

## FROM EXCLUSIONARY COVENANT TO ETHNIC HYPERDIVERSITY IN JACKSON HEIGHTS, QUEENS\*

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**ABSTRACT.** When Edward MacDougall of the Queensboro Realty Company originally envisioned and developed Jackson Heights in Queens, New York in the early twentieth century, he intended it to be an exclusive suburban community for white, nonimmigrant Protestants within a close commute of Midtown Manhattan. He could not have anticipated the 1929 stock market crash, the subsequent real estate market collapse, or the change in immigration policies and patterns after the 1950s. This case study examines how housing and public transportation infrastructure intended to prevent ethnic diversity laid the foundation for one of the most diverse middle-class immigrant neighborhoods in the United States. *Keywords:* immigrant neighborhoods, New York City, public transportation, Queens.

During the decade of the 1990s the borough of Queens in New York City became the most ethnically diverse county in the United States (Kasinitz, Bazzi, and Doane 1998). Its population had been predominantly non-Hispanic white until the 1970s, but since 1995 it has been the destination of one of the nation's most diverse pools of immigrants (Salvo 2001). The area most affected is the corridor along which the Number 7 train runs, an elevated route of the New York subway system originally constructed to take middle-class and upper-middle-class commuters to their suburban homes in north-central Queens. One neighborhood that has been completely transformed by the recent immigration is Jackson Heights.

In most ethnic enclaves in major immigrant cities, including New York, one particular national-origin group dominates an "ethnic Main Street." But Roosevelt Avenue, one of the principal commercial streets in Jackson Heights, and the streets that intersect it have attracted entrepreneurs from all over the world, mainly from Latin America. The parallel street one block to the north, 37th Avenue, has become part of the economic heart of "Little India." Ethnically heterogeneous economic and residential patterns have served as magnets for even greater diversity.

The consolidation of New York's five very different counties, or boroughs, in 1898 defined the current boundaries of the city. Prior to 1898 each borough had a unique settlement morphology. The preconsolidation history of Queens is linked to rural, agricultural Long Island, with most of the urban development and population growth occurring as postconsolidation planned communities. Jackson Heights is one of those communities. It was originally developed in the early decades of the twentieth century as an elite suburban community for middle-class and upper-middle-class families desiring to move out of Manhattan without leaving the city. Like two other Queens developments, Forest Hills Gardens and Sunnyside Gar-

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