

HOPE SUMMIT II FINAL REPORT

JULY 2014



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Municipal Art Society

Margaret Newman, Executive Director

Kate Slevin, Vice President Policy and Planning

Mary Rowe, Director of Urban Resilience and Livability

Joanna Crispe, Director of Programs

Karyn Williams, Project Manager

Courtney Smith, Project Manager

Aileen Gorsuch, Associate Planner

Mike Ernst, Project Manager

Casey Uy, Planning Intern

The Brownsville Partnership

Rosanne Haggerty, President

Andrew R. Haupt, Senior Director, Operations

Rasmia Kirmani-Frye, Director

Kristine Woods, Deputy Director

Nupur Chaudhury, Program Manager

Jacqueline Kennedy, Community Mobilization Coordinator

Toni Diaz, Program Assistant

Yvette Rouget, Resource Specialist

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction	I
Vision 2030 Brownsville	2
Visualizing Change in Brownsville	3
Visualizing Change on Belmont Avenue: Long-Term Vision	4
Visualizing Change on Belmont Avenue: Short-Term Action Items	7
Conclusion	8
Appendices	
Infographic of HOPE I Summit	A
Neighborhood Map	B
Belmont Avenue Base Map	C
Visual Preference Activity Results	D
The Most Liked Images from the Visual Preference Activity	E
The Least Liked Images from the Visual Preference Activity	F
Conceptual Ideas for Belmont Avenue	G

INTRODUCTION

The Brownsville Partnership, in cooperation with the Municipal Art Society (MAS), hosted the second annual Brownsville HOPE Summit on June 20 and 21, 2014. The event attracted almost 200 people who live, work, worship, and attend school in Brownsville, Brooklyn. The community-wide event was organized to re-imagine and revitalize Belmont Avenue, a struggling retail corridor, and to articulate a long-term vision for Brownsville.

Background and Planning Process

MAS has been working with the Brownsville Partnership, an initiative of Community Solutions and the residents of Brownsville, to devise a collaborative vision for the revitalization of Brownsville since 2011. The Brownsville Partnership is leading neighborhood revitalization by connecting and coordinating various community interventions focused on access to safe neighborhoods and a broader mix of affordable housing, developing better routes to economic development, building the capacity of neighborhood leaders to address challenges, and supporting a community-led revitalization process that builds on local traditions and cultural assets.

Through the collaboration with Municipal Art Society, community members received a formal training through an eight-workshop program called *Livable Neighborhoods: Brownsville* prior to the Summit. MAS' *Livable Neighborhoods Program* teaches residents how to become more involved in neighborhood revitalization through urban planning and civic action. Eight Livable Neighborhoods alumni acted as facilitators at the event, leading groups of a dozen residents each through sessions to identify potential redevelopment options to the planning and design challenges in Brownsville.

The HOPE Summit II has launched a yearlong effort to mobilize residents and local and citywide agencies to work collectively to make visible neighborhood changes in Brownsville with a strong focus on Belmont Avenue.

The Summit was organized around three main activities aimed to figure out participants' preferences for redevelopment in Brownsville. The activities were Vision 2030 Brownsville, Visual Preference for Brownsville, and Visualizing Change on Belmont Avenue.

The Challenge

Belmont Avenue in Brownsville is a historical commercial corridor that is located between Mother Gaston Boulevard and Rockaway Avenue. Land uses on the corridor include commercial, office, and institutional (religious) uses. There are a number of vacancies on the street and very little vibrancy in the evening when shops close. Other land uses surrounding Belmont Avenue include established residential and commercial buildings along Pitkin Avenue. Although Pitkin Avenue has continued to define itself as a shopping and service destination serving the Brownsville community, Belmont Avenue has yet to establish itself with an identifiable designation. The purpose of focusing on Belmont Avenue is to get people interested in revitalizing Belmont Avenue and creating a stronger identity for the street.

VISION 2030 BROWNSVILLE

Residents believe Brownsville is a safe, prosperous, and vibrant neighborhood of people from diverse backgrounds, long-term residents and neighborhood-based businesses. They believe it is well served by social services, a variety of stores, and cultural activities. Residents feel optimistic about the future of the neighborhood and have a sense of community and pride.

