman. I have people who come in and have no clue about prices. And sometimes I spend quite a bit of time at the counter before I make a deal."

For these businesses, customers from different backgrounds came with the territory—literally and figuratively. The owner of one establishment on the 74th Street side of the corridor that has mostly regulars ("90 percent") observed:

"When I took over [in 2001] it was more Indian and Pakistani. It's funny because people still think of Jackson Heights as Indian but it's really not anymore. Maybe at that time. Probably before that, too, a Spanish influx... [These days] Tibetan. And in the last several years, White people moved back in too so it's more mixed. The clientele is really mixed."

The owner of a pharmacy stocks Spanish bath products because people would look for them, and staffed people who speak different languages. In the case of one business owner who identifies as an immigrant, to cater to the broader community "we all had English,

we all learned English.” He mentioned a language barrier in interacting with Bengali customers, “so we tried getting a salesperson who spoke the language... It makes a difference.” For customers who don’t speak English well, language accommodations enhance their experience and foster a sense of inclusivity. For one business that describes itself as a “modern mom and pop,” offering multilingual customer service, though necessary, has been a challenge because of the business’s size and hiring capacity. “I try the best I can to staff people who speak different languages,” said the owner, “but I might have one person on the floor at a time. It’s always important to have a Spanish speaker but not possible all the time.”

Table 5. Reasons for locating in Jackson Heights for general businesses on 37th Avenue

Reason	Selected quotes*
An existing customer base	<p>“I picked Jackson Heights mostly because we found a significant overlap in customer base... And it was close enough to our [Astoria] store that we could move and transfer products. I also know some people who have businesses in the area.” <i>[Specialty]</i></p> <p>Had worked here before so they knew the people and the area well. <i>[Pharmacy]</i></p>
An established market/business	<p>“When we came into this country my father’s family friend was in the electronics business. He told my father to come in so they started working together... That person was based in Jackson Heights so that’s why. When you learn, you learn with the same community and everything.” <i>[Electronics]</i></p> <p>“We zeroed in on Jackson Heights because it was close to our homes, there was foot traffic, it was well-established, and there used to be a [similar business] here.” <i>[Specialty]</i></p>
Met a need in the community	<p>“You have all these buildings with a lot of apartments. And at the time it was a lot of rentals so there was constant movement— people moving in, people moving out. So it was the perfect neighborhood for it.” <i>[Hardware/Home improvement]</i></p> <p>“There’s nothing in the neighborhood [for home supplies]. People usually have to go to Home Depot or outside in Long Island.” <i>[Home improvement]</i></p>

*Responses paraphrased for interviews that were not recorded, as indicated by the lack of quotation marks.

All businesses have their regulars. **Table 5** lists the reasons that general businesses on 37th Avenue gave for opening in Jackson Heights. The stories may be different, but the main reasons were the same as those of the culturally specific businesses. The influence of the built environment was also strong here. For certain businesses, like home improvement, walkability in the neighborhood and the absence of big box enable them to occupy spaces and provide services and products for which people would otherwise drive to a big box retailer. The co-ops have also helped 37th Avenue establish an ecosystem of its very own. When the owner of a hardware store first started his business in 1974, many of the co-ops were rentals. As people moved in and out, they needed his services; over time, “We know most of the buildings... We know what everybody needs, more or less.”

The co-ops, as valuable real estate, draw in new customers who patronize local businesses. Five of the nine businesses interviewed along 37th Avenue referenced the co-ops. Newcomers to the co-ops help add to the homeowner population—rather than being transient, these were residents who would be in the community for some time; “embedded” as one business owner described it. And the proximity to Manhattan attracts renters as well. Notably, Kasinitz, Bazzi and Doane (1998) had made similar observations—the presence of the co-op community and access to Manhattan—in discussing why Jackson Heights was able to avoid the depopulation and disinvestment that plagued other urban areas in the mid- to late-twentieth century.

In the interviews, gentrification was alluded to, but few people used the term specifically. Rather, some business owners observed that the “Manhattan crowd” had started to move here; one followed up that observation by saying that 37th Avenue was “more of a White area [and] they started buying properties” there compared to the Roosevelt Avenue

side. Although commercial rent and housing costs are up generally, the effects of gentrification were perceived to be concentrated around the upper 70s to 80s, with “White” or “Caucasian” and “young people” used as coded words for the phenomenon. One business owner near 74th Street declared that his location was “not attractive to White people.” The built environment played a role in those perceptions as well. A different business on that side of the corridor observed that “the 80s” had new storefronts with “a different look, maybe a more gentrified look” as well as a Starbucks, the presence of which is popularly perceived as a telltale sign of neighborhood change. “The only thing constant is the change,” he added. Near and within the historic district, business owners acknowledged and welcomed change:

“Maybe I’m wrong, but more people are coming with disposable income and are more able to spend money... I think one, we’ve been here a long time, and plus our inventory, we added more. But the neighborhood is changing, too. Many people used to complain, oh, this is 15, 20 dollars. Now people know these [products] cost pretty much [the] same everywhere. They might spend 50 cents less [elsewhere] but it’s not as nice or convenient.”

