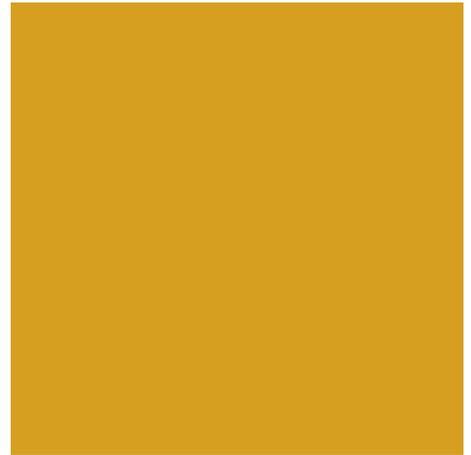
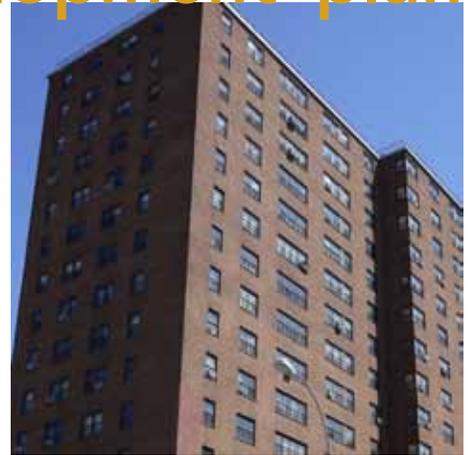
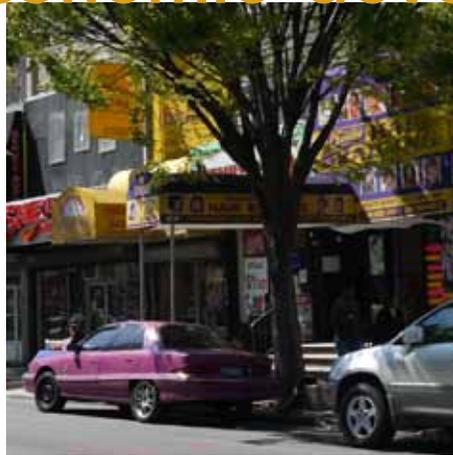


# BROWNSVILLE WORKS!

a strategic economic development plan





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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

## INTRODUCTION

In the fall of 2011, the Economic Development Committee of Community Board 16 in Brooklyn approached the Hunter College yearlong studio to develop an economic development plan for Ocean Hill-Brownsville. Brownsville Works! A Strategic Economic Development Plan is the culmination of that yearlong planning process.

The plan delivers a set of strategies for the Economic Development Committee of Community Board 16 to address major challenges obstructing the economic development process in Ocean Hill-Brownsville. It demonstrates that a comprehensive approach must be taken to improve the economic conditions of Ocean Hill-Brownsville. The plan demonstrates that focusing solely on improving the traditional indicators of economic vitality will not suffice. Economic security must incorporate a sense of place, safety, and a quality environment.

Although this plan is not a panacea for all the problems Ocean Hill-Brownsville faces, it serves as an optimal course of action for community-led revitalization.

## BACKGROUND

The history of Ocean Hill-Brownsville suggests that the imperative to strengthen New York City's economy through regional and citywide policies has often come at the expense of economic development on the neighborhood scale. Once a thriving commercial hub in the early 20th Century, Ocean Hill-Brownsville has been consistently undermined by these broad economic development policies since the mid-20th century.

The government-subsidized middle class exodus to the suburbs in the 1950s; disproportionate development of public housing in the 1960s; and intentional disinvestment in infrastructure during the 1970s have failed Ocean Hill-Brownsville. More recently, the city government's tendency toward policies favoring citywide and regional economic development has accelerated economic decline. The relocation of M. Slavin and Sons Fish Market, the former economic and cultural anchor of Belmont Avenue, to Hunt's Point in 2011, is one of the many casualties of such policies. Interviews with key stakeholders and the study of Ocean Hill-Brownsville's economic conditions indicate that a new approach to economic development is essential to overcoming the myriad of interrelated challenges present in the community today.

## EXISTING CHALLENGES

We have identified three central challenges undermining the economic and social life of Ocean Hill-Brownsville.

### *Weak Climate for Economic Development*

Based on interviews of key stakeholders, literature reviews, and surveys of residents and businesses, we learned that the organizational infrastructure necessary to promote economic development is lacking.

This fragile economic climate is characterized by:

- Stressed relationships between absentee landowners, business owners, and customers;
- An excess of non-profits that specialize primarily in health and social services;
- The absence of non-profit and government programs that prioritize the development of human and economic resources;
- Limited workforce and entrepreneurial development opportunities for local residents;
- And, a high rate of retail vacancy.

## *Compromised Built Environment and Infrastructure*

Although Community District 16 is advantageously located near a transportation hub (Broadway Junction), the primary retail corridors, Pitkin and Rockaway Avenues, are not well served by subways and bike lanes. Access to the retail corridors is obstructed by infrastructure (e.g. Eastern Parkway and East New York Avenue, the Long Island Railroad Bay Ridge Freight Line, and mega-blocks that disrupt neighborhood interconnectivity). In addition, subway stations located in the middle of industrial parks are not conducive to directing pedestrian traffic towards the retail corridors, which limits the customer base.

All of these elements create an inconsistent urban form, not only from block to block, but also from building to building. This inconsistency is aggravated by high rates of vacant and underutilized land.

## *Safety, Perception, Portrayals*

Crime and safety present a unique set of challenges to Ocean Hill-Brownsville. First, there is the direct violence inflicted upon the community and its members. Second, there are the resultant negative perceptions and portrayals of Community District 16 within the community and by external audiences. Both of these key issues coalesce with a compromised built environment to create a major challenge to the realization of the community as an attractive and comfortable place to live, work, play, and shop.

## **SEIZING EXISTING OPPORTUNITIES, CREATING ALTERNATIVES**

In consultation with our client, we developed a vision statement to guide our planning process. This vision reflects the client's and the studio's joint ambitions for the future of Ocean Hill-Brownsville:

To revitalize Ocean Hill-Brownsville through a comprehensive, inclusive economic and retail development plan that provides opportunities for all neighborhood residents.

The vision is comprised of three central objectives:

1. Improve Conditions for businesses and residents
2. Enlarge the customer base
3. Create a sense of place that promotes economic development

Brownsville Works! outlines five key recommendations designed to serve as a critical path toward the objectives, and, ultimately, the vision:

- Establish a community advocacy non-profit to coordinate economic development strategies in Ocean Hill-Brownsville;
- Coordinate workforce and business development strategies;
- Implement a network of pop-up stores to revitalize the retail corridors and create business opportunities;
- Promote and support strategic placemaking initiatives;
- And, initiate a targeted campaign to improve the built environment and infrastructure.

## **A WAY FORWARD: TOWARDS A SUSTAINABLE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT**

Brownsville Works! articulates a network of strategies that will meet the objectives and lead to the realization of this vision. However, if the objectives outlined above are to be achieved, they must be undertaken by a strong organization that is committed to advancing the long-term economic development of the Ocean Hill-Brownsville communities. Currently, no such organization exists. Community Board 16's Economic Development Committee should provide the leadership and guidance necessary to empower such an organization to emerge.

The plan details the initiatives that this non-profit entity (henceforth referred to as "Brownsville Works!") should spearhead in tandem with Community Board 16's Economic Development Committee. The scope of work is comprised of short, medium, and long-term initiatives that will enable the Economic Development Committee to gradually develop their leadership capabilities; build a membership network and relationships with key stakeholders; and, formalize an organizational structure for Brownsville Works!, while simultaneously addressing the central challenges facing Ocean Hill-Brownsville.

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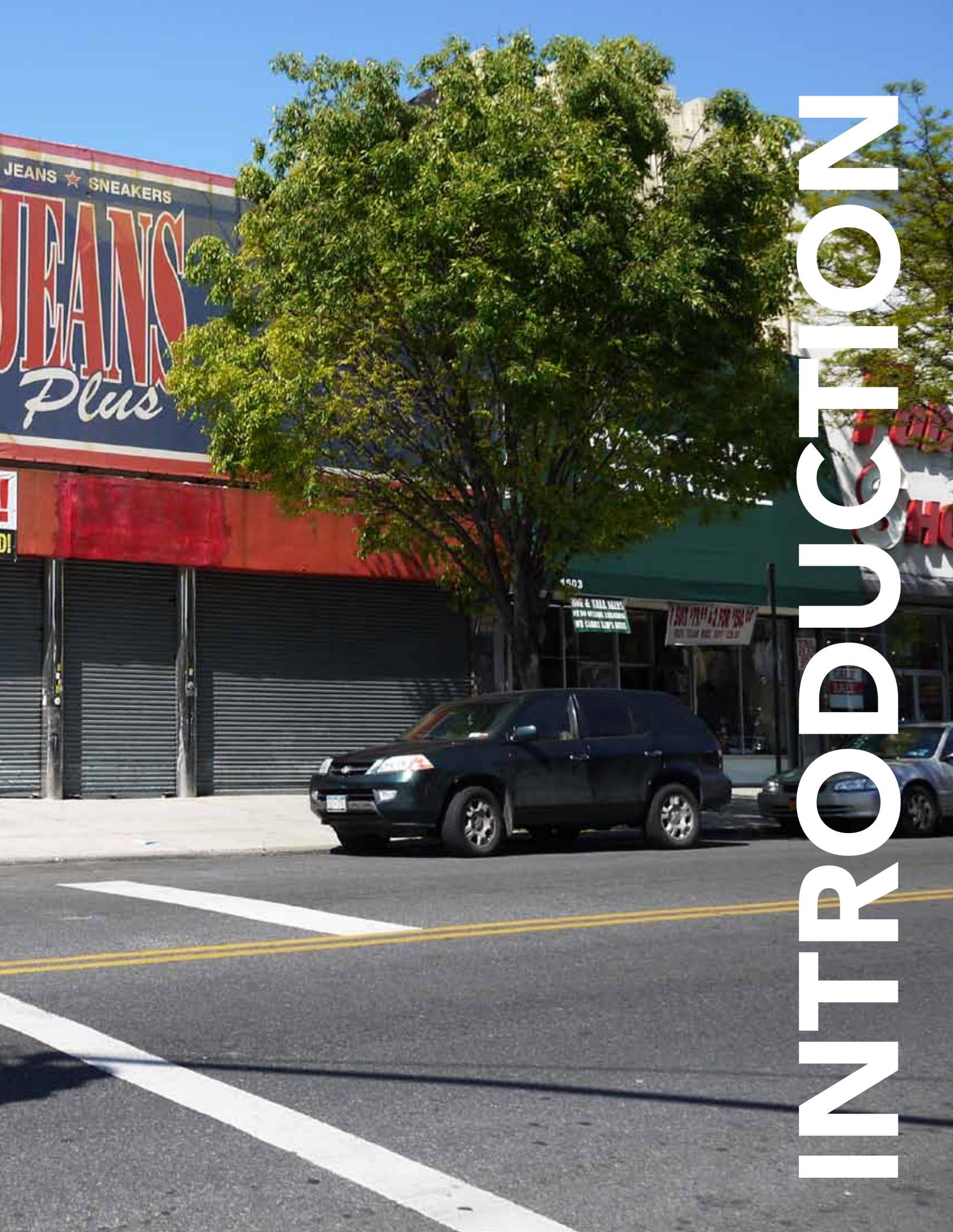
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Plus

# INTRODUCTION



## INTRODUCTION

This report is a comprehensive economic development plan that addresses the key challenges facing the Ocean Hill-Brownsville community. The overarching goal of this plan is to revitalize Ocean Hill-Brownsville's historic retail corridors, and in doing so, revive the ailing local economy. Brownsville Works! was researched and written by the Hunter College Urban Planning graduate students for the Economic Development Committee of Brooklyn Community Board 16. Brownsville Works! is not just the name of our report, but its final objective: to create a vital, economically thriving Ocean Hill-Brownsville. It is also the name of a new proposed non-profit organization that will spearhead and coordinate efforts to realize the recommendations set forth in this report. Our vision is to revitalize Brownsville and Ocean Hill through a comprehensive, inclusive economic and retail development plan that provides opportunities for all neighborhood residents. The recommendations in this report present a critical path towards achieving this vision.

## PLANNING PROCESS AND COMMUNITY OUTREACH

Our comprehensive planning process, spanning from September 2011 to May 2012, had three distinct phases:

### 1. Assessment of Existing Conditions (September 2011- November 2011)

Our client, the Economic Development Committee of Community Board 16, tasked us with developing a comprehensive economic development plan for Ocean-Hill-Brownsville that takes into account commercial revitalization, workforce development, the built environment, and community building. After determining the study area in consultation with our client, we began assessing existing conditions of the study area by performing streetscape and urban design, retail, and land use surveys of the 74 blocks comprising our primary study area. We also administered surveys to 75 customers regarding their shopping patterns and 21 businesses regarding their business practices and relationship to the neighborhood. Please refer to the appendix for copies of the surveys.

### 2. Identification of Key Challenges and Vision (December 2011 - February 2012)

After analyzing the data from the initial surveys, our next step was to conduct 13 targeted interviews with key stakeholders from the community board, elected officials offices, local non-profits, and the business community, to get a local understanding of Brownsville's key challenges and community assets. We also attended several community meetings throughout this period to reach out to a variety of actors. Once we had solicited significant community input, we defined our vision and objectives in consultation with our client.

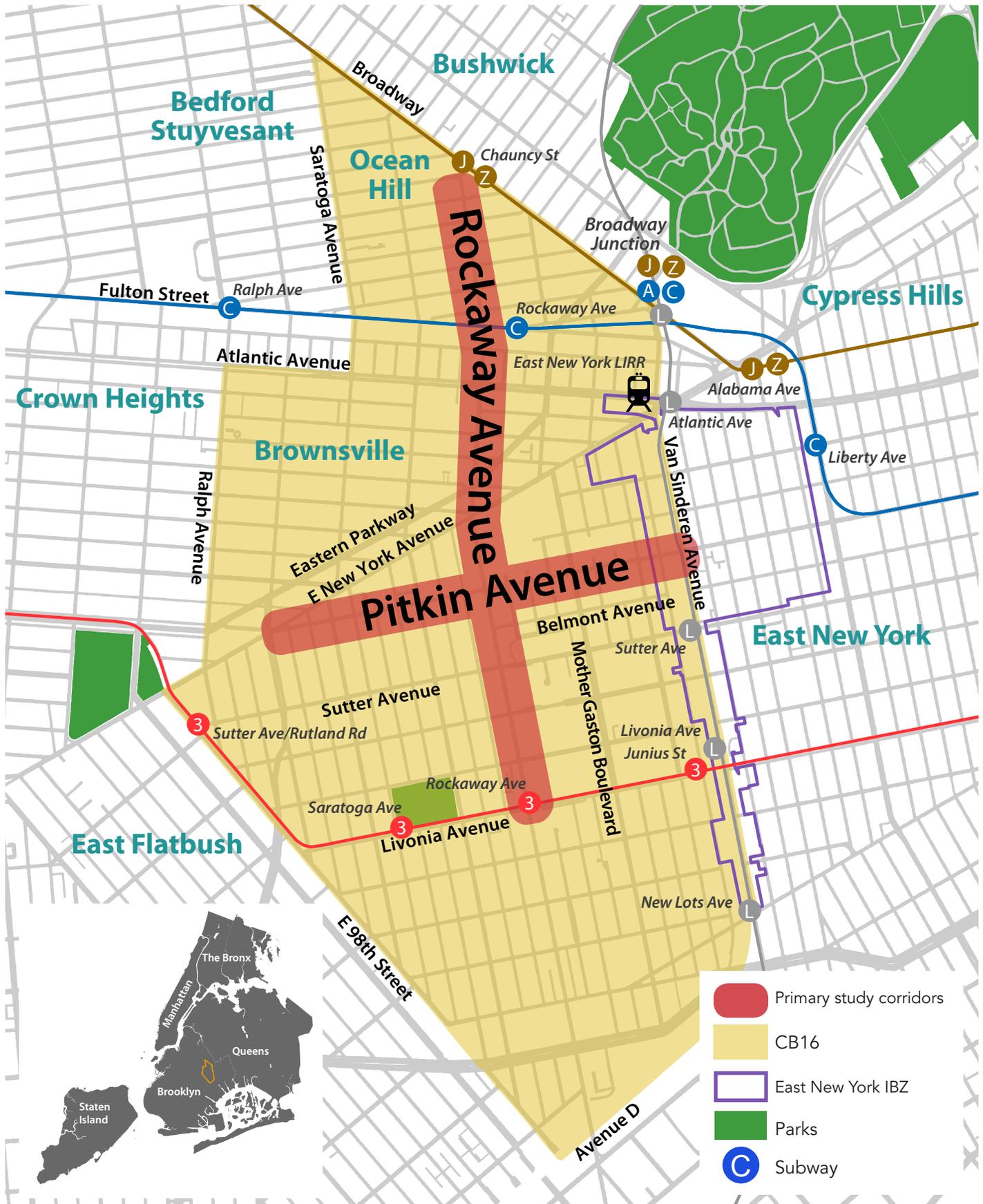
### 3. Formulation of recommendations and Report Writing (March- May)

During the months of March-May we began formulating and honing our recommendations in close consultation with our client and the community. We held multiple meetings with our client and a focus group in Brownsville to which we invited all the key stakeholders we had spoken with previously. Upon completion of the report, we presented our recommendations at a full community board meeting.

## STUDY AREA DEFINED

Ocean Hill-Brownsville is located in the eastern portion of Brooklyn and comprises the entirety of Community District 16. It borders East New York on the east; Canarsie to the south, East Flatbush, Crown Heights, Bedford Stuyvesant to the west, and Bushwick to the West; and Bushwick to the North. The primary study area consisted of Ocean Hill-Brownsville's two main retail corridors: Pitkin Avenue and Rockaway Avenue. Pitkin Avenue, Brownsville's most active retail corridor, runs east to west. We studied the portion of Pitkin Avenue from Eastern Parkway to Van Sinderen Avenue, the entire length of Pitkin Avenue in Community District 16. Rockaway Avenue, Brownsville's next most active retail corridor, runs north to south. We studied the section of Rockaway Avenue from Fulton Street to Livonia Avenue, the densest concentration of retail activity on Rockaway Avenue within Community District 16 borders. The secondary study area was the entirety of Community District 16.