Activity

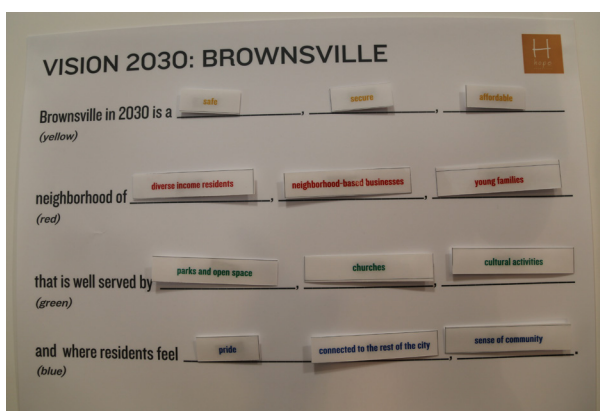
Participants were asked to use a series of adjectives and phrases that described their individual desire for Brownsville in 2030. Participants also had a chance to write in their own words or phrases. Each vision was photographed. The vision statement was created tallying the most popular responses.

The purpose of this activity was to give participants an opportunity to think about how they would like to describe their neighborhood in 2030 and to come up with a positive statement that can guide change in Brownsville.

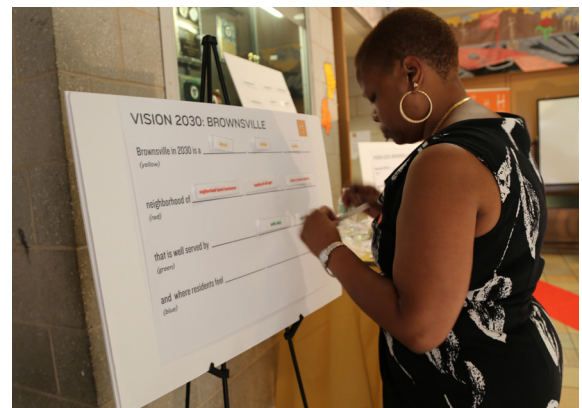
Results

The results from the visioning exercise indicate that participants want to feel a sense of pride and optimism about the future of their neighborhood. They would like a stronger link to the history visible in the neighborhood, civic pride, and a sense of community to grow.

Participants welcome change and diversity, but not at the cost of housing affordability for long-term residents. The participants want Brownsville to be a stable neighborhood where working families can live safely.



Vision 2030 Brownsville activity board.



Brownsville resident filling out her vision for Brownsville.

VISUALIZING CHANGE IN BROWNSVILLE

Activity

A modified form of a visual preference survey was used to get feedback from participants on physical design alternatives they would like to see as a part of the redevelopment of Brownsville. The results from this activity can be used to help make decisions about the future built environment in Brownsville.

Overall, participants were open to bringing in change that would maintain the culture and character of their neighborhood. However, there was a concern among participants that redevelopment will lead to gentrification and eventually displacement.

The Results



This graph illustrates images that were most and least preferred in residential, commercial/mixed-use, parks and open space, and streets categories. The numbers represent the amount of votes received for each image.

VISUALIZING CHANGE IN BROWNSVILLE

Residential

Although some participants did express a desire to see modern high-density towers in their neighborhood, the majority of the participants favored medium-density residential buildings that are four to six stories high. Images of residential buildings that looked similar to the existing public housing stock were not preferred because many associated this building type with crime.

Above all else, participants emphasized a desire for new housing development to be affordable for existing residents. Most of Brownsville is currently zoned R-6 which would permit a medium density building to be built as-of-right even in parts of the neighborhood where there are single-family-attached and semi-detached homes.

Commercial/Mixed-use



Residents want fresh food stores in Brownsville, similar to the one above.

Many participants express a desire to see diverse locally-owned stores, such as coffee shops, produce markets, pharmacies, and restaurants. Participants believe these types of businesses are needed in the community

to promote healthy eating and living. While there is a strong desire and need for retail diversity, residents would like opportunities for locally-owned and operated businesses to set up in Brownsville as a means to greater economic security for neighborhood residents.

Parks and Open Space

Participants expressed a desire for parks and open spaces that have substantial greenery, benches, and active recreation amenities, such as basketball courts, swimming pools, and playgrounds. Despite a desire to see more active recreation opportunities, some participants disapproved of an image of a skateboard park because fear it would turn into a retreat for illicit activities in the evening time. Images of ballfields, courts, and exercise equipment evoked positive responses especially for inclusion in Betsy Head Park.

Streets

After reviewing participants' feedback, it is evident that participants favor narrow roads with bicycle lanes, wide sidewalks, street furniture, trees, and easily accessible public transit; all elements of well-designed streets. It was also stated that the Citibike would be a good addition to Brownsville and become part of an on-going effort of community organizations to promote better health and wellness.

VISUALIZING CHANGE ON BELMONT AVENUE

Long-Term Vision

Brownsville residents hope that Belmont Avenue will once again be a vibrant neighborhood destination that serves the needs of current residents and provides employment and entrepreneurial opportunities.

