Distinct Places, Shared Opportunity:
A Neighborhood-based Analysis of Asian Americans in NYC

A report by Asian Americans for Equality, Inc.
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Background and Purpose

New York City—home to 8.3 million people—is a constellation of neighborhoods. When analyzed from a citywide perspective, data on Asian Americans as well as other race and ethnic groups can be limiting. As a result of continued immigration, demographic change, economic growth, and housing choice, the City's Asian American communities have grown to look very different from one neighborhood to another.

The purpose of this report is to document the social and economic diversity of Asian Americans in New York City through a place-based approach. Asian Americans for Equality (AAFE) analyzed data from the U.S. Census Bureau's *2005-2009 American Community Survey* to identify New York City neighborhoods with a share of Asian American population above the city-wide average (12.2% Asian American). Data for neighborhoods was analyzed based on the Census Bureau's Public Use Microdata Areas (PUMA) which approximate the City's 59 community districts. With a focus on 20 community districts with the greatest Asian American population, this report presents selected economic, demographic and housing characteristics for each neighborhood to show the rich complexity of NYC's Asian American communities. All data presented in this report were analyzed from the *2005-2009 American Community Survey 5-year Estimates*.

Contents

Asian Americans in New York City

The Asian American community has been the fastest growing race group in the nation and NYC for the past two decades, and remains the most culturally and economically diverse population in the U.S. The most recent American Community Survey estimates that there are 1,013,209 Asian Americans living in NYC, which represents 12.2% of the City's 8.3 million residents. Since 2000, NYC's Asian American population has grown by 16.7%. This far exceeds the City's overall population growth, which was 3.7% in the same time period. If the Asian Americans population of NYC were a consolidated city, they would represent the 10th largest city in the U.S. by population, coming in just after Dallas, TX.

There are 9 NYC community districts where Asian Americans now represent more than 25% of the population in a given neighborhood. It is in these neighborhoods—Elmhurst, Woodside, Flushing, and Bayside in Queens, and Bensonhurst and Sunset Park in Brooklyn—where Asian American communities have grown between 40-89% since 2000. Through this astonishing growth, Asian American communities have remade their neighborhoods: buying homes; opening small businesses; establishing places of worship, civic associations and community-based organizations.

Asian Americans in NYC speak more than 40 different languages and dialects, and have many national, ethnic and religious identities. While these distinctions are important to understanding the needs and assets of the Asian American community, this exploratory analysis highlights the distinction of place and brings attention to issues of equity for Asian Americans when compared to their neighbors as a whole. Across a number of measures, such as income and homeownership, Asian Americans in some neighborhoods are similar to their neighbors. However, disparities persist in terms of language access, poverty levels, and housing conditions between Asian Americans and their neighbors, as well as for Asian Americans across neighborhoods.

Asian American Neighborhoods

This report identifies 20 community districts (CD) where the Asian American population is greater than 12.2%, and compares available data for Asian Americans with the population as a whole within each CD. An estimated 74.0% of all Asian American New Yorkers live in the 20 CDs listed in Table 1 below. While CDs are not necessarily uniform in geography and population size, they serve as the most useful level of analysis for data at a local level. Neighborhoods within a given CD are also not demographically or economically uniform, and can change in terms of population and character from one block to another. For example, the aggregate poverty rate for a CD may not accurately represent the poverty rates of two neighborhoods within the it. However, these local estimates are critical to dis-aggregating data on Asian American communities.

Accordingly, the 5 community districts currently with the largest share of Asian American population are:

1. Flushing (Qn 7) at 42.9%
2. Chinatown (Mn 3) at 35.3%
3. Bayside (Qn 11) at 34.8%
4. Woodside (Qn 2) at 33.9%
5. Elmhurst (Qn 4) at 32.3%

Asian Americans are now a significant proportion of neighborhoods that historically have not been considered Asian American "places." Asian Americans now represent:

- 1 in 3 residents of Bensonhurst (Bk 11)
- 1 in 4 residents of Forest Hills (Qn 6)
- 1 in 5 residents of Richmond Hill (Qn 12)
- 1 in 6 residents of Lower Manhattan (Mn 1,2)
- 1 in 8 residents of the Murray Hill (Mn 6)

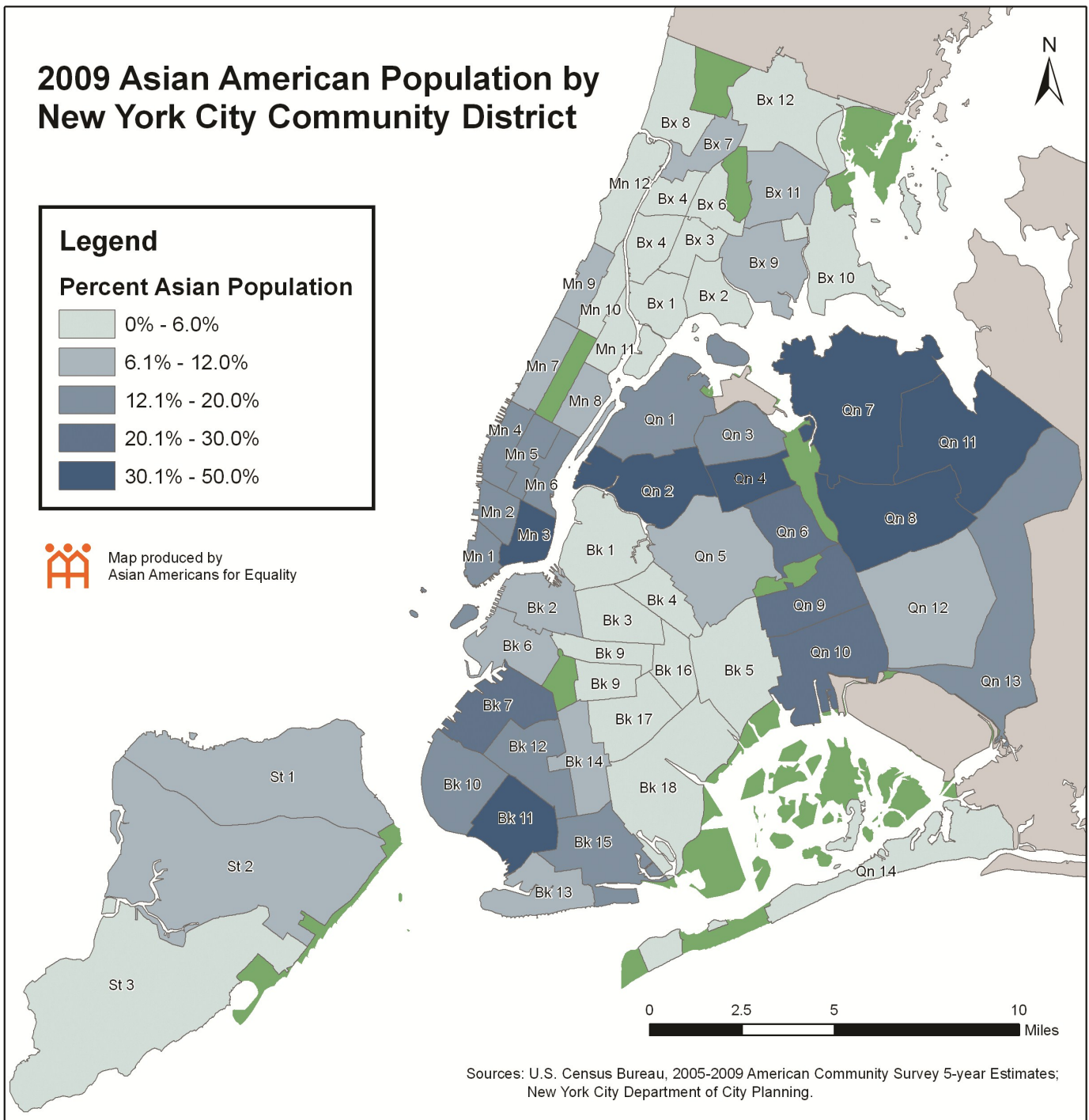**Table 1: The Percent Share of Asian Americans in Selected NYC Neighborhoods**

