



# BUSHWICK BROOKLYN

Neighborhood Arts and Cultural Inventory



Bill de Blasio  
Mayor  
Tom Finkelpearl  
Commissioner



El Puente  
The Bushwick Starr



# BUILDING COMMUNITY CAPACITY

**Building Community Capacity (BCC)**, takes a collaborative and comprehensive approach to building cultural capacity in targeted low-income neighborhoods. This multi-year program strives to ensure both that culture is included as part of the City's interagency efforts around neighborhood planning, affordable housing, and economic development; and that local cultural stakeholders have ownership and voice in their own community's development efforts.

# NEIGHBORHOOD BACKGROUND

Bushwick has a rich and homegrown tradition of visual and performing arts, cultural celebrations and community events that are unique to the neighborhood and have evolved into powerful symbols of belonging and self-determination for multiple generations of residents who have lived and grown up in the community.

In the mid-1960s, Bushwick became an affordable refuge for Puerto Rican and African American families who moved to New York in search of better opportunities. However, the neighborhood was also profoundly shaped by discriminatory policies such as redlining and practices like blockbusting, that affected the financial security, health, and wellbeing of its diverse communities. By the 1980s, Latinx communities had increased significantly and by 2006, they had reached 70% of the neighborhood's population. During this time, mainstream media outlets began to describe the area as the next trendy cultural neighborhood. By 2008, newcomers, including many artists and arts groups/spaces, began to arrive along with businesses that focused on the newer arrivals and often disregarded the

existing communities. As rents began to rise (a 68% increase between 2000 and 2014) the Latinx and African American populations experienced a dip, and of those affected 47% were severely rent-burdened, low-income households.<sup>1</sup>

Today, neighborhood activists, community organizations, and long-time residents continue to advocate and develop strategies for an inclusive future. The Bushwick Community Plan is a project that was spearheaded in 2014 by Community Board 4 jointly with Council Members Antonio Reynoso and Rafael Espinal, in response to concerns about the development and trajectory of the neighborhood. The plan was created to help shape and inform Mayor de Blasio's objective of creating 300,000 affordable housing units in the city by 2026. In addition to local advocacy efforts, Bushwick is also part of the Department of Education's Community Schools initiative, the Rental Assistance Demonstration (RAD) program (Hope Gardens NYCHA), and the Department of Cultural Affairs' Building Community Capacity Program.

## IN THIS REPORT

The research data and analysis outlined in the following sections express the voices of over 550 Bushwick community members representing a broad cross-section of people who live, work, and visit the neighborhood.

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## STUDY AREA

Flushing Ave to the Northwest, Broadway to the Southwest, Cypress Ave and Wyckoff Ave to the Northeast, and Evergreen Cemetery to the Southeast.

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<sup>1</sup> Furman Center's Housing Reports <https://medium.com/the-brooklyn-ink/this-is-the-headline-d24e15fe8cbd>



“La cultura ni se compra ni se vende, la creamos las personas de esta comunidad y aquí eso no se respeta a la gente. Nos quieren sacar sin dignidad / Culture is neither bought nor sold, it was created by the people of this community and that is what is not respected anymore. We are being taken out without dignity.”

— PTA Focus Group

The community surveys conducted for this report showed that cultural erasure, loss of self-determination, and a sense of belonging are key issues that the neighborhood is grappling with. Bushwick became a desirable venue for artists, arts spaces, and subsequently developers due to its strong tradition of community arts, its diversity, and relative affordability. These same conditions which made it a cultural hub are now contributing to a precarious situation: many longtime residents report that they are at risk of or already experiencing a severe loss and appropriation of existing cultural and artistic practices, spaces, and traditions as communities watch their family members and neighbors being priced out. With younger generations unable to afford to live in the

neighborhood, seniors—who form a large portion of Bushwick’s population—are concerned for the continuity of their knowledge, history, and struggles.

Moving forward, it is of critical importance to residents and stakeholders, both new and old, that this community can both preserve its cultural history and protect the people contributing to it, and open access for all to benefit from the arts and culture that increasingly define the neighborhood and impact its future development.

# CULTURAL ASSETS

CULTURAL ORGANIZATIONS • PARKS & GARDENS • EDUCATION • FAITH-BASED INSTITUTIONS  
 • PLAYGROUNDS • COMMUNITY/SENIOR CENTERS • LIBRARIES • SOCIAL SERVICES



# Legend

## CULTURAL ORGANIZATIONS

<b>1</b>	Be Electric Studios
<b>2</b>	Bizarre Bar Bushwick
<b>3</b>	Bushwick Arts Collective
<b>4</b>	Company XIV
<b>5</b>	El Puente
<b>6</b>	House of Yes
<b>7</b>	Living Gallery
<b>8</b>	My Voice Theater
<b>9</b>	NurtureArt
<b>10</b>	Opening Act at Bushwick Educational Campus
<b>11</b>	RiseBoro Youth Center
<b>12</b>	Secret Project Robot
<b>13</b>	Still Waters
<b>14</b>	The Bushwick Starr
<b>15</b>	Tiger Strikes Asteroid

## PARKS AND GARDENS

<b>16</b>	BK Rot
<b>17</b>	Bushwick Park
<b>18</b>	Concerned Citizens of Grove Street Garden
<b>19</b>	Evergreen Cemetery
<b>20</b>	Freedom Triangle
<b>21</b>	Goodwin Community Garden
<b>22</b>	Green Central Knoll Park
<b>23</b>	Irving Square Park
<b>24</b>	Knickerbocker Plaza
<b>25</b>	Madison Square Community Garden
<b>26</b>	Make the Road Garden