Activity

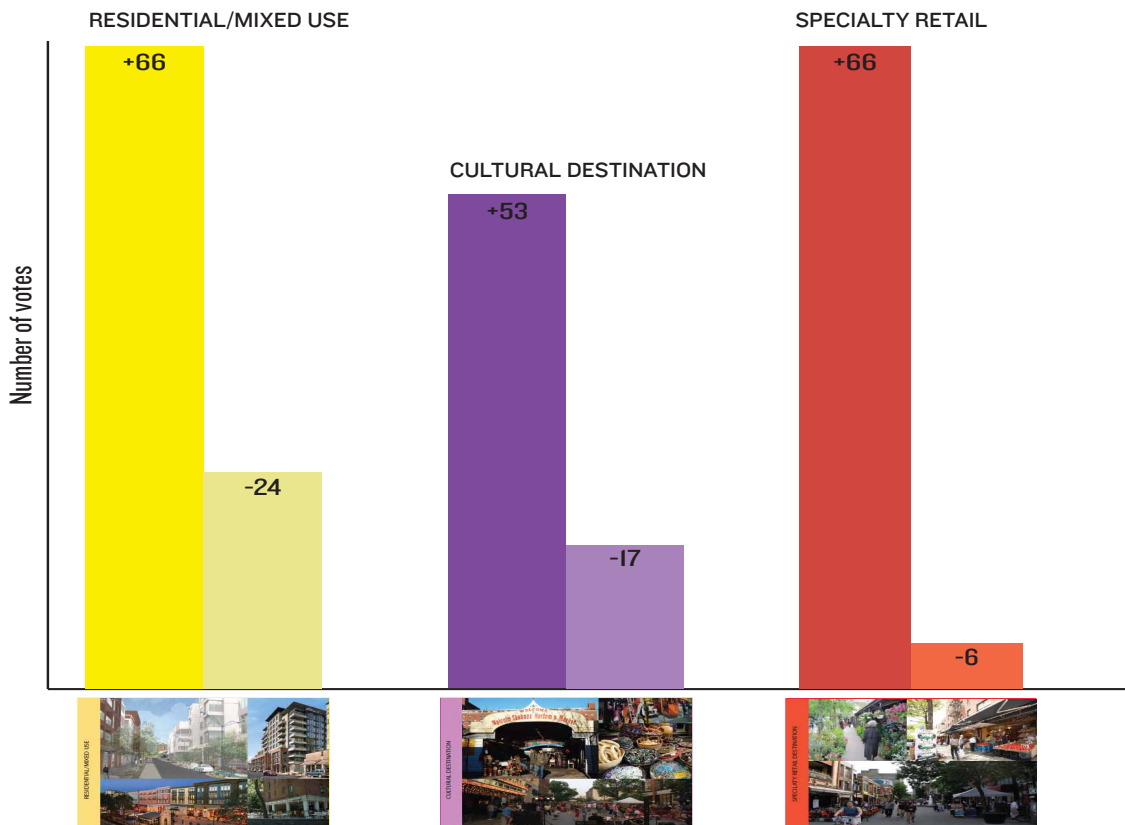
The second part of the summit included activities to develop a long-term and short-term vision for Belmont Avenue. Given three potential conceptual ideas for a revitalized Belmont Avenue, participants discussed which ideas most resonated with them as possibilities for the corridor:

Concept 1- Residential Mixed Use: Ground floor retail could be supported by additional residential development above.

Concept 2- Cultural Destination: Use arts and culture as the catalyst

Concept 3- Specialty Retail: Unique and specific type of retail not found elsewhere.

Residential and mixed-use development in Belmont Ave received the greatest support. While the cultural destination concept was not the most preferred concept, many participants had a lot of positive feedback about it. Many residents said turning Belmont into a cultural destination would provide opportunities for cultures to come together through markets and nightlife. In terms of urban design, many participants liked the idea of either temporarily or permanently closing a section of Belmont Avenue to vehicular traffic, allowing for pedestrian-friendly streets.



VISUALIZING CHANGE ON BELMONT AVENUE

Short-Term Action Items

Activity

Participants were asked to come up with possible ideas for improving the public realm on Belmont Avenue and to develop a list of three short term visible changes that they would like to see implemented.

Participants were asked to rank their priorities for public realm improvements. First priorities were allowed three points, second priorities two points, and third priorities one point.

The top short term priority was a farmers market along the commercial corridor, followed by street festivals and street furniture. Many stated that adding a farmers market in the street would showcase and

encourage good health in the community. Street festivals would promote a sense of community and new benches and bike racks would make the street more lively and accessible.