District	Neighborhoods within Community Districts	Total Population	Asian Population*	% Share Asian
QN 7	Flushing, Bay Terrace, College Point, Whitestone, Queensboro Hill	250,458	107,384	42.9%
MN 3	Lower East Side, Chinatown, Two Bridges, East Village	168,041	59,276	35.3%
QN 11	Bayside, Douglaston, Little Neck, Auburndale, East Flushing	120,600	42,001	34.8%
QN 2	Long Island City, Woodside, Sunnyside	135,448	45,886	33.9%
QN 4	Corona, Corona Heights, Elmhurst	139,583	45,127	32.3%
BK 11	Bensonhurst, Bath Beach, Gravesend, Mapleton	177,922	57,336	32.2%
QN 8	Fresh Meadows, Jamaica Estates, Flushing South, Utopia, Briarwood	152,820	48,513	31.7%
BK 7	Sunset Park. Windsor Terrace	151,262	39,767	26.3%
QN 6	Forest Hills, Rego Park	116,224	29,144	25.1%
QN 9	Kew Gardens, Woodhaven, Ozone Park, and Richmond Hill	147,338	34,170	23.2%
QN 10	Richmond Hill, Ozone Park, South Ozone Park, Howard Beach	130,753	26,562	20.3%
BK 10	Bay Ridge, Dyker Heights, Fort Hamilton	127,209	23,721	18.6%
QN 3	Jackson Heights, East Elmhurst, North Corona	182,868	31,871	17.4%
MN 1,2	Financial District, Battery Park City, Tribeca, West Village, NoHo, SoHo	143,354	23,020	16.1%
BK 15	Homecrest, Sheepshead Bay, Manhattan Beach, Kings Bay	149,019	22,377	15.0%
QN 13	Queens Village, New Hyde Park, Bellerose, Rosedale, Floral Park	204,564	30,296	14.8%
QN 1	Astoria, Long Island City, Ditmars, Ravenswood, Steinway	184,083	25,590	13.9%
MN 4,5	Clinton, Chelsea, Midtown	143,734	18,710	13.0%
MN 6	Murray Hill, Gramercy Park, Stuyvesant Town, Turtle Bay, Sutton Place	150,263	19,336	12.9%
BK 12	Borough Park, Kensington, Ocean Parkway, and Midwood	163,611	20,481	12.5%

Reported Asian alone or in combination with any other race.

2009 Asian American Population by New York City Community District

Legend

Percent Asian Population

- 0% - 6.0%
- 6.1% - 12.0%
- 12.1% - 20.0%
- 20.1% - 30.0%
- 30.1% - 50.0%
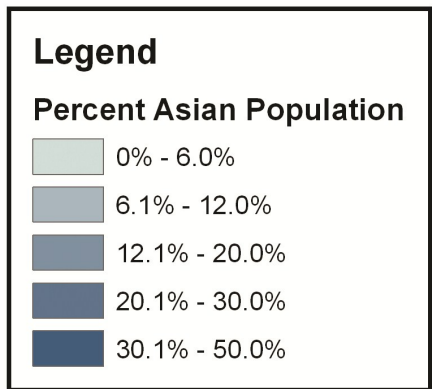
Map produced by
Asian Americans for Equality

N

0   2.5   5   10
Miles

Sources: U.S. Census Bureau, 2005-2009 American Community Survey 5-year Estimates;
New York City Department of City Planning.

Neighborhoods such as Jackson Heights (Qn 3), Flushing (Qn 7), Sunset Park (Bk 7), and Chinatown (Mn 3) are known as Asian American enclaves in NYC and serve as "gateway" neighborhoods for new immigrants. Over the past several decades Asian American communities have settled here and built up their neighborhoods, and they remain commercial hubs for their respective ethnic communities from throughout the region. The data presented here shows that Asian Americans now live throughout many NYC neighborhoods which are not historically considered Asian American enclaves. Some neighborhoods are entirely residential, while others have become secondary and tertiary commercial districts, such as Richmond Hill (Qn 10) for the Indo-Caribbean community; Woodside (Qn 2) for the Filipino community; and Bensonhurst (Bk 11) for the Chinese community. Asian Americans choose neighborhoods for universal reasons: quality of life; affordable housing; access to transit; good schools; and employment opportunities.

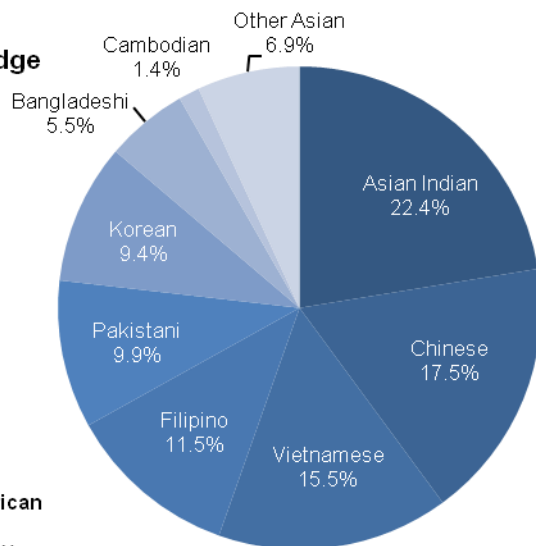## Ethnic Diversity across Neighborhoods

Figures 1 through 10 present the make-up of Asian American communities in selected community districts by ethnic group. Districts in the Bronx and Staten Island lack a percent share Asian population more than 12.2%, however, the North Shore in Staten Island (St 1) and Kingsbridge in the Bronx (Bx 7) have the highest share Asian populations in their respective boroughs. Based on available estimates, Chinese and South Asians represent the majority of Asian Americans living in Brooklyn. Neighborhoods throughout Queens represents the rich diversity of NYC's Asian American community. The "Other Asian" groups making up 4.7% of Asian Americans include Taiwanese, Burmese, Nepali, Indonesian, Thai, Sri Lankan, Cambodian, and Malaysian.