# STUDY AREA



# PLANNING PROCESS

## 2011

September

October

November

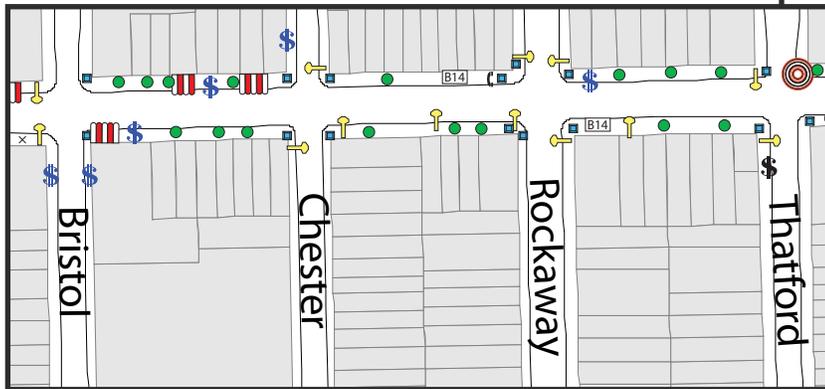
December

Identify client,  
initial client meetings

Background literature review,  
goals and objectives, work plan,  
client meetings

Attending community board meetings  
and other community meetings

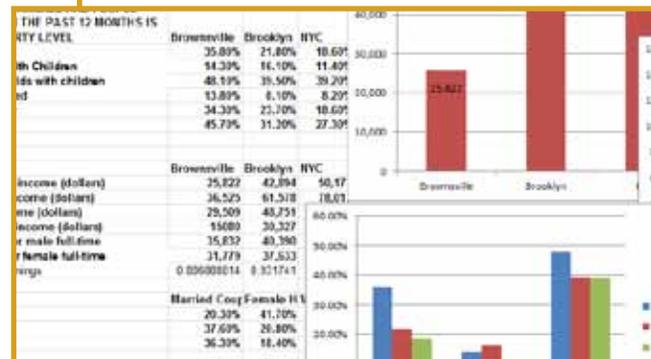
Urban design, retail, and land use surveys



Business owner and  
customer surveys

Analyze survey data

Targeted interviews with  
key stakeholders



# 2012

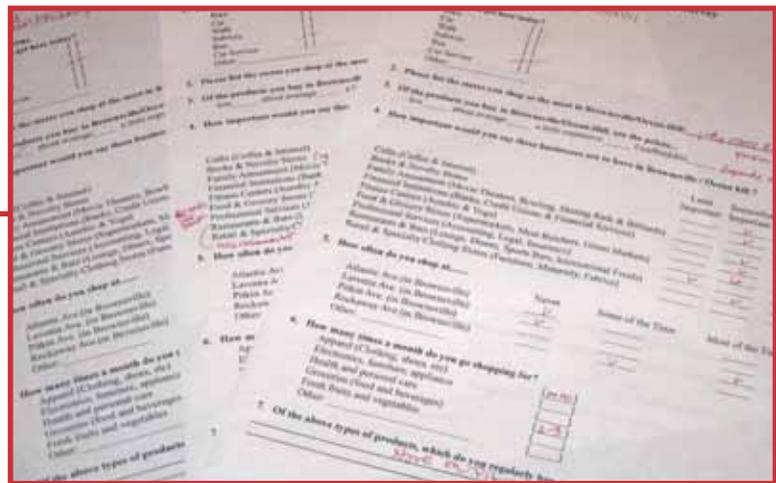
January

February

March

April

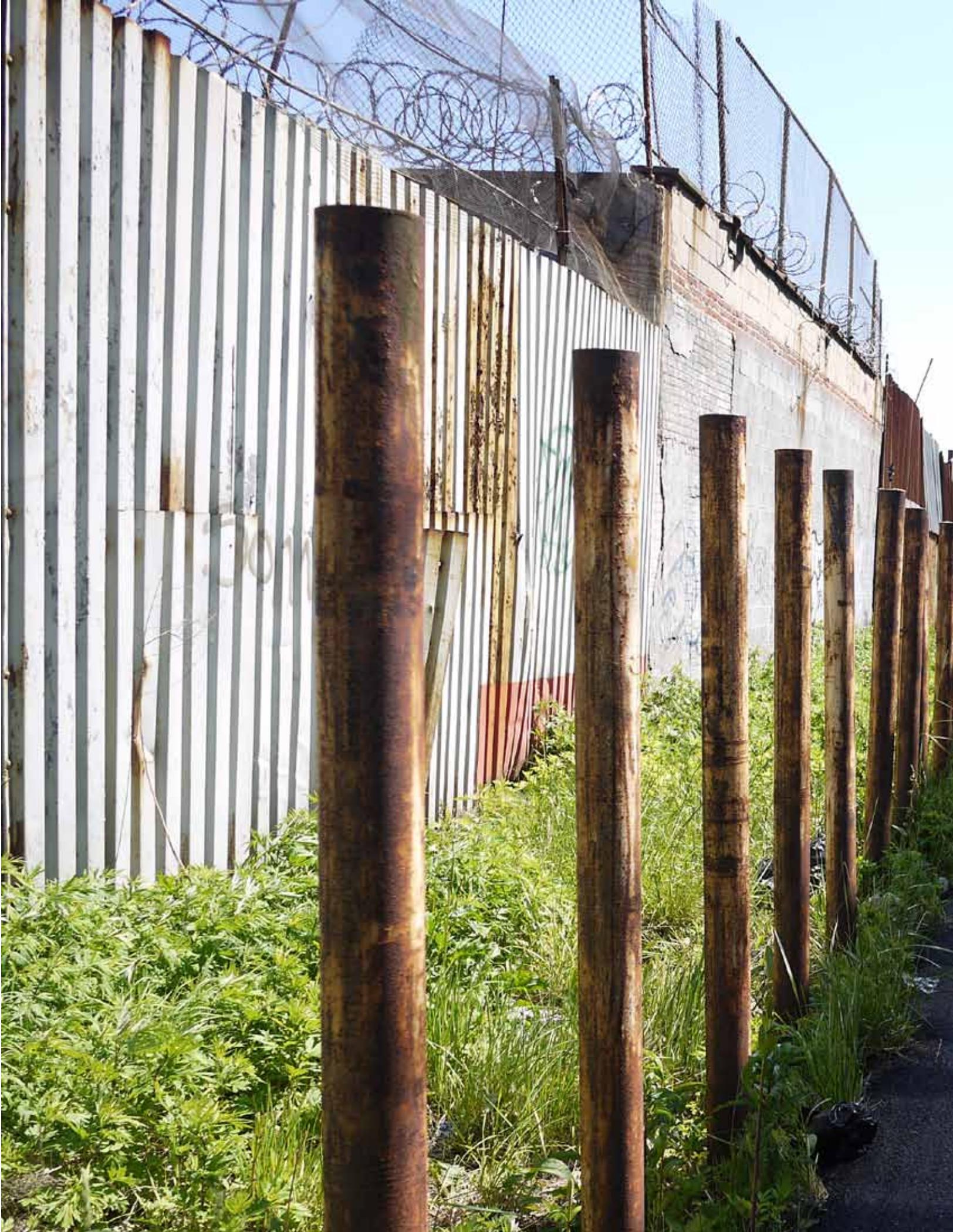
May

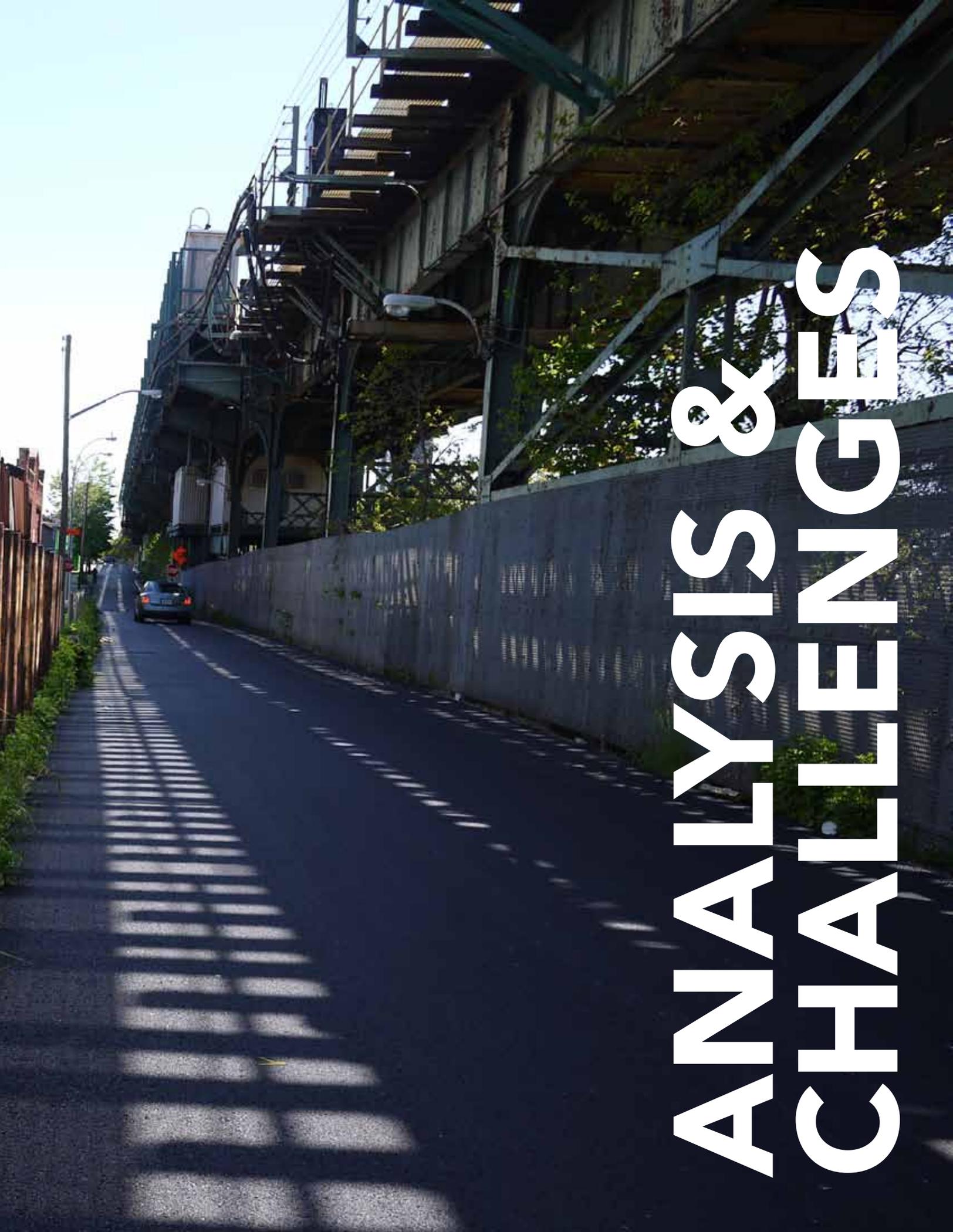


Develop recommendations

Present draft of recommendations to client

Presentation/final report





# ANALYSIS & CHALLENGES

# ANALYSIS

## THE HISTORY OF OCEAN HILL-BROWNSVILLE

### Overview

The Ocean Hill-Brownsville neighborhood of Brooklyn has undergone major demographic, economic and built environment shifts since its establishment in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. Although a predominantly Jewish community until the mid-1950s, it became a majority African-American and Caribbean community from the 1950s onwards. In addition, the once-thriving commercial and manufacturing district was weakened by the citywide economic crisis during the 1970s and the subsequent decline of the nation's industrial economy. Furthermore, while in the earlier part of the century, development was dominated by private developers, by the late 20<sup>th</sup> century Brownsville became home to the highest concentration of public housing in the country. Due in part to these transformations, Brownsville has consistently suffered from profound structural inequalities and denial of adequate public services. Yet, despite these odds, the residents of Ocean Hill-Brownsville have achieved admirable and unprecedented gains for their neighborhood through decades of ardent political activism. What follows is a brief historical narrative divided chronologically into phases that depict these trends.

### Early History: The Jerusalem of America

Present day Ocean Hill-Brownsville was largely European and agricultural until the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century. During the 1830s, freed slaves established Weeksville, one of Brooklyn's first African American settlements, in present-day Ocean Hill.<sup>1</sup> As a successful community of middle class African American laborers and professionals, Weeksville developed active civic institutions and attracted a steady stream of new residents through the 1870s.<sup>2</sup> Later in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, completion of the Brooklyn Bridge (1883) and the elevated railroad (1885) spurred Jewish, Italian and Irish migration from Manhattan to Brooklyn. These newcomers brought the clothing and textile industry with them, which would remain the basis of Ocean Hill-Brownsville's economy for the next several decades.<sup>3</sup> Thus, Ocean Hill-Brownsville concluded the 19<sup>th</sup> century with a much more diversified population and economy than it began with.

Events at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century—the consolidation of New York

1 Slavery was abolished in New York State in 1827.

2 MacDonald

3 Landesman, 3

City in 1894, the building of the elevated railroad lines, the opening of the Williamsburg and Manhattan bridges in 1903 and 1909, and explosive immigration to New York City—rapidly accelerated Jewish immigration to Ocean Hill-Brownsville. The influx of Jewish immigrants to Ocean-Hill Brownsville inaugurated a period of unprecedented population, economic and institutional growth that earned the neighborhood the nickname, "The Jerusalem of America."<sup>4</sup> By 1920, Ocean Hill-Brownsville had a population of over 100,000 (up from 25,000 in 1900)<sup>5</sup> and the neighborhood's main commercial thoroughfare, Pitkin Avenue, became a thriving retail corridor often referred to as "the Fifth Avenue of Brooklyn."<sup>6</sup> Concurrently, a strong concentration of Jewish cultural, religious and charitable organizations proliferated in Ocean Hill-Brownsville and both the first children's library and birth control clinic in the world, opened in 1914 and 1916 respectively.<sup>7</sup> In addition, many Jewish immigrants to Ocean Hill-Brownsville, who had been active members of the Socialist party in Europe, became prominent labor activists and leaders of New York City's Socialist movement.<sup>8</sup> A spirit of progress therefore permeated all sectors of public life during the first two decades of the twentieth century in Ocean Hill-Brownsville.

4 Pritchett

5 Pritchett

6 Landesman, 4

7 Pritchett, also at this time the local retail corridor Belmont Avenue became home to an established pushcart market

8 Pritchett



Belmont Avenue, 1939 (Flickr User: straitis)

## Early 20th Century: Arrival City

Although affected by the stock market crash of 1929, Brownsville's economy became reinvigorated and continued to thrive in the 1930s. With the largest concentration of furniture, apparel, and household appliance retail outlets in the city by the mid-1930s, Brownsville's economy provided residents several entry points into the workforce and opportunities for upward mobility. Despite the thriving economy, however, housing and infrastructure decline in the 1920s, as well as the poor working conditions in local factories and businesses, began to take a toll on residents. Residents who could afford to do so moved elsewhere, while what remained of the neighborhood gained a reputation as a Jewish ghetto.<sup>9</sup> According to Alfred Kazin, author of "A Walker in the City," the memoir of a Jew growing up in Brooklyn in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, Brownsville was best described as "a place that measured all success by our skill in getting away from it."<sup>10</sup>

From this perspective, Brownsville during the first half of the twentieth century functioned as a gateway city for new immigrants. While the neighborhood's booming retail and garment industries attracted thousands of immigrants and provided them the tools to make themselves more upwardly mobile, the crumbling infrastructure and lack of investment in the built environment barred Brownsville from becoming a viable middle class community. Doug Saunders terms such transitional urban spaces that foster the burgeoning middle class "arrival cities." In his book, *Arrival City: How the Largest Migration in the World is Reshaping Our World*, he argues that government investment in these transitional urban areas on the neighborhood level, through housing, urban design, and infrastructure is crucial in order to lift the existing residents of these areas out of poverty and attract other middle class residents to live there.<sup>11</sup> While Brownsville had all the makings of a successful mixed income community, failure to invest in the community's infrastructure at the crucial moment prevented this from occurring.

## Postwar: The Transformation

In the 1940s Brownsville residents lobbied hard to acquire middle class amenities for their community and transform it into a sustainable mixed-income neighborhood. While they succeeded in securing new housing, parks, and community facilities during World War II, the community-generated 1944 "Postwar Plan For Brownsville," that called for an indoor produce market, transit improvements, zoning changes, and more social services, was never realized.<sup>12</sup> Instead, public officials deliberately designated Brownsville as the location for the expansion of New York City's Black ghetto and carefully planned for this. As the GI bill and national housing policy facilitated a mass exodus of White, middle class residents from Brownsville, the neighborhood became a dumping ground for urban renewal refugees; Hundreds of Puerto Rican and African-American residents displaced by urban renewal projects elsewhere in the city

were brought to Brownsville to live in the crumbling vacant tenements that had been left behind by the upwardly mobile Jewish population.<sup>13</sup> Simultaneously, Robert Moses deemed Ocean Hill-Brownsville the ideal location to build public housing projects due to its high rate of vacancy, deteriorated housing stock and progressive ethos. Unlike other communities in Brooklyn, Moses expected Brownsville to tolerate, or even welcome, an influx of minority residents.

In addition, redlining, the practice of discriminatory lending that limited the locations where minority groups could get mortgage loans, had a profound effect on Ocean Hill-Brownsville. Although redlining had been in effect since the 1930s, it became a much greater force after World War II, when many returning veterans wanted to buy houses to take advantage of new federal subsidies for home ownership.<sup>14</sup> Ocean Hill-Brownsville was one of the few Brooklyn neighborhoods where African Americans were allowed to buy houses, which resulted in further consolidation of Ocean Hill-Brownsville as a predominately African American community.<sup>15</sup>



Van Dyke Houses, 1953 (NYCHA)

Thus, in a few short years, Moses achieved his objective of transforming Brownsville into the next location for the expanding African-American ghetto. While African-American residents comprised 22% of Brownsville's population in 1950, by 1962 more than 75% of residents were African American or Puerto Rican.<sup>16</sup> As seen above, this demographic change occurred due to white flight facilitated by national and municipal housing policies, the strategic concentration of public housing in Brownsville, and the proliferation of discriminatory lending policies that affected Brownsville disproportionately. In addition, an increase in violence, illicit behavior, and racial tension during the late 1950s and early 1960s in Ocean Hill-Brownsville further

9 Soyer, Pritchett, 10  
10 Pritchett, 10  
11 Saunders, 3  
12 Pritchett

13 Pritchett, 121  
14 Kenneth Jackson, *Crabgrass Frontier*.  
15 Kenneth Jackson, *Neighborhoods of Brooklyn*.  
16 Pritchett, 108,149

contributed to white flight. Although levels of violence increased citywide during this era, the Van Dyke houses in Brownsville had among the highest rates of arrest in all New York City Housing Authority (NYCHA) developments: 14.1 per one thousand residents.<sup>17</sup> Gang violence, in addition to widespread drug abuse and explosive racial tension between young African-Americans, Puerto Ricans, and elderly whites, ultimately, solidified Brownsville's image as a "ghetto" and impeded investment in the neighborhood as a result.

## The 1960s: Community Development Corporations and Community Control

The increasing segregation, violence, and racial tension of the 1960s coincided with increasing political mobilization that stimulated community development investment in Brownsville. The victorious 1962 Beth-El hospital strike, in which non-professional hospital workers struck for and won the right to collectively bargain, brought Brownsville into the focus of and drew support from local students, African American advocacy organizations and Jewish philanthropic organizations.<sup>18</sup> Empowered by the 1962 strike, Brownsville residents, with the aid of federal funding, established the Brownsville Community Council (BCC) in 1963, to address concerns pertaining to economic development, housing, and arts and culture.<sup>19</sup> Through facilitating the formation of social infrastructure in Brownsville and the entry of many social services and jobs to the area, especially government jobs, the BCC gave residents the tools to solve their own problems. They were recognized for this work by the federal government, as many of the policies in President Johnson's War on Poverty, especially those that encouraged the formation of community development corporations (CDCs), were influenced directly by the community organizing efforts occurring throughout Central and Eastern Brooklyn.

Yet, despite the BCCs continued efforts and the increased political mobilization overall in Ocean Hill-Brownsville, the structural forces of urban poverty were still firmly in place, and had particularly detrimental effects on schools. Residents advocated for school decentralization and, in 1967, Mayor Lindsay gave Ocean Hill-Brownsville parents and educators the power to form their own governing board and improve the trajectory of their failing schools. The governing board had a tense relationship with local teachers, however, and fired nearly 20 teachers and supervisory per-

sonnel believed to be sabotaging the community control program.<sup>20</sup> This drove teachers to stage a series of strikes in 1968, that concluded with the state department of education's adoption of a citywide school decentralization plan that strategically divided the city into school districts too large for true community control. Ultimately, the dispute between the predominantly Jewish teachers and the majority African American and Puerto Rican residents fractured the Jewish - African American liberal coalition fostered during earlier Civil Rights struggles and triggered an acrimony between the two groups.<sup>21</sup> Brownsville residents emerged from the strike with a deepened distrust of the political apparatus and a heightened critique of disinvestment in their community.

## The 1970s – Disinvestment and Disrepair

The economic crisis faced by the City of New York in the 1970s hit neighborhoods like Ocean Hill-Brownsville with a vengeance. Deindustrialization, white flight fueled by accelerating suburbanization, and mismanagement of city budgets left working class neighborhoods in disrepair and with significantly fewer city services. In 1970, Brownsville had the highest poverty rate and the second highest crime rate in the city.<sup>22</sup> In addition, riots broke out in the neighborhood twice that year; first, in reaction to the infrequency of

sanitation service, and next to protest state budget cuts.<sup>23</sup> The 1970s also saw the decline of Brownsville's famous commercial strips as they lost their attraction due to high crime rates, riots and economic decline.

Most significantly, Brownsville's built environment during the 1970s fell into utter disrepair.