Short-Term Change Responses

																TOTALS	# VOTES
Public Art				1					2			2	2			7	4
Farmers Market	1	3	3				3		1	3	3		3	1		21	9
Street food vendors			2					3				1		2		8	4
Planting		2			2	1		2					1	2		10	6
Tree planting & tree pits					3	2					2		1	2		10	5
Street furniture			1		1	2	1		3				3	3		14	7
Street festival	2	1		3	3				2	1	1	1	3	1		18	10
Safety	3															3	1
Community Center				2												2	1
Bank								1								1	1
Garbage cans/recycling													2			2	1
Cross walk/light													3			3	1

CONCLUSION

The following recommendations offer a guideline for a strategy to develop lasting solutions to some of Brownsville's pressing issues. The challenges that Brownsville faces are complex and well-known. Additionally, there are a number of activities, both formal and informal, taking place. These include a youth farmer's market and community organizing around Betsy Head Park. The question remains -- what is the best approach for realizing the vision for Belmont Avenue and the neighborhood as a whole? Long-term strategic planning is necessary, but as those visions develop, MAS will be working with the BP to come up with a near-term approach that is mindful of existing resources and that builds on existing strengths. The strategy outlined below will focus on creating visible neighborhood change, while also advocating for long-term strategic planning for Brownsville.

Assess The Capacity Of Retail Corridors In Brownsville

A market analysis of retail and residential conditions should be done in order to answer some key questions: Is there too much commercial zoning, given the residential density? Which commercial street should initial focus lie in terms of redevelopment? What is the demand for real estate? What types of business should be recruited and where? What is the potential for growth and workforce recruitment and where? How can Brownsville build on its history and create an identity that can be promoted to revitalize Belmont Avenue?

Past plans and retail studies should be considered as a part of the assessment. This work should help to prioritize interventions and identify other redevelopment initiatives. This analysis would be conducted by a private firm.

Physical Conditions Analysis

As a part of gauging the capacity of retail corridors in the neighborhood and setting priorities, it is critical to determine the physical conditions that exists in the following locations: Pitkin Avenue, Livonia Avenue, Belmont Avenue, Rockaway Boulevard, Mother Gaston Boulevard, and East 98th Street. Land use, infrastructure conditions, sites susceptible to land use change or redevelopment, land use conflicts, and publicly-owned and abandoned properties should be documented and used to prioritize interventions based on conditions and opportunities.

Form A Belmont Avenue Task Force

A group of stakeholders including representatives from the community board, civic organizations, local businesses, and the real estate industry should be charged with developing a detailed plan for redevelopment on Belmont Avenue. They should also assist with the recruitment of tenants and developers, as well as improvements to the public realm.

Visible Neighborhood Change

MAS will engage design professionals and other city-building organizations in support of revitalization of Betsy Head Park, Belmont Avenue, and another prioritized commercial street. The engagement will likely be in the form of design charettes.

MAS will also be working with 15 youth ages 16-24 years or older to enliven and transform their community assets. The youth will be involved in a 12 week training in urban design, planning, and creative place-making practices. The youth that are a part of the project will be able to help complete the physical analysis recommended in this section.

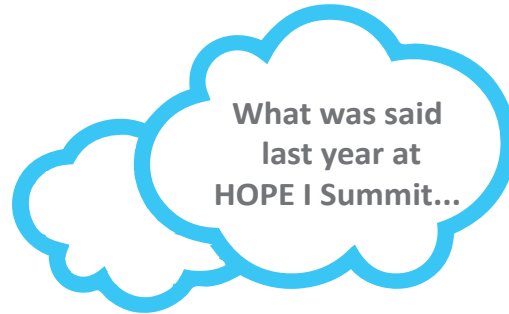
The project will produce a series of achievable and highly-visible design interventions that will improve Betsy Head Park's function and encourage art-making projects to increase the appeal of Belmont Avenue, leveraging the power of design, community, and place to foster social cohesion and economic revitalization.

A word cloud featuring various terms related to community and social services. The words are arranged in a roughly rectangular shape, with 'COMMUNITY' and 'SENSE' being the largest and most prominent. Other significant words include 'NEIGHBORHOOD', 'FUTURE', 'PRIDE', 'SAFE', 'OPTIMISTIC', 'PUBLIC', and 'SOCIAL SERVICES'. The colors used are orange and grey.




