



LONG ISLAND CITY

Comprehensive Plan **Phase 1**

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



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The full Phase 1 Report can be found at licqns.com/licplan.

COMPREHENSIVE PLAN FOR LIC: WHY NOW?

Historically and currently, Long Island City is a key economic driver for the region. It is a source of good-paying, middle class jobs for local workers, of essential goods and services for New York City, and, increasingly, of housing -- both affordable and market rate.

The area remains and is becoming ever more attractive for commercial office, retail, light industrial, design, tech, and cultural uses, reinforcing the neighborhood's authentic, mixed-use character.

LIC's recent growth confirms its strong regional reputation as an attractive neighborhood, ripe with opportunity. Without careful planning, however, this growth threatens the very mix of uses that has helped attract investments in the first place. Cultural organizations, artists and businesses across all sectors are challenged to find and maintain affordable real estate. Without attention to their needs, these businesses and organizations will move outside of LIC—and some outside of NYC—taking with them the diversity they contribute to, along with their quality jobs and critical economic activity. Existing infrastructure is already at or over capacity, with more residential and

business growth expected. LIC must also be positioned to take advantage of new opportunities such as attracting spin-off companies from Cornell Tech when it opens on Roosevelt Island in 2017.

Despite its economic importance, LIC has never had an overall plan guiding its development, and is developing in ways no one ever planned. This first-ever LIC Comprehensive Plan will address how to leverage LIC's tremendous market potential to not only preserve but also enhance this authentic, mixed-use "city within the City."

The objectives of Phase 1 of the Comprehensive Plan were to gather and synthesize information from many existing sources to understand the current market and the perspective of various stakeholders, to validate widely held views and take them out of the realm of the anecdote, and to discover new information or trends that should inform future policies and actions.

We reviewed the myriad of past or ongoing studies that explored aspects of LIC, all of which focused on smaller geographies or particular sectors. This Comprehensive Plan looks across sectors at the greater LIC area that more closely matches

its historical definition: from north of Newtown Creek to Astoria Boulevard, and from the East River to Steinway Street (on the north side of Sunnyside Yards) and 43rd Street (on the south side of Sunnyside Yards). This set of boundaries also allowed the study to capture important activities underway today that have implications for all of LIC. We conducted a study of the existing conditions with a baseline analysis of key LIC characteristics, including land use, market conditions, and demographics. We held dozens of conversations with key stakeholders in the community—including business owners, property owners and developers, artists and cultural institutions, Cornell Tech, business incentive program experts and workforce development providers. We also undertook a landmark survey—distributed to all of the more than 6,600 businesses and organizations in LIC—to understand who is here, their perceptions of the neighborhood, the challenges they face here, and the opportunities they see to grow and thrive. An impressive 515 unique businesses and organizations across a range of sectors and sizes responded to the survey, providing invaluable perspective and insights.

KEY FINDINGS

The secondary and primary research resulted in a breadth of information to be used for future policy recommendations and further study. The following key findings reflect some of the most crucial indicators to highlight for action.

1. LIC's central location, its mixed-use character, and the interdependence and collaboration among entities – within and across sectors – are seen as LIC's greatest assets.
2. Businesses and organizations across sectors are optimistic about their longevity in LIC and want to expand their operations here.
3. Sufficient availability of affordable and appropriately configured space is a challenge across sectors and endangers our "city within the City."
4. There is unmet demand for commercial office space. Yet, without government intervention new buildings have not been created, limiting economic growth and putting pressure on existing industrial space.
5. Stakeholders across all sectors affirmed that the presence of arts and culture and working artists are essential to LIC's mix and vibrancy. But these uses are under threat and interventions are needed to support their future in LIC.
6. Existing business incentive programs, while helpful to industrial and commercial firms, are not easily available to and are often insufficient for the businesses in LIC that need them most today.
7. Although the overall population in the study area showed increased income and educational attainment, persistent and substantial pockets of poverty remain.
8. New job opportunities abound and will increase in LIC's growing sectors. However, maximizing the benefits of these opportunities will require better connections between employers and local residents, and appropriate training and education programs.
9. Many parts of LIC feel disconnected from other parts of the neighborhood—or are very hard to navigate—creating barriers to movement and vitality.
10. Improved public transportation options, availability of parking for commercial activity and efficient vehicle movement are all economically vital to the area.
11. A diverse variety of local amenities and services, including restaurants, retail, recreation, housing options, green space, community services, libraries, quality health care and schools are fundamental to maintaining a successful mix of businesses and organizations in LIC and to forming a functional live/work environment to support employee needs as well as the existing residential population.