Several unfinished urban renewal projects left vast portions of the neighborhood vacant and deserted for nearly two decades. Additionally, landlords became increasingly neglectful, failed to pay their taxes, and did not intervene when dozens of fires, started by bad electrical wiring and juvenile delinquents, destroyed many of the remaining buildings. In response, the city took control of all buildings with at least a yearlong tax delinquency, a decision that drove hundreds of neglectful landlords to abandon their buildings altogether. As a result, in 1979, according to the Department of Hous-



Brownsville Fires, 1973 (Flickr User: Paulv2c)

17 Pritchett, 156

18 Pritchett, 162

19 Pritchett

20 Pritchett

21 Pritchett, Podair

22 Pritchett, 242

23 Pritchett 241

ing Preservation and Development (HPD), more than 60% of units in Ocean Hill-Brownsville were either held by the city or at risk of becoming city property.<sup>24</sup> Given these desperate conditions, the population of Ocean Hill-Brownsville shrunk by 35% between 1970 and 1980, which weakened social ties and caused a loss of social capital.<sup>25</sup>

## The 1980s and 1990s: Growing Optimism

The 1980s brought resurgence to the larger New York City economy with the rebounding of the financial sector, but Ocean Hill-Brownsville and other low-income neighborhoods of color did not benefit from larger economic trends. The unemployment rate increased in Brownsville from 1980 to 1990 and crime and drug addiction hit a new intensity with the introduction of crack-cocaine to New York City in 1984. Despite that, beginning in the late 1980s, public and private investment helped rebuild what had been destroyed during the previous decade. NYCHA constructed more public housing that gave greater consideration to spatial integration with the neighborhood. And, nonprofit organizations and private owners took on rehabilitation of several housing units as well.



Nehemiah Houses, 1989 (Flick User: gracieola)

One of the most successful housing development projects in Brownsville during this era was Nehemiah housing, an affordable home ownership initiative. Spearheaded by East Brooklyn Congregations, a consortium of 30 local churches, and subsidized by the Department of Housing Preservation and Development, Nehemiah housing led to the construction of over 3,000 single-family homes in Brownsville between 1987 and 1999. Although Nehemiah housing was criticized for being expensive and low-density, it improved the overall neighborhood landscape and attracted middle class residents, creating a more mixed-income environment in Brownsville. In fact, the Nehemiah homes were so successful in Brownsville that they inspired

<sup>24</sup> Pritchett, 248

<sup>25</sup> Pritchett, 243

HUD's Home Act, an initiative that encourages working class homeownership nationwide.

## 2000s: Ongoing Challenges

Following reconstruction and a new citywide approach to policing, crime rates finally began to fall in Brownsville in the 1990s, which created a more favorable business climate. In 1996, a business improvement district (BID), a self-taxing business district, was established on Pitkin Avenue to boost its sanitation, security, and streetscape. Today, the BID continues to provide cohesion and centrality to Brownsville's business community. In addition, the creation of the East Brooklyn Industrial Park during the 1980s which became the East Brooklyn Industrial Business Zone in 2006, has incentivized manufacturing businesses to locate near Brownsville.<sup>26</sup> Despite these local initiatives, however, Brownsville's current retail vacancy is 13 percent and it has trouble retaining manufacturing businesses.<sup>27</sup> Deep-rooted structural inequalities as well as global and regional economic trends have prevented Brownsville from receiving the investment necessary to foster a thriving local economy.

As a result, Brownsville's population continues to confront several ongoing obstacles. Currently, more than 50 percent of Brownsville's 60,000 residents live in publicly supported housing, making it the highest concentration of public housing units in the city.<sup>28</sup> Notwithstanding, Brownsville has an affordable housing crisis and is home to one of the nation's largest homeless populations.<sup>29</sup> Ocean Hill-Brownsville also suffers from unemployment, failing schools and the highest rate of infant mortality in the city.<sup>30</sup> Given these trends, one historian described Brownsville as "the last to profit from economic growth and the first to suffer from economic dislocation."<sup>31</sup> In this vulnerable climate, as neighborhoods all over Brooklyn experience development booms, Brownsville's growth rate remains stagnant.

## Conclusion

Our economic development plan for Ocean Hill-Brownsville takes the complexity of its history into account; while on one hand we recognize that Brownsville continues to endure structural inequalities resulting from decades of disinvestment, we also look to its legacy of progressive politics, citizen mobilization, and thriving commerce as models for future policies and initiatives. In an effort to echo the ingenuity and forward-thinking of its community leaders throughout the twentieth century, we plan to utilize Ocean Hill-Brownsville's rich historical assets to present innovative economic tools and opportunities to the community moving forward.

<sup>26</sup> Pritchett, 270

<sup>27</sup> Land Use Survey, Appendix

<sup>28</sup> Pritchett, 259

<sup>29</sup> <http://www.loop21.com/content/campaign-targets-thousands-homeless>

<sup>30</sup> Bellafante

<sup>31</sup> Pritchett, 270

## DEMOGRAPHICS

Brownsville's population peaked in 1925 at 300,000 and has been steadily decreasing since then.<sup>1</sup> Community District 16 suffered dramatic population loss during the 1970's, falling from a population of 122,589 in 1970 to 73,801 in 1980.<sup>2</sup> This decline coincided with severe deterioration of housing stock and widespread abandonment of private property. Much of the housing destroyed during the 1970's has been replaced by single-family, owner-occupied Nehemiah housing. Community District 16 is currently home to 36,000 fewer people than it was in 1970, making it difficult to support the retail community and to utilize property. This can impart a sense of emptiness and abandonment in the neighborhood, as the urban form was designed to support a much larger population.

Brownsville has the highest concentration of public housing in the country<sup>3</sup>, a large youth population, and a high rate of female-headed households. In general, these groups have low levels of disposable income, which is necessary to

1 Landesman, Alter F. (1969). Brownsville. New York: Bloch Publishing Company, Inc.

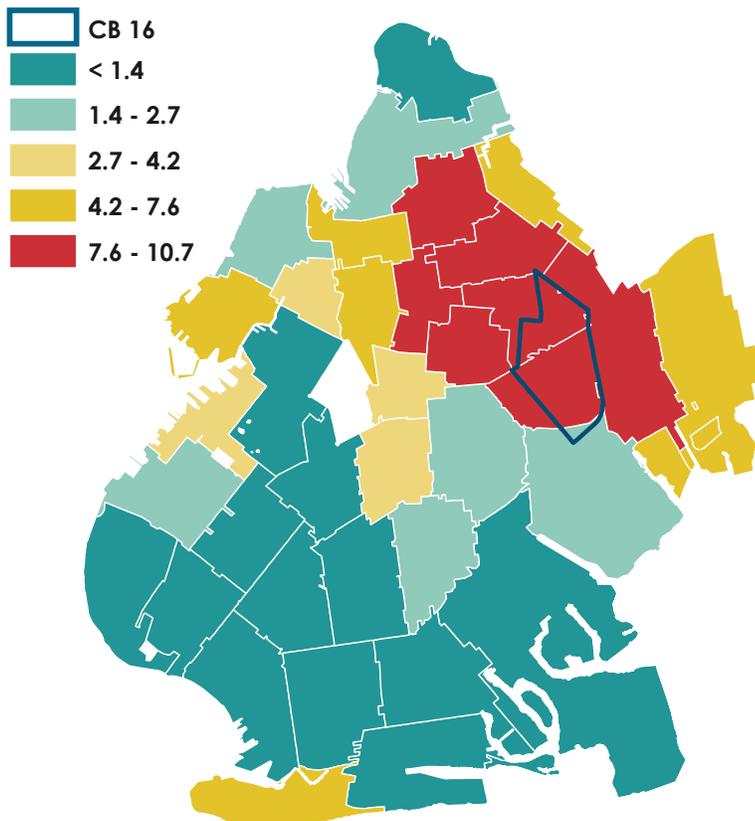
2 New York City Department of City Planning. (2010). PI-P1 CD Total Population, 1970-2010. Retrieved from [http://www.nyc.gov/html/dcp/html/census/demo\\_tables\\_2010.shtml](http://www.nyc.gov/html/dcp/html/census/demo_tables_2010.shtml)

3 Sun, Feifei. (2012, January 31). Brownsville: Inside One of Brooklyn's Most Dangerous Neighborhoods. Time. Retrieved from <http://lightbox.time.com/2012/01/31/brownsville-brooklyn/#1>

stimulate retail growth, pursue higher education, or start a business. Nearly one-third of the population lacks a high school diploma, and there is a much lower attainment of college degrees than the rest of Brooklyn and New York City. This impacts both the quality of jobs and the wages earned, which again leads to very little disposable income. Unemployment rates in Brownsville are nearly twice New York City and Brooklyn wide averages.

Ocean Hill-Brownsville is also home to the second highest concentration of million dollar blocks (blocks whose prison expenditures total more than \$1 million dollars per fiscal year) in the city. This contributes to the fact that after age 19, each age group has significantly fewer men than women. The fact that women in Brownsville make less than men (\$.89 on the dollar) further contributes to levels of poverty and lack of disposable income.<sup>4</sup> The high rate of crime and the criminalization of men in Brownsville presents employment challenges for people leaving the criminal justice system, does not create a welcome shopping environment, and stifles efforts to build community and attract new businesses.

4 U.S. Census Bureau. (2010.) PUMA5 04007 2005-2009 Five-Year Summary Files.



## Incarcerated Males per 1000 Residents (by zip code)

NYS Division of Criminal Justice Services



**NYC**



**Brooklyn**



**CB16**

**FEMALE HEADED HOUSEHOLDS**



**18%**



**21%**



**42%**

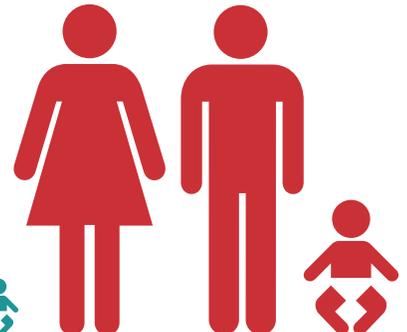
**AFRICAN AMERICAN POPULATION**



**23%**



**33%**



**75%**

**MEDIAN INCOME**



**50K**



**42K**



**25K**

**UNEMPLOYMENT**



**8%**



**8%**



**14%**

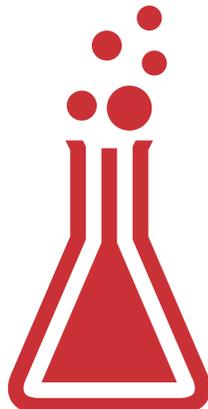
**% LESS THAN HIGH SCHOOL**



**21%**



**23%**



**29%**

**% BACHELOR DEGREES**



**33%**



**28%**



**10%**

2010 US Census and 2009 American Community Survey

## BUSINESS AND EMPLOYMENT INVENTORY

The analysis of the demographic data revealed a customer base with little disposable income. In addition, the economic vitality of Ocean Hill-Brownsville is negatively impacted by business patterns and employment structures. Approximately 59% of Community District 16 residents were employed in the health care, transportation, or retail industries in 2009.<sup>1</sup> Most of these jobs are low-skill, low-wage, and do not provide residents with much disposable income, which is necessary to fuel retail corridors. Community District 16 currently has a higher rate of employment in the retail sector than the borough of Brooklyn as a whole, suggesting that Brownsville may have a unique competitive advantage in that sector.

Very few businesses participate in government funded business assistance programs or were members of trade organizations and chambers of commerce. Of those who did participate, half did not see the benefit of this experience. Interviews and conversations with residents and community leaders indicate that most businesses do not hire locally, despite the myriad of profitable tax incentives associated with hiring youth, parolees, single-mothers, and economically disadvantaged locals. Another aspect of weak climate for economic development is a high rate of retail vacancy, which has a huge impact on vibrancy and safety, as well as perceptions of the retail corridors as a viable destination.

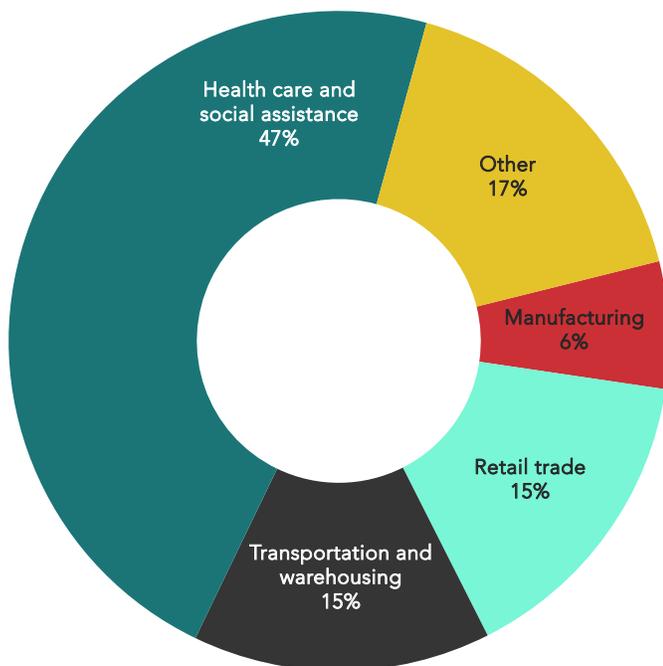
<sup>1</sup> Bureau of Labor Statistics (Quarterly Census Employment Wages)

## PROPERTY AND BUSINESS OWNERSHIP

By and large, business owners and landlords in Ocean Hill-Brownsville are not invested in the local community. This does not lend to the creation of a positive shopping experience and tends to drive customers away. An analysis of property ownership along Pitkin and Rockaway Avenues revealed that the businesses in Brownsville are not “home-grown business,” meaning that very few business and property owners live in Brownsville. Of the 66 buildings analyzed, only two of the property owners had Brownsville addresses. Through the 1980s, buildings in Brownsville were owned by individuals, but in late 1990s a corporate ownership model began to emerge. Corporate owners are primarily concerned with extracting profits from parcels and are less likely than local owners to engage with the community. They have a lower stake in the neighborhood’s fate, except insofar as it affects their ability to profit from landownership.

This ownership model diminishes the relationships between customers, business owners, and landowners. Surveys and interviews with community members revealed an excessive amount of security measures and distrust; customers are required to leave their bags at the door, or at times required to ring a bell to enter. This dynamic drives people in the neighborhood to shop in other locations and does not create a welcome environment to people from outside the community. If Brownsville is to have a more vibrant, invested retail environment, rates of local business and property ownership must increase, or absentee landlords will need to be brought into line with community interests.

## Employment by Sector of the Economy



US Census County Business Patterns, 2009

## ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Brownsville is challenged by the fact that federal, state, and city economic development initiatives focus on regional competition, not neighborhood development.<sup>1</sup> As a result of these strategies, private companies choose to locate in Federal Empowerment zones, none of which are located in Brownsville, or to places with better commercial transportation access. These policies have hurt Brownsville's neighborhood economy. For example, M. Slavin and Sons Fish market, an economic and cultural anchor in Brownsville, relocated to Hunts Point due to the economic development incentives available there. This has contributed to the significant downfall of Belmont Avenue, Brownsville's once-vibrant wholesale shopping street, and Brownsville's reputation as a shopping destination.

<sup>1</sup> Bartik, Timothy. (1993). Who Benefits From Local Job Growth—Migrants or the Original Residents? *Regional Studies* 27, number 4 (1993) p. 297–311.

Analysis has shown a deep degree of fragmentation and decentralization in terms of efforts to connect business improvement strategies, workforce opportunities, place-making and community building, and to combat negative image associated with conducting business. The fact that there is no central organization to advocate for economic development in Ocean Hill-Brownsville is one of the core challenges. The non-profits in Brownsville are limited to social services and health care, which are incredibly important, but do not address structural and community obstacles to economic development. Interviews also show little collaboration and cooperation between existing non-profits in the area. As a result, no organization or coalition has effectively lobbied for workforce development or entrepreneurial development opportunities in Brownsville. In looking to other neighborhoods with similar challenges, non-profit organizations and local development corporations are effective advocates for community-based economic development, establishing themselves as a central political force.



*M. Slavin and Sons Fish Market, Belmont Ave*

## ZONING AND LAND USE

The study area consists primarily of medium-density R6 residential districts with C1 and C2 commercial overlays, and the area around the intersection of Pitkin and Rockaway Avenues which is zoned C4-3. Considering the fact that the retail corridors were designed to support a much larger customer base, medium-density housing presents a unique challenge in that it spreads people out and away from the retail corridor. It also limits the amount of space for new residents and does not provide enough incentive for private developers to build mixed-income housing projects. A new residential project has been built in a recently rezoned R7A section, suggesting that this density may be sufficient to promote new development. C4-3 zoning offers the same residential floor area ratio as R6 zones, which is not enough to spur development. Second floor vacancies in C4-3 are

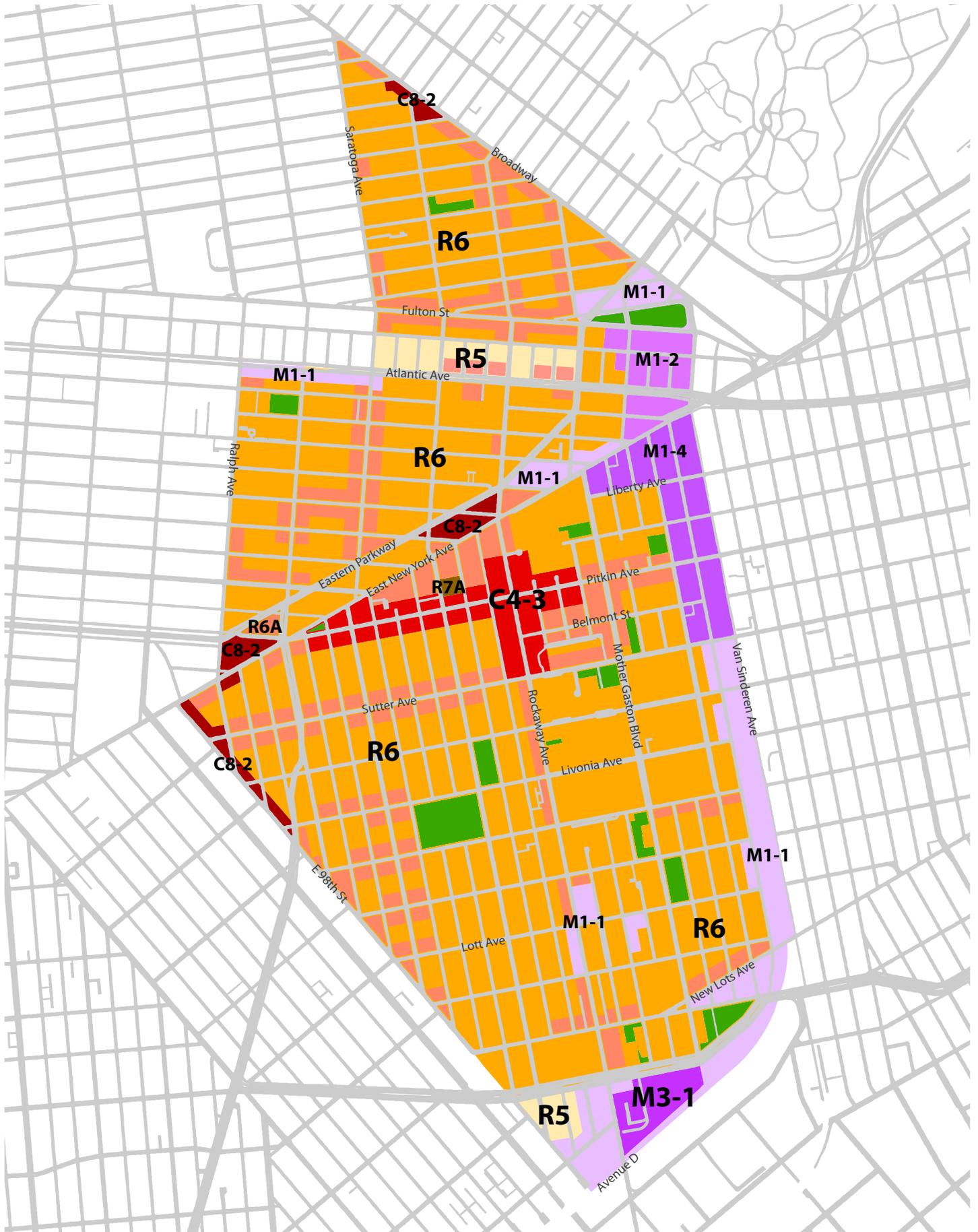
very high. Bringing more residents to the areas immediately surrounding the retail corridors is key to increasing the area's customer base and improving retail diversity.