PRIDE
CONNECTED TRANSPORTATION EMPLOYMENT
SAFE FUTURE HAPPY SPACES
STORES SCHOOLS NEIGHBORHOOD
COMMUNITY
COMFORTABLE OPTIMISTIC
CULTURAL SENSE ACTIVITIES PUBLIC
VARIETY OPPORTUNITIES
CITY CHURCHES SOCIAL SERVICES

HOPE I Summit 2013 Summary

What you guys had to say about Brownsville



Livonia Street was a main focus in last year's HOPE Summit and here is what you want to see along Livonia Street:

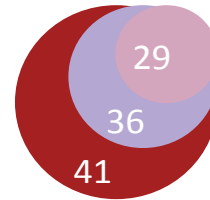
- diversified income housing 
- open space amenities 
- more public/community facilities 



What you thought were community assets:

- 
- 
- 

Main Goals: **Community organizing/mobilization**
youth engagement/development
neighborhood safety



What you thought were areas of opportunity:

empty lot on Chester Street

activity to Belmont Ave

gang activity on Mother Gaston and Hegeman

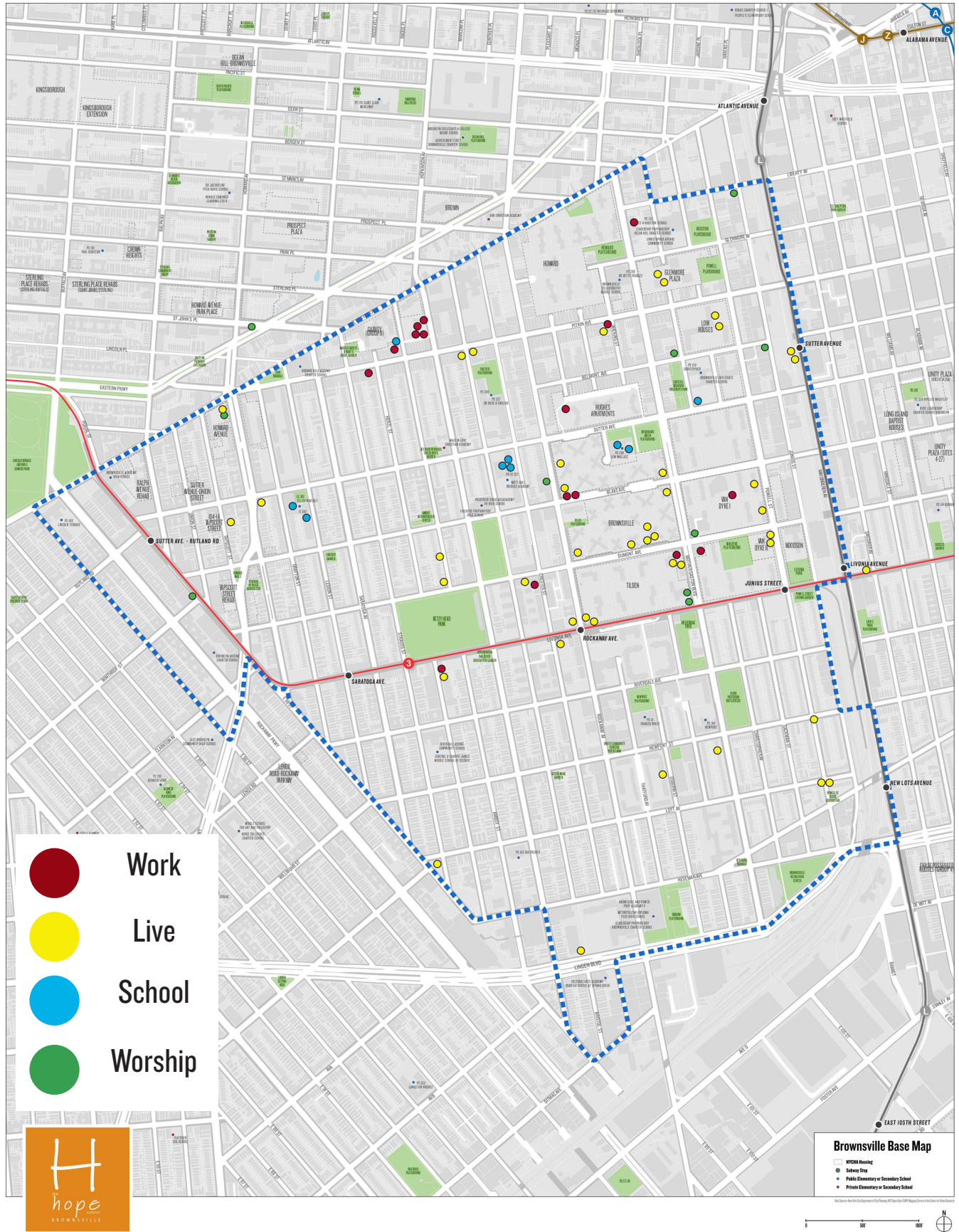
What you were not satisfied with:



Many responded and said they want to end violence and have better police protection.