“The neighborhood has changed for the better. There’s less crime, less drugs, it’s cleaner. And even though there’s so many nationalities living close together, Jackson Heights is very unusual in that you still have a sense of community... Take any of these apartment buildings. We have the oldest co-ops in the United States, right? We have people living there that are thrown together, so the connections are really cool.”

There are long-time relationships embedded in the long-time businesses. During the interview at the hardware store, a customer came in for assistance. As he left, satisfied, he said, “That’s why you come here and you don’t go to Home Depot. You come here because you get personal service. However many times I’ve moved, I [come here].” The owner responded, “See, that’s the service I’m talking about. No matter what, they [big box] can’t take that away from us.” Another business owner along 37th Avenue—not in the historic district—called the avenue “one of the strongest retails in New York City” and had customers

who actively sought to support small business. There is a deliberate awareness of what sets small businesses apart—daily interactions that strengthen community cohesion. “I don’t know the girl’s name at Duane Reade,” pointed out the pharmacy owner, adding that “people tell you their troubles. About their knee surgery.”

Community cohesion in Jackson Heights

“You walk down to Roosevelt Avenue and it’s like you’re in South America. I’d be one of the few White people there. Same thing if you walk down to 74th Street. Yet at the same time we’ve been neighbors and the communities are so close to each other that one flows into the other.”
—*Owner of a specialty shop*

Business owners invoked “community” in different contexts: the hyper-localized business community, the co-op community, the different ethnic communities. One merchant on 74th Street characterized community cohesion through the planning of different cultural events:

“Every year we have a Diwali Mela [fair] here on the street. And the Bangladeshis, when they have their Boisakhi [Pohela Boishakh, the Bengali new year] ... It’s not like we’re from India so we’re separated, or from Bangladesh so we’re separated. Because we are all dependent on each other.”

Although Jackson Heights organizations plan cultural events and the neighborhood hosts two annual neighborhood-wide parades, for Queens Pride and Halloween, there seems to be no mechanism for interaction between the corridor’s main retail blocks. The corridor is a continuous one. 73rd and 74th Streets flow into 37th Avenue to one side and Roosevelt Avenue to the other; 37th Avenue and Roosevelt Avenue intersect with 82nd Street, which has its own business improvement district. But each section of the corridor seems to operate independently, with little in the way of a greater Jackson Heights “community.” This

observation has not gone unnoticed to one business owner who opened their shop in the neighborhood relatively recently.

“I personally do not perceive any cooperation between the three distinct areas. Not for malicious reasons. I don’t know anyone in those other corridors. On 37th Avenue I know some people and their phone numbers and email. It might be a neighborly thing... To me, in Astoria, I probably know most of the business owners. It’s culturally [in terms of business] different. Could be because there just aren’t as many mom and pop shops. Maybe the older ones know each other. Maybe as a cohort, shops that started around the same time. But I don’t think it’s purposeful in any way.”

Although there are many advantages to a long-established business corridor and community, among some business owners there is a sense that the community is entrenched in a way that has not come to terms with today’s needs. This business owner expressed his frustration about the goings-on of a local merchant organization, the Jackson Heights Bangladeshi Business Association, thus:

“I want to interact with the local community. I want to go to the, you know, precinct, local community houses, school community. They want any, like, a minister [who] comes from Bangladesh. What do I have to do with that? Nothing to do with them.”

Few people credited the merchant organizations with anything beyond asking for donations and advertisements (and “not digital” advertisements, pointed out one second-generation business owner, who said the business community, because it skewed older, was also “old school” when it came to marketing). “I don’t think they’re doing something better in actual policy, actual actions... They have some organization, but it’s like a signboard,” said one person who worried about the economic outlook for his main customers, lower-income, lower-skilled workers. But others invoked the local merchant groups in discussions about organizing street fairs, addressing parking needs, and supporting City efforts to convert an intersection near Roosevelt Avenue into a pedestrian plaza.

Diversity Plaza, which was transformed from a congested intersection—with parking—to a pedestrian plaza under the Department of Transportation’s Plaza Program, was contentious among several businesses that were dissatisfied with its quality of life issues, including crime, sanitation, and congestion. Moreover, more generally the City was criticized for inadequate parking and insufficient sanitation services. Whether community boards or the local district office, only three immigrant business owners mentioned engaging with local political bodies, one of whom spoke positively of Community Board 4, which covers Elmhurst, for its diversity and interest in the community’s businesses. Though people were aware that resources were available should they need it, few took part themselves. The time-consuming work of running a business, or an aversion to anything political, precluded it in some cases. There was also a sense of a cultural barrier; said one Bangladeshi business owner, “The Jewish community, the White community, they interact very much. But the language barrier, we don’t know how to speak to them. Maybe that’s the issue.”