Table 2: NYC Asian American Population by Ethnic Group (Asian alone)

Ethnic Group	Population	Percent
Chinese	441,963	45.6%
Asian Indian	221,398	22.9%
Korean	88,079	9.1%
Filipino	69,564	7.2%
Bangladeshi	30,581	3.2%
Pakistani	29,251	3.0%
Japanese	24,512	2.5%
Vietnamese	17,578	1.8%
Other Asian Groups	45,235	4.7%
Total Population*	968,161	100.0%

Estimate for "Asian alone" population, see technical note on page 12.
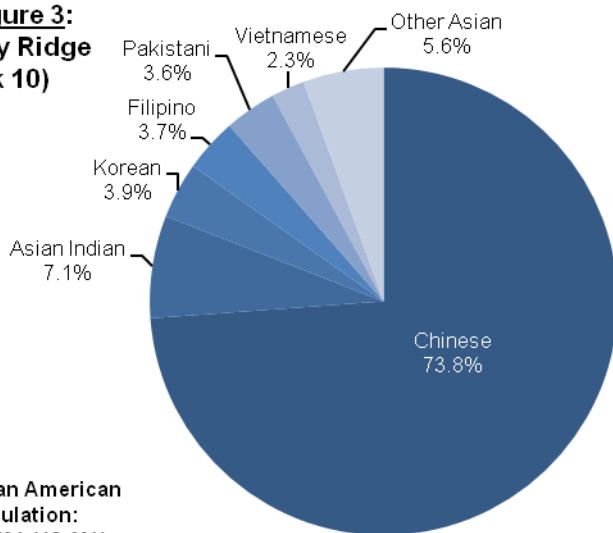
Figure 1: Kingsbridge (Bx 7)

Other Asian 6.9%
Cambodian 1.4%
Bangladeshi 5.5%
Korean 9.4%
Pakistani 9.9%
Filipino 11.5%
Vietnamese 15.5%
Chinese 17.5%
Asian Indian 22.4%

Asian American Population: 10,528 (8.2%)

Figure 2: North Shore (St 1)

Other Asian 7.5%
Pakistani 1.9%
Vietnamese 3.7%
Korean 3.9%
Sri Lankan 5.3%
Filipino 20.7%
Chinese 35.3%
Asian Indian 21.6%
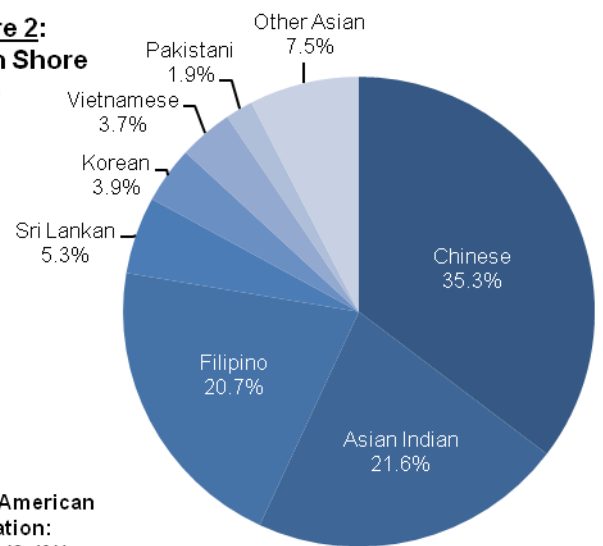
Asian American Population: 14,738 (8.4%)

Figure 3: Bay Ridge (Bk 10)

Other Asian 5.6%
Vietnamese 2.3%
Pakistani 3.6%
Filipino 3.7%
Korean 3.9%
Asian Indian 7.1%
Chinese 73.8%

Asian American Population: 23,721 (18.6%)

Figure 4: Borough Park (Bk 12)

Other Asian 5.9%
Korean 2.0%
Filipino 2.4%
Pakistani 7.2%
Bangladeshi 11.0%
Chinese 48.1%
Asian Indian 23.4%
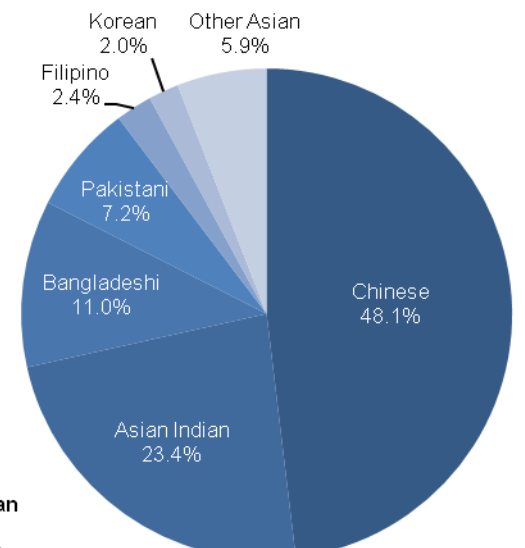
Asian American Population: 20,481 (12.5%)

Figure 5:
Astoria
(Qn 1)

Asian Indian 29.5%
Chinese 17.9%
Bangladeshi 11.1%
Filipino 9.4%
Japanese 8.1%
Korean 7.0%
Pakistani 5.7%
Other Asian 11.4%
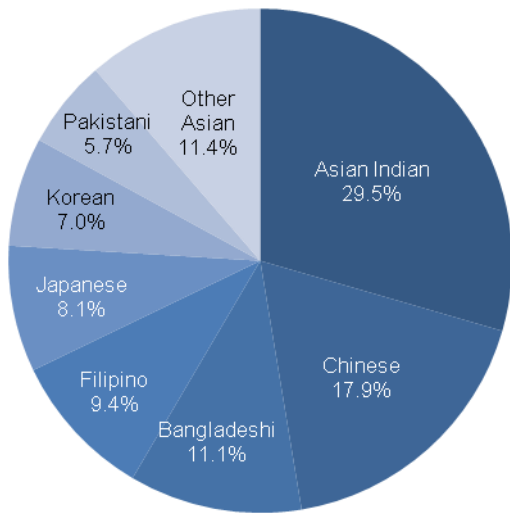
Asian American
Population:
25,590 (13.9%)