The C8-2 zones along Eastern Parkway Extension, dominated by autobody shops, cut off Brownsville from neighboring communities. These land uses do not support very many jobs and could be relocated to underutilized space in the Industrial Business Zone. C1 and C2 commercial overlay districts permit "local shopping and services", but it is unclear why certain sections have overlays. These overlays could have the impact of decentralizing the business community and detract from efforts to promote infill along the primary commercial corridors.

	Maximum Residential FAR Height Factor	Maximum Residential FAR Quality Housing wide/ Narrow street	Maximum Community Facility FAR	Maximum Commercial FAR	Maximum Street Wall Height	Minimum base Height wide /narrow street (FT)	Maximum Base Height wide /narrow street (Ft)	Maximum Building Height wide/ narrow street (ft)	Required Parking
<b>Existing Zoning</b>									
R6	2.43	3.0/2.2	4.8	n/a	n/a	40/30	60/40	70/55	70%, 50% QH
C8-2	n/a	n/a	4.8	2.0	30	n/a	n/a	Sky Exposure Plane	Varies with use
M1-1	n/a	n/a	n/a	1.0	30	n/a	n/a	Sky Exposure Plane	Varies with use
<b>Proposed</b>									
R6A	n/a	3/3.6*	3.0	n/a	n/a	40	60	70	50%
R7A	n/a	3.45/4.6*	4.0	n/a	n/a	40	65	80	50%
C4-3A	n/a	3	3.0	n/a	n/a	40	60	70	50%
C4-5A	n/a	3.45 / 4.6*	4.0	4.0	n/a	40	65	80	50%

\* With Inclusionary Housing Program

	Maximum Commercial FAR R6	Depth of Overlay District in feet
<b>Existing</b>		
C1-1	2.0	200
C1-3	2.0	150
C2-1	2.0	150
C2-3	2.0	150
C2-4	2.0	100
<b>Proposed</b>		
C2-4	2.0	100

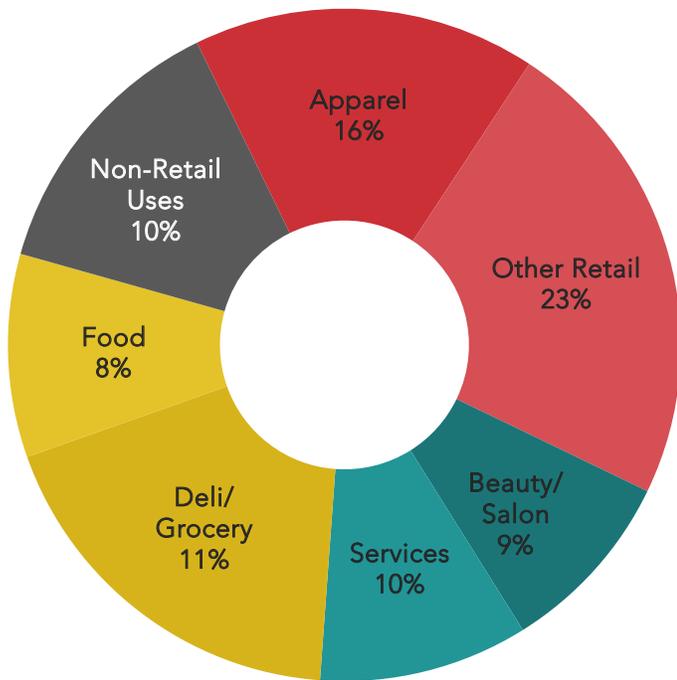


## RETAIL CORRIDOR LAND USES

Another aspect of the weak climate for economic development is the high rate of retail vacancy, which has a huge impact on vibrancy and safety, as well as perceptions of the retail corridors. Vacancy of ground floor commercial sites and upper-floor residential spaces along retail strips has far reaching effects; for population density, public safety, the provision of public funds and resources, and many other factors vital to economic development in Brownsville.

The five most common active ground-floor uses along commercial strips in the study area were apparel retailers (16.2% of storefronts), delis and small grocery stores (10.4%), beauty salons (8.5%), food service establishments (8.5%), and variety/discount stores (4.9%). Together, these uses account for 48.5% of storefronts in the study area. Also, most retail activity in Brownsville shuts down by sundown. 90% of business owners we surveyed cited safety as a key concern and there are no sit-down restaurants, bars, movie theaters, or youth entertainment centers.

### Retail Mix



2012 Land Use Survey

### Vacant Retail



2012 Land Use Survey

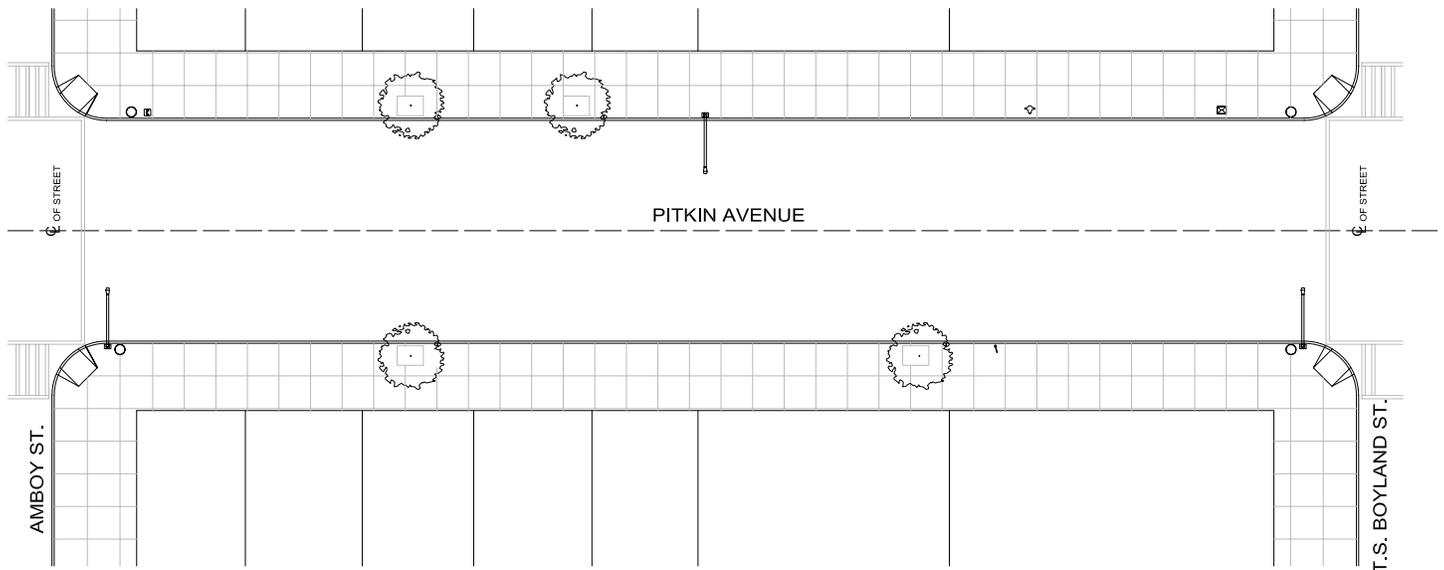
# STREETSCAPE AND URBAN DESIGN

Brownsville has a poorly maintained streetscape, making the retail corridors inaccessible or uninviting. Major urban form variations and high rates of underutilized land diminish the pedestrian experience, and poor sidewalk conditions are unpleasant and dangerous for people with strollers and wheelchairs and a liability for business owners.

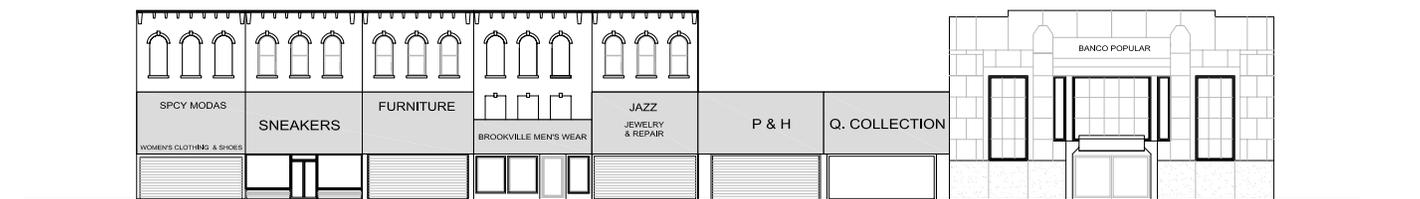
Lack of consistent urban design diminishes the sense of being in a particular place, making it difficult to attribute one single image to Brownsville. For example, NYCHA high rises are next to Nehemiah homes, manufacturing uses surround subway stations, and vacant lots are dispersed throughout the landscape. These issues need to be addressed in order to steer customers to the retail corridors.

The discontinuity also persists in the design of store signage. Currently stores have different sign aesthetics and some signs cover the entire building facade, hiding historic architectural characteristics that could be featured. Streetwalls have either too much or too little glazing. Street trees are poorly maintained, and street furniture is lacking. Improving design consistency, street wall continuity, and sidewalk life are essential to creating a welcoming environment. These are key strategies used for economic redevelopment.

## Pitkin Avenue Existing Conditions



EXISTING PITKIN AVE. SIDEWALK FLOOR PLAN



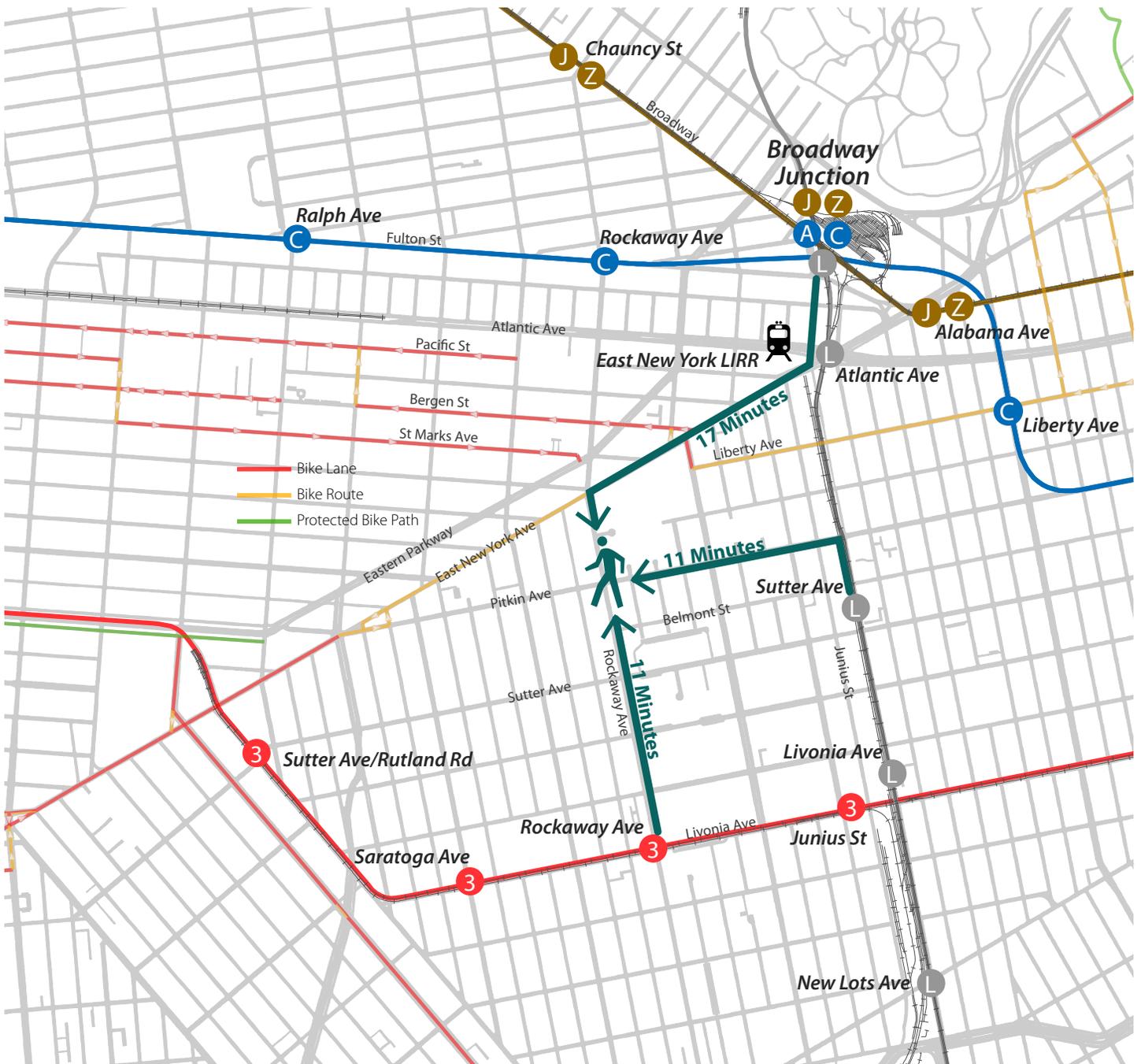
EXISTING PITKIN AVE. SOUTH ELEVATION

2012 Urban Design Survey

# TRANSPORTATION

Community District 16 has a wealth of transit options, but connections between subway stations and the retail corridors are poor. Most stations in the area are distant from the intersection of Rockaway and Pitkin Avenues and there are no buses connecting passengers to Broadway Junction, the district's major transit hub, to the retail corridors. The majority of subway stations are not ADA accessible, and several station entrances are closed, making it more difficult to access the retail corridor. The fact that both Broadway Junction and the Sutter Avenue L train stop are surrounded

by manufacturing uses makes it difficult for people getting off at these stops to direct themselves to the retail corridor. There are only two bike lanes in Community District 16, and despite the surrounding bicycle access on Eastern Parkway, there is very little connectivity. A detail analysis of the transportation system for Brownsville is in the appendix.



# CHALLENGES



We have identified three central challenges undermining the economic and social life of Ocean Hill-Brownsville: **the weak economic climate; a compromised built environment and infrastructure;** and **high crime and negative public image.** Taken together, these three issues impede the development of a vibrant retail environment by undermining the purchasing power and entrepreneurial spirit of neighborhood residents, limiting access to Brownsville's primary retail corridors, and discouraging investors, business owners, and shoppers from spending money in the area.

The current climate for economic development in Ocean Hill-Brownsville is characterized by high rates of retail vacancy, stressed relationships between business owners and customers, and limited workforce and entrepreneurial development among neighborhood residents. These issues are exacerbated by the dearth of non-profits and governmental programs that prioritize the development of human and economic resources.

This weak economic climate also has ramifications for Brownsville's urban form and public infrastructure. High rates of residential vacancy and the dense concentration of public housing in Ocean Hill-Brownsville create an inconsistent landscape, not only from block to block, but also from building to building. Likewise, infrastructural deficiencies contribute to the weak economic climate; although Community District 16 is advantageously located near transportation hubs including Broadway Junction, the primary retail corridors, Pitkin and Rockaway Avenues, are not well served by subways, buses, and bike lanes. Connectivity between bicycle routes and subway stations and Brownsville's retail

corridors is obstructed by busy roads, the elevated portion of Atlantic Avenue, the Bay Ridge freight rail lines, and superblocks of public housing. The subway stations are at the periphery of the shopping corridors. This weak connectivity discourages potential customers from outside of the neighborhood from shopping in Ocean Hill-Brownsville's retail corridors.

Ocean Hill-Brownsville's high crime rate and the resultant negative attention that it receives in popular media provides non-residents with a further disincentive to shop in the neighborhood. Negative popular portrayals of the neighborhood further harm residents by serving as justification for business owners' mistrust of residents. The negative image also discourages employers, most of whom do not live in Brownsville<sup>1</sup>, from hiring individuals with Brownsville addresses. This further undermines neighborhood-wide economic development.

The distinct but closely related challenges Ocean Hill-Brownsville faces cannot be addressed independently; issues of economic development, public infrastructure, and safety coalesce to impede Ocean Hill-Brownsville's development into an attractive, comfortable and distinctive place to live, work, play, and shop.

<sup>1</sup> Business Owner/Manager Survey, 2012



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**RECOMMENDATIONS**

# VISION



To **revitalize** Ocean Hill and Brownsville through a **comprehensive, inclusive** economic and retail development plan that provides **opportunities** for all neighborhood residents.

To realize this vision, we have worked with the Economic Development Committee of Community Board 16 in Brooklyn to establish 5 mutually reinforcing recommendations that will improve conditions for people living and doing businesses in Ocean Hill-Brownsville, enlarge the customer base by making the retail environment more inviting, and create a sense of place to promote economic development.

# RECOMMENDATIONS

## **1. Establish a Community Advocacy Non-Profit to Coordinate Economic Development Strategies in Ocean-Hill Brownsville**

We charge the formation of a non-profit, we referred to as Brownsville Works!, to be the central force in coordinating commercial revitalization, entrepreneurial training, workforce development, and strategic placemaking initiatives. This non-profit will be well positioned to motivate stakeholders, leverage grant money for neighborhood economic development initiatives, and apply political pressure to agencies and elected officials to improve neighborhood conditions.

## **2. Coordinate Workforce and Business Development Strategies**

Coordinating workforce development strategies will stimulate growth as residents obtain higher levels of income. This will be accomplished through working with the business community to promote local hiring and to improve their business strategies. Improving relationships between property owners, businesses, and customers will retain Ocean Hill-Brownsville residents and attract new customers as well.

## **3. Implement a Network of Pop-Up Stores to Revitalize and Create Opportunity**

Providing entrepreneurial opportunity through a network of pop-up stores will spur commercial redevelopment in the short-term and form stronger relationships between customers, business owners, and property owners in the long-term. Property owners will temporarily offer their vacant storefronts in exchange for low-cost maintenance and enhancement of the property.

## **4. Promote and Support Strategic Placemaking Initiatives**

Actively promoting placemaking initiatives will build community capital and combat the Ocean Hill-Brownsville's negative portrayal in the media. Highlighting historical assets through tours and a lighting plan will reinforce the idea that Ocean Hill-Brownsville is a place of great historical significance and of great potential. Community events will provide a vehicle for Brownsville Works! to garner support for economic development initiatives.

## **5. Initiate a Targeted Campaign to Improve the Built Environment and Infrastructure**

Finally, community members will address deficiencies in the built environment through initiating a targeted campaign to improve the built environment; address issues of zoning, transportation and access; and highlight historical features.

Together, these strategies form a symbiotic network of mutually reinforcing plans that address the community and individual levels as well as the structural and institutional challenges that are preventing Ocean Hill-Brownsville from actualizing this vision. Each goal has short, medium, and long-term strategies, respective to the capacity of the Economic Development Committee of Community Board 16 and the emerging Brownsville Works! non-profit, which through executing this plan will become the central organizers of economic and community development in Ocean Hill-Brownsville.

# 1 ESTABLISH A COMMUNITY ADVOCACY NON-PROFIT TO COORDINATE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

In looking to similar communities that have effectively undertaken comprehensive economic development strategies, we have identified the need in Ocean Hill-Brownsville for a non-profit organization to spearhead community-led efforts to promote economic development strategies, place-making initiatives, and to engage with government agencies responsible for maintaining the built environment. For the purpose of this plan, this non-profit is referred to as Brownsville Works!

**Stage 1: Establish the Brownsville Business and Community Portal to Speak in a Unified Voice about Ocean Hill-Brownsville**

**Stage 2: Formalize Organization Structure and Establish a Track Record**

**Stage 3: Establish a Business Incubator**

Taking into account the overarching goal of this plan, to revitalize the neighborhood of Ocean Hill-Brownsville, along with the specific objectives laid out to achieve a more thriving neighborhood, we have identified the need for a central organization; a not-profit entity within the neighborhood to lead community-based economic development initiatives. We envision a new non-profit organization or an existing organization to take on such work.

The South Bronx Overall Economic Development Corporation and the Cypress Hills Local Development Corporation are non-profits that coordinate the business community and promote workforce development and placemaking activities in their respective communities.<sup>1</sup> Both organizations have been highly successful at confronting the same types of challenges facing Ocean Hill-Brownsville. Their success has been possible because they have built a base of support in their community and earned the respect needed to carry out these tasks. Ocean Hill-Brownsville is currently lacking such an institution with the capacity to speak in a unified voice about economic opportunities and to promote the positive aspects of the community.