<b>27</b>	Maria Hernandez Park
<b>28</b>	People's Garden
<b>29</b>	Wyckoff Plaza

## EDUCATION

<b>30</b>	Achievement First Bushwick Elementary School
<b>31</b>	Achievement First University Prep HS
<b>32</b>	Arts and Literacy @ P.S. 123K
<b>33</b>	J.H.S. 291K Roland Hayes
<b>34</b>	Bushwick Ascend Middle School
<b>35</b>	Bushwick Campus High School
<b>36</b>	Bushwick Community High School
<b>37</b>	Bushwick Leaders High School
<b>38</b>	EBC High School
<b>39</b>	I.S. 291K
<b>40</b>	I.S. 383K
<b>41</b>	P.S./I.S. 384K Frances E. Carter
<b>42</b>	P.S. 106K
<b>43</b>	P.S. 123K Suydam
<b>44</b>	P.S. 396K
<b>45</b>	P.S. 75K
<b>46</b>	P.S./I.S. 045K Horace E. Greene School

## FAITH-BASED INSTITUTIONS

<b>47</b>	Bible Life Holiness Ministry
<b>48</b>	Church of God Prophecy
<b>49</b>	Clarke Percy
<b>50</b>	Iglesia Cristiana Tabernaculo De Reunion
<b>51</b>	Our Lady of Lourdes Roman Catholic Church
<b>52</b>	South Bushwick Reformed Church

<b>53</b>	St. Barbara's Church
<b>54</b>	St. Brigid Church
<b>55</b>	St. Joseph's Patron Roman Catholic Church

### PLAYGROUNDS

<b>56</b>	Hope Ballfield
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### COMMUNITY/SENIOR CENTERS

<b>57</b>	Diana H. Jones Senior Center
<b>58</b>	Hope Gardens Senior Center
<b>59</b>	Ridgewood Bushwick Citizen
<b>60</b>	Ridgewood Bushwick Senior Center
<b>61</b>	Ridgewood Bushwick Senior Citizen Home Care

### LIBRARIES

<b>62</b>	DeKalb Public Library
<b>63</b>	Irving Public Library

### SOCIAL SERVICES

<b>64</b>	Bushwick Housing Independence Project
<b>65</b>	Churches United for Fair Housing
<b>66</b>	Coalition for Hispanic Family Services
<b>67</b>	Family Services Network of New York
<b>68</b>	Make the Road New York
<b>69</b>	Onderdonk House
<b>70</b>	Opportunity for a Better Tomorrow
<b>71</b>	Salvation Army



# NEIGHBORHOOD SNAPSHOT AND DEMOGRAPHIC HIGHLIGHTS

SOURCE:  
AMERICAN COMMUNITY SURVEY  
2014–2016, US CENSUS BUREAU

## TOTAL POPULATION

<b>BUSHWICK</b> <b>117,185</b>	<b>BROOKLYN</b> <b>2,606,852</b>	<b>NEW YORK CITY</b> <b>8,461,961</b>
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## AGE

### MEDIAN AGE

<b>BROOKLYN</b> <b>34.5</b>	<b>BUSHWICK</b> <b>30.5</b>	<b>NEW YORK CITY</b> <b>35.9</b>
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<b>UNDER 5 YEARS</b> <b>6.6%</b> 7.4% 6.6%	<b>25 TO 44 YEARS</b> <b>36.7%</b> 31.9% 31.6%
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<b>5 TO 14 YEARS</b> <b>12.4%</b> 12.3% 11.3%	<b>45 TO 64 YEARS</b> <b>18.9%</b> 23.2% 24.6%
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<b>15 TO 24 YEARS</b> <b>17.1%</b> 13.0% 13.0%	<b>65+ YEARS</b> <b>8.2%</b> 12.2% 13.0%
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**53.8%** OF BUSHWICK RESIDENTS ARE BETWEEN 15–44 YEARS OLD. BROOKLYN **44.8%**  
NEW YORK CITY **44.6%**

## INCOME

**\$** MEDIAN INCOME  
**43,637**  
**\$50,640**  
**\$55,191**

<b>UNDER \$15,000</b> <b>21.0%</b> 17.5% 16.2%	<b>\$75,000 TO \$99,999</b> <b>10.3%</b> 10.9% 10.9%
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<b>\$15,000 TO \$34,999</b> <b>21.0%</b> 20.2% 18.9%	<b>\$100,000 TO \$149,999</b> <b>12.1%</b> 12.5% 13.1%
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<b>\$35,000 TO \$49,999</b> <b>13.3%</b> 11.7% 11.1%	<b>\$150,000 TO \$199,999</b> <b>3.5%</b> 5.4% 6.1%
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<b>\$50,000 TO \$74,999</b> <b>16.9%</b> 15.6% 15.3%	<b>\$200,000+</b> <b>2.0%</b> 6.2% 8.3%
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**34.8% OF RESIDENTS 65 AND OVER LIVE BELOW THE POVERTY LINE, AS COMPARED TO 22.6% IN BROOKLYN AND 18.7% IN NEW YORK CITY**



# EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT



LESS THAN HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATE

**35.5%**  
20.0%  
19.2%

HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATE/  
SOME COLLEGE

**37.1%**  
39.7%  
28.2%

ASSOCIATE'S DEGREE  
OR HIGHER

**27.3%**  
40.3%  
42.6%

# HOUSEHOLDS

**38,461**

HOUSEHOLDS IN BUSHWICK

**51.2%** ARE RENT BURDENED (PAY 30% OR MORE OF INCOME IN RENT)

**27.1%** OF FAMILIES LIVE BELOW THE POVERTY LINE

**14.6%**  
29.2%  
31.7%

RESIDENTS WHO OWN THEIR HOMES

**35.6%**  
HAVE CHILDREN UNDER 18 YEARS

**19.5%**  
24.5%  
26.0%

INCLUDE ADULTS 65 YEARS AND OLDER

# DISABILITY

RESIDENTS 65 AND OVER WITH A DISABILITY

**39.5%**  
40.2%  
36.7%

# LANGUAGE



**62.6%**

OF RESIDENTS SPEAK A LANGUAGE OTHER THAN ENGLISH AT HOME.

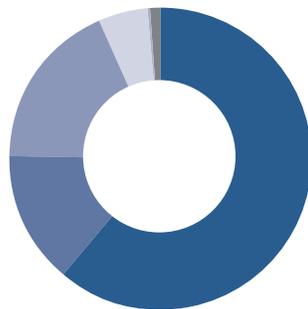
**31.4%**

OF ALL RESIDENTS SPEAK ENGLISH LESS THAN "VERY WELL."

SOURCE: AMERICAN COMMUNITY SURVEY 2011-2015, US CENSUS BUREAU.

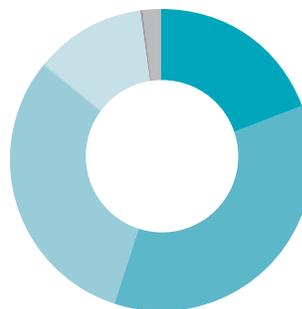
# RACE/ETHNICITY

BUSHWICK



Race/Ethnicity	%
Two or More Races	1.0
Some Other Race	0.3
Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander Alone	0
Asian Alone	5.1
American Indian and Alaska Native Alone	0.1
Black or African American Alone	18.2
White Alone	14.0
Hispanic or Latino	61.3

BROOKLYN



Race/Ethnicity	%
Two or More Races	1.7
Some Other Race	0.4
Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander Alone	0
Asian Alone	11.6
American Indian and Alaska Native Alone	0.2
Black or African American Alone	30.9
White Alone	35.8
Hispanic or Latino	19.4

NEW YORK CITY



Race/Ethnicity	%
Two or More Races	1.8
Some Other Race	0.9
Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander Alone	0
Asian Alone	13.6
American Indian and Alaska Native Alone	0.2
Black or African American Alone	22.2
White Alone	32.3
Hispanic or Latino	29.0

NYC Population FactFinder <https://popfactfinder.planning.nyc.gov/#12.25/40.724/-73.9868>, retrieved June 7, 2018

# KEY FINDINGS

Across hundreds of points of public engagement and feedback, a number of key forces and trends, strengths, and challenges among residents emerged:

## Forces & Trends

- Bushwick’s low-income population continues to face displacement as rents rise and demand increases for deeply affordable housing as well as locally accessible cultural spaces and activities.
- In the past decade, Bushwick has become a hotbed for the city’s DIY and cultural organizing communities, and art galleries and popular nightlife / performance venues attract visitors from across the city.
- While new spaces and artists enhance the creative life of the neighborhood, they can also inadvertently contribute to the affordability crisis and exclude local communities in their engagement and creative pursuits. Several DIY spaces have themselves been priced out of the neighborhood and forced to close in the last few years.
- Enduring organizations such as El Puente, RiseBoro Community Partnership, and Make the Road work with longtime residents, youth, seniors, parents and workers to sustain the arts traditions of Bushwick and advocate for inclusive development and cultural equity.
- Libraries, parks, schools, streets, and senior centers are cultural sites that are most affordable and accessible to the Bushwick community.

“Right now in Bushwick you find that beside a wall full of graffiti, is a gallery selling fine art; right next to that there is a gallery doing sculptures of metal work; right next to that there is an establishment that is providing a DIY space, and right next to that you have a place where people are acting on stage. Every kind of artist you can imagine has a place in our neighborhood.”

— Council Member Antonio Reynoso,  
*District 34*

## Strengths

- Bushwick is a **naturally occurring cultural district**, possessing qualities that make neighborhoods culturally strong and viable: a rich history of community-based and cutting edge artistic practices; diversity in expression and participation; small businesses that promote cultural traditions; and community events that bring people together and are accessible to all.



- **Local leadership:** Bushwick is served by Community Board 4, an active, well-represented, and respected body in the Bushwick community. It is made up of longtime residents and is very present and involved in the daily lives of the neighborhood's stakeholders.
- **Identity:** Arts and culture are significant to Bushwick's identity. Residents create a sense of place in the neighborhood through block parties, murals, dance battles, poetry, barbeques in the park, music and small businesses. Theater, experimental galleries, and DIY spaces make it a popular hub for artists.
- **Self-Determination:** In spite of being under-resourced, old and new cultural communities in Bushwick use creative means to sustain artistic activities and practices. People have taken control of their circumstances and created thriving non-traditional and accessible cultural spaces, ranging from outdoor areas and coffee shops, to community centers and places of worship.
- **Diversity:** Bushwick embodies and provides a model for cultural diversity in all its forms. Popular festivals, parades and events celebrate various ethnic and religious identities. Community events are usually organized by youth and engage seniors. Traditional arts activities and spaces are open and affordable for households with low to medium income levels.
- **Connectivity:** A robust variety of influential associations, institutions, and coalitions that connect tenants, merchants, artists, gardeners, families, seniors, faith based community, etc. that strengthen the Bushwick community.
- **Resiliency, creativity, equity,** and community values inform the neighborhood's cultural evolution.



