The Future of Sunnyside Yard:
Taking a Transportation and Infrastructure-First Approach

NYU Rudin Center
January 22, 2020
What is Sunnyside Yard?

- 180-acre active railyard owned by Amtrak (142 acres), MTA (31 acres - City air rights), and small private parcel (7 acres)

- Critical piece of regional rail infrastructure since 1910

- One of the busiest passenger railyards in the nation

- Critical Main Line tracks, train storage, and maintenance facilities for Amtrak’s Northeast Corridor

- Also tracks and servicing for NJT and LIRR trains; Metro-North trains will use Yard in future post-Penn Access
What happens at Sunnyside Yard?
Sunnyside Yard presents a unique opportunity for sustainable, long-term planning that **supports** Western Queens neighborhoods.
Its position within regional rail networks gives it potential to connect to the entire Northeast.
# Phases of Sunnyside Yard Master Planning Process

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<th>Blue-Sky Listening</th>
<th>Workshopping Draft Concepts</th>
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<td>Oct. 24</td>
<td>Mar. 26</td>
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<tr>
<td>First Public Meeting 400+ Attendees</td>
<td>Second Public Meeting 200+ Attendees</td>
<td>Third Public Meeting 175+ Attendees</td>
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<td>Digital Town Hall 100+ Attendees</td>
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<tr>
<th>2018</th>
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<td>Summer</td>
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<td>Feb. 2019</td>
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<td>Stakeholder group interviews</td>
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<td>Summer 2018</td>
<td>Winter 2019</td>
<td>Quarterly Steering Committee Meetings</td>
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The Sunnyside Yard Steering Committee – a group of 40+ elected officials, community leaders, regional thought leaders, and technical experts – will play a critical advisory role throughout the process.

**Hosts**
- Vicki Been
  - Deputy Mayor for Housing and Economic Development, City of New York
- Anthony Coscia
  - Chairman of the Board, Amtrak
- Sharon Greenberger
  - President and CEO, YMCA of Greater New York

**Invited Elected Officials**
- Charles Schumer
  - United States Senator
- Kirsten Gillibrand
  - United States Senator
- Carolyn Maloney
  - United States House of Representatives
- Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez
  - United States House of Representatives
- Michael Gianaris
  - New York State Senator
- Catherine Nolan
  - New York State Assemblywoman
- Jimmy Van Bramer
  - New York City Councilmember
- Melinda Katz
  - Queens Borough President

**Members**
- Angela Pinsky
  - Executive Director, Association for Better New York
- Annie Cotton Morris
  - Chair of NYCHA, Citywide Council of Presidents
- Antonios Benetatos
  - President, Dutch Kills Civic Association
- Carlo Scissura
  - President and CEO, New York Building Congress
- Dean Devita
  - Secretary-Treasurer, National Conference of Firemen & Oilers
- Denise Keehan-Smith
  - Chair, Community Board 2
- Elizabeth Erion and Gerry Caliendo
  - Land Use Committee Chair, Community Board 1
- Felix Ciampa
  - Executive Director, Urban Land Institute New York
- Frank Wu
  - President, Court Square Civic Association
- Assuanta Howard
  - Interim Assistant Dean, LaGuardia Community College
- Gary LaBarbera
  - President, Building and Construction Trades Council
- Holly Leicht
  - Executive Vice President, Empire State Development
- Jaime-Faye Bean
  - Executive Director, Sunnyside Business Improvement District
- Janno Lieber
  - Chief Development Officer, Metropolitan Transportation Authority (MTA)

**Jonathan Bowles**
- Executive Director, Center for an Urban Future

**Judith Zangwill**
- Executive Director, Sunnyside Community Services

**Lisa Deller**
- Land Use Committee Chair, Community Board 2

**Lynne Sagalyn**
- Professor, Columbia University

**Marie Tornielli**
- President, Steinway Business Improvement District

**Melissa Orlando**
- Executive Director and Founder, Access Queens

**Mitchell Moss**
- Director of Rudin Center, New York University

**Nuala O’Doherty**
- Director of Policy, CEC 3G

**Sheila Lewandowski**
- Member, Long Island City Cultural Alliance

**Sylvia White**
- Co-Chair, Justice for All Coalition

**Thomas J. Grech**
- President & CEO, Queens Chamber of Commerce

**Tom Wright**
- President, Regional Plan Association

**Tomoko Kawamoto**
- Director of Public Information, Museum of the Moving Image
The Sunnyside Yard Master Plan is a framework to guide future decision-making, cementing public goods while maintaining flexibility to evolve over time.
A Transportation and Infrastructure-First Approach
The Sunnyside Yard Master Plan is an opportunity to **think comprehensively and long-term about local, citywide, and regional transportation needs.**
Sunnyside Master Plan Transportation Strategy

Transportation in Western Queens requires investment in the coming years and decades to **increase reliability, capacity, and transportation options**.