Writing in 1998, Kasinitz, Bazzi, and Doane observed that immigrant groups in Jackson Heights were active to some degree; groups regularly held parades and events, and people mobilized during elections in their home countries. But that left most of the local political power in the hands of White residents. In recent years, New York’s community boards have been confronted with the challenge of diversifying their boards. It was a major impetus for a ballot measure that eventually passed in 2018, which limited community board members to four two-year terms in the interest of encouraging participation from “new voices” and enabling greater opportunities for new people to join the board (NYC Charter Revision Commission, 2018). The measure also formalized the board appointment process and required Borough Presidents, who appoint the members, to publish data about their

local community boards. According to an analysis of the Queens Borough President's annual report by *Queens Eagle*, in 2019 Latinos were underrepresented in Community Board 3, which represents Jackson Heights (Brand, 2019). Queens CB3 was one of four boards where Asians were not underrepresented.

But some merchants speculated that there was something more subconscious at play, a preference for what is 'comfortable' or 'familiar,' much as some business owners themselves have expressed. In the following two quotes, one person made an observation about his employees, who were from different Latin American countries, while another commented similarly about the South Asian community, in wondering aloud about how many were involved with local organizations like the Jackson Heights Beautification Group:

"It's not like they're not friendly or whatever. They just seem to frequent their own. You know? I guess they feel more comfortable, they know the food, but I know for a fact that's what they do."

"But you know what, self-segregation? That's what it comes down to at the end. They feel comfortable with their own kind, so they make their own groups to hang out. That's the same thing that's pretty much happening on this side also."

It is a notion that seems to be changing with the new generation, who "is more 9 to 5." As the second generation comes of age and the older generation ages, neighborhood preferences may well change. This is also facilitated by rising rents that make it harder for new immigrants to settle in the same neighborhoods as their predecessors. As newer, albeit smaller corridors to serve them emerge elsewhere in the city, or in the suburbs, people have more, and more convenient, options. Thus, that reliable customer base shrinks as new immigrants settle elsewhere and the next generation seeks out their own spaces. But in parts of the neighborhood that are higher income, there are more young people and families settling. Business owners' observations of older immigrants and the younger generations

complicate the notion that gentrification is solely about a “White” population remaking a neighborhood. The following two quotes from immigrant-owned businesses that provide general services noted that immigrants were less likely to adopt their products, which could be considered a luxury, than the 1.5 or second generation:

“I don’t know if this sounds like... I would say we don’t get a lot of Indian and Bangladeshi customers even though there’s a community here. I think it’s a little bit of a cultural thing... People who are growing up in America or born here are more similar in culture.”

“The challenge is that not a lot of people want to spend money. It’s the mindset and culture. The new generation is not like that. They’re looking for quality and service.”

A third-generation business owner said that it was easy to buy at the right prices to sell to customers, but to successfully adapt to changes in the community—especially between generations of the same group—is impossible; “parents have one idea, kids have a different idea.” Business owners on 73rd and 74th Streets commented on generational dissonance within the older South Asian-American groups that still comprise their main customers. With newer groups the dynamics may be rather different. As the Nepalese restaurant owner described it, “We still don’t have a culture of eating out. That’s the biggest challenge we had until a few years ago.” But he observed that this has started to change as of late, both as the Nepalese community started to adapt American traditions and as their earnings started to increase. “It used to be a challenge, now it’s a good thing. They’re following the American way of lifestyle. People started celebrating birthdays, which we don’t have a culture of celebrating.” For someone in the restaurant business, these trends are not only helping, but potentially turning around a business outlook.

'Mainstreaming' the corridor

"You can see—I don't wanna say it, but the decor is weak. It's the 21st century. People should see you're up to date."
—*Owner of health store*

For business owners who remember a time when 74th Street was a main retail destination for Indians from around the city and beyond, the new normal displays a conspicuous reduction in traffic. Now there exist other hubs for people to buy Indian products, "unless you want to buy a lot of stuff for a wedding or something, then you come to Jackson Heights." Observations about the potential role that young people could play in retail corridors ties into another recommendation that several business owners had to strengthen the longevity of the corridor: updating the corridor and bringing it more into the 'mainstream.' The motives were different, but the strategies they proposed were the same.