This chapter provides a roadmap for the successful creation and expansion of Brownsville Works! The first stage is to build a support base through the Brownsville Business and Community Portal website. Establishing a positive reputation in the community and building a network of committed and enthusiastic supporters must be the first stage. The Portal will be a low-cost way to promote placemaking strategies and business and workforce development initiatives. The second stage will formalize and increase the non-profit's

capacity as a means to access new funding resources and to take on more complex placemaking and economic development initiatives. Finally, in the third stage, the non-profit will establish a physical presence in Ocean Hill-Brownsville through a business or non-profit incubator space.

## *The Case for a Non-Profit*

Non-profit organizations and Local Development Corporations have been taking a more prevalent role in the advocacy and management of local issues in American cities over the last few decades. Whether they serve as a corrective mechanism to the devastating unintended consequences of city and state economic and social policies; or a replacement for the void left by the retreat of the role of government in light of political and economic austerity, local community groups are often in a better position to address the issues facing their neighborhood. These organizations can become exceptional agents in building and expanding the formal and informal networks needed to build the economy and community from the ground up.

Foundations, and more recently city programs like the New York City Small Business Services Avenue NYC program, are recognizing that providing strategically targeted funding towards community-led placemaking efforts and workforce development initiatives is money well spent.<sup>2</sup> The responsible management of financials is essential to gain access to these increasingly prevalent forms of support and development (e.g. one-on-one capacity training for board and staff members, and increased exposure). Several organizations in socioeconomically similar neighborhoods have been identified as models for Brownsville Works!. See appendix for information about their programming and organizational structures.

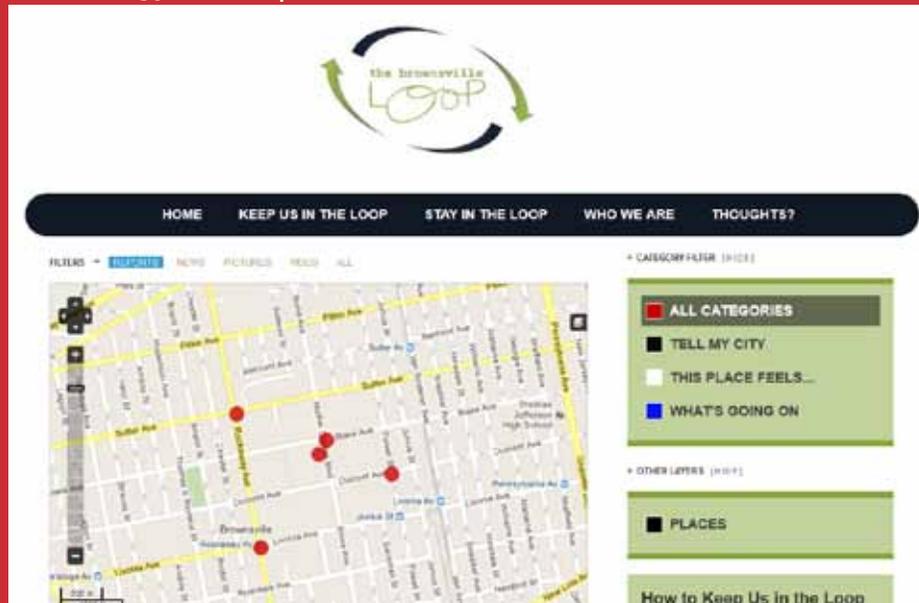
Brownsville Works! will function as an outgrowth and expansion of projects currently led by Community Board Sixteen's Economic Development Committee and its members. As of spring 2012, these efforts concentrate on increasing the connections of young professionals to one another and youth mentorship opportunities within Ocean Hill-Brownsville. This section of the report is meant to serve as guidance to lift up current programs from volunteer led to more formalized staff led organizational endeavors. It is important to note that although the plan advocates for a centralized entity to implement the goals contained within this plan, all of these goals could be adopted by a coalition, organization, or individual working to tackle existing problems.

<sup>1</sup> Fioravante, Janice. (1996, April 28). If You're Thinking of Living in Cypress Hills, An Evolving Northeast Brooklyn Enclave. The New York Times, Real Estate Section.

<sup>2</sup><http://www.nyc.gov/html/sbs/html/neighborhood/avenuenyc.shtml>

## The Brownsville Loop

The Brownsville Partnership has implemented a website called the Brownsville Loop, which allows residents to map events, neighborhood conditions, and comments about place; however, the site is poorly utilized. Partnering with the Brownsville Loop will serve as an invaluable tool to report conditions in the built environment which need to be addressed and will provide valuable up-to-date cases for the campaign to improve the built environment. By coordinating with this technology, smart phone users in Ocean Hill-Brownsville can share pertinent information about



community events, historical assets, local businesses, and the infrastructure campaign on social media websites. The advantage of accessing the Internet through cellular phones is that it facilitates crowd-sourcing geo-coded information; the user can simply report a condition and it will be stored online with the location. In the short term, the Portal should connect the BID website with the Brownsville Loop to generate more traffic to all three sites.

[www.bvilleloop.com](http://www.bvilleloop.com)

### Stage 1: Establish the Brownsville Business and Community Portal Website to Speak in a Unified Voice about Ocean Hill-Brownsville

Brownsville Works! is tasked with creating a stronger sense of community across all of Ocean Hill-Brownsville through promoting placemaking events and economic development programs. The Brownsville Business and Community Portal will assist in building a base of support in Ocean Hill-Brownsville by publicizing the economic and community-building activities of the non-profit. This is a crucial first step in establishing a presence in the community and actively engaging stakeholders. The Brownsville Business and Community Portal will serve as the outward facing presence of Brownsville Works! until a physical incubator space is established in the long-term. The Portal will be the one-stop shop for businesses seeking improvement strategies; individuals seeking workforce development opportunities; and individuals who are looking to formalize their business. The Portal will also promote other strategies in the Brownsville Works! plan; advertise community placemaking events; spotlight important historical assets; inform the public about infrastructure improvement projects; and provide a marketing tool for businesses participating in the Pop-Up Network.

#### *Brownsville Business and Community Portal Website*

Having a strong online presence through a website and social networking is a vital component of community out-

reach in today's digital age and can be a strategic tool in moving programs and initiatives forward. Currently, there is no central online presence in the Brownsville Community. While the Pitkin Avenue Business Improvement District has a website catering to business needs and the Brownsville Partnership has a website catering to resident needs, there is no online venue that bridges the economic and social spheres. The results are two poorly trafficked websites. In order for Brownsville stakeholders to begin to speak in a unified voice, they need to have a shared venue for sharing information. The Brownsville Business and Community Portal will serve this central function.

The long-term goal of the website would be to serve as the premier venue for crowd-sourced information about Brownsville that caters to both the business community and local residents. We recognize that many Ocean Hill-Brownsville residents do not have access to the internet on a home computer, however, and therefore recommend that the website be easily viewed with a mobile phone and linked to Facebook, to reach as many stakeholders as possible. The Brownsville Business and Community Portal should also have printed materials associated with it that can be passed out at community meetings and around the neighborhood to cater to the older generation as well that tends to be less internet-savvy.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>3</sup>Interview with Chanel Halliburton, CB 16 member

## Stage 2: Formalize Organizational Structure and Establish a Track Record

Upon successful formation and registration with the New York State Charities Bureau<sup>4</sup> as a 501(c)(3) and establishing a presence in the community through the Brownsville Business and Community Portal, it will be important to build out the staff and leadership of Brownsville Works!. Formalizing the organizational structure and establishing a solid financial history will increase the efficacy of the mission to revitalize Ocean Hill-Brownsville. This will also open the doors to foundation and government funding, and attract people with the skills and passion needed to effectively accomplish the goals laid out in this plan.

Ocean Hill-Brownsville is fortunate to be located in the non-profit resource rich city of New York. In part due to this high level of saturation, several organizations exist to develop organizational leadership, both staff and board, across the city. For a listing of city government and non-profit assistance programs groups taking this work on, as well as case study organizations, please see the appendix.

Expertise in community-based revitalization of low and moderate-income communities as well as knowledge of local history, and leadership within Ocean Hill-Brownsville will be indispensable qualities for those leading Brownsville Works!. A full-time Executive Director of Brownsville Works! that will serve as the public 'face' of the organization, manage the board of directors, and coordinate programs, will be necessary to get the organization up and running beyond a volunteer-led capacity. Brownsville Works! should actively strive to expand beyond a volunteer/grass-root initiated campaigns, and actively take on larger goals such as attracting workforce development programs or gaining support for infrastructure improvements. As many of the goals in the plan are intrinsically linked with current projects by members of the Community Board 16 Economic Development Committee (CB 16 EDC), it would be appropriate to suggest that initially the Executive Director would have experience working with members of the Ocean-Hill Brownsville or a similar community and a willingness to partner closely with the CB16 EDC.

In its first years of running, and hopefully no longer, the capacity for the Board of Directors will need to be significant to activate the organization into full function. For this reason, it is essential that the members of the initial Board of Directors for Brownsville Works! understand that this will be a voting and working Board. The Board should be made up of a mix of people with the same expertise expectations as those set out for the Executive Director. This should lead to a diverse Board of Directors in terms of race, class, gender, and experience. Several models for Board fundraising exist and it is essential that the Board select the appropriate model to ensure the inclusion of all its members to feel they individually and collectively have a stake in the organization's financial goals, regardless of a single member's ability

<sup>4</sup>[http://www.charitiesnys.com/charindex\\_new.jsp](http://www.charitiesnys.com/charindex_new.jsp)

to give.<sup>5</sup> For this reason, it may be more fitting to set individual goals for each member based on a combination of their individual giving and asking capacities.

As the organization is able to grow further from a single staff member, prioritizing additional hiring should be decided under the purview of the Board working with the Executive Director. A Community Organizer, perhaps in the form of an AmeriCorps VISTA<sup>6</sup> volunteer, may be wise both in terms of staff and budget, to consider. Given this report's findings, based on community outreach and interviews, of significant segmentation across groups in Ocean Hill-Brownsville, the role of a community organizer or organizers is crucial to continuously understand the needs of those in the community, while connecting residents with the correct services and agencies to meet their needs.<sup>7</sup> Other staff members to consider should include the areas of Development (fundraising), programming, government liaison, and communications/media relations. Each of these functions corresponds to objectives we have laid out previously in our plan and would be carried out initially by the board and volunteers, then later by paid staff as the organization is able to expand its funding base, reducing the board responsibilities to a governing and fiduciary body.

## Stage 3: Establish a Business Incubator

Establishing a physical headquarters and business incubator space near the intersection of Pitkin and Rockaway Avenues would be a monumental accomplishment that would radically improve the conditions for business and community development in Ocean Hill-Brownsville. New York City has been using incubator spaces throughout the city as a means to stimulate local economies and to provide opportunities for people, allowing them to experiment with and refine their business strategies without the financial exposure of opening their own stores. The New York City Economic Development Corporation has been successfully using this model across the city; Lower Manhattan, South Bronx, and Harlem.<sup>8</sup> Most of these incubators support tech start-ups and freelance professionals, however some incubators, such as the Hot Bread Kitchen in East Harlem, provide opportunities for people wishing to formalize their food production businesses. It is important to acknowledge that there is no one model, and all successful incubators have been tailored to the demographic and economic profiles of the area and industry they service.

Ocean Hill-Brownsville could have such an incubator space to provide cultural and economic entrepreneurs with the support they need to undertake the types of establishments

<sup>5</sup>Roth, Stephanie and Klein, Kim (2011, 6th edition). The Board of Directors. Oakland, California: Chardon Press, Publication of Grassroots Fundraising Journal.

<sup>6</sup>AmeriCorps. Overview - For Organizations. In Corporation for National and Community Service. Retrieved January 2012, from [http://www.americorps.gov/for\\_organizations/overview/index.asp](http://www.americorps.gov/for_organizations/overview/index.asp)

<sup>7</sup>Kahn, Si. (2010) Creative Community Organizing. San Francisco: Berrett-Koehler.

<sup>8</sup>NEW YORK CITY ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION. Incubators and Workspaces. In NYCEDC. Retrieved December 2011, from <http://www.nycedc.com/service/incubators-workspaces>

that people want in Ocean Hill-Brownsville. Using extensive surveys, economic base analysis, and market research, ideal candidates could be selected to provide unmet needs (see the Analysis appendix). This would keep money in Brownsville and promote the area as a complete economic district, while giving people the support and opportunity they need to experience upward mobility. Considering that most other non-profits in the community are focused on providing health and social services (which are equally valuable), and that city economic development strategies have largely ignored this area, Brownsville Works! may be the ideal candidate to take on this effort.

The long-term vision is for Brownsville Works! to occupy an opportunity site in Brownsville along Pitkin or Rockaway Avenues to serve as a community anchor for business and community development by incubating small businesses. Businesses located in the incubator will gather the necessary skills needed to establish themselves in the community. Not only will this space offer storefront, office, and work space for businesses trying to establish themselves in Ocean Hill-Brownsville, it will serve as space in which targeted workforce development trainings can happen (as detailed in the section below).

Providing a physical space will reinforce Brownsville Works! presence and commitment to the neighborhood. Physically embodying the functions of the Brownsville Business and Community Portal will further position Brownsville Works! as the one stop location for business and community development programs addressing the core challenges the neighborhood faces. A variety of funding opportunities exist to support the undertaking of renovations and to partake in unique ownership arrangements. For example, many arts and non-profit institutions are granted occupancy in city-owned properties with the understanding that the occupants will serve a public need in perpetuity. These

agreements can be structured into restrictive deeds or into the certificate of occupancy. While the details of these arrangements are beyond the scope of this report, and largely contingent upon the proven track record of an organization, many non-profits and arts organizations have successfully taken ownership of vacant city owned properties by building in restrictive covenants into property deeds to ensure that the building will perpetually serve the public need.

One particularly successful incubator model is the nonprofit organization incubator. These are shared mission-driven office spaces that provide programs of support and much needed space for organizations to establish themselves and continue to grow. In urban areas, such systems of structural support and the ability to provide offices at a more affordable rate through subsidies and communal spaces are both practical and efficient. The scarcity of space in large metropolitan areas has led to a trend in communal working spaces. Started by artists and freelancers and moving to technology firms, communal office spaces now exist for a myriad of industries. Brownsville has little access to capital and a great need for entrepreneurs, and could benefit from such a space. An incubator space could provide the flexibility to meet a diverse set of challenges; to weather uncertain economic climates; and to lower and share the risk associated with such ventures.

Within this model, Brownsville Works! would serve as the manager of the space and would work to conduct entrepreneurial trainings in the establishment. Utilizing funding from the city and foundations, as well as partnering with the Department of Small Business Services, would offer Brownsville Works! capacity-building consulting, stipends, and access to business networks. There is an array of examples of best practices in nonprofit business incubators listed in the appendix.

## Best Practices - Business Incubator

### Hot Bread Kitchen in East Harlem



[www.hotbreadkitchen.org](http://www.hotbreadkitchen.org)

# 2 COORDINATE WORKFORCE AND BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT STRATEGIES

Coordinating business, entrepreneurial, and workforce development strategies is key to sustained economic development in Brownsville. Through the strengthening of business networks, fostering entrepreneurial development opportunities, and creating a well-trained and well-paid workforce, a vibrant business climate and thereby an increased tax base can emerge in Brownsville. These conditions will yield stable, long-lasting economic development.

This section identifies business, entrepreneurial, and workforce development strategies that Brownsville Works! can pursue in order to foster a stronger business climate. In terms of workforce and entrepreneurial development, the initial strategies will focus on disseminating information

opment, this strategy will move Brownsville toward a higher rate of business success and openings.

Strengthening the business network and the relationships between customers and merchants and attracting more businesses to Brownsville are the other key components to improving Brownsville's business climate. Through a newsletter and pilot programs to improve the shopping experience in the short-term, a strategic marketing plan in the medium-term and a business incubator in the long-term, Brownsville Works! can foster a more favorable business environment and an improved shopping culture in Ocean Hill-Brownsville.

## Our Strategies

### 1. Strengthen Business Network

- A. Create strategic marketing plan for Pitkin and Rockaway Avenues
- B. Foster pilot programs to improve the shopping experience and merchant-customer relations
- C. Pitkin Avenue BID Newsletter

### 2. Foster Entrepreneurial Development

- A. Tax incentives for small businesses
- B. SBS Entrepreneurial trainings and MWBE Certifications
- C. Micro-lending
- D. Informal Business Support

### 3. Create a Well-Trained and Well-Paid Workforce

- A. Promote local hiring
- B. Women
- C. Parolees
- D. Youth

about existing trainings and programs throughout New York City that Brownsville residents can take advantage of. As Brownsville Works!' capacity increases, the recommended long-term strategy will be to conduct specialized workforce and entrepreneurial development training programs in Brownsville. In terms of workforce development, this will move Brownsville towards the ultimate goal of increasing the number of high-skill high-wage jobs for residents at the greatest disadvantage in the current job market: youth, women, and parolees. In regards to entrepreneurial devel-

## Strategy 1: Strengthen Existing Business Network

The initial strategy is for Brownsville Works! to partner with the Pitkin Avenue Business Improvement District to attract new entrepreneurs to the area, improve the merchant and customer relations, and improve connectivity with and among the business network.

### A. Create a strategic marketing plan for Rockaway and Pitkin Avenues

The Pitkin Avenue Business Improvement District (BID), founded in 1996, has worked to improve the sanitation, security, and streetscape conditions of Pitkin Avenue and initiated placemaking and marketing campaigns for the retail corridor.<sup>1</sup> The BID is the only entity currently actively involved in improving business conditions in Brownsville, aside from the Community Board 16 Economic Development Committee. The BID also serves as an online space for community events, information about existing and available retail properties, and Brownsville history. Despite the BID's efforts, however, it is currently the lowest funded BID in the city, due to a small tax base. The BID has a great need for additional funding and expanded programming. In this strategy, we look to the BID as an ally in creating a strategic marketing plan for Pitkin Avenue and suggest potential funding streams for the BID, as well.

As discussed previously, one of the key challenges Brownsville faces is a poor reputation due to concerns regarding

<sup>1</sup> Pitkin Avenue BID website, [http://www.pitkinbid.org/About\\_Us.php](http://www.pitkinbid.org/About_Us.php)

crime and safety. Thus, to boost retail attraction in Brownsville a strategic marketing plan for entrepreneurs that seeks to improve Brownsville's public image is necessary.

In August of 2010, using funds from the New York City Department of Small Business Services' Avenue NYC program, the BID engaged the JGSC Group to conduct a market analysis and consumer survey of Pitkin Avenue. No strategic marketing materials came out of this analysis, however. For the BID to move forward with marketing the corridor, we recommend that they apply for additional Avenue NYC funds to engage the JGSC Group in completion of a marketing brochure and website redesign that can showcase Pitkin Avenue's assets and opportunities.

In 2011, the Women's Housing and Economic Development Corporation (WHEDco), an organization in the Bronx, used Avenue NYC funds and worked with JGSC to develop such a marketing brochure for the Southern Blvd. Merchants Association. The brochure provides attractive images of the retail corridor, a map of available properties, details of the unmet demand in various retail sectors, and a map of destinations and new developments in the half- and one-mile areas surrounding the corridor. This three-page brochure communicates the essential information that a prospective entrepreneur requires in an attractive and easily digestible format.

Once such information exists in a more succinct and well designed form, it could also be incorporated into the BID website. Currently, the BID website contains the basic information that existing and potential business owners as well as customers need. However, the website lacks robust marketing information for potential retailers, coordination with community groups, and connection to social networking sites. The BID should look to the Southern Blvd. Merchants Association's website for relevant ideas about design and content. While the Southern Blvd. Merchants Association's easy to navigate website can be instructive to the BID in many respects, their marketing of available retail space is especially notable. Their website has an interactive map with available retail space listings and clear information regarding how to set up a tour and acquire the relevant mar-

ket data for the area, all integrated with social networking utilities. This user-friendly approach results in more rapid dissemination of critical information and, ultimately, more success in attracting new businesses.