Figure 6:
Woodside
(Qn 2)

Chinese 29.3%
Asian Indian 22.6%
Filipino 13.0%
Korean 12.8%
Bangladeshi 4.1%
Japanese 2.9%
Pakistani 2.4%
Other Asian 12.8%
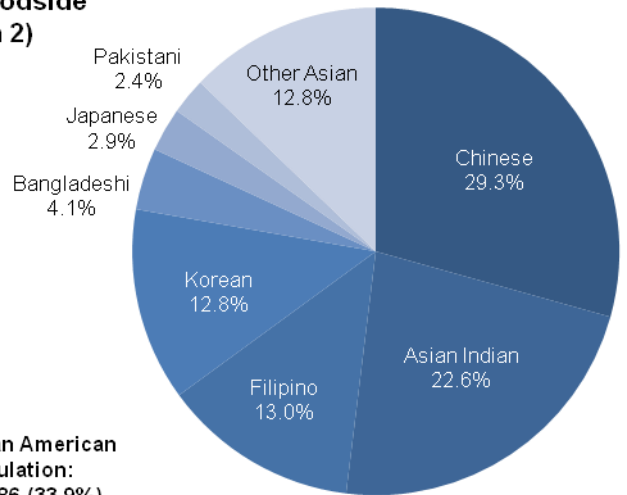
Asian American
Population:
45,886 (33.9%)

Figure 7:
Jackson Heights
(Qn 3)

Asian Indian 36.6%
Chinese 30.5%
Bangladeshi 10.2%
Filipino 7.9%
Pakistani 4.6%
Korean 3.4%
Other Asian 6.9%
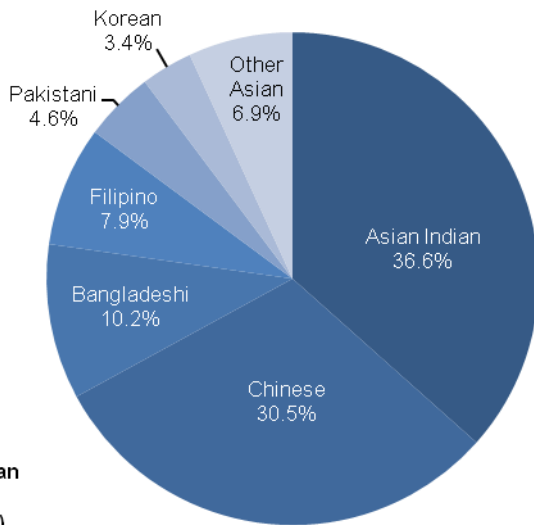
Asian American
Population:
31,871 (17.4%)

Figure 8:
Fresh Meadows
(Qn 8)

Chinese 33.5%
Asian Indian 32.2%
Filipino 12.0%
Korean 7.9%
Bangladeshi 5.2%
Pakistani 3.6%
Other Asian 5.5%
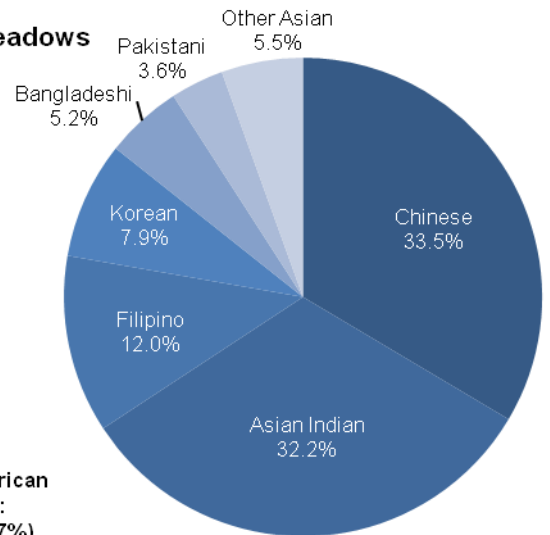
Asian American
Population:
48,513 (31.7%)

Figure 9:
Richmond Hill
(Qn 10)

Asian Indian 79.7%
Chinese 6.4%
Filipino 5.3%
Pakistani 2.7%
Bangladeshi 2.2%
Korean 1.5%
Other Asian 2.3%
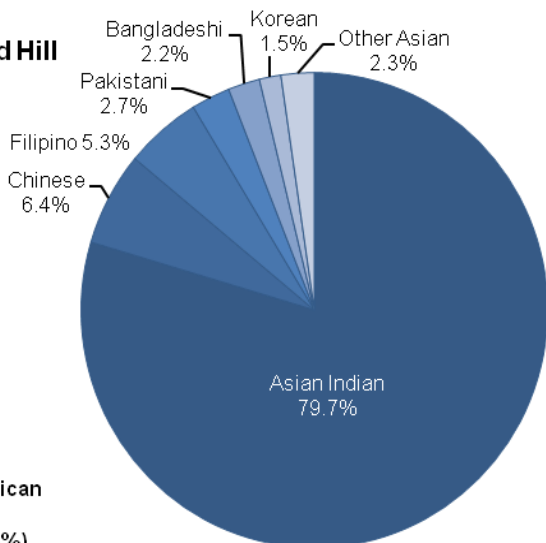
Asian American
Population:
26,562 (20.3%)

Figure 10:
Queens Village
(Qn 13)

Asian Indian 64.2%
Filipino 13.8%
Chinese 11.5%
Korean 2.9%
Pakistani 2.0%
Bangladeshi 1.0%
Other Asian 4.6%
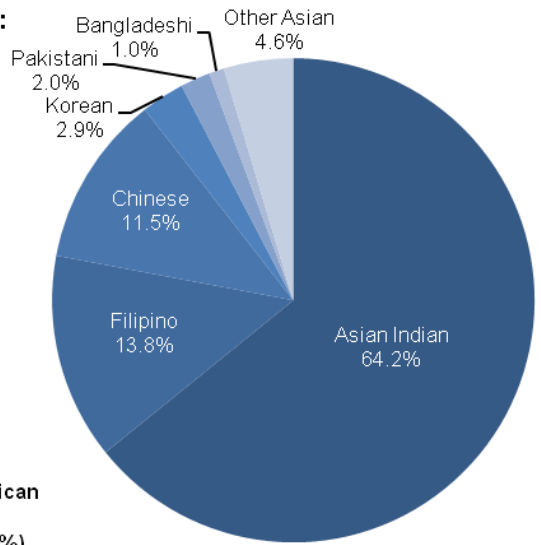
Asian American
Population:
30,296 (14.8%)

Poverty and Economic Status

Asian Americans represent every part of the economic spectrum. The median household income for an Asian American household citywide is $53,173, which is higher than the median household income for NYC as a whole at $50,173. This level of income is higher than for all racial and ethnic groups, except for White, Non-Hispanic households which is $68,747. In aggregate, Asian American New Yorkers would appear to be faring well economically. However, through the lens of a neighborhood-by-neighborhood analysis, the data reveals that economic inequity persists for Asian Americans across the City.