Bangladeshi business owners spoke about bringing the younger members of their community back to Jackson Heights. One younger business owner referenced his peers' interest in exploring identity. Previously, Bangladeshi immigrants tended to open Indian restaurants to conform to what was familiar to Western audiences; now there was interest in asserting one's identity and culture, or in introducing underrepresented cuisine into the mainstream (Sen, 2018; Mishan, 2019). Writing in 2002, Khandelwal noted that young Indian Americans who had access to an enclave while growing up expressed having had the opportunity to explore their identities and familiarize themselves with the culture. Their experiences contrasted with those of suburban Indian Americans for whom cultural immersion was a deliberate act, not quotidian reality. For this latter group, enclaves could be about "access[ing] their cultural resources (Khandelwal, 2002, p. 148). As the second generation comes of age and possesses disposable income, business owners see an

opportunity to encourage community interaction with food, not just for young people but for families looking for a quality dining experience. Said a Bangladeshi entrepreneur:

“We have to give them some space... it’s a way to keep the second generation in the community and I can make some business, also. In our community... we’re missing that many places like that. Halal food, high end.”

The concept of ‘high end’ options was echoed by several business owners as a way to upgrade the image of 74th Street, with some business owners sharing that they are looking to enter into that venture as well. According to the Office of the New York City Comptroller (2017), one-third of all income in New York City is earned by immigrants. An earlier report put forth by the New York State Assembly’s Task Force on New Americans (2014) also states that immigrants statewide had over \$100 billion in spending power. This challenges possible misconceptions about the types of businesses that would appeal to communities with a large immigrant population. A business owner whose grocery has multiple locations said that the customers at his Jackson Heights location, which was the first, seek high-quality products and meats, which he works to deliver. His business, he said, survives on that, as well as the name recognition and customer relationships discussed earlier in this paper. Business owners seemed unable to agree on whether immigrants are spenders or savers. To one merchant, the fact that they tended to save meant that that they had the potential to spend:

“Keep this in mind, Indian, Pakistani, Bengali, Nepalese—this community, they believe in saving money. So, they save everything. So, they do have more disposable income.”

And yet, at least from one person, there was a dissonance in the desire for upscale fusion options alongside a belief that ethnic-sounding businesses would alienate potential

customers. A business owner who expressed interest in more “high-end” dine-in options with a broader customer base shared his trepidation in naming a recent business venture:

“We changed the name, tried to name it a different way, not like a community-based place... Even our people—like you think, oh, this is called ‘Taj Mahal’? It’s Bengali owned? No.”

This perceived reluctance of even co-ethnic customers to engage with co-ethnic firms for certain products and services was echoed by the second-generation owner who earlier cited young Americans’ interest in their ancestry, albeit differently. Here, he critiqued his peers, saying that they were less inclined to “spend time with their own people.” He doubted that “White establishments” would receive enough customers to do good business. But another person cited a bakery in the area, one block from 74th Street, that is popular with multiethnic, multi-generational clientele, noting that such establishments enable the “Insta-sharing of food” that attracts people who seek an experiential outing. Fusion cuisine—popularized historically through the likes of kosher-Chinese—was also proposed:

“My concept is to take a little from every culture and add Desi flair to it. Why not bring hibachi here, offer the same experience but halal? Something similar but different.”

If Yelp reviews of Jackson Heights establishments are any indication, many vendors and restaurants in the area are patronized by a broad array of people from the neighborhood and visitors. Fusion cuisine as a business strategy was brought up several times. The owner of the Nepalese and Tibetan restaurant described his fear that customers’ tastes would change. For him, fusion cuisine was a way to move beyond “culture based” food to introduce other flavors familiar to his customers, both returning visitors and regulars, so that they remain interested in patronizing at his business. Actively expanding the customer base was a strategy in one of New York City’s business expansion success stories, Xi’an Famous Foods.

What started as a small side-business in a regional cuisine in Flushing today boasts 16 locations across New York City, from the Upper West Side in Manhattan to Greenpoint, Brooklyn. In a 2013 *Forbes* article, the co-owner of the chain critiqued local Chinese businesses for being occupied with competing with each other and not considering how to compete in the United States with their authentic offerings, which are valued by customers regardless of background (Shao, 2013).

In some sectors, though a change is inevitable what worries businesses is a change in customer preferences rather than the customers themselves. As a representative from the electronics store that once specialized in Bangladeshi media said:

“You [young adults] growing up, that’s not the problem. Other groups are growing and taking your place. The online market is what’s affecting things. It’s not an issue of people taking each other’s place. Young people are just more likely to shop online.”

Here enters the second component of this ‘mainstreaming’ discourse. To convince people to continue to shop and patronize in Jackson Heights, “I guess we still have to improve this community,” said one business owner, “The ambience of this business is not right for sure for over here.” He also questioned the logic of being in a busy retail street with high rents, a premium, yet having to request police officers to monitor the area because there have been thefts. Ambience was brought up by several business owners, especially in reference to sanitation, congestion, and crime. Though in the past, the same reasons were given by a mostly White contingent to critique certain quarters of the corridor, the context in which it was now being discussed was in changing and challenging those very perceptions. The business owner, a jeweler, worried about losing customers because they had one bad experience in Jackson Heights. “Within my merchant group, they should understand how to deal with people” by training their employees to be knowledgeable about the products they

sell, he said. He and other merchants compared themselves and their peers to national and international brands in an aspirational way—to position their small businesses with the same attention to brand and customer experience, “So even though this is Jackson Heights, this can be downtown Manhattan.” Manhattan was invoked several times in this context:

“There are already so many restaurants here. But there’s not a quality, good restaurant. If somebody wants to get the people, mostly they’re take-out types. But there’s nowhere good like in Manhattan. I think if someone opens something nice, that could be a start.”