To identify these options, the Master Plan divided transportation into two strategies:

1. **Designing local streets that prioritize walking, biking, and transit use**
2. **Addressing the overall transit network and crowded subway system**
60’ appears consistently in New York’s built environment...

...so we studied 60’ module blocks relative to blocks in other cities...

...and how these block sizes could accommodate various types of buildings on Sunnyside Yard...

...and lastly, the differences between rectangular and square blocks.

In conclusion, we determined that a 240’ X 240’ grid of square blocks would be the best fit for Sunnyside Yard.
The plan uses a **base grid of 240’ X 240’**, modifying some blocks to integrate seamlessly into the existing street network and surrounding neighborhoods.

The proposed grid **prioritizes walkability** and **accommodates a range of uses** to be flexible and adaptable to the **needs of New Yorkers over time**.
New streets are flexible enough to meet changing needs over time while enabling efficient and reliable movement by a range of modes.

The plan embraces the goal of safer and more vibrant street life and seeks to minimize car traffic to and from the Yard.

Priorities for streets will differ. Some can handle high volumes of vehicles, while others should be quiet, local streets with neighborhood-serving uses.
A hierarchy of four street types accommodates today’s needs as well as emerging forms of transportation.
Proposed Central Greenway
Proposed Interior Streets
Proposed Northern Corridor

Illustrative View
The plan’s approach to transit was further broken down into two areas:

1. **Options to reduce the number of people on the subway**
2. **Ways to expand subway capacity and make the system function better**
Network Efficiency: Additional Options

New Yorkers will have additional transit options through regional rail service, a new Sunnyside Station, and Bus Rapid Transit (BRT).

These interventions can reduce the number of people relying on the subway and alleviate the strain on our congested subway system.
Sunnyside Station is a new regional rail station served by Long Island Rail Road initially, and eventually by Metro-North, NJ Transit, and Amtrak – creating a hub with access to every part of the NYC region.

It would support commercial growth and regional commuting to the Yard, enabling more balanced land use that mitigates demands on other modes.
**Sunnyside Station** is a new regional rail station served by Long Island Rail Road initially, and eventually by **Metro-North, NJ Transit, and Amtrak** – creating a hub with **access to every part of the NYC region**.

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What is Sunnyside Station?

1- A station  
Rotterdam Central Station

2- A connector  
Berlin Hauptbahnhof

3- A destination  
Madrid Atocha Station
Expanding subway capacity and making the system function better is crucial to Western Queens, the City and the wider region. Options include increasing subway frequency and redesigning cars to carry more people.
The MTA’s 1968 *Program for Action* proposed a “super express”, extending the F Line from the 63rd Street Tunnel to Forest Hills/71st Avenue.

The right-of-way under Sunnyside Yard was preserved to enable future construction. A station could be located in the southeast portion of the Yard.

A new subway line for Queens is the most impactful of the long-term strategies studied. Numerous alternative routes have been proposed, and a robust alternatives analysis is needed to identify the optimal alignment.
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Findings

- Much of the anticipated additional subway demand will happen outside of Sunnyside Yard
- With investment, the subway network can accommodate projected new riders in the coming decades
- The next MTA Capital Plan puts the subway on the path to reach at least the “moderate” improvements
- The Master Plan outlines “ambitious” improvements that can make the network function even better
Findings

- Expanding subway capacity provides most of the improvement
- Alternatives to the subway are key to optimizing the wider network
- Better use of regional rail system comes with the new station and changing fare policy
- Robust BRT with connections to Midtown is a viable alternative to the subway
- Need to continue momentum around bike mode share
- Smart land use can help reduce trips on the most crowded lines

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Crowding Levels:
- Rare Crowding
- Occasional Crowding
- Frequent Crowding
- Consistent Crowding
Sunnyside Yard is an opportunity to envision and plan for a revitalized and expanded 21st-century transportation system.
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