The disparity between median incomes for Asian American households compared to all households in Figure 12 is greatest in Lower Manhattan (Mn 1 & 2) which contains economically diverse neighborhoods such as Tribeca, the Financial District, Battery Park City, Greenwich Village, SoHo, Chinatown, and Little Italy. In the analysis of presented in Figure 12, Asian American households have median incomes lower than those of their neighbors throughout neighbor-hoods of Queens, with the exception of Forest Hills (Qn 6) and Fresh Meadows(Qn 8) where median incomes for Asian American households were higher than that for all households.

The median per capita income for NYC is $30,337, while the median per capita income for Asian Americans is lower at $25,414. This is half of the per capita income for White, Non-Hispanic New Yorkers at $49,699. The low median per capita income for

Asian Americans may indicate that the size of Asian American households are larger, and their make-up tends to be multi-generational. The overcrowding rate for Asian American households is nearly double the city-wide average of 7.8%. As a result there are more individuals who work to contribute to the household's income. New immigrants will work in low-wage jobs and household members will often pool their resources to cover living costs.

Poverty status is determined based on federal guidelines which factor the income of all persons within a household relative to total household size. Few neighborhoods in this analysis have poverty rates at or above the city-wide average of 18.6%. The average poverty rate for Asian American New Yorkers is 17.5%, just below the city-wide average. However, Figure 11 shows that poverty among Asian Americans remains high and is concentrated in neighborhoods such as Borough Park (Bk 12, 34.1%), Chinatown (Mn 3, 32.7%), Sunset Park (Bk 7, 30.6%), Jackson Heights (Qn 3, 23.6%), Elmhurst (Qn 4, 20.2%), and Astoria (Qn 1, 19.7%). Due to economic disadvantages these neighborhoods also have some of the largest household sizes and high overcrowding rates for Asian American households (Figure 15).

The largest disparities in poverty for between Asian Americans and their neighbors exist in:

- Bay Ridge (Bk 10, 21.7% vs. 14.0%)
- Lower Manhattan (Mn 1,2, 17.1% vs. 8.8%)
- Jackson Heights (Qn 3, 23.6% vs. 16.0%)
- Fresh Meadows (Qn 8, 8.6% vs. 4.2%).
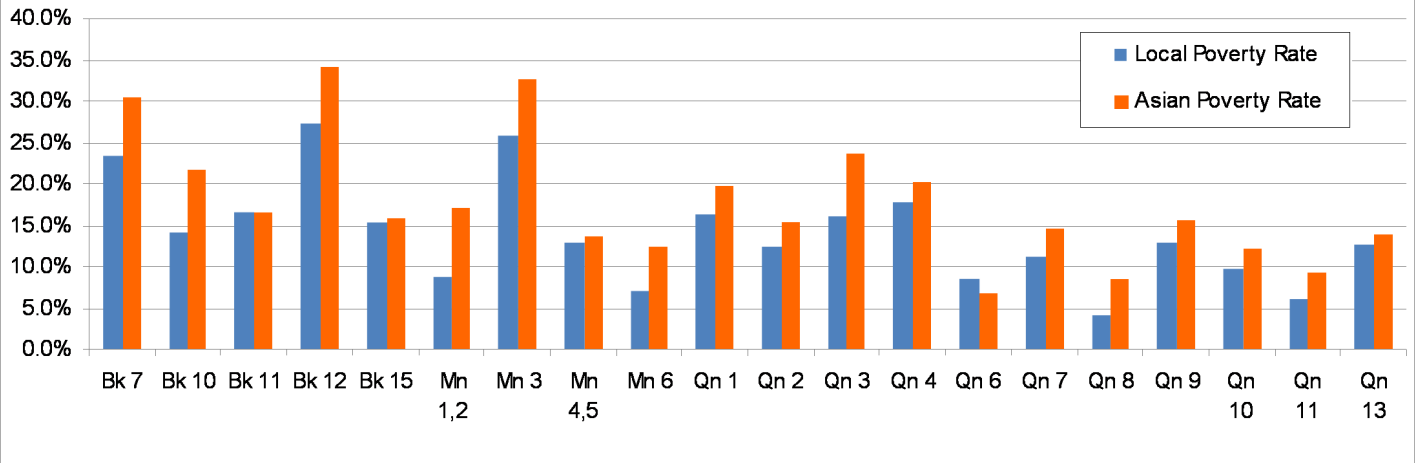
Figure 11: Households in Poverty