“We’re not that big yet as a business entrepreneur,” said another, “not today or tomorrow, but one day you’ll bring the customers here because you opened a business.” As for why it was not happening yet, a second-generation business owner posited that “people are scared to do it because it is risky. There’s still an old-fashioned mentality. And entrepreneurial interest among Desi-Americans is dying.” The restaurateur noted that to his knowledge, people in the Nepalese community were “experimenting with taste.” Entrepreneurial experience is necessary because the restaurant business is risky, and to fit into New York’s food landscape, knowledge of the trade is also valuable. Said one person:

“If you’re bad at the business, in two, three months, before you even know the customers, you’re out of the business. So, you need at least one year’s time. At least you need a base or you’ll lose a lot of money. So new people cannot try it because they don’t have a concept yet. Other places literally opened in three places because they learned the concept.”

Immigrant entrepreneurship has been observed to support future entrepreneurs and an ethnic group’s social mobility through informal apprenticeships (Zhou & Cho, 2010). But a Bangladeshi business owner expressed frustration that, “Even in my community. I work daily but nowadays no one wants to learn anything.” The situation seems to be a product of the corridor’s own making; entrenchment is prevalent. In some cases, a long-time family

business may be an inheritance—that was the case in six of the businesses in this study, three of which were culturally specific—which one long-time member of the Jackson Heights business community observed may make it hard for new businesses to survive. The risks associated with starting a new enterprise, high rent, and—given the interest in dining options—the costs of any additional licensing and permitting may put off risk-averse entrepreneurs from entering the market. Two business owners on opposite sides of the age spectrum observed a lack of new young entrepreneurs in culturally specific businesses. “Everyone is a programmer,” said one who identifies as a millennial. The older business owner said:

“The people running the shop, we’re all getting old. We’ve tried to get some young people to come join us, to take over, but it looks like nobody is interested in getting into this kind of... once you are qualified, you are educated, you don’t want to come into the retail business and do this kind of work. So, this is what has happened.”

For immigrants, entrepreneurship can be a path to economic mobility. “They came here to establish themselves,” said one business owner, “and that is how they’re using it. And after they learn something, they’re flying away.” The type of commercial area that these business owners aspire to create is reminiscent of New York’s or Los Angeles’ Koreatown. Zhou and Cho (2010) describe the latter as a rare manifestation of the urban ethnic enclave because of the presence of “upscale” restaurants and a variety of shops that “resemble a transplanted cosmopolitan city from contemporary Asia” (p. 89). The concept is aspirational:

“If I can convince you,” said a merchant, “you won’t shop around to Tiffany’s. You will buy from me. But you should be able to trust me, and to gain that trust, I should be able to convince you.”

However, Zhou and Cho (2010) stress that the co-ethnic institutional framework—strong local institutions that support co-ethnic capacity building, professional development,

and social infrastructure essentially—can be exclusionary to other groups in a multiethnic setting. They propose a model of community building that integrates policy for an “interethnic coalition” of resource sharing, with the additional caveat that a strong middle class to facilitate this is often rare in immigrant “enclaves” (Zhou & Cho, 2010).

There is another practical obstacle to this type of remaking of the corridor, rent, which dictates what types of businesses are seen as risks. The ‘enclave effect’ that draws more culturally specific businesses to the area has the consequence of increasing competition between similar establishments and between satellite enclaves. “I don’t see the customers that used to come from Long Island or New Jersey,” said an Indian business owner. That phenomenon now includes the Bangladeshi community, which has several nodes in the Tri-State area, some in cheaper commercial districts or areas that facilitate parking more easily. At the time of interview, one of the Bangladeshi businesses, a grocery and butcher shop, was gearing to close after nearly 30 years of operating in the neighborhood. The owner noted that though competitors started to enter in the late 1990s, competition “skyrocketed” in 2006. Ultimately, for his business the reputational premium of being one of the first Bangladeshi businesses in the area came up against hard accounting. Competition against larger stores that successfully leverage economies of scale, when considered alongside rent burden, made circumstances untenable. He and another business owner who cited the crowded retail market have decided to leave their retail businesses entirely in pursuit of a service-based business.

This is not a new occurrence; Khandelwal (2002) notes that Indian shop owners in the late 1980s experienced pricing competition as their cluster of businesses grew. Upscale restaurants in the area at the time tried to either compete with cheaper eateries or moved to

the suburbs altogether. The feeling of competition was not lost on the Bangladeshi businesses. One business owner compared rent to what he used to pay in Midtown Manhattan; when prompted about why that might be, he wondered if “maybe we did it.”