## Pilot Program to keep stores open later

Today, stores in Brownsville close at sundown, and, as many of the residents we interviewed said, it is hard to find anything open after 7pm. In addition, 90% of merchants we surveyed cited safety as "very important" to their business success. Extending store hours would satisfy an unmet need for evening retail as well as create safer retail corridors overall. Evening shopping would automatically lead to a better lit and more well-trafficked pedestrian environment that would increase safety of the retail corridors and result in enhance the customer base.<sup>1</sup>

In that regard, we recommend that the BID communicate the advantages of extended store hours to merchants and spearhead a short-term pilot program to do so. The pilot program would be a great way to energize the business community around a risk-free way to try out a new business practice. If started in the summer, the program could be kicked-off with a block party involving music, food, and other activities to publicize it, potentially in Zion Triangle, the plaza that the BID has partnered with the DOT to redesign. This could be followed by a series of public events throughout the summer to build and maintain engagement in the pilot program.

<sup>1</sup> Jane Jacobs, *Death and Life of Great American Cities*

## B. Business-Customer Relations

The customer survey indicated that 60% of Brownsville residents do all of their major shopping outside of the neighborhood, primarily due to the poor quality of goods and the lack of retail diversity in Brownsville. Through stakeholder interviews, however, it became evident that tense relationships between merchants and customers in Brownsville also contribute significantly to the customer drain.

The high security present in the Brownsville shopping experience manifests through bag checks; security personnel; glass barriers; and, bells shoppers must ring to enter stores. In addition, anecdotes from several interviews with merchants and residents indicate high levels of suspicion on the part of merchants regarding customers. One Brownsville resident reported that she is routinely followed around while shopping at the bodega that she visits several times a week. These tensions, coupled with non-existent return policies that signify a lack of trust, steer customers elsewhere.

## On Southern Boulevard

### AND THE WINNERS ARE...

**PRESIDENT:**

Jebel Ceasay  
JB Collection Clothing  
1085 Southern Boulevard


**VICE PRESIDENT:**

Abdou Yaya  
YA-RABEE Inc.  
1158 Southern Boulevard


**SECRETARY:**

Olivia Vasquez  
Dunkin' Donuts  
1040 Westchester Avenue


**TREASURER:**

Abraham Leiva  
American Boulevard Auto  
Supply  
911 Jennings Street @  
Southern Boulevard



#### New Southern Boulevard Board Holds its First Officers Meeting

Two of the four new Southern Boulevard Merchant Association Officers had a lively first meeting on Wednesday June 29th. They discussed their roles and brainstormed ideas for improving Southern Boulevard.

To better serve Southern Boulevard merchants and shoppers, the new officers want to meet with you to understand your concerns and identify ways to deal with them. Look out for the new Merchant Officers as they visit businesses along Southern Boulevard in the next few weeks. Don't forget to tell them what you would like to see on Southern Blvd. You can also make plans with them at the next **Merchant Meeting on July 18th, 6-7pm, 1330 Intervale Ave.**

Save the Date for the Next Southern Boulevard Merchant Meeting,  
**MONDAY, July 18th, 2011**  
from 6:00-7:00 PM at 1330 Intervale Ave  
(b/w Freeman & Jennings Streets)

#### Why Should You Attend?

- Come out and meet the **New Southern Boulevard Merchant Association Officers**
- Find out what Business Owners are saying about Southern Blvd. and what it means for Residents/Shoppers
- Help plan the next Southern Boulevard **Sale** and get the full **District Needs Survey Report**
- NYC agencies, area businesses, property owners, brokers, community organizations, clergy, and residents/shoppers are **all invited!**



Want to find out more? Contact WHEdco's Director of Community Development Kerry A. McLain  
P: 718.839.1189 or e-mail [kcovdev@whedco.org](mailto:kcovdev@whedco.org)  
Visit us at [www.southernblvd.org](http://www.southernblvd.org) & [www.whedco.org](http://www.whedco.org)



## On Southern Boulevard

### Con Edison Brings the Small Business Energy Efficiency Program to Southern Boulevard!

On May 10<sup>th</sup> and May 19<sup>th</sup> 2011, WHEdco brought Con Edison to Southern Boulevard to carry out FREE energy surveys of area businesses and non-profits. 27 businesses participated! They found out what energy conservation measures they should implement to save money on their utility bills. Each business received a free, individualized energy report from Con Edison, and those who participate in the program will have 70% of their energy upgrades paid for by Con Edison. Want to cut your business' or non-profit's energy bills? Call Akila Shenoy at WHEdco at 718-839-1197 for your free energy survey!

#### WHEdco holds Southern Boulevard "Rolling up the Gates" Retail Space Tour

WHEdco held its Second Annual "Rolling up the Gates" tour on Southern Boulevard on **Wednesday, June 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2011**. Nine property owners/brokers with retail space on Southern Boulevard rolled up their gates for businesses considering moving to the area.

Attendees were greeted by new Southern Boulevard Merchant Association President, Jebel Ceasay, of JB Collection Clothing at 1085 Southern Boulevard. They networked with current business owners about the neighborhood, got market data, viewed the launch of [www.southernblvd.org](http://www.southernblvd.org), and then took the much-anticipated retail space tour.

We thank Da Bakery owners Anthony & Sandro for hosting the event reception for the second year! See their fashions at 1700 Southern Boulevard or [www.dabakeryshop.com](http://www.dabakeryshop.com). Thanks to all the property owners/brokers who 'rolled up their gates' for businesses interested in moving to the area.

Looking for prime retail space in one of NYC's fastest growing neighborhoods? Call WHEdco at 718-839-1189 for more.

#### WHEdco and Merchants Launch NEW District Website, [www.southernblvd.org](http://www.southernblvd.org)

[www.southernblvd.org](http://www.southernblvd.org) is now LIVE! Find out about our district's rich history, fun family-friendly activities, music events, stores and restaurants, and business opportunities!



Prime Southern Boulevard Retail Spaces for electronics/cell phones, clothing, shoes, grocery, specialty food, furniture, health & personal care, restaurants, and office uses.



Want to find out more? Contact WHEdco's Director of Community Development Kerry A. McLain  
P: 718.839.1189 or e-mail [kcovdev@whedco.org](mailto:kcovdev@whedco.org)  
Visit us at [www.southernblvd.org](http://www.southernblvd.org) & [www.whedco.org](http://www.whedco.org)



### Southern Boulevard Merchants Association Newsletter

Furthermore, according to our merchant survey, only 10% of Brownsville business owners are local residents, further contributing to the disconnect between residents and merchants. As outsiders, the merchant community has little incentive to spearhead community improvement efforts in Brownsville. The BID must, therefore, create opportunities for merchants to get involved with each other and the community-at-large. In order to foster a stronger business network, constructive relationship between customers and business owners with the aim of creating a more amenable shopping environment, and increasing overall sales in Brownsville, we propose pilot initiatives to:

- keep stores open later;
- implement merchandise return policies;
- allow people to keep their bags when they enter stores;
- and, remove glass from cashiers' areas.

Aside from removing glass barriers, all of these programs could be initiated immediately, at little to no cost to merchants. Making these initial changes to the shopping experience in the short-term would allow merchants to test their effectiveness. Many merchants expressed that is that they would not want to be the first, or the only, store to pilot these programs. By jointly initiating a pilot program, there would be power in numbers, as several merchants would make the same change simultaneously. This would also generate significant public attention around changes being made in the Brownsville shopping environment and would provide a public relations opportunity for the BID. Thus, such a campaign would have potential benefit to customers, merchants, and the BID.

### C. Pitkin Avenue Newsletter

In order for the BID's activities to succeed, it will be necessary to boost morale and connectivity among merchants. As mentioned previously, Brownsville merchants are not locals and therefore have little invested in the community. This lack of investment strains their relationship with both customers and other business owners. According to the merchant survey, only 10% of merchants were part of trade organizations or chambers of commerce, and only two merchants attended the most recent annual BID meeting. For meaningful change to occur on Brownsville's retail corridors there must be better channels of communication among the merchants. The aforementioned website we have recommended should be accompanied by a BID-sponsored newsletter.

The Southern Blvd. Merchants Association in the Bronx, in collaboration with the Women's Housing and Economic Development Corporation, publishes a quarterly newsletter, available online and in hard copy, that provides information on improvements or positive initiatives happening along the retail corridor; merchant meetings; and any updates from officers of the merchants association.<sup>2</sup> This newsletter format can be viewed as a best practice to emulate.

<sup>2</sup> [http://www.whedco.org/images/whedco/Communitydevelopment/southernblvdnewsletter\\_7.11.pdf](http://www.whedco.org/images/whedco/Communitydevelopment/southernblvdnewsletter_7.11.pdf)

## Strategy 2: Foster Entrepreneurial Development

Currently, Brownsville has a 13% retail vacancy rate,<sup>3</sup> and the majority of Pitkin Avenue and Rockaway Avenue business owners surveyed indicated that sales have significantly declined in the past five years. These trends echo citywide and national trends of recession and difficulty for small businesses. According to the U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA), 70% of small businesses only survive two years, and 51% only survive five years.<sup>4</sup> New businesses fail most often due to lack of business and marketing skills, insufficient funding, and debt.<sup>5</sup> In that regard, our surveys indicate that only 10% of Brownsville businesses participate in government funded business assistance programs.<sup>6</sup> Various studies indicate that entrepreneurial assistance and training markedly improve the rate at which entrepreneurs succeed in starting-up businesses.<sup>7</sup> To this end, we have identified several entrepreneurial development and support programs currently offered in the city that Brownsville Works! can direct clients to in the short-term and seek to emulate in the long-term.

### A. Entrepreneurial trainings and MWBE Certifications

The New York City Department of Small Business Services (SBS) and the Brooklyn Public Library Business and Career branch offer a number of services for business owners and people interested in starting a business, as well as for business certifications that provide new opportunities and preferred hiring. We recommend that these programs be publicized by Brownsville Works! or the BID through pamphlets and on their respective websites. See appendix for a copy of the pamphlet designed to with information about such programs.

#### *Entrepreneurial Training*

Entrepreneurial training programs have the capacity to streamline a business' finances, foster long-term business stability, encourage business expansion, and equip potential entrepreneurs with the skills necessary to make a business plan. One example of training for new entrepreneurs is the FastTrac New Venture, a seven-session classroom-based "crash course" that helps entrepreneurs determine the viability of their business concepts and develop start-up strategies for their businesses.<sup>8</sup> The Brooklyn Library Business and Career Branch also offers recurring trainings for new entrepreneurs as well as an annual Business Start-Up competition, PowerUp!, with entrepreneurial development workshops for all applicants and a \$15,000 prize for the winner.<sup>9</sup> In terms of strengthening existing businesses, SBS

3 See land use survey results in appendix

4 Small Business Administration, Survey

5 msnbc article, <http://www.passionforbusiness.com/blog/do-50-percent-of-small-businesses-really-fail/>

6 See appendix for business owner survey results

7 Bartik, Economic Development Strategies, 26

8 New York City Department of Small Business Services, Fast Trak Growth Venture, [http://www.nyc.gov/html/sbs/nycbiz/html/summary/course\\_catalog.shtml#ftnv](http://www.nyc.gov/html/sbs/nycbiz/html/summary/course_catalog.shtml#ftnv)

9 <http://www.brooklynpubliclibrary.org/locations/business/powerup>

offers FastTrac Growth Venture, an eight-session training course that will teach existing business owners how to review and reshape their business models in order to meet the current economic challenges,<sup>10</sup> and the Brooklyn Public Library Business and Career branch in downtown Brooklyn offers entrepreneurs free one-on-one coaching meetings with business experts.<sup>11</sup>

#### *Certifications*

SBS certifications for women and minority-owned businesses, construction-related businesses, emerging businesses, and locally-owned businesses offer entrepreneurs several benefits.<sup>12</sup> Certified businesses are automatically placed on the City's Online Directory of Certified Firms, which gives them preferred access to government contracting opportunities, technical assistance, and networking events. It also allows them to enroll in "Strategic Steps for Growth," a 9-month business management program, and the Corporate Alliance Program, an initiative that gives certified business opportunities to receive one-on-one coaching, access to corporate contracts, and corporate skills trainings.

These certifications should also be used as a means to attract businesses to Brownsville and incentivize businesses to hire locally. The Locally-Based Enterprise Certification, for example, is available to individuals who conduct at least 25% of their businesses in economically deprived areas of the city or employ 25% disadvantaged persons.<sup>13</sup> By locating in Brownsville and hiring locals, a business could qualify for certification and reap the benefits associated with it.

If publicized widely and strategically by the BID and Brownsville Works! in the short-term, these free trainings and certifications could immediately bolster the Brownsville business community's resilience and nurture new businesses. In the medium-term, Brownsville Works! should aim to coordinate with SBS, the Brooklyn Public Library, and other agencies offering free and low cost business assistance to hold workshops in Brownsville, to make the workshops more immediate and accessible to a higher number of Brownsville residents. In the long-term, Brownsville Works! should strive to build the capacity to spearhead such programs on its own.

### B. Micro-lending

Micro-lending provides the opportunity for business owners or entrepreneurs to access capital to make improvements to their business facilities, or to gain start-up capital to open a business. Organizations such as Project Enterprise,<sup>14</sup> a non-profit that serves businesses in New York City's under-resourced communities by providing micro loans, business development services, and networking opportunities and

10 New York City Department of Small Business Services, Fast Trak Growth Venture, [http://www.nyc.gov/html/sbs/nycbiz/html/summary/course\\_catalog.shtml#ftgv](http://www.nyc.gov/html/sbs/nycbiz/html/summary/course_catalog.shtml#ftgv)

11 <http://www.brooklynpubliclibrary.org/locations/business/score>

12 <http://www.nyc.gov/html/sbs/html/procurement/mwbe.shtml>

13 [http://council.nyc.gov/d28/html/members/Locally\\_Based\\_Enterprise\\_Program\\_SBS.pdf](http://council.nyc.gov/d28/html/members/Locally_Based_Enterprise_Program_SBS.pdf)

14 <http://www.projectenterprise.org/About/mission.html>

Accion USA,<sup>15</sup> a non-profit lender that caters to low-to-moderate income businesses, would be ideal partners for Brownsville Works!. Brownsville Works! should disseminate information about these organizations in the short-term and form relationships with them in the medium and long-term in order to facilitate the easy acquisition of loans for Brownsville entrepreneurs.

### C. Formalizing Informal Businesses

Informality is another barrier to successful entrepreneurship in low-income neighborhoods such as Brownsville. Keeping a business informal, or unregulated, offers entrepreneurs the opportunity to keep their income hidden, sell at competitive price points, and avoid the costs of compliance with regulation.<sup>16</sup> Yet, by maintaining informal status, informal businesses are not eligible for many of the benefits that accompany formality: pensions; eligibility to collect social security; union membership and labor protections; health, unemployment, and life insurance; and access to funding streams.<sup>17</sup>

Based on the results of the interviews with Brownsville residents, the child-care sector appears to have the highest rate of informality in Community District 16. Brownsville Works! should aim to assist those interested in formalizing their childcare businesses by connecting them with the Department of Health and Mental Hygiene, the Day Care Council of New York, and WHEDco. For a list of resources, see the appendix.

### Strategy 3: Create a Well-trained and Well-Paid Workforce

The 14% unemployment rate<sup>18</sup> in Ocean Hill-Brownsville, almost twice the city and borough-wide averages, is an enduring concern. In addition, the \$25,000 median income,<sup>19</sup> half the city-wide average, and significantly lower than the borough-wide average, reflects community members' struggles to secure high-paying jobs. These obstacles affect NYCHA residents, youth, women, and parolees, in particular. Although several factors underlying this hardship are beyond the purview of Brownsville Works!, the lack of local hiring and insufficient workforce development opportunities within Community Board 16 can and should be addressed locally, starting immediately.

In terms of incentives to hire locally, in addition to the aforementioned business certification for locally-based business enterprise, there are several financial incentives for businesses to hire NYCHA residents, youth, women, and parolees that Brownsville Works! should educate local business owners about. Regarding workforce development training,

<sup>15</sup> <http://www.accionusa.org/home/small-business-loans/about-us/what-is-accion-usa.aspx>

<sup>16</sup> Logsby et al, Informal Economy Literature Review, Field: Microenterprise Fund for Innovation, Effectiveness, Learning and Dissemination

<sup>17</sup> Ibid

<sup>18</sup> 2009 American Community Survey

<sup>19</sup> Ibid

Brownsville Works! should link local residents to existing programs in the short-term; partner with existing programs to bring them to Brownsville in the medium term; and establish specialized workforce development trainings specifically catering to Brownsville residents in the long-term. Ultimately, the conflation of improved hiring practices and increased job readiness should create many more opportunities for high-skill, high-wage local jobs. Furthermore, once these programs successfully increase employment among vulnerable populations and raise the wages earned by local residents, more disposable income will be spent within Ocean Hill-Brownsville, stimulating the local economy and generating more opportunities for residents overall.

### A. Promote local hiring through tax incentives

Encouraging local hiring is essential to combating issues of poverty and delinquency. Although the local tax base benefits from increased employment, it is not enough to merely create jobs; ensuring that new positions go to local residents is key to building a virtuous cycle whereby newly earned income is to be spent within the community. Studies show that creation of new jobs in a particular area does not necessarily correlate with local residents securing employment through newly created jobs.<sup>20</sup> The dynamic between job creation and local employment is often poorly understood by policy makers and is typically more geared towards ensuring regional competition, not local hiring.

Research demonstrates that, initially, upwards of 50% of newly created jobs go to non-local residents, while, after 5 years, this increases to 60-90%.<sup>21</sup> This can be addressed through tax incentives and subsidies for local hiring. Initially, such incentives can be publicized within Community Board 16 through a pamphlet, a web presence, and announcements at community meetings. Once Brownsville Works! capacity increases, communicating with business owners about available tax incentives, through door-to-door canvassing or organizing a merchant meeting in partnership with the BID, would be an ideal way to directly address any questions or concerns business owners have. Below are a few examples of incentives to be capitalized on:

#### *The Locally-Based Enterprise Certification*

Mentioned previously, the locally-based enterprise certification is available to individuals who conduct at least 25% of their businesses in economically deprived areas of the city or employ 25% disadvantaged persons.<sup>22</sup> By locating in Brownsville and hiring locals, a business could qualify for certification and reap the benefits associated with it. See Strategy 2A Entrepreneurial Trainings and MWBE Certifications for more information about the benefits associated with certification programs.

<sup>20</sup> Timothy J. Bartik, "Who Benefits from Local Job Growth, Migrants or the Original Residents?" *Regional Studies*, (September 1993), pp. 297-311.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid

<sup>22</sup> [http://council.nyc.gov/d28/html/members/Locally\\_Based\\_Enterprise\\_Program\\_SBS.pdf](http://council.nyc.gov/d28/html/members/Locally_Based_Enterprise_Program_SBS.pdf)

## Home-Based Childcare Micro-Enterprise Network (WHEDCo)

WHEDCo founded the Home-Based Childcare Microenterprise Network, which trains, licenses and provides professional support for home-based childcare providers at 22 locations throughout the 5 boroughs of New York City. The goal of the home based childcare improvement project is to help childcare providers improve the quality of their services; increase their revenues; and create their own home-based childcare business. The 15-year old Home-Based childcare network reaches 45,000 unlicensed childcare providers a year, and offers trainings in the following subject areas:

- Child Development
- Health and Safety
- Nutrition
- Family Day Care Regulations
- Marketing
- Contracts and Policies
- Accounting and Taxes
- Liability Insurance



[www.whedco.org](http://www.whedco.org)

### *The Federal Working Opportunity Tax Credit*

The Working Opportunity Tax Credit (WOTC) offers financial incentives to hire 9 different categories of vulnerable populations. Fortunately, all of the demographic groups we identified as being at high risk for unemployment in Ocean Hill-Brownsville are covered by the WOTC. Employers can receive a \$2,400 tax credit for a new adult hire and a \$1,200 tax credit for each summer youth hire. Furthermore, ex-felons, Temporary Assistance to Needy Families recipients, and food stamp recipients all qualify for federal working opportunity tax credits as well. Most importantly, the application process for WOTC involves minimal paperwork and business owners can hire as many employees that qualify as they would like.<sup>23</sup>

### *The New York State Youth Works Program*

The Youth Works program run by the New York State Department of Labor is designed to create employment opportunities for youth who may face challenges in the job market. It caters to at-risk youth who have not received a high school diploma or a General Equivalency Diploma (GED); have served time in jail; or have children. The program has three components. The first component is a tax credit for businesses in good legal standing, which can provide up to \$4,000 per youth hired.<sup>24</sup> The youth that are

<sup>23</sup> [http://www.doleta.gov/business/incentives/opptax/PDF/WOTC\\_Fact\\_Sheet.pdf](http://www.doleta.gov/business/incentives/opptax/PDF/WOTC_Fact_Sheet.pdf)

<sup>24</sup> <http://www.labor.ny.gov/formsdocs/factsheets/pdfs/P429.pdf>

hired must be certified in this program in order to be eligible. The second component of the program is job training support, including the provision of stipends to people who are in training and looking for work. This program can provide up to \$900 in benefits: \$300 per month for up to two months while looking for work, and additional \$300 upon beginning a new job. Finally, organizations that assist in job placements and occupational training are eligible for funding of up to \$200,000. Members of Community Board 16 have unsuccessfully tried to approach the business community in the past to hire youth for summer jobs. Returning to the business community with information about the Youth Works Program and Working Opportunity Tax Credits should result in a more favorable outcome for youth employment.