## Cultural Anchors

Bushwick’s creative ecosystem is an amalgamation of many diverse cultural traditions and evolving practices. On a walk through the welcoming Wyckoff Plaza, one can encounter crafts reflective of Mexican communities in the neighborhood, or can join the churches as they celebrate the Virgen De Guadalupe and the Virgen of Altagracia. The Mexican food and crafts are accompanied by Dominican food and creations that are savored by residents and visitors alike. Murals rooted in social justice and history define the neighborhood. In 2003, Los Muralistas de El Puente (El Puente’s resident public art collective) painted the mural —“Creating a World without Violence”. Walk a few blocks down to Woodbine, and a mural covering Bushwick’s history —“Time Flies” — wraps around a 400 ft wall. DIY and cultural organizing spaces like The Bushwick Starr, Mayday Space, and Living Gallery are based here. Popular nightlife and performance venues like House of Yes, Elsewhere, and Company XIV attract visitors from across the city, and several art galleries like Secret Project Robot, Microscope gallery, Sardine Gallery and The Parlour Bushwick have emerged since 2008.



“Arts and culture is more than just recreation — it can also provide job skills and pathways to employment for our young people. We need more programs that train people in creative and practical skills in the arts and cultural sector, and paid job opportunities in the neighborhood that can prepare them for the workforce.”

— Facilitator & Residents Focus Group

## Challenges

- **Displacement and gentrification:** During the research conducted for this report, community members repeatedly asserted that any cultural project, initiative, plan, or study based in the neighborhood has to reckon with issues of displacement, and be engaged with the rezoning process. While doing this work, a sense of accountability is important as residents expressed frustration with participating in planning processes without sufficient transparency around the outcomes.

“This place was never on the map, nobody wanted to be in Bushwick. It was very easy to develop properties, but nobody wanted to do it. We, the residents, changed the neighborhood and made it safe through community policing, arts, culture, and now we are not able to afford to stay on and reap the benefits.”

— **Robert Camacho**,  
*Chair of Community Board 4 and  
resident of Bushwick for 57 years.*

■ **Affordability and economic justice:**

Many longtime residents and community stakeholders feel that they don't see evidence that the community is benefiting from the cultural investment brought into the neighborhood through economic and real estate development. They also contend that the new housing being proposed needs to be more deeply affordable for low-income community members who are being displaced in the process and at times, even being moved into

shelters. Small businesses, artists, cultural enterprises and community spaces that gave Bushwick its cultural character are rapidly disappearing.

- **Barriers to cultural participation:** Survey respondents indicated that some of the key barriers to participation included lack of time, cost, and lack of knowledge about events. Just over 40% indicated that lack of time is a key barrier to participation, usually due to multiple jobs, childcare responsibilities, elderly care and community work. 28% indicated that events are too expensive and another 28% suggested that they don't hear about events until they have passed. Around 13% indicated that language or accessibility creates obstacles to attendance.

- **Inaccessible programming and space:** Three segments of the Bushwick community that face the greatest barriers to accessing cultural programming, spaces, and activities are: **families, NYCHA residents, and seniors.** In spite of being surrounded by cultural activity, members of these communities struggle to find arts and culture that is affordable, welcoming, open to the entire family, available during weekends or after work, and that offer childcare. Libraries and block parties are extremely popular with families, and survey respondents indicated a desire for more support for such activities, along with incentivizing and training other spaces to reflect similar values.
- **Safety, police and community interactions:** There is an increased police presence that has improved safety in the community; however, some residents feel that the relationship between the police and residents would be stronger using a more preventive and

community-based approach. Community activities such as parades, block parties, family days, and barbecues especially see a large presence of uniformed officers.

- **Access to arts education:** Respondents believe that schools in Bushwick do not have adequate access to arts education, cultural partnerships, art teachers, spaces, and after-school programming. Among other solutions, the cultural community of Bushwick, including galleries, art and music venues, and artist collectives and groups could explore forging partnerships and programs with public schools in the neighborhood.
- **Lack of centralized communication systems:** Bushwick is home to a wealth of cultural activities and programming and yet residents are often unaware of facilities available, events and activities. There is a need for common notice boards and spaces where this kind of information can be shared. There are also technological and language barriers within the community.

■ **Permitting and bureaucracy:**

Community events, block parties, fairs, and festivals are some of the most important sources of arts and culture for Bushwick residents. In spite of this, residents indicate confusion about permits and licensing. Applying for and

receiving permits can be a lengthy process, and community members and groups report challenges in navigating through the appropriate channels. This situation can make it difficult to plan events with enough advance notice to encourage broad participation.