Another business owner was adamant that this was indeed the case:

“I can tell you that now whatever Bengali people are touching, they’re making it sky high... So, in our community—if I go to some location, like 73rd Street... Even 74th, nothing. [It’s] 300 times cheaper within two blocks because our people are like, I don’t want to build a business here. Everyone wants to stick here, and the rent goes up. Because of us.”

Even in other parts of the corridor—though there is acknowledgement of the corridor’s valuable real estate, given the proximity to Manhattan, transit hubs, and the historic district—no one can reason why the rent is as high as it is. One shop owner speculated that proximity to the businesses on 74th was affecting rents. Another connected it to the slow changes in the neighborhood when it comes to responding to current needs.

“Rent is definitely high. Because we’re so close to Little India, as they call it. Over there rent is the same as in Manhattan. The marketplace, right? People come from out-of-state to buy Desi groceries. So rent is very high and building owners are realizing—they’re charging \$15,000, why am I charging only \$4,000, right?”

“People love to think I’m a gentrifier—people think I’m coming for cheap rents. Let me promise you, per square foot I’m paying much more. To spend resources, it’s cheaper in Astoria. Jackson Heights is notoriously expensive. Maybe that’s why you don’t see a lot of modernization. There’s a lack of childcare services despite it being such a family-friendly community.”

“Consistency is probably the most important thing in any business,” said one owner about his own business, “When you’re dealing with a business that’s not a necessity, really a luxury a lot of the time, you have to convince people to spend their money.” From these interviews arose, then, two perspectives on modernization. One is in elevating the reputation of the corridor, both to position the corridor as a destination for retail and, in the case of the

corridor's South Asian community, attract young people to spend and invest in the neighborhood. The other lens through which modernization can be viewed is in establishing an environment where businesses can more adeptly, and with less risk, respond to the current needs of neighborhood residents.

In summary

“Sometimes I call it blood money,” said a business owner who has been in the neighborhood for 32 years, “because I work all holidays. I don’t know what Easter or Christmas are like.” In every success story about a long-time small business, there is the reality of grueling hours, complex regulations, and the daily arithmetic of sales against ever-growing expenses. Sometimes the challenge is from the imposition of certain external but controllable forces—unreasonable rents, lease disputes, or permit issues. Other times, the challenges are a function of a business’s life cycle, as when a successor to the business is not found, or the market changes irrevocably. It is the latter reason, that of non-market forces, that is the focus of this paper.

Jackson Heights’ businesses are as diverse as its residents, and with that comes unique business priorities. As such, this study compared the experiences of businesses that specialize in cultural items or services, largely concentrated from 72nd to 74th Streets, and general businesses, most of which can be found along the 37th Avenue thoroughfare. Both categories of businesses spoke of the role that reputation plays in their survival. In a neighborhood where more than half of customers are believed to be locals, the older the business, the greater the reputation advantage. Both categories of businesses also benefited from built characteristics. For businesses on 37th Avenue, the significant residential district

beyond—including the neighborhood’s historic garden apartments—and the limited presence of chain retailers were essential to their market.

For businesses around 74th Street, the spatial clustering of South Asian establishments enables them to draw from much of the same traffic, particularly with regard to out-of-town visitors who come for specific products. For them, success is tied less to the place than to the community they serve. Success is more collective; alone, no single group possesses the variety of businesses required to support an economy and foot traffic that, together, they benefit from by being clustered. These businesses are supported by a transnational framework whereby goods are imported from abroad for local consumption and typify some of the qualities that scholars have identified in ethnic enclaves. Unlike general businesses, whose products and offerings appeal to the broadest customer base, cultural businesses are decidedly more ‘niche.’ The same advantages that allowed them to thrive, however, can become a challenge as the corridor’s customers change. As the immigrant generation matures and smaller communities cluster elsewhere, there is concern about sustaining customers and an interest in upgrading the corridor to attract more young people and visitors. Across the corridor, culturally specific and general businesses alike expressed a desire for the corridor to modernize and acknowledged that each segment of the corridor seemed to operate independently, with little ‘Jackson Heights community’-wide cohesion.

Conclusion

The concept of the 'ethnic enclave' describes the phenomenon in which ethnic businesses and services are visibly concentrated in a physical space, sustaining entrepreneurial and employment opportunities and a specialized market for goods and services that are facilitated by co-ethnic ties. Jackson Heights' 74th Street block does not adhere exactly to this definition, as the businesses there have come to represent a whole region. However, some of the same benefits exist. Co-ethnic entrepreneurs join forces to open businesses, business owners contribute to community causes, and with time businesses build up reputations that assure them a reliable, largely co-ethnic, customer base.