### **B. Cultivate high quality jobs through workforce development training**

The term “workforce development” is defined by Jacobs and Hawley as “the coordination of public and private sector policies and programs that provides individuals with the opportunity for a sustainable livelihood and helps organizations achieve exemplary goals, consistent with the societal context.”<sup>25</sup> This includes vocational programs, public assistance programs, and vocational training targeting specific groups of people. Workforce development will increase job

<sup>25</sup> Bartik, Timothy J. (1995). *Economic Development Strategies* Upjohn Institute Staff Working Paper 95-33. Kalamazoo, Michigan. p.24

readiness through specialized skills, making NYCHA residents, youth, women, and parolees more attractive to employers.

One particular challenge residents in Brownsville face is access; although many workforce development trainings exist in Brooklyn, few training programs are located in Ocean Hill-Brownsville. As such, while we recommend that Brownsville Works! disseminate information about existing programs elsewhere in the city initially, they should begin coordinating with the organizations and agencies listed below to offer site-specific trainings in Ocean Hill-Brownsville as soon as possible. Building relationships with these successful organizations will not only create opportunities for residents to connect to existing programs, it will allow Brownsville Works! to learn from these organization's best practices in workforce development, and, ultimately, emulate their programming. We have identified a number of programs below that can best suit the needs of youth, women, and parolees.

*New York City Housing Authority (NYCHA) Workforce Development*

According to the Ocean Hill-Brownsville stakeholders interviewed, NYCHA is the most comprehensive resource for workforce development opportunities in Brownsville. NYCHA in Brownsville currently offers the NYCHA Resident Training Academy (RTA), an 8-week construction and janitorial training and job placement assistance program.<sup>26</sup> While this NYCHA training may be the best option for certain Ocean Hill-Brownsville residents, it is limited to low-wage and low-skill industries and neglects the needs of non-NYCHA residents altogether.

Brownsville Works! should look to some of the NYCHA more

<sup>26</sup> NYCHA. 2012. Resident Employment Services [website] [http://www.nyc.gov/html/nycha/html/community/res\\_employ.shtml](http://www.nyc.gov/html/nycha/html/community/res_employ.shtml)

## NYCHA Green Job Training

In the South Bronx, NYCHA has partnered with the South Bronx Overall Development (SoBRO) to provide a green jobs certification program. These higher paid, higher skill certifications include fields such as occupational safety and health administration, building maintenance, and energy efficiency.<sup>1</sup> SoBRO has also been able to advocate for making this training program available to non-NYCHA residents. We recommend that Brownsville Works! begin conversations with the Brownsville Partnership, a non-profit in Brownsville that works closely with NYCHA, as well as NYCHA itself to discuss how specialized workforce development opportunities, such as the green job program, can be brought to Brownsville.

<sup>1</sup> NYCHA. 2012. Green Jobs Training and Job Placement Assistance. [http://www.nyc.gov/html/nycha/downloads/pdf/sobro\\_greenjobs.pdf](http://www.nyc.gov/html/nycha/downloads/pdf/sobro_greenjobs.pdf)

*SoBRO/NYCHA Green Jobs Training flier*

specialized workforce development programs offered elsewhere in New York City as examples. See side box for more information about NYCHA's green job training in the South Bronx.

*Workforce Development for Women*

Programs specifically catering to the unique workforce needs of women should be a top priority for Brownsville Works!

Nontraditional Employment for Women (NEW) is a training program that prepares women to enter into skilled blue collar work that offers competitive pay and a high level of job security. They prepare women for careers in building and

construction trades, public utilities, railroad and transportation, and green collar jobs. The focus of the organization is to eliminate barriers women often have to gaining this type of employment. They offer several different programs at different times of the day/week and provide a wide variety of educational and hands-on learning opportunities. Graduates of NEW also receive assistance in acquiring an apprenticeship, which is a requirement for obtaining a union position.<sup>27</sup>

### *Youth*

Brownsville's large youth population has a high rate of unemployment and low levels of educational attainment. Moreover, as we discovered through interviews, local merchants have little incentive to hire local youth. While the Youth Works Program and Working Opportunity Tax Credit both provide significant incentives to merchants to hire local youth, these tax credits must be pushed for in conjunction with work readiness programs as well.

The Certified Work Ready Community (ACT), one of the largest educational testing 501(c)(3) organizations in the United States, has propelled its mission to advance education and workplace success to a new level with Certified Work Ready Communities (CWRC). CWRC is a community-based workforce development implementation framework and certificate program that empowers counties and states with actionable data and specific workforce goals. Participating states are leveraging the National Career Readiness Certificate (NCRC), an industry recognized credential issued by ACT that identifies an individual's skills in reading for information, applied math, and locating information. Aimed to drive economic growth, over 1.2 million certificates have been awarded since the NCRC's inception in 2006, the majority of which have been earned in the last two years.<sup>28</sup>

### *Formerly Incarcerated Individuals*

As discussed in the demographics section, Brownsville has the second highest concentration of Million Dollar Blocks in New York City. This translates into a high number of formerly incarcerated individuals in the community, a demographic that is at a great disadvantage in the job market.

One workforce development program that targets formerly incarcerated individuals, the NYC Justice Corps, brings young adults involved with the criminal justice system together with their communities to identify and address unmet community needs. The NYC Justice Corps is a six-month program that incorporates principles of youth development, service learning, workforce development, and prisoner reentry. Corps members begin and proceed through the NYC Justice Corps in a cohort model that promotes leadership development and team building. Beginning at enrollment, the NYC Justice Corps helps members transition from training (1 month), to community benefit project

service (10-14 weeks), and, finally, to internships (minimum of 6 weeks) with the goal of placing Justice Corps graduates in permanent employment and/or educational opportunities.<sup>29</sup> This program has been successful due the incorporation of authentic work experience through the internship component, giving participants exposure to real-world work environments and incentivising them to pursue careers.

Brownsville Works! should publicize this program within Ocean Hill-Brownsville and seek to partner with the Brownsville Community Justice Center,<sup>30</sup> a new community court in Brownsville, which provides alternatives to the criminal justice system.

<sup>27</sup> <http://www.new-nyc.org/index.html>

<sup>28</sup> <http://icw.uschamber.com/promising-practice/act-certified-work-ready-communities>

<sup>29</sup> [www.nycjusticecorps.org](http://www.nycjusticecorps.org).

<sup>30</sup> <http://www.courtinnovation.org/staff/Brownsville%20Community%20Justice%20Center>

# 3 IMPLEMENT A NETWORK OF POP-UP STORES TO REVITALIZE AND CREATE OPPORTUNITY

A strategic deployment of a “pop-up” store network will directly confront the weak climate for economic development by addressing: (1) high rates of storefront vacancy, (2) a poor retail mix, (3) the dearth of local hiring and entrepreneurship, and (4) the disconnected relationship between customer, merchants, and property owners.

## Pop-Up Network

The idea of pop-up retailing was first introduced by Vacant in 1999, a Los Angeles based company that modeled their concept of pop-up retail on their observations of temporary shops in Tokyo that provided limited-edition products to eager consumers.<sup>1</sup> The concept of temporary retail has since become a trend in urban areas<sup>2</sup> and is increasingly becoming a rationalized process for retailers and entrepreneurs looking to test products, create brand buzz, or make a profit with marginal over-head costs.<sup>3</sup>

Non-profits such as the Union Square Main Streets (Somerville, MA) and individuals like property and business owner Alfonso Dominguez and Sarah Filley (Oakland, CA) have experimented and expanded the pop-up concept into an innovative tool for urban intervention.<sup>4</sup> Although the pop-up model as an economic development strategy has undergone a great number of transformations, each unique to specific circumstance, pop-up stores have a number of tested benefits.

Pop-up stores:

- Lower institutional barriers to would be business and cultural entrepreneurs,
- Introduces retail/activity where it is most needed,
- Create a space for visioning,
- Reinforce mutual relationships between the participating stakeholders.

In this report, we envision three stages through which the pop-up network can be implemented to intervene in the built environment and to promote economic development. Separation into three stages best ensures the network's viability and replicability, as well as its potential to build local skill-sets and resources over time.

<sup>1</sup> “About.” [www.govacant.com](http://www.govacant.com).

<sup>2</sup> “Pop-up Retail” [www.trendwatching.com](http://www.trendwatching.com). January 2004.

<sup>3</sup> Gregory, Sean. “Why Pop-up Shops Are Hot,” *Time Magazine Business*. (November 06, 2009): <http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,1940675,00.html>.

<sup>4</sup> Reisman, Alexandra. “Retail Infusion: Pop-Up!” [www.unionsquaremain.org](http://www.unionsquaremain.org). (March 7, 2012). [www.popuphood.com](http://www.popuphood.com).

## Stage 1: Employ and Manage Pop-Up Stores As a Pilot Test

The purpose of the pilot is to build support by stakeholders and to lay the foundation for the Pop-Up Network. This will be done through the formation of a steering committee and establishment of pilot stores. Because the goal of this recommendation is to be long-term and sustainable, careful deliberation should be given to identifying the key stakeholders. Implementation of the pop-up strategy as a pilot program would allow the steering committee to identify the strengths and weaknesses of the group, recognize emerging leadership, and build the much-needed community support that would be required to make this program successful.

## Stage 2: “Scale-Up” The Pilot To A Network

Although the pop-up strategy has been successfully implemented as a tool for economic revitalization, the scale and the scope necessary for the pop-up strategy to jump-start economic and entrepreneurial activities in Ocean Hill-Brownsville has no precedent. Stage two, will be an attempt to “scale-up” the pilot to the management of multiple sites. At this stage it is important to evaluate the success and limitations of the pop-up strategy. Implementing the Pop-up Network will require asking a number of fundamental questions:

- 1) Is the Pop-up Network a desirable tool? If so, how can support be increased?
- 2) Is scaling-up (managing multiple sites) an option given the existing condition and resources?
- 3) What are the funding resources available?

Stage 3: Re-evaluate the Pop-up Network & Explore the possibility of an entrepreneur/business incubator based on experience

It is important to note that the recommendation for the Pop-Up Network is not meant to serve as a substitute for the “organic” development of the retail corridors or to replace or control the market; it is meant to complement them. If relationships between customers/residents and business and property owners improve, the network could be expanded to further cultivate community businesses and entrepreneurialism: a specialized incubator can serve this function.

## Pop-Up Network Opportunity Sites



## Vacant Storefronts Along Belmont Ave



## Pop-Up Network Framework: How to start a Pop-Up Network

The operational framework for implementing the Pop-Up Network will be an agreement of participation between merchants, business owners, community members, and community organizations. This framework has been designed based on the unique challenges facing Ocean Hill-Brownsville and on successful case studies across the country. The goal is to build trust and confidence between the various stakeholders through active collaboration and intervention in the built environment. What follows is a list of six key components that should be carefully considered by any party interested in implementing the Pop-Up Network.

### 1. Identification and Assessment of Sites

For the convenience of the client, six strategic sites of intervention have been identified. The Pop-Up Network Opportunity Sites Map above contains brief description of the sites and suggestions for established boundaries and projects. Each vacant store should be assessed and inventoried to have clear sense of what use would best be compatible to the existing amenities and those that would need to be provided. For instance, what would be the ideal type of establishment in this vacant property? What types of insurance or permits would be needed at this location?

### 2. Identifying Stakeholders and Defining their Roles in the Implementation Process

All participating stakeholders should be identified. They may include but are not limited to:

- Business owners
- Property owners
- Community organizations
- Community members
- Local artists

An examination of relevant case studies indicates that a project of this scope demands a high level of structure and discipline. One way to do this is for the coalition to firmly define the role of each stakeholder through a Community Agreement document. Such a document can help the coalition maintain support and control over their project, mediate internal disputes, and prevent external forces from compromising the goals of the coalition.

### 3. Cultivate External Support

At this critical phase, it is important to develop the support of the political and community leadership (e.g. council members and church leaders). Letters of support can add a much needed weight and leverage to the conversations and implementation of

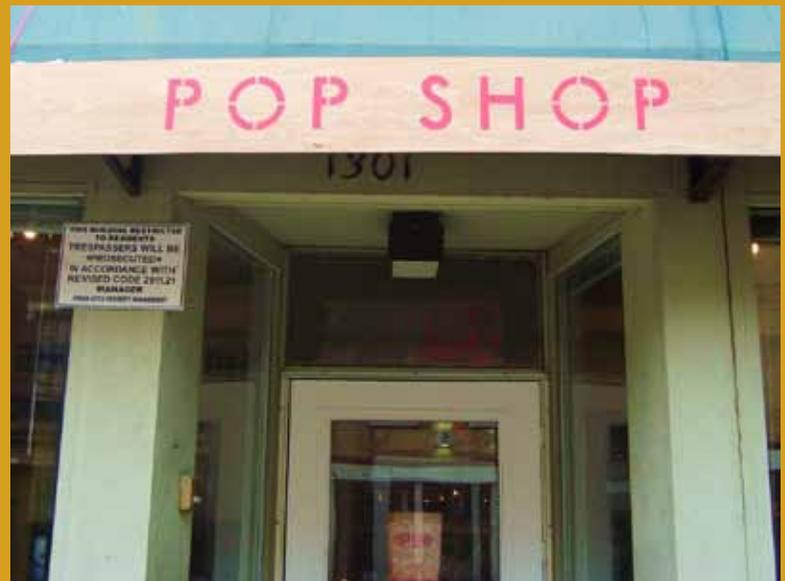
the program. For example, a letter from the local representative may convince a property owner to participate in this process by giving them a sense of security.

### 4. Proposal Requests and Overview

Appendix X provides a sample of the Application used by the Art in Empty Spaces program implemented in Community Board 3 of Manhattan in collaboration with No Longer Empty, an arts organization. This application can serve as a template for the Pop-Up Network. In their assessment of the Art in Empty Spaces program, CB3 identified a number of key points that are essential to improving the participants' experience:<sup>5</sup>

<sup>5</sup>Art in Empty Storefronts Report-Spring 2011.

## Best Practices Cincinnati's Pop Shop



[popshopcincy.blogspot.com](http://popshopcincy.blogspot.com)



Temporary exhibition and education program at 395 Flatbush Avenue Extension in Brooklyn  
Photo: Nicole Bengiveno/The New York Times The New York

- Selected applicants should be notified immediately if they have been chosen, even if the specific space their store will be in has yet to be assigned.
- Detailed logistical information regarding permits, trash collection, and utilities should be provided to applicants.
- Applicants should be given distinct guidelines regarding the limits on use of the space.

#### 5. Resources

In the appendix "Funding Streams" we provide a number of resources that the coalition can access to provide financial support to the Pop-Up Network.

#### 6. Program Assessment

The steering committee will periodically assess the status of its project and offer opportunities for community and stakeholder feedback, identify opportunities for participation, and report to the coalition at predetermined time-marks. This type of record keeping and assessment will build a history and reputation that can be useful in persuading future support and increase a greater access to funding resources. One way this type of "record" keeping can be maintained is through an index of improvements.

# 4 PROMOTE AND SUPPORT STRATEGIC PLACEMAKING INITIATIVES

Ocean Hill-Brownsville is marked by a negative public image. These unfavorable portrayals have a direct impact on local economic activity. This section details a number of placemaking strategies that can be utilized to override these perceptions and actively build a positive image. Placemaking is a multi-faceted approach to design of public spaces that emphasizes public participation and community cohesiveness.<sup>1</sup>

This chapter provides a critical pathway for the Ocean Hill-Brownsville community to transform their neighborhood to reflect their values and hopes for the future. It will require a constant dialogue between all stakeholders and a realignment of existing relationships. The creation of space for dialogue is crucial to the placemaking process.

The plan recommends promoting placemaking as a way to directly confront negative publicity. Recommendations include three strategies: Placemaking events, A Historical

## Our Strategies

### 1. Placemaking by Developing Public Events

- A. Invite community to development a placemaking guide
- B. Organize public events that involve the community participation such as street fairs

### 2. Historical and Cultural Assets Plan

- A. Open House New York annual event
- B. Public Housing Walking Tour
- C. Public Housing Archive Collection

### 3. Shed a New Light on Brownsville

- A. Implement Pedestrian friendly street lighting
- B. Extend store hours for better lit streets
- C. Create an artistic lighting event and plan

Asset Plan, and a Lighting Plan. These strategies not only address key challenges, but seek to leverage the power of historic symbols to help improve Ocean Hill-Brownsville's reputation. Coupled with the Fix Blitz campaign, discussed in recommendation 5, placemaking strategies offer opportunities for participation in rebuilding Ocean Hill-Brownsville's reputation as a progressive and connected community.

<sup>1</sup> Schneekloth Linda and Shibley Robert G. Placemaking The art and Practice of Building a community.

## Strategy 1: Placemaking by Developing Public Events

The Brownsville Works! plan calls for a centralized non-profit organization to be the central force in coordinating economic and community development. This cannot happen without a strong community base that carries out the mission of this organization. To help facilitate the development of this base, Brownsville Works! will coordinate public activities to reactivate underutilized and "dead" public spaces. This strategy has been effective in several municipalities, including Chicago, as seen below.

### A. Initiate a Community Placemaking Process

Creating a placemaking plan tailored to Ocean Hill-Brownsville can serve as an invaluable tool for building community through public space design. It would serve a resource for residents and local advocates during future community planning endeavors. In 2008, Chicago's Metropolitan Planning Council, in collaboration with the non-profit organization, Project for Public Spaces, developed a guide for neighborhood placemaking<sup>2</sup> that the Ocean Hill-Brownsville community can utilize. The 11-step guide seeks to define successful public places and the role that they can play in neighborhood revitalization; provide actionable strategies to facilitate community collaboration; and, offers solutions to place-related challenges. The guide's final objective is a long-term design and management plan. Such a process would heighten public participation in Ocean Hill-Brownsville and, ultimately, provide a deliverable that embodies a unified public vision.

### B. Organize Public Events that Involve Community Participation

Public events should be held in the sites selected for placemaking initiatives to sustain continuous activity on-site and thereby promote the sites as viable public spaces in the eyes of the community. These activities can include public meetings, charrettes, block parties, festivals, or arts events. The Pitkin Avenue BID has been working with the New York City Department of Transportation to create an enhanced public plaza at Zion Triangle, the triangle at the intersection of East New York and Pitkin Avenues, and has been holding summer plaza events there since 2009 to promote the site. The summer plaza events are

<sup>2</sup><http://www.placemakingchicago.com/>

three day-long events throughout the summer that include sports, biking and recreation, games, and arts and crafts.<sup>3</sup> These events have been successful in attracting Ocean Hill-Brownsville residents of various age brackets. Other place-making opportunity sites include Belmont Avenue and the Stone Avenue Branch Public Library. Public events at these sites could catalyze future community building initiatives.

## Placemaking Chicago Step-by-step guide

### Getting ready

Step 1: Assess public space challenges

Step 2: Select a site

Step 3: Identify key stakeholders

### Evaluating your neighborhood

Step 4: Collect data

### Making a place plan

Step 5: Conduct place evaluation workshop

Step 6: Translate the ideas into action with a working group

Step 7: Develop a visual concept plan

Step 8: Create a summary report and presentation

### Implementing your place plan

Step 9: Implement short-term actions

Step 10: Develop long-term design and management plans

Step 11: Assess results and replicate

[www.placemakingchicago.com](http://www.placemakingchicago.com)

## Strategy 2: Historical and Cultural Assets Plan

Community Board 16 consists of communities that have persistently worked and fought to improve their economic and social standing. Their struggles have left a mark on the physical and social fabric of present-day Ocean Hill-Brownsville. The existing buildings and urban spaces are a testimony of this history. Highlighting this history is an effective way to build community pride and to attract shoppers to commercial districts.