**“We need more things for the kids to do here. Not every parent can afford to pay train fare and leave the neighborhood for the kids to have something to do on the weekends. In spite of being surrounded by arts & culture, if a student in Bushwick wants to pursue a career as an artist, there are very few resources available to guide them in this direction.”**

**— PS 86 Focus Group**

# CULTURAL LANDSCAPE AND ENGAGEMENT

## NEIGHBORHOOD

### What We Heard from Residents, Workers, and Visitors

Over 550 individuals, including residents, workers, and visitors, completed a survey about arts and culture in Bushwick, providing a valuable diversity of voices and perspectives.

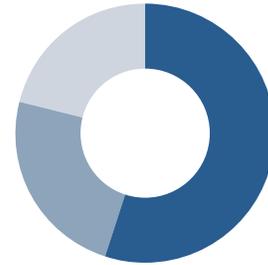
**37%**

OF RESPONDENTS HAVE BEEN CONNECTED TO BUSHWICK FOR 6–15 YEARS

**46%**

HAVE BEEN CONNECTED TO BUSHWICK FOR 1–5 YEARS

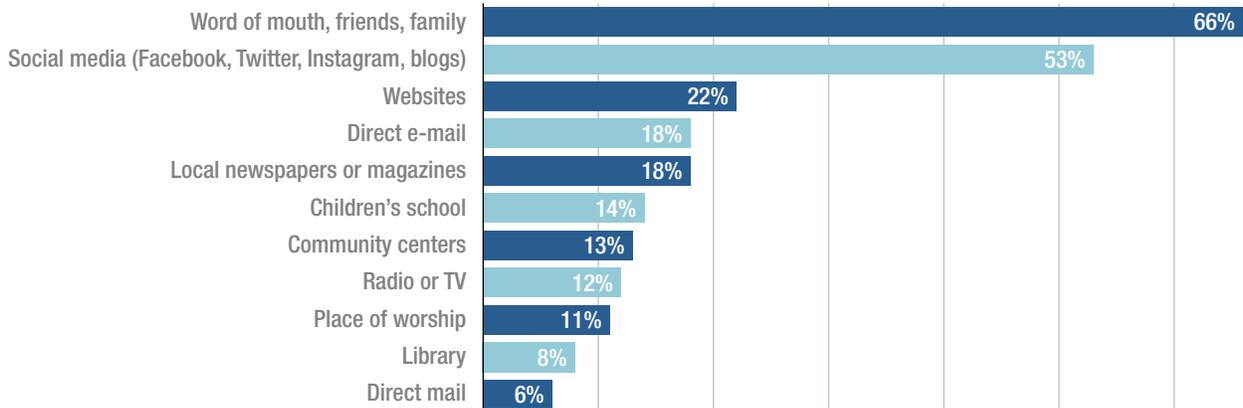
### HOW DO YOU RELATE TO OUR NEIGHBORHOOD?



Resident	55%
Visitor	24%
Employee	21%

## COMMUNICATION

### HOW DO YOU HEAR ABOUT CULTURAL EVENTS IN BUSHWICK? *(Check all that apply)*



**99%**

OF FAMILIES HEAR ABOUT CULTURAL EVENTS VIA WORD OF MOUTH

**78%**

OF FAMILIES USE SOCIAL MEDIA

**63%** OF

ENGLISH-SPEAKING HOUSEHOLDS AND

**52%** OF

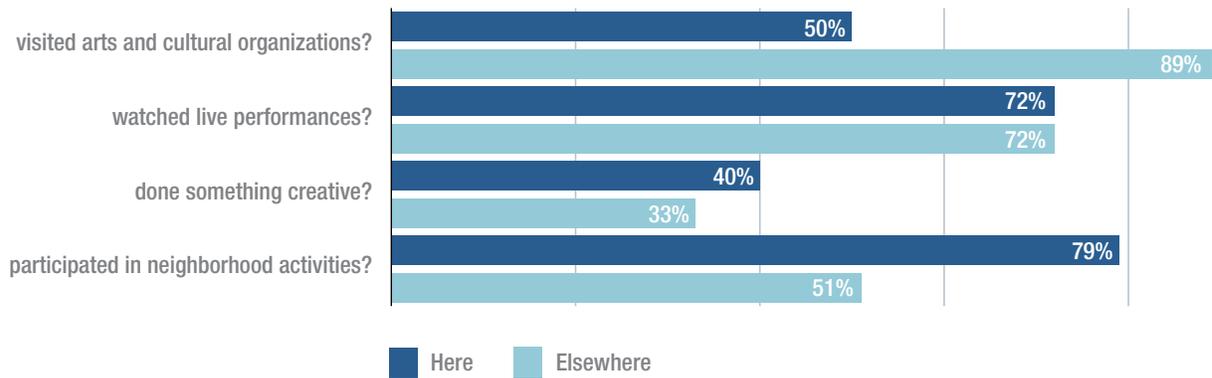
NON-ENGLISH SPEAKING HOUSEHOLDS LEARN ABOUT ARTS AND CULTURAL EVENTS VIA SOCIAL MEDIA.



