



## Staten Island Advance

### Here's chance to shape Island's future

**This week, residents seeking reform can offer opinions at Vision for Staten Island meetings**

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By **DEBORAH YOUNG**

**ADVANCE STAFF WRITER**

STATEN ISLAND, N.Y. -- Because Staten Island sees itself as a small town, residents feel invested in the decisions that affect the quality of life here.

But because Staten Island increasingly looks like a big city, with all the attendant stresses and growing pains, the borough of nearly 500,000 also sits at a crossroads.

All this week, in a series of open-to-the-public brainstorming sessions, residents will have the chance to vent about the push and pull of our unique existence.

Vision for Staten Island, a new not-for-profit group, hopes to glean residents' wisdom, impressions and aspirations for the place they call home in these intimate meetings -- and will compile the ideas into a model for reform.

"I think Staten Island is primed for this type of process because we're at a point where our infrastructure and our landscape and our demographics have been so changed and we've grown so quickly," said Adena Long, executive director of Vision for Staten Island.

"Staten Islanders feel we haven't kept pace in where we want to be, and these things are just sort of happening to us."

Referencing multiple other studies on Island life, she said the Vision group is not looking to "recreate the wheel." Rather, it hopes to sketch out a picture of the Island at its maximum potential, using input from a broad cross section of Islanders.

#### CREATE OWN AGENDA

"The idea of visioning is there is no agenda," said Ms. Long, who distributed more than 1,500 fliers at the Staten Island Ferry last week to promote the meetings, the first of which is tomorrow from 7 p.m. to 9 p.m. at Brighton Heights Reformed Church, St. George. "When people come with their ideas, they are in essence creating the agenda."

Upon arrival at the meetings, to be held at points across the borough throughout the week, participants will be randomly assigned to small groups of eight to 12 people, mediated by trained volunteers -- many of whom will be the Staten Island community notables who make up the group's steering committee and board.

Each person's idea will be committed, verbatim, to chart paper, and some will be reported back to the larger assembly at the meetings' close.

Afterwards, every idea will be posted online at [www.sivision.org](http://www.sivision.org), the Web site affiliated with the group, funded by a \$250,000 grant from The Staten Island Foundation.

"You figure there will be thousands of ideas to come out of these meetings," said Ms. Long. The format should especially appeal to creative thinkers who often turn over thoughts about life here in their minds, but who might be too busy to participate in local civic organizations, she said.

#### IDEAS INTO THEMES

In January, the steering committee will assemble the ideas into themes. Then, sometime during the spring, the group will start doing a series of "reality checks," interfacing with lawmakers and other leaders, to see where potential implementation stands. The hope is to dovetail the findings with recommendations from other Island studies already in the works.

"We're hoping to get a diverse and great participation from the community," said Ms. Long.

"We're not looking for solutions at this point; we're looking for people to express ideas about what they would like to see in their community. And on Staten Island, that can really run the gamut."

#### Vision for Staten Island meeting schedule

Staten Islanders will be able to provide their input about the place they call home during a series of intimate meetings across the Island. Hosted by Vision for Staten Island, the gatherings are the first step in a process that seeks to cull thousands of ideas about how to improve life in the borough, and then to help that vision materialize.

Tomorrow Brighton Heights Reformed Church, St. George, 7 p.m.-9 p.m.

Tuesday PS 58, New Springville, 7 p.m.-9 p.m.

Wednesday Totten Intermediate School, Tottenville, 7 p.m.-9 p.m.

Thursday Port Richmond High School, 7 p.m.-9 p.m.

Saturday Staten Island Academy, Dongan Hills, 8:30 a.m.-10:30 a.m.

Dec. 8 New Dorp High School, 7 p.m.-9 p.m.

In addition, there is a youth idea-gathering session, intended for those 16-18 years old, Thursday from 4 p.m.-6 p.m. at the Cromwell Recreation Center at Pier 6, Tompkinsville.

For more information, go to [sivision.org](http://sivision.org) or call 718-568-3561.

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