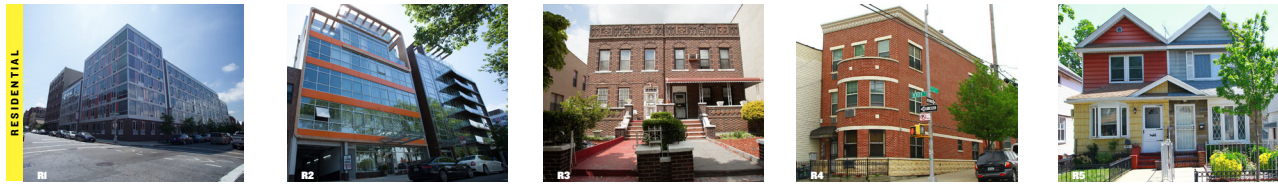
Appendix B Where do you live, work, worship, or go to school in Brownsville?



Appendix C Belmont Avenue Base Map



Appendix D Visual Preference Activity Results



	1	2	3	4	5
Residential	+41/-25	+34/-14	+15/-6	+16/-7	+22/-12
Commercial	+18/-12	+31/-8	+14/-28	+12/-12	+12/-24
Parks	+51/-6	+25/-7	+30/-8	+50/-0	+57/-3
Street	+34/-10	+14/-6	+11/-35	+15/-11	+20/-37

R1

Positive	Negative
Nice design of the building	Doesn't fit in with current community
We need more apartments similar to this	Glass unappealing
	Threat of gentrification
	Taller buildings are associated with crime

R2

Positive	Negative
Retail on ground floor	Looks too expensive
Like modern design	Too much glass
Open and clean	
Density is not to high	
Urban look appealing	
Strong curb appeal	

*The physical design of the building is good, but would like new residential developments to be affordable to current residents of Brownsville.

R3

Positive	Negative
Like the brick building material	Worried about being a home owner in this economy

R4

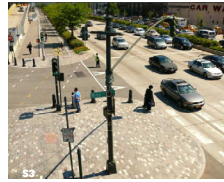
Positive	Negative
Peaceful greenery	Brick material
Materials, comfort, and space	
Balcony	

*Townhouses are essential and should be built for low-income residents.

R5

Positive	Negative
Different colors	No privacy
Separation	Shared backyard
There is space for larger families	

Visual Preference Activity Results



	1	2	3	4	5
Residential	+41/-25	+34/-14	+15/-6	+16/-7	+22/-12
Commercial	+18/-12	+31/-8	+14/-28	+12/-12	+12/-24
Parks	+51/-6	+25/-7	+30/-8	+50/-0	+57/-3
Street	+34/-10	+14/-6	+11/-35	+15/-11	+20/-37

S1

Positive	Negative
Trees and places to sit	Too many long blocks in area, shorten city blocks or potentially add bus routes
Need more tree-lined walkways with shade	
Benches are a useful amenity	
Calming space, relaxing	
Extend Eastern Parkway greenway into Brownsville	
Trees	
Good place to relax and gather your thoughts	

S2

Positive	Negative
Shopping area	Doesn't feel like Brownsville
More stores	Seems out of touch with the neighborhood
Nice mix of businesses, homes, trees, and bike lanes	

S3

Positive	Negative
Add Citi Bike in Brownsville	Concern that density and diversity of uses will cause too much noise and traffic
Bike path a huge plus	
Good street design	
Traffic islands valued in community	
Trees and bikes add value	

S4

Positive	Negative
Visible nature	Safety concerns
Trees	Wires

S5

Positive	Negative
Commercial use	No Starbucks, too expensive
Benches give senior citizens a place to sit	Local coffee shop preferred

Visual Preference Activity Results



	1	2	3	4	5
Residential	+41/-25	+34/-14	+15/-6	+16/-7	+22/-12
Commercial	+18/-12	+31/-8	+14/-28	+12/-12	+12/-24
Parks	+51/-6	+25/-7	+30/-8	+50/-0	+57/-3
Street	+34/-10	+14/-6	+11/-35	+15/-11	+20/-37

C1

Positive	Negative
Design is ok but would like to see large national retail businesses like: H&M, Target, Old Navy, Walmart	There are enough cell phone retailers in the neighborhood

C2

Positive	Negative
More fresh fruit markets are necessary	

C3

Positive	Negative
Like the idea of mixed land use with sit down restaurants	Building is out of scale
Like new building design	Condominiums
	High rises are not taken care of
	More restaurant diversity

C4

Positive	Negative
Diverse businesses	Looks too similar to developments in Brownsville
Attractive buildings	

C5

Positive	Negative
Building design is ok	Looks like Brownsville today, not different
Additional security is necessary in these types of buildings, for examples, doormen, security cameras, and/or retail.	
Banks are useful but, we could also use pharmacies, fruit and vegetable markets, and street furniture	