The enclave offers a path to manifesting a community's identity through the built environment, like homes, religious institutions, or even a retail strip on an otherwise unassuming neighborhood block (Sen, 2016). Then "Little India" and other such places are themselves physical and social assertions of ethno-architecture. A long-time business owner described the early years of "Little India" thus:

"All these houses and apartments all around, there used to be American people staying. The whole street was a residential building. There was nothing else... And slowly, slowly people started opening shops, the buildings broke down. And this became Little India. And now it looks like a Little Bangladesh!"

The same business owner's observations of changes in the corridor are reminiscent of Frazier (2016)'s observations about the tensions of remaking a place:

"There were Italians and other people here and slowly, slowly they started moving out because they weren't used to... this type of noise or whatever. Now you come in the night and you see... you don't feel you're in America. You feel you're in Bangladesh."

Table 6 and **Table 7** highlight some of the thoughts that business owners in this study had about the future of small business in the Jackson Heights corridor. Twice as many people

were optimistic as not, but notably fewer businesses in the 74th Street network felt positively about the future of the community, citing reduced foot traffic, inter- and intra-corridor competition between like firms, and a lack of interest from the younger generation. Where the oldest businesses first emerged to address a need of a certain immigrant community or the unique needs of the neighborhood, according to the businesses today the next step in the corridor’s development seems to be in deliberately attracting and sustaining new customers to the area and modernizing the corridor.

Table 6. Perceptions of the future of the corridor, selected quotes, pessimistic*

Future Outlook	Businesses w/ culturally specific product offerings or services	General businesses
Pessimistic (7 total)	<p>There’s no future. Expenses are high and the new generation isn’t coming. The existing community alone won’t sustain it. It’s no longer about supply and demand.</p> <p>There’s no future here. People only come for the old gold stores. Property taxes go up and owners raise rents... How can we convince the landlords?</p> <p>House rent is also high, so how can people live here? Who is affordable housing serving? How is an income of \$50,000 affordable?</p>	<p>“I think a lot of businesses will get squeezed out. It might get more corporate—that’s usually what happens when you start to see those trends. But I would like to see this area keep its individuality.”</p> <p>In five years, 50 to 60 percent of the stores will be out of business. The new generation doesn’t like to shop.</p>

*Responses paraphrased for interviews that were not recorded, as indicated by the lack of quotation marks.

Through place remaking, the meaning of a place is reimagined (Frazier, 2015). Some business owners, in discussing their concerns about intergenerational cohesion, proposed a reimagining of the corridor’s businesses—more diverse dining options, more shareable experiences—yet all tied to culturally-oriented offerings, with the goal of attracting young people back to the community. Others added that updating the look of the corridor and offering an “upscale” experience—one referenced sit-down Indian restaurants in

Manhattan—would attract more people, leaning into the “Little India” moniker proposed for marketability nearly three decades ago (Khandelwal, 2002). Today, in Jackson Heights and Elmhurst 12 percent of credit card spending in electronics and 10 percent of such spending in discount stores are by tourists (CUF, 2019).

Table 7. Perceptions of the future of the corridor, selected quotes, optimistic*

Future Outlook	Businesses w/ culturally specific product offerings or services	General businesses
<p>Optimistic (15 total)</p>	<p>“I want to open the next place.”</p> <p>We have to save our community, our food, our culture by keeping these businesses and showing them to newcomers. If we close it all because of rent and other issues, it’s a loss to the community. We can promote cultural exchange this way.</p> <p>“People have built up so many things here. Indian shops and all. Grocery shops and all. And a lot of people put a lot of money into this area. So, chances are this market is going to remain here. It’s not going to disappear in the next couple of years.”</p>	<p>“I see the neighborhood stabilizing and getting even better. Years ago, in the 90s, it got really bad. It’s really turning around. I see it staying that way.”</p> <p>“The one good thing in this neighborhood is, Jackson Heights is one of the first neighborhoods in NYC that built co-ops, way back. And that, more than anything, is probably what helped me stay in business and get me going. Word of mouth. Oh, who did that? And so on, and so on.”</p> <p>“City Council has a lot [of the responsibility] when it comes to regulation about storefronts. If we can’t afford it, we will leave. [But] I would double the size for my store tomorrow. I think it’s a very strong community.”</p> <p>I feel optimistic. I have support. Customers come from PA, NJ, I mail to Michigan. It’s about how you grow your business.</p> <p>Definitely optimistic for people who have higher income because rent is going up. I guess it’s changing like some other places. Astoria, Long Island City. With the trains, it’s very convenient. E, R, F, M, 7. 15 minutes, you’re in Manhattan.</p>

*Responses paraphrased for interviews that were not recorded, as indicated by the lack of quotation marks.