Legend: Local Poverty Rate, Asian Poverty Rate

Figure 12: Median Household Income

Legend: Local Median Household Income, Asian Median Household Income

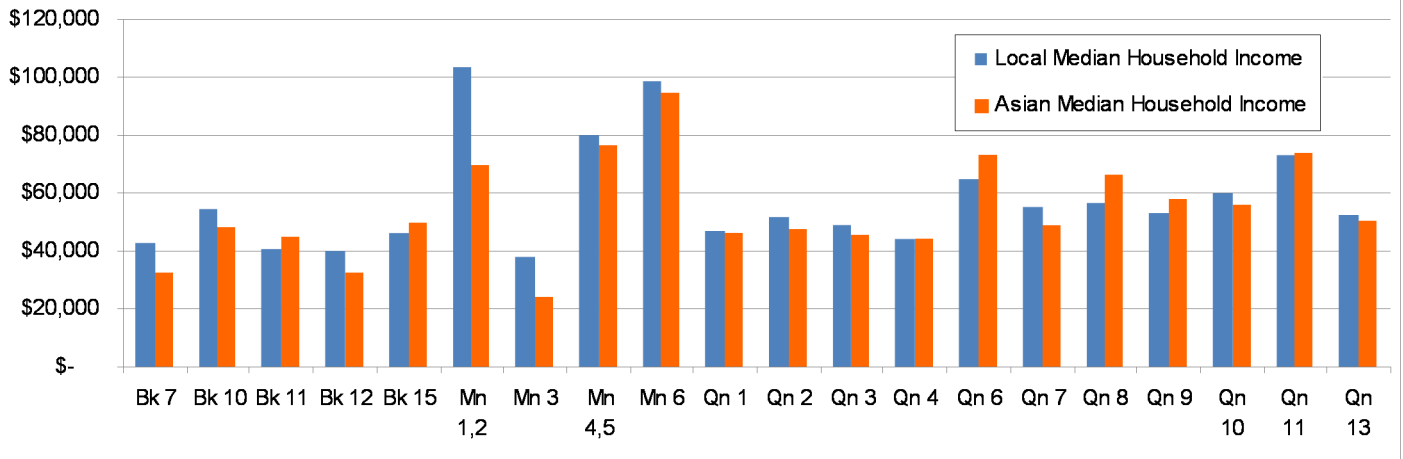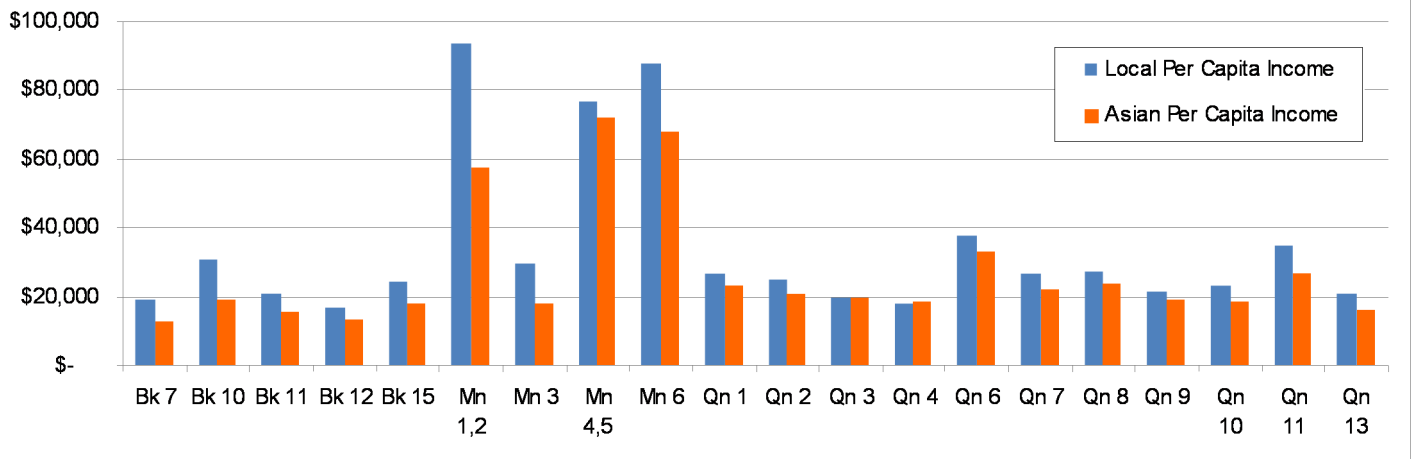**Figure 13:** Per Capita Income

Legend: Local Per Capita Income, Asian Per Capita Income

Housing Characteristics

Housing tenure and household overcrowding are primarily functions of economic resources and housing choice. Due to economic disadvantages and high housing costs many Asian Americans live in crowded, unsafe living conditions throughout NYC. The rate of overcrowding, defined as more than 1 person per room living within a housing unit, among Asian Americans households is 14.4% which is nearly double the city-wide average of 7.8%. The highest rates of overcrowding for Asian American households are in Sunset Park (Bk 7) and Borough Park (Bk 12). Disparities in overcrowding for Asian American households are greatest in:

- Borough Park (Bk 12, 27.2% vs. 6.3%)
- Sunset Park (Bk 7, 30.1% vs. 15.8%)
- Astoria (Qn 1, 19.0% vs. 8.0%)
- Chinatown (Mn 3, 17.7% vs. 8.5%).

The rate of homeownership for Asian American households (40.4%) is higher than the citywide average of 33.9%, but still below the rate for White, Non-Hispanic households (43.9%). In neighborhoods where there is relative parity in median household income between Asian American households and all households (Figure 12), Asian Americans still have higher rates of homeownership, including Jackson Heights (Qn 3), Bay Ridge (Bk 10), and Homecrest (Bk 15). This may demonstrate Asian Americans choosing affordable home buying opportunities in these neighborhoods. As a community of first-time homebuyers, many Asian American households play a pivotal role in neighborhood stabilization where homes have been neglected or abandoned. Asian Americans who become homebuyers also become more civically engaged and support the economic revitalization of neighborhoods as in the case of Flushing (Qn 7).
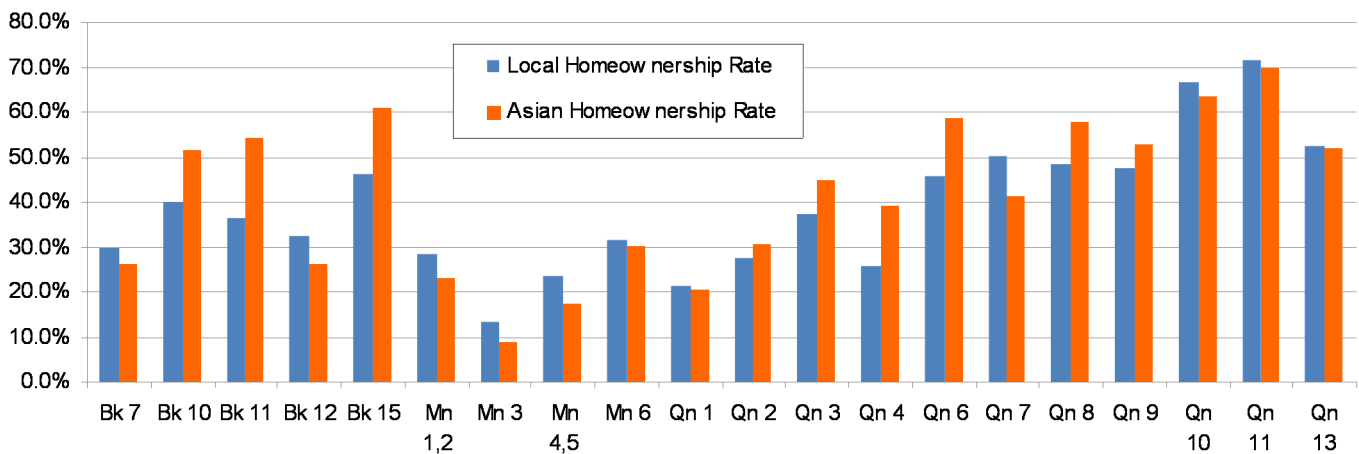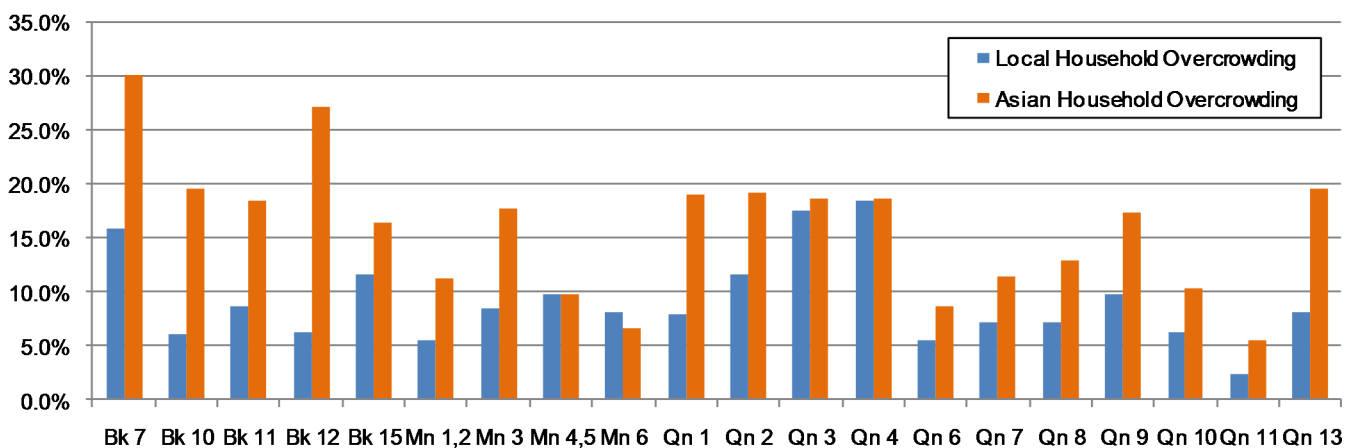