32% OF YOUTH UNDER 18 ENGAGE IN THE ARTS AT SCHOOL AND 37% AT LIBRARIES

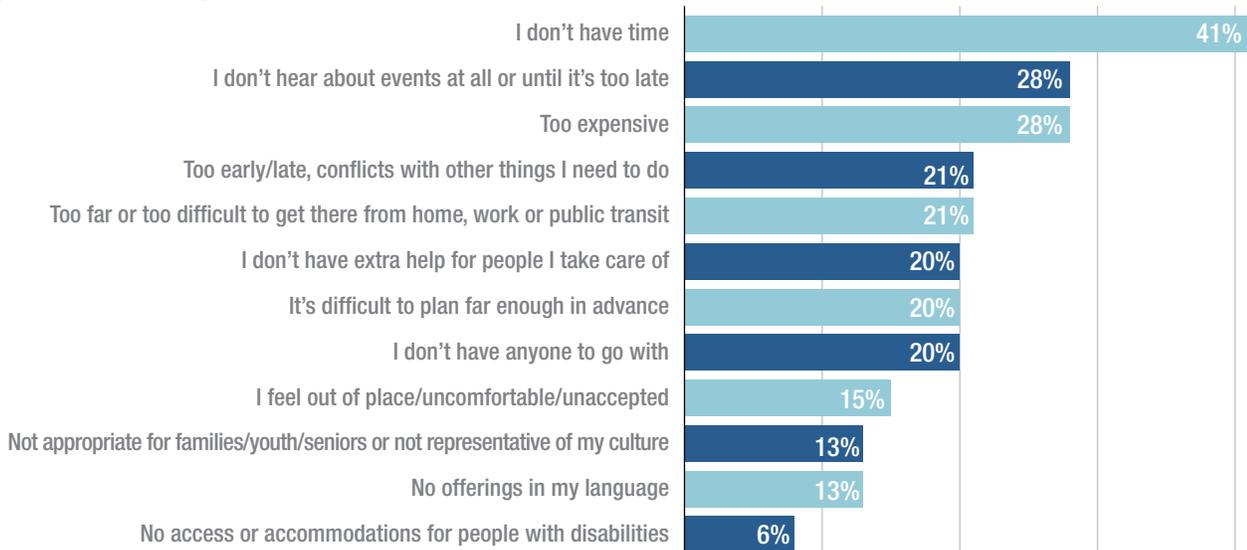
# ARTS AND CULTURAL PARTICIPATION

IN THE LAST 12 MONTHS HAVE YOU... (Check all that apply)

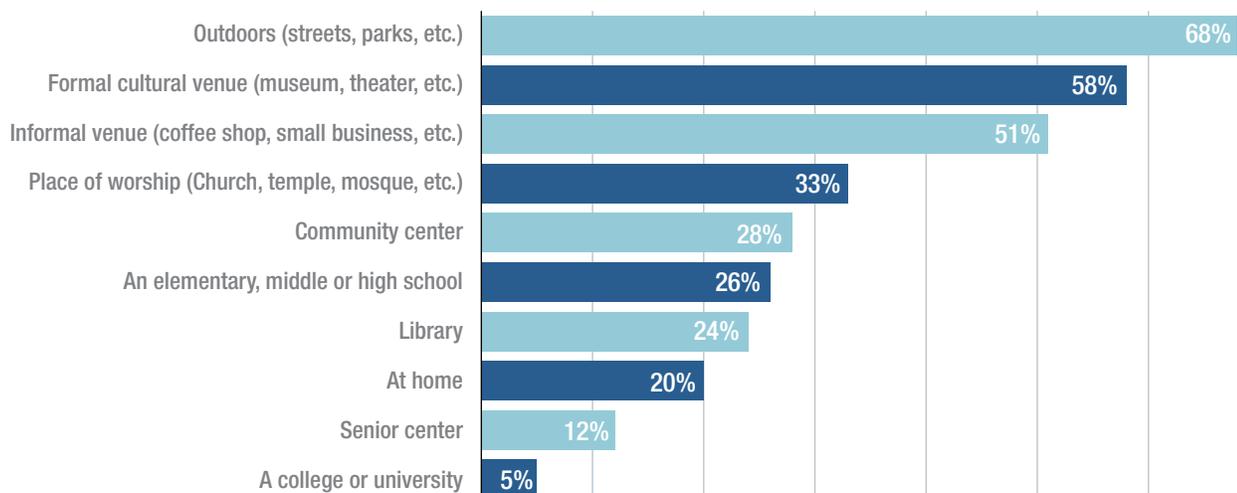


DO ANY OF THE FOLLOWING PREVENT YOU FROM PARTICIPATING IN ARTS AND CULTURE IN BUSHWICK?

(Check all that apply)



WHERE HAVE YOU PARTICIPATED IN ARTS AND CULTURE? (Check all that apply)