Visual Preference Activity Results



	1	2	3	4	5
Residential	+41/-25	+34/-14	+15/-6	+16/-7	+22/-12
Commercial	+18/-12	+31/-8	+14/-28	+12/-12	+12/-24
Parks	+51/-6	+25/-7	+30/-8	+50/-0	+57/-3
Street	+34/-10	+14/-6	+11/-35	+15/-11	+20/-37

P1

Positive	Negative
Like the playground	Concerns of safety
Nice to add a water feature to the playground	More diverse options for active recreation such as basketball courts
Shade from the trees benches add to the space	

P2

Positive	Negative
Likeable atmosphere	Concern about loitering and the wrong people gathering
	Not enough space, cannot walk around
	Trees bring bugs and pollen

P3

Positive	Negative
One could eat lunch here	Too much open space
	Doesn't look like a park
	Would turn into a "hangout" with illicit activity at night

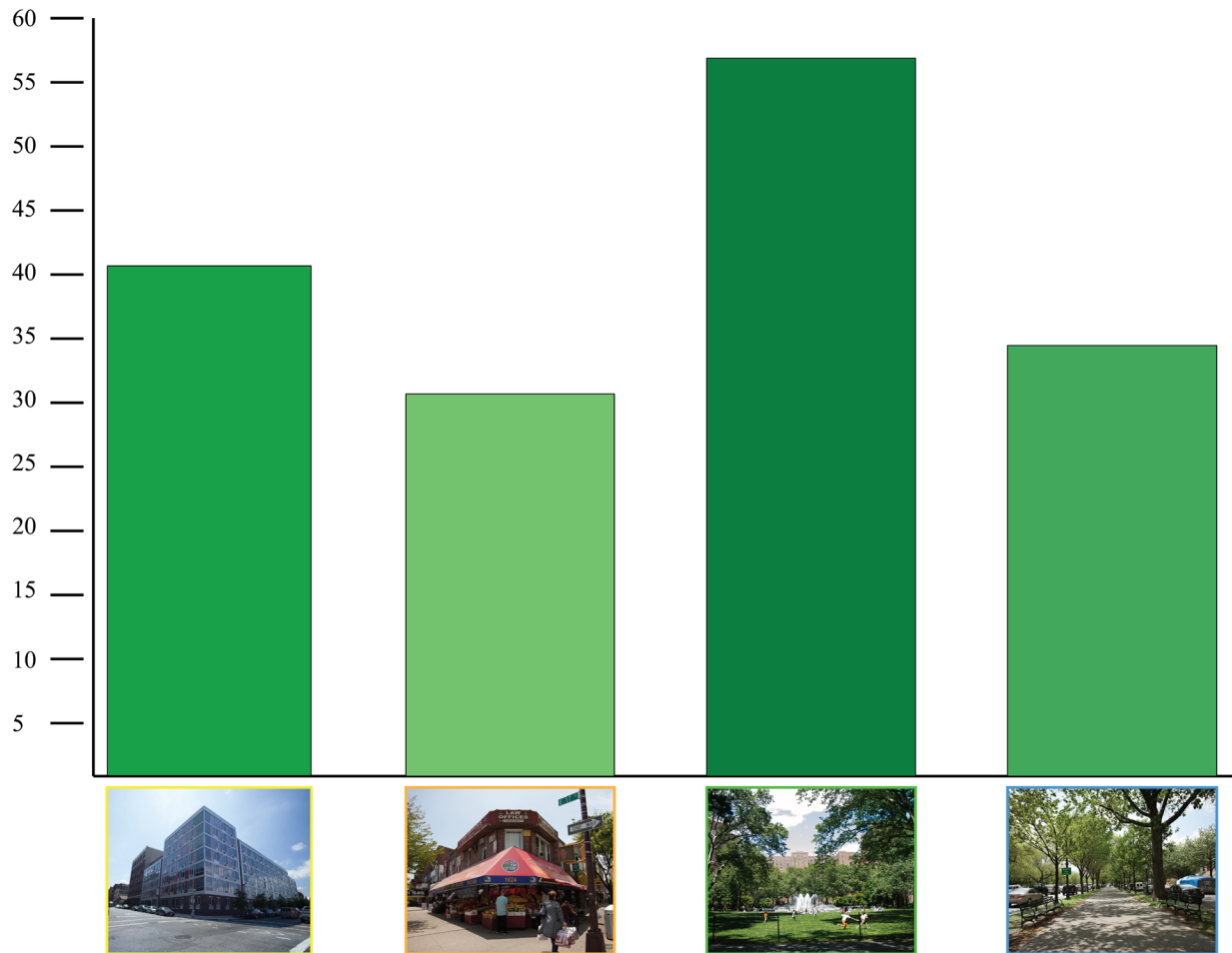
P4

Positive	Negative
Nice track	
Open space to play	
Free exercise equipment	
Fix Betsy Head: New track for fitness	
Activities and sports for kids	
Space for festivals and social activities	
Space for seniors	
Can be combined with playground	