Among general businesses, some business owners spoke of training their current employees, who were from different backgrounds, in the hopes that they would be interested

in taking over one day. Business owners who sell traditional clothing and cuisine expressed trepidation at the future of the business in that area, saying that young people in their community were not interested in entering the retail business. For culturally specific businesses, some of which have been acquired between co-ethnic entrepreneurs or inherited by family, the eventual outcome remains to be seen. An environment in which entrepreneurs could take risks could have the potential to attract younger business owners with new ideas to the corridor and stimulate investment into the community. But therein lies the challenge in modernizing the corridor. According to business owners, within the 74th Street block the old guard is entrenched; beyond, in other parts of the neighborhood, amenities like childcare option lag behind the community's needs. For example, a redesign of the neighborhood's main park, Travers Park, from an asphalt play fields to a park with green space, a pedestrian plaza, play areas, and spaces to congregate was completed only last year (NYC Parks, 2020).

The ideas put forth for transforming the corridor have echoes of New York's Koreatown. But Koreatown is unique in that it is in a non-residential place within proximity to many of the city's popular tourist attractions. Few corridors exist like the one supporting Jackson Heights' immigrant communities: long-established, multiethnic, and low-to-middle income. Many decisions that are in the hands of urban planners can affect the vitality of a neighborhood corridor and, by extension, its neighborhood. From affordability targets for new housing to what land uses are allowed, such decisions can influence the types of businesses represented.

The business owners interviewed did not seem to be interested in preserving the corridor in its current state. Rather, there is a desire to conserve its foundation—shops of cultural significance and small businesses that can provide personal attention. For a long

time, the area's affordability is what made it the immigrant neighborhood it is today. In that distinction, it has reaped many more benefits, from fostering an environment in which skill-sharing and individual success has manifested in older groups moving on, and enabling newcomers, like the Nepalese and Tibetan communities, to enter the market as entrepreneurs.

Recently, news of a Target at 82nd Street and 40th Avenue, a block south of Roosevelt Avenue, has stirred fears of displacement in that part of the corridor. Though rents are rising in the lower 70s, the area has thus far warded off such projects. Although the impact of such a project cannot be predicted, it is possible that the fallout, as commercial and residential rents rise in a reactionary manner, would be swift. One interviewee expressed frustration about how hard it was to get by as a resident while affordable housing thresholds set 'affordability' beyond many very low-income earners' means. Further, anchor retail of that magnitude would require space that could only be produced in the dense quarters of Jackson Heights through a new project—and the zoning challenges that come with that—as with the 82nd Street Target, or through assemblages in the manner described by one business owner:

“[Say] Rite Aid wants to rent here. They need eight stores. They need a certain number of square foot. So, guess what? If you want to stay, yeah, I want \$12,000 a month rent. And everyone leaves and [the landlords] give it to Rite Aid, who will give them that kind of money.”

For small businesses to modernize, compete amid e-commerce and chains, and continue to contribute to the local economy and invest in the local community, they will require the tools and the space to do so. In speaking to business owners, there does not seem to be a corridor-wide dialogue about specific implementations—or community cohesion, for that matter. The Community District Needs Assessment for Jackson Heights reports some of

the priority areas, from physical improvements to the corridor to customer requests for street furniture, as well as business owners' challenges, such as language barriers and access to financing (SBS, 2020). An immigrant business's maturity and local language skills, in particular, were identified by Arrighetti, Bolzani, and Lasagni (2014) as being influential in its entrance into the 'mainstream' market. Immigrant communities are not static; they form, shrink, and shift as homeownership, wealth, and generations grow. With time, a more mature community may resettle beyond the neighborhood, and in so doing enable newer communities to establish their place in the corridor, building on the investment of their predecessors. An organized approach to capacity building and corridor-wide planning in the neighborhood, paired with a commitment to the types of affordability that enable small businesses to thrive, will be essential to the corridor's continued development.

Finally, from interviews with business owners there are several avenues for future research. One business owner characterized her experience in finding a space in Jackson Heights as atypical because the landlord she signed with "understands small business... We find landlords who aren't a mega corporation. One particular human being to work with, that's the path to success." Another business owner said that, "my particular landlord is right here... They have their finger on the pulse of the neighborhood." In a development environment where assemblages are more utilized, there is space to consider the power that property owners hold in a corridor's evolution through their leasing practices.

There is also the topic of informality in leasing through the use of "key money" as an act of "goodwill" to sublease a vacated property from a current tenant. The role of these deals in the past and their use or lack thereof today could explore some of the unseen ways that

small businesses in immigrant communities have changed over time, and whether enclaves of old are unlikely to be recreated in a similar fashion in today's real estate environment.

Lastly, following the waves immigration from different countries over the last three decades, there is an opportunity to examine and disaggregate the effect of generational change on recent immigrant communities and how it manifests in the built environment and community reinvestment. Particularly as the communities in which new immigrants settle are more and more diverse, the effects in 'mini' enclaves could garner new insights into neighborhood change and community development.

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