# CULTURAL LANDSCAPE AND ENGAGEMENT

## ARTS AND CULTURAL PARTICIPATION



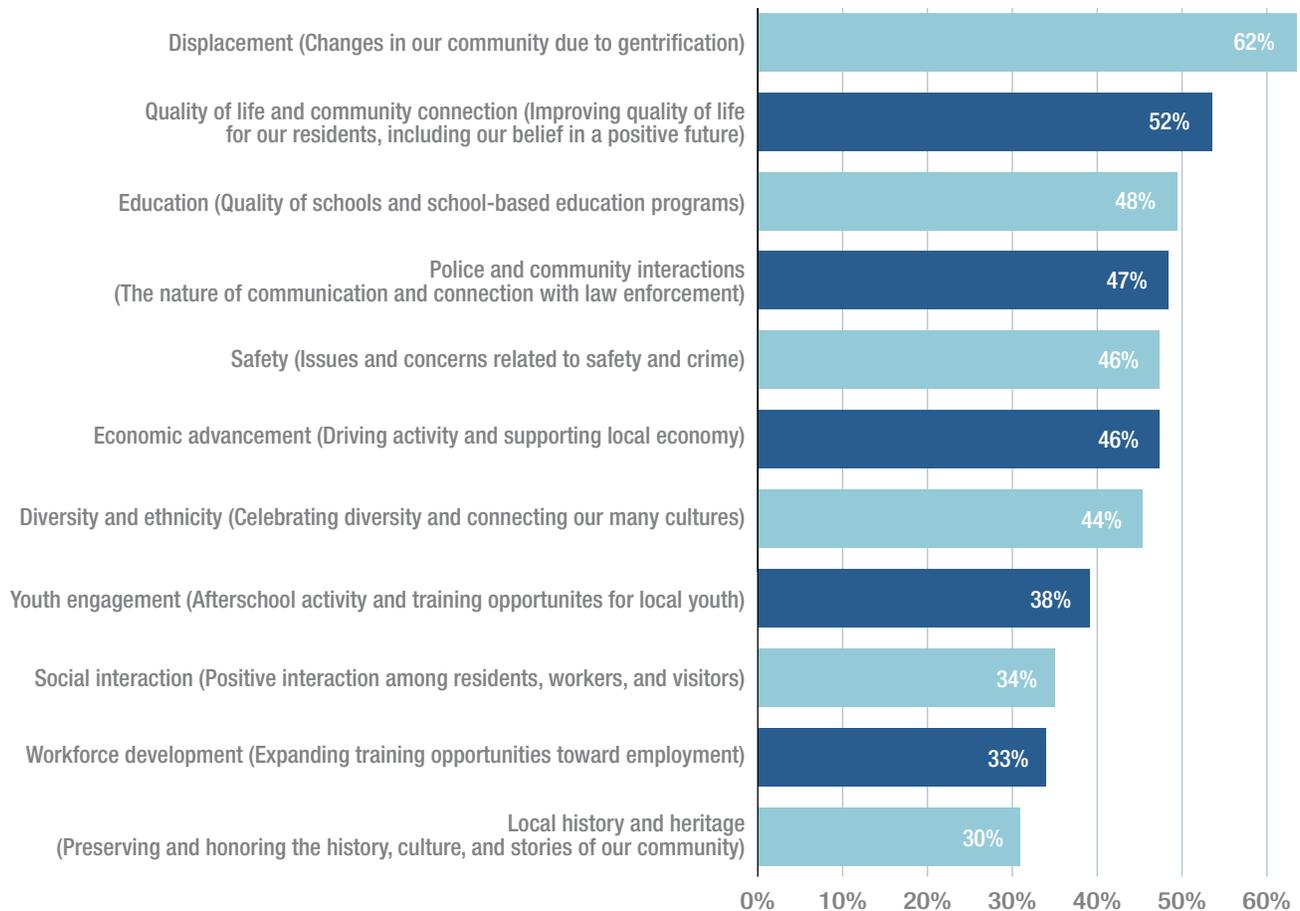
**96%**  
of families are culturally active in Bushwick.



**32%**  
of families felt that activities are too expensive.

## COMMUNITY ISSUES

PLEASE MARK THE 5 BUSHWICK COMMUNITY ISSUES THAT ARE MOST IMPORTANT TO YOU.



## CONSISTENT FINDINGS

In 2017, community members were asked what they would like to revive, preserve or create in the neighborhood\*:

### REVIVE / BRING BACK

- Minority-owned businesses
- Schools and improved education
- Green spaces (parks and community gardens)
- Church services and engagement
- Neglected buildings
- Street festivals, parties and cultural celebrations

### PRESERVE

- Existing parks, open spaces and trees
- Community amenities
- Libraries
- Community centers
- Senior centers





- Afterschool programs
- Long standing locally owned businesses and minority owned businesses
- Affordable housing
- Community organizations and nonprofits
- Neighborhood culture

## CREATE

- Family entertainment options
- Movie theaters
- Bowling alleys
- Sit-down restaurants
- Arts and culture facilities
- Community theaters
- Museums
- Art galleries
- Affordable housing and rent-stabilized apartments
- Parks and open spaces
- Community gathering spaces
- Jobs centers and business opportunities

\*This research was conducted by El Puente through the Blueprint Project, funded by the New York Community Trust.



# COMMUNITY INSIGHTS

Bushwick residents envision an inclusive, accessible and affordable landscape for arts and culture that are welcoming and at their core address urgent community issues. Below are reflections of the current conditions and activities that community members celebrate and could act upon.

**Survey respondents expressed that arts & culture in Bushwick is often geared more towards visitors than to its own residents.** In spite of its international reputation as the artistic heart of Brooklyn, many of its local arts

Survey respondents reported visiting arts and cultural organizations outside of the neighborhood more often than they do inside of the neighborhood—with one exception—local libraries. The popularity of libraries among residents, particularly low income residents with families, versus more formal art venues like galleries or theaters, highlight the urgent necessity for spaces that are free, accessible to families, welcoming and familiar.



and cultural resources are not widely accessible to communities within Bushwick, specifically those who have invested in the neighborhood for decades and have worked towards making it creative, safe, and liveable.