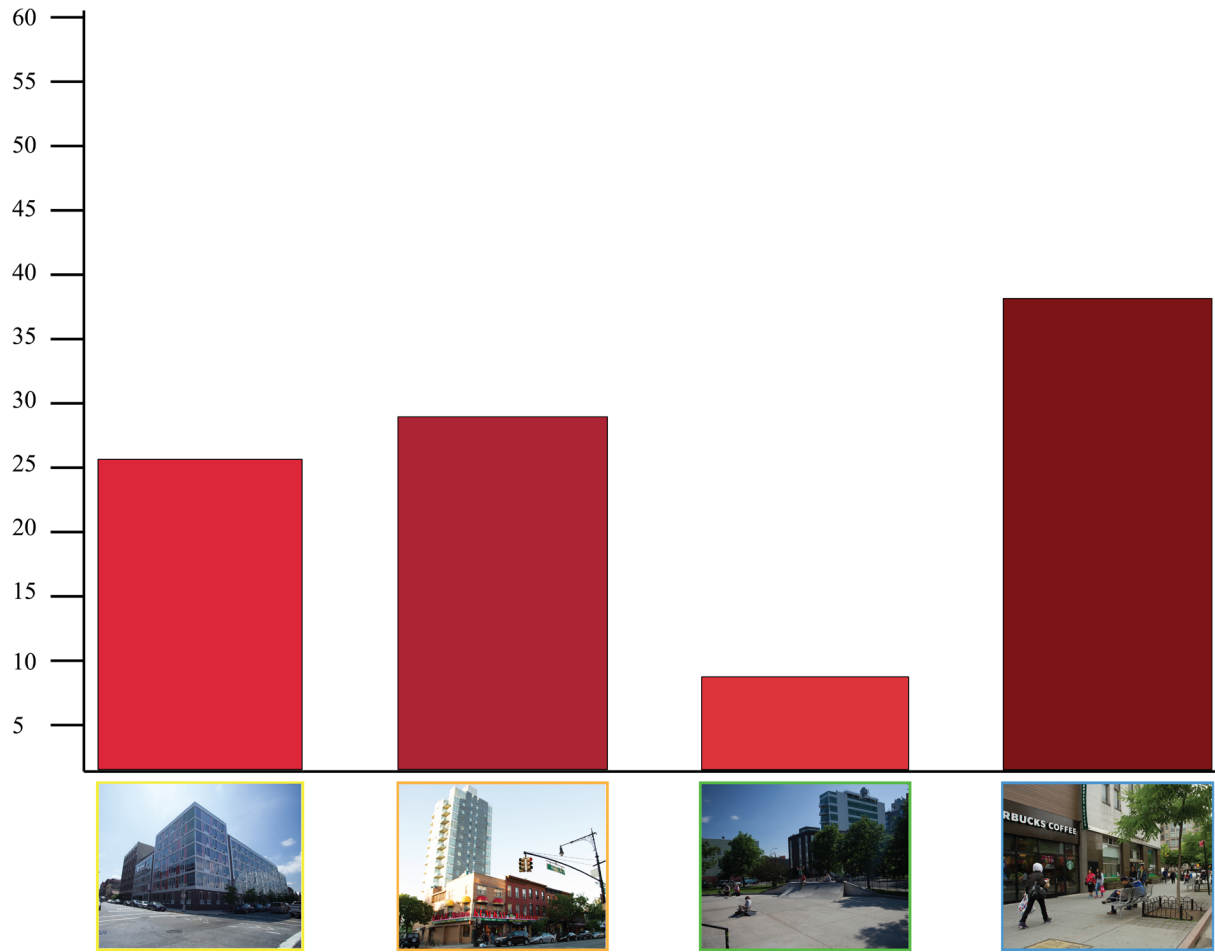
P5

Positive	Negative
Trees provide a great deal of shade	Lacks green space for passive recreation
Good views and space to explore	
Love water feature, very calm	
Feels like Central Park	
Place for kids to play	
Flexible space for social activities	
Pretty landscape	

Appendix E The Most Liked Images From the Visual Prefer-



Appendix F The Least Liked Images From the Visual Preference



Appendix G Conceptual Ideas for Belmont Avenue



CULTURAL DESTINATION