Figure 14: Homeownership Rates

Figure 15: Overcrowded Households

English Proficiency and Language Access

For immigrant New Yorkers, limited English proficiency (LEP), defined as speaking English less than "very well," often presents significant challenges to accessing health care, social services, employment, and education. While New York City's population is 35.9% foreign-born, 22.8% of New Yorkers are LEP. The rate of LEP among Asian Americans in NYC is 60.0%, however this varies significantly across Asian ethnic sub-groups. Table 3 presents this variation by selected Asian language, and provides evidence for how policies and programs serving LEP individuals should be developed based on population as well as the severity of disaggregated need within a language group or local community.

Linguistically Isolated Households

LEP Asian Americans often rely on children and other English-speaking family members to access services which lack adequate language assistance. However, an estimated 15.1% of all NYC households are linguistically isolated, defined as a household which has no individual 5 years of age or older who speaks English "very well." NYC's Asian American households continue to have the highest rates of language isolation when compared to any other race or ethnic group: 42.5% are linguistically isolated. Due to population growth in NYC's Asian American communities being driven by immigration, it also is not surprising that the rate of isolated households in NYC is notably higher than that of Asian American households across the United States at 27.6%.

Table 3: Share of LEP Individuals by Selected Asian Languages Spoken

Language Spoken	Percent LEP
Chinese	67.3%
Gujurati	38.3%
Hindi	29.8%
Japanese	55.3%
Khmer	44.3%
Korean	62.5%
Tagalog	30.1%
Thai	59.3%
Urdu	44.2%
Vietnamese	60.6%

Figure 16 presents the rates of language isolation among Asian American households. The highest rates of linguistically isolated households are found in historic neighborhoods for the Asian American community: Sunset Park (Bk 7), Chinatown (Mn 3), Flushing (Qn 7) and Jackson Heights (Qn 4). Neighborhoods with moderate rates of language isolation such as Borough Park (Bk 12), Elmhurst (Qn 4) and Sunnyside/Woodside (Qn 2) represent residential areas adjacent to places like Sunset Park and Jackson Heights. Households in Richmond Hill (Qn 10) and Queens Village (Qn 13) have the lowest rates of language isolation. One possible explanation of this finding is that Indians and Filipinos represent more than 75% of Asian Americans living in these areas (Figures 9,10) and have high rates of English proficiency (Table 3).

Figure 16: Linguistically Isolated Asian American Households
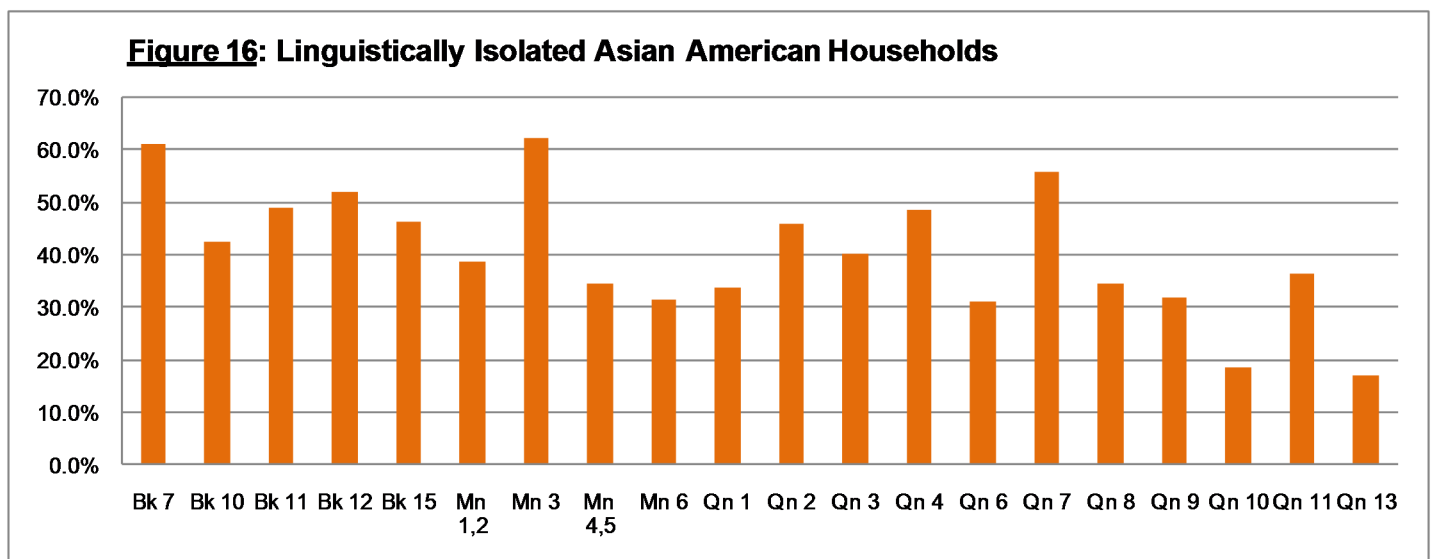
Conclusion and Recommendations

The data on Asian Americans and neighborhoods in NYC analyzed in this report represents an initial assessment on how service providers, advocates, organizers and researchers can better understand the complexity of Asian American communities across the City. Ethnic identity, histories of immigration and settlement, languages, and religious affiliations all play important roles in influencing the needs and assets within Asian American communities. However, many additional factors ground people to their neighborhoods: social networks; housing choice despite limited resources; employment opportunities; and access to linguistically appropriate services and community resources. This data shows that Asian American communities are different across neighborhoods, but face similar challenges in terms of access and equity.