**Block parties and community events are a cultural lifeline of the Bushwick community.** Surveys indicated that people with lower household incomes and people of color are more likely to participate in neighborhood activities like block parties and events in parks or local community centers. 89% of respondents with household income under \$20,000 participated in block parties, with a higher rate of participation among long-term and Latinx residents. Additionally, Latinx residents were more likely to be more involved in creative activities that are available locally. This highlights the need to support the local culture of block parties and outdoor gatherings for residents to establish a more inclusive sense of belonging. It also points to the potential benefits of streamlined permitting processes and for alternatives to be available during the winter so neighbors can come together year round.



**Bushwick does not have a clear distinction between formal and informal cultural spaces.** “Informal” spaces like churches, bars, streets, or cafes are important sites of cultural participation, while “formal” spaces that are specifically for culture like galleries might not be viewed as welcoming or accessible to many residents. Many “formal” arts events take place inside “informal” venues. Community and senior centers, libraries, gardens, and parks attract a diverse range of cultural activities, while there are no museums, aquariums, or zoos in the neighborhood.

**Families are more culturally active in Bushwick than non-family households.** Families are more active than non-family households, mostly participating in formal and informal venues. Most survey respondents, particularly people of color, did not participate in “formal” venues in Bushwick, and people tend to participate in spaces and places that are convenient and familiar to them. For example, kids under 18 are more likely to have participated at school and at the library while older adults are more likely to participate at a senior center.

**Survey respondents expressed local pride and a strong attachment to place.**

While most are excited about the neighborhood's people, sense of community, diversity, food, and arts and culture, many also expressed concern about preserving these characteristics. Many expressed an urgent need to recreate a sense of belonging and reclaim cultural traditions.

**Arts and culture could help address important neighborhood issues.**

Community members identified economics, safety, relationships with police, education, quality of life, and displacement as their top concerns. A recent study of New York City neighborhoods conducted by the Social Impact of the Arts Project, "Culture and Social Wellbeing in New York City" indicates that the arts are essential to healthy communities, and their presence correlates with improvements across a number of indicators including physical health, education, crime, and social well-being.



## INFLUENTIAL ASSOCIATIONS

- Community Board 4
- Concerned Citizens of Grove Street
- Knickerbocker Avenue Merchants Partnership
- Broadway Merchants Association
- Hope Gardens Tenant Association
- Covert Street Block Association
- Grove Street Tenant Association
- Cooper Street Tenant Association
- Linden Street Block Association
- Woodbine Street Block Association
- Bushwick Community Partnership (BMCI /CPP)

# ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The **iWEPA!** Bushwick participatory action research project was conducted by El Puente and Bushwick Starr.

Built upon the principles of equity, self-determination and belonging, the researchers aimed to listen closely to Bushwick community members, especially those who are often left out of decision making and research. It reached across geographic areas, organizations, affiliations, groups, income levels, ethnicities and ages, in order to prepare a community sourced inventory of existing neighborhood cultural assets and resources. The study worked to identify traditions, events, activities, and spaces that longtime residents want to be preserved, brought back, or created, especially in response to the planned rezoning.

The research data and analysis outlined in this report represent the voices of over 550 residents, artists, arts providers, community leaders, cultural workers, parents, students, teachers, churchgoers, visitors, political representatives, engaged in schools, libraries, small businesses, galleries, theaters, parks, churches, daycare centers, community centers, senior centers, bodegas, tenant association meetings, and community planning meetings.

El Puente and The Bushwick Starr want to thank all the community residents, community leaders, tenant associations, art spaces, Bushwick based organizations, and elected officials who gave their time so generously. This project has been led by an amazing team representative of El Puente and The Bushwick Starr, who researched and wrote the report. Thank you to Frances Lucerna, Clara Parker, Gloria Zelaya, Shy Richardson, Noel Allain, Vanessa Felix, Lauren Miller, John Del Gaudio, Luis Munive and Asenhat Gomez, and to project lead consultant, Masoom Moitra. Images courtesy of El Puente.



**El Puente** is a community human rights institution whose mission is to inspire and nurture leadership for peace and justice through the engagement of youth and adult members in the arts for social change, education, wellness, environmental action, and social justice advocacy.



**The Bushwick Starr** is an Obie Award winning not-for-profit theater that presents an annual season of new performance works. Since 2007, the organization has been defined by both artists and community members, and has grown into a thriving theatrical venue, a vital neighborhood arts center, and a destination for exciting and engaging performance.



Data analysis and research support provided by **Webb Management Services (WMS)**. WMS is a research and planning practice dedicated to advancing the arts and culture. Founded in 1997, the firm supports preservation, development, and delivery within the arts and cultural sector with sound planning, research and consulting services that lead to cultural and community development. Webb Management Services has worked on more than 400 projects for governments, arts organizations, educational institutions, and other related entities across North America.

**The NYC Department of Cultural Affairs (DCLA)** is dedicated to supporting and strengthening New York City's vibrant cultural life. DCLA works to promote and advocate for quality arts programming and to articulate the contribution made by the cultural community to the City's vitality. The Department represents and serves nonprofit cultural organizations involved in the visual, literary, and performing arts; public-oriented science and humanities institutions including zoos, botanical gardens, and historic and preservation societies; and creative artists at all skill levels who live and work within the City's five boroughs. DCLA also provides donated materials for arts programs offered by the public schools and cultural and social service groups, and commissions permanent works of public art at City-funded construction projects throughout the five boroughs. For more information visit [www.nyc.gov/culture](http://www.nyc.gov/culture).

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