RELEVANT PROJECTS UNDERWAY

During the course of this study a number of projects, policies, proposals, and plans in LIC or that will have an impact on the area were completed, announced or begun, helping to address some of the issues raised in our key findings. For a complete list, see page 36 in the Summary Report.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations address some of the issues and disconnects revealed by the key findings. While some intervention is underway, more is required. Implementing these recommendations will have a real impact across all sectors and will help to maintain and foster an equitable, mixed-use, full service community in LIC.

- 1. Make incentive programs work for the businesses that need and want to be in LIC. In addition, look for creative ways to build more space for businesses.**

 - Implement adjustments to improve the (1) accessibility, (2) predictability, (3) transparency, and (4) effectiveness of existing incentive programs.
 - Relieve the real estate pressure on industrial companies and allow for future growth by creating more commercial, and, if possible, more industrial space by designing creative development structures.
 - Address impediments to new construction and investment, such as current tax policies, outdated building codes, and zoning restrictions.

- 2. Work with the City to incentivize new commercial office construction through appropriate zoning and incentives to serve pent-up demand, take advantage of new growth, and simultaneously reduce pressures on viable industrial and cultural space.**

- 3. Capture and retain growing, entrepreneurial businesses in LIC to anchor their job creation here.**

 - Develop a nonprofit, multipurpose step-up space for small, growing industrial firms and nascent technology and design firms graduating from co-working or incubator space. Colocate it with prototyping and workforce development services.

- 4. Increase opportunities for cultural institutions and artists to maintain and operate active, permanent spaces in LIC. Expand the integration of arts and culture into the LIC urban fabric and communities.**

 - Explore options to creatively help with space costs (ownership and rental) by both making existing tools such as zoning bonuses function better and incentivize use of existing space for artists.
 - Create a connected “downtown” through incorporating culture into the landscape. Explore projects in other cities, such as RiNo District in Denver and Miami Adrienne Arsht Center for possible adaption for LIC.

5. **Develop a strategy to foster a cluster of biotechnology, life sciences, and technology related industries in LIC by leveraging LIC's relevant and unique advantages, anchoring an important sector for NYC.**
6. **Work to relieve parking strain on LIC businesses and organizations. Maintain truck and vehicular movement necessary for efficient business activity.**
 - In commercial areas of Community Boards 1 and 2, undertake a targeted study to identify opportunities to alleviate LIC's parking strain on businesses of all sectors to facilitate local commercial activity.
 - LICP will continue to advocate for the replacement of parking spots lost from demolition of a municipal parking garage and for additional parking spots to be created for businesses.
 - Ensure trucks and necessary vehicles can still operate within and through LIC.
7. **Work with transportation agencies to update routes and frequencies of buses and subways in order to move people within LIC from where they are to where they need to go.**
 - Study where there are gaps in local transportation options, such as intra-LIC and inter-borough, to consider adding additional public transportation service or increase frequency of existing service.
8. **Bridge neighborhood barriers and improve connection between sub-areas of LIC.**
 - Enliven underused public land to create safer and more interesting spaces for pedestrians.
 - Create a new street sign program modeled on DOT's Walk NYC neighborhood maps to help residents, visitors and employees better navigate the neighborhood and increase awareness of the many amenities and cultural resources in the area.
9. **Maximize economic benefits for LIC residents and businesses.**
 - Create better linkages among LIC employers, jobseekers and training options to build skills in residents that are needed by our businesses and to connect them with local employers.
 - Support workforce training programs at the high school, technical and college levels.

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ABOUT THIS REPORT

Phase 1 of the Comprehensive Plan and this report was completed by Long Island City Partnership with the assistance of Public Works Partners and BJH Advisors. In the final months leading to publication of this report, additional work, including continued stakeholder conversations, was undertaken by Long Island City Partnership.



The Long Island City Partnership (LICP) is the local development corporation for Long Island City (LIC), Queens. LICP's mission is to advocate for economic development that benefits LIC's industrial, commercial, cultural, and residential sectors. The goal is to attract new businesses to LIC, retain those already here, welcome new residents and visitors, and promote a vibrant and authentic mixed-use community. The LIC Partnership operates the Long Island City Business Improvement District and the LIC Industrial Business Zone, among other programs.



Public Works Partners is a consulting firm whose work strengthens the organizations that strengthen communities. Our clients include nonprofits, government agencies, foundations, higher education institutions, and public policy research organizations. We help our clients to launch and administer complex new programs; improve operations and increase impact; and promote organizational excellence. They come to us because our team's hands-on experience and expertise in these sectors allows us to design and implement customized solutions to complex problems that make the most sense for each organization we serve.



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