AAFE presents the following recommendations to explore further research, inform decision-makers and mainstream service providers to develop more culturally and linguistically appropriate services, and advance economic, political and social opportunities for Asian Americans in NYC.

Recommendation 1:
Understand Community Change

Asian American communities have grown beyond the traditional "gateway" neighborhoods in recent decades. Some factors for this growth may be beneficial Asian Americans, such as better schools or better housing conditions; yet other factors may be detrimental to Asian Americans, such as increased demand of housing resulting in escalating housing costs. It is important to understand what is driving this mobility and why families select these new neighborhoods. We encourage further research to determine the wide-ranging effects of neighborhood change on Asian American communities.

Recommendation 2:
Promote Language Access and English Language Learning Opportunities

Language access remains a priority for NYC's Asian American communities. Every 3 out of 5 Asian American New Yorkers face barriers in accessing education, employment, and critical social and health services due to limited English proficiency. Government agencies need to be more responsive to local language needs and concerted efforts are needed to sustain and expand services that assist immigrant New Yorkers with learning English. Mainstream social service providers in communities with a growing Asian American population need to develop culturally and linguistically sensitive outreach and education initiatives to serve emerging populations. Funders and government agencies can form partnerships with traditional social service providers and local community-based organizations that have the expertise in serving Asian Americans to ensure that programs are developed to serve the needs of this growing population.

Recommendation 3:
Focus on Asset-building for Families

Despite trends in homeownership and median income, poverty persists for many Asian American households throughout the neighborhoods in NYC. In many Asian American communities, more individuals are working with lower earnings in order to contribute to the household. These causal relationships need to be explored further and more needs to be done to support individuals and families who face the most economic disadvantage in building their assets.

Recommendation 4:
Expand Affordable Housing Opportunity in Targeted Neighborhoods

The situation of overcrowding for Asian American households is critical, and highlights the severe lack of housing choice, whether due to limited affordable housing opportunities or discrimination in the housing market. Affordable housing opportunities should be expanded where the real estate market provides for it, as well as where Asian American households experience disparate burdens in housing costs and rates of overcrowding.

Recommendation 5:
Consolidate Local Civic Participation

Release of the 2010 Census data in 2011 will begin the redistricting process for New York State. In many neighborhoods across the City, one elected official represents communities of interest at each level of government. Newly created electoral districts that do not regard organic neighborhoods and communities of common interest do a disservice to local civic participation. As Asian Americans grow in emerging neighborhoods, elected officials need to understand and be accountable to their changing electorate. Elected officials that represent emerging Asian American communities need to hire staff with the cultural and language capacity to serve the emerging Asian population.

Community Boards play a vital role in the public participation of members of the community. For communities with an emerging Asian American community, it is the responsibility of Borough Presidents and New York City Council Members to appoint Asian Americans to Community Boards in order to represent the community, and to advocate for the wide-ranging needs of Asian American.

Recommendation 6:
Explore Further Research on Local Communities

Data available through the American Community Survey provides a wealth of information never before available for Asian American communities at the local and neighborhood levels. Community leaders and researchers should collaborate to explore potential applications of this data to craft policy and build local resources.

Recommendation 7:
Increase Funding Opportunities for Community-Based Organizations that serve Asian Americans

Community-based organizations that are Asian American-led and serve Asian American communities have traditionally received less than 1% of New York City's government funding for healthcare, social services, and advocacy services. With the Asian American population exceeding 12% in 20 neighborhoods and 25% in 9 neighborhoods, local government agencies and elected officials need to invest more resources and create greater equity through funding for community-based organizations that serve Asian Americans.

Methods and Notes

2005-2009 American Community Survey 5-year Estimates and Sampling

Data from the *2005-2009 American Community Survey (ACS) 5-year Estimates* was released in December 2010. The data contained in these data products are based on the sample of households over a period of time, and not an actual count of all households in the U.S. Each year, approximately 3 million housing unit addresses from the U.S. Census Bureau's Master Address File are selected for the ACS. Independent address samples are selected for each of the 3,142 counties and county equivalents in the U.S., including the District of Columbia, for the ACS. For the 5-year data products, interviews from January 1, 2005 through December 31, 2009 were included in the sample. The multiyear estimates should be interpreted as estimates with margins of error that describe a time period rather than a specific reference year.

"Asian alone" vs. "Asian alone or in any combination"

"Asian alone or in any combination" corresponds to ACS interview responses that included Asian race, either alone or in any combination with other race categories. The data pertaining to the percent share of an Asian population within a given geography presented in Table 1 and subsequently used throughout this report are estimates for persons who are "Asian alone or in combination" with any other race. This data was used where possible as the most inclusive reporting of Asian Americans in NYC. All other demographic, economic and housing data is reported by the U.S. Census Bureau only for persons with a single race identified "Asian alone," and will not include responses in which race categories were reported in addition to Asian.

For more information on the American Community Survey, including data and documentation, visit: http://www.census.gov/acs

About Asian Americans for Equality, Inc.

Asian Americans for Equality is a non-profit organization established in 1974 with a mission of advancing the rights of Asian Americans and all those in need through advocacy and access in civil rights, immigrant assistance, social services, youth development, affordable housing, and economic development; to empower our communities through research and publishing that embody our issues and concerns; and to foster understanding and unity among diverse communities through building coalitions and forming collaborations.

During the past 37-years, AAFE has evolved into a nationally recognized affordable housing developer and an experienced social service provider. With offices in Chinatown, Lower East Side, Flushing and Sunset Park, AAFE is the only citywide community development corporation serving New York City's one million Asian American residents. Services include community development and housing preservation, housing legal services, community education, citizenship preparation, and social services. AAFE affiliate organizations the AAFE Community Development Fund and Renaissance Economic Development Corporation provide homeownership counseling and small business training, respectively.

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