Drawing residents to explore the legacy of Ocean Hill-Brownsville serves several purposes. It will raise the awareness of the struggle and historical richness of the neighbor-

3 [http://www.facebook.com/note.php?note\\_id=135282936489645](http://www.facebook.com/note.php?note_id=135282936489645)

hood; develop a local consciousness within the area; and improve Ocean Hill-Brownsville's reputation. The following recommendations aim to utilize history as a tool to create a sense of place for Ocean Hill-Brownsville residents:

### A. Open House New York

Open House New York, a non-profit organization whose mission is to promote a greater appreciation of New York City's built environment, holds an annual weekend-long festival that provides access to unique historical and architectural assets throughout the 5 boroughs. Their programming showcases excellence in design, planning and preservation.<sup>4</sup> Two landmarked buildings in Ocean Hill-Brownsville, the Betsey Head Play Center, the recreation center at the Betsey Head playground constructed in 1936,<sup>5</sup> and P.S. 73 Thomas S. Boyland, a historic elementary and middle school, would be ideal candidates for the Open House New York weekend. We propose that the Economic Development Committee of CB 16 advocate for these two buildings to be included in the next Annual Open House New York weekend.

### B. Public Housing Walking Tour

Brownsville has the highest concentration of public housing in the country and can be viewed as a public housing laboratory of sorts. A walking tour of the neighborhood could provide an overview of the historical and political significance of the different public housing styles as well as a critical perspective on the public agencies and non-profits that have been responsible for their construction.

Development of the tour should be spearheaded by the Economic Development Committee and Brownsville Works! and have a substantial community participation or oral history component as well. Incorporating anecdotes,

past and present, from Brownsville's public housing residents, will enrich the tour and give it a more personal touch.

The Municipal Arts Society (MAS), an organization that advocates for intelligent urban planning, design, and preservation has an extensive offering of historical neighborhood tours and has held "Brownsville, Brooklyn" tours.<sup>6</sup> MAS has also gotten involved in Brownsville history through Place Matters, a joint oral history project with City Lore that highlights places of historical and cultural significance in New York City.<sup>7</sup> Place Matters did a feature on the Brownsville Heritage House, an African-American cultural center in Brownsville. Taking into account MAS's existing involve-

4 <http://www.ohny.org/weekend/overview>

5 [www.nycgovparks.org/parks/betsyheadmemorial/highlights](http://www.nycgovparks.org/parks/betsyheadmemorial/highlights)

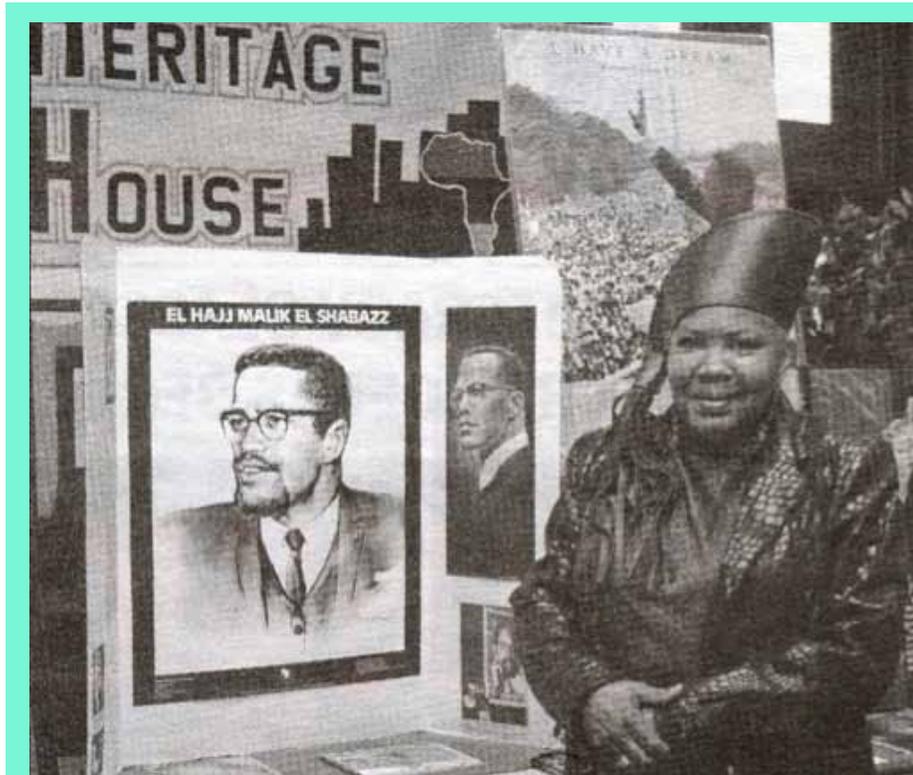
6 <http://mas.org/walk/brownsville-brooklyn/>

7 <http://www.placematters.net/node/1615>

ment in Brownsville, deepening and broadening that relationship would be the ideal path towards a robust public tour program.

Partnership with the non-profit organization Big Apple Greeter should also be looked into. The Greeters are local residents who love their city and are ready to give some of their time to enable visitors to see their city through their eyes. They are all volunteers and offer their services free of charge.<sup>8</sup> This kind of tourism, based on local hospitality would provide a more informal way for outsiders to learn about Brownsville.

### Strategy 3: “Shed a new Light on Brownsville”



Patricia Deans, director and curator of the Brownsville Heritage House, has been volunteering since 1992 and is a NYCHA resident of over 40 years

Interviews with residents revealed that Brownsville’s off-putting public image negatively impacts their quality of life. In addition, despite some buildings of historical or social significance, Ocean Hill-Brownsville’s architectural value is overlooked. According to the literature<sup>9</sup> and interviews with community residents, Ocean Hill-Brownsville has lost its historically strong sense of community pride and activism. These three issues, negative perceptions and crime, awareness of architectural history, and sense of community, can be addressed, simultaneously, through a lighting plan. Such a lighting plan would involve improvements to street lighting; a pilot program to keep stores open later; and artistic lighting schemes to draw attention to specific sites.

<sup>8</sup><http://www.bigapplegreeter.org/>

<sup>9</sup>Pritchett, Wendell E. 2002. *Brownsville, Brooklyn: Blacks, Jews, and the changing face of the ghetto*. University of Chicago Press, février 15.

### A. Implement Pedestrian-Friendly Street Lighting

The scale and orientation of Ocean Hill-Brownsville’s streetlamps are not well suited to the pedestrian experience. They are extremely large and primarily illuminate the roads, rather than the sidewalks. Smaller, human-scale streetlamps that provide lighting for both cars and pedestrians would better serve the needs of Ocean Hill-Brownsville’s residents. This could be accomplished by adding streetlamps that illuminate the pedestrian path at each lamppost.

Also, certain blocks in Ocean Hill-Brownsville have no more than one or two streetlamps in total. It is necessary to have at least four streetlamps per block- two on each side of the sidewalk, for a street to be properly illuminated and achieve a minimum level of safety for motor vehicles and pedestrians. Part of the lighting plan should involve the installment of additional lighting on these poorly lit blocks.

#### Best Practice: Street Lighting

According to Sacramento’s Transportation and Air Quality Collaborative report, pedestrian-scale lighting improves safety by illuminating sidewalks, crosswalks, curbs, signs, as well as barriers and potential hazards. From the pedestrian’s point of view, numerous shorter and dimmer lampposts are preferable to fewer tall and bright lampposts. Pedestrian-scale lighting should be employed in areas of high pedestrian activity. It should therefore be installed along both Pitkin and Rockaway Avenues. Such lighting will improve pedestrian enjoyment of the retail corridor and increase public safety.

### B. Extend store hours for better-lit streets

The extension of store hours mentioned in Recommendation 2 is an important part of the lighting plan. It would improve safety on the retail corridors through increasing pedestrian and motor vehicle traffic after-dark. Regardless of increased traffic, however, the light from store windows will better illuminate the sidewalk and lead to better lit streets overall.

### C. Artistic Lighting Plan

Best practices in Saint-Nazaire, France and Philadelphia, Pennsylvania as well as theory of city lighting, demonstrate that an artistic lighting plan can change the image of a place. In Ocean Hill-Brownsville, an artistic lighting plan would showcase the area’s distinctive architectural and historical features, improve public safety, and boost the neighborhood’s public image.

*East New York Lighting Study*

## Best Practices

### Public Lighting in France



*Cité Radieuse Le Corbusier, Briey, France, 2011*



*La Fete des Lumieres, Lyon, France, 2011*

In response to an RFP by the NYC Department of Transportation, Tillet Lighting Design studied the lighting in East New York, Brooklyn.<sup>10</sup> East New York is immediately adjacent to Ocean Hill-Brownsville and shares many of its challenges with physical infrastructure and public safety. Tillet's study revealed the positive effects that good lighting design can have for public safety in neighborhoods like Ocean Hill-Brownsville. Tillet worked on a particularly desolate section of New Lots Avenue in East New York and, at a low cost, managed to improve lighting in the area below the elevated subway and decoratively illuminate two distinctive structures, a church and a library. Within a year, pedestrian traffic increased and neighbors admitted they felt safer at night.

Lighting is a useful tool for placemaking as well as safety. According to Deleuil, it can become the expression of the social and emotional link of a population to its territory.<sup>11</sup> While currently Ocean Hill-Brownsville residents have little pride in their built environment, well-designed illuminations would cast it in a more positive light. It is essential that Ocean Hill-Brownsville residents have substantial input in the lighting plan. By collectively determining which buildings and public spaces should be the focus of the lighting plan, Ocean Hill-Brownsville residents can build community and begin to confront the negative perceptions of their neighborhood.

Perceptions are especially pertinent when considering that Ocean Hill-Brownsville can be seen from the elevated subway lines. Broadway Junction is an important transit hub through which thousands of riders pass every day. A lighting plan that draws attention to the taller and more attractive buildings in the area has the potential to change the way that passers-by view Ocean Hill-Brownsville. Rather than viewing it as dangerous, they may begin to see it as a

distinctive neighborhood with a unique history and potential for economic development.

## Conclusion

Due to negative public perceptions of Ocean Hill-Brownsville related to high crime rates, the majority of residents and passers-by are unaware of the area's historical assets. Historical tours would enable residents to not only to become aware of their neighborhood's rich history, but become proud of it as well. The lighting plan would draw attention to the area's history, improve safety, and increase traffic on the retail corridors. It would also create the opportunity for residents and passers-by to look at Ocean Hill-Brownsville in a new way, a shift that is essential for a better future.

<sup>10</sup>Seward 2009

<sup>11</sup>Deleuil, Jean-Michel, et Jean Yves Toussaint. 2000. « De la sécurité à la publicité, l'art d'éclairer la ville ». *Les annales de la recherche urbaine* (87): 52–58.

# 5 INITIATE A TARGETED CAMPAIGN TO IMPROVE THE BUILT ENVIRONMENT AND INFRASTRUCTURE

The experience of urban design shapes the relationship between the physical and social environments. An unpleasant and inaccessible urban form leaves negative traces in our memories. Visual and physical clutter is a significant problem in Ocean Hill-Brownsville — business signs mask attractive architecture, and underutilized and vacant lots exacerbate the lack of coherence in the streetscape.

These recommendations address issues with the built environment through the lenses of the urban fabric, physical access, and the theoretical and actual visibility of the Ocean Hill-Brownsville neighborhood. The first and second sections describe recommendations regarding the urban form, which can be improved through zoning regulations and landmarking historical and distinct buildings. The third portion of this section deals with sidewalk improvements and streetscape design. The fourth segment contains recommendations regarding transit access and visibility in Ocean Hill-Brownsville, including a detailed artistic lighting plan. The last part presents an innovative community engaging campaign which empowers citizens to participate in the urban improvement of Ocean Hill-Brownsville.

## Strategy 1: Preserve Retail Corridors and Historic Character

### A. Store Signage Consistency

In terms of urban design, one of the most significant problem with the built environment along Brownsville's retail corridors is the lack of continuity and overwhelming size and character of the exterior signs used by businesses to advertise their merchandise. Most businesses promote themselves through large, colorful signs that cover a high proportion of most buildings' façades. This is a problem for two reasons. First, obtrusive signs conceal the buildings' architectural details (Figure 1), obscuring Brownsville's architectural and commercial history.

Continuity in terms of the building signs' colors and sizes would contribute to the creation of a sense of place in Ocean Hill-Brownsville. It is important that signs draw attention to the distinctive architectural characteristics of the buildings along Brownsville's retail corridors and create a sense of coherence. Such a sense could be fostered by imposing regulations on the size and maximum facade coverage of signage along Pitkin and Rockaway Avenues. For example, the Coney Island Special District<sup>1</sup> establishes the height of signs for all commercial districts of the area. In this area, the proposed maximum height of signs is 25 feet for some commercial districts and 40 feet for other commercial districts.

In the case of Pitkin and Rockaway Avenue signs and awnings should be located above ground floor entrances and windows and below second floor existing window sills.

### B. Frontage glazing

In the Park Slope/Gowanus 4th Avenue Enhanced Commercial Special District streetscape design guidelines, commercial, community facilities, lobbies, and retail frontages are required to be 50% transparent. These guidelines were developed to establish a connection between the interior spaces of retail establishments and activities occurring on the street to facilitate commercial activity. Since customers' purchase deci-

<sup>1</sup> Section 131-20 from the New York City Zoning Code

## Our Strategies

### 1. Preserve Retail Corridors and Historic Character

- A. Store signage consistency
- B. Frontage glazing
- C. Landmark buildings in Brownsville

### 2. Rezone to Encourage Retail Development and Increased Density

- A. Change zoning to encourage retail development
- B. Increase customer base through residential rezoning

### 3. Improve Sidewalk for a Better Shopping Experience

- A. Improve sidewalk conditions
- B. Improve sidewalk furniture

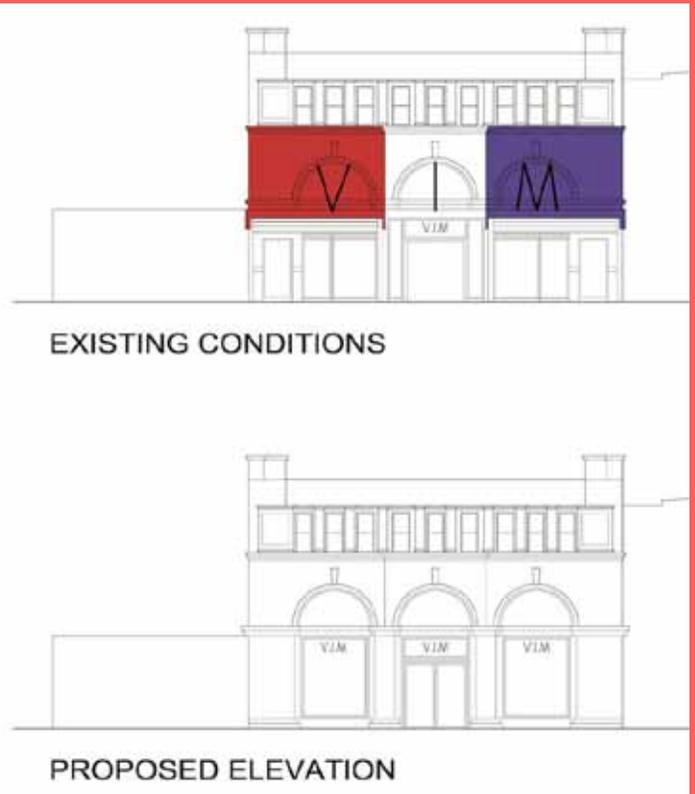
### 4. Improve Access to Retail Corridors

- A. Wayfinding and subway connections
- B. Increase bus route frequency
- C. Create more robust bike network

### 5. Public Service Fix Blitz and Community Participation



Figure 1  
 Above: VIM Clothing store on Pitkin Avenue, with signage obstructing architectural characteristics  
 Right: Rendering of before and after conditions for signage consistency



sions are often based on what they see instead of what they need, having an appropriate pedestrian environment is a key to revitalizing both corridors in Ocean Hill-Brownsville.

### C. Landmark buildings in Brownsville

There are several buildings along Pitkin and Rockaway Avenues that should be landmarked to protect them against future demolition or modification. A strategic landmarking and preservation plan can establish and maintain an architectural identity for Ocean Hill-Brownsville, and help to build and preserve a unique architectural language that the community can be proud of. Some of the buildings that could be cornerstones to these landmarking and preservation plan are illustrated in Figure 2.

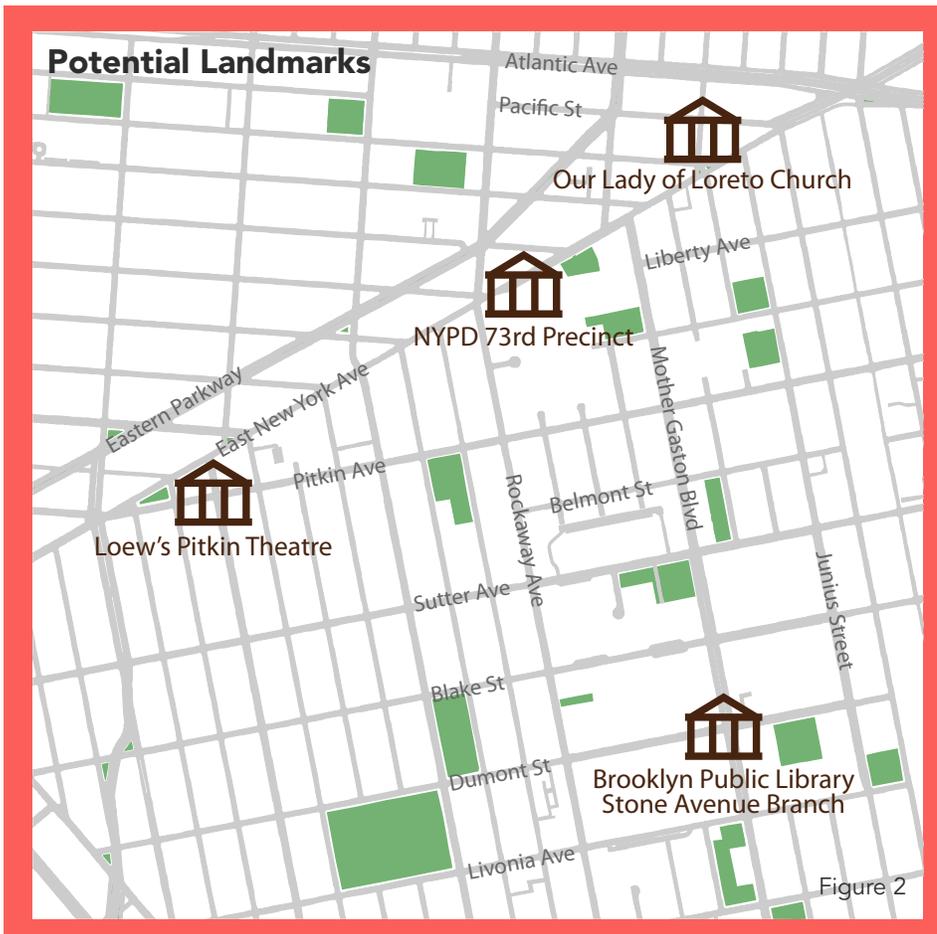
Unfortunately, efforts to preserve and revitalize historic buildings often run up against financial obstacles that create challenges in preserving these assets. However, there are available incentives to make preservation more economically feasible. City, state, and national preservation offices and commissions, as well as non-profit organizations, offer grants, low-interest loans, and tax incentives to property owners to restore or rehabilitate their buildings.

## Strategy 2: Rezone to Encourage Retail Development and Increased Density

### A. Change Zoning to Encourage Retail Development

Zoning is a regulatory tool that dictates land use and bulk maximums and minimums for specified areas. Currently, Ocean Hill-Brownsville's zoning does not promote continuity in the streetscape and encourages the development of commercial properties where they are least practical, not where it would strengthen the character of Pitkin and Rockaway Avenues as the premier shopping district in Ocean Hill-Brownsville.

We propose three major zoning changes to commercial areas in Brownsville. First, changing the C8-2 district between Eastern Parkway and East New York Avenue to a C4-3A district to improve streetscape and bulk continuity along Pitkin and Rockaway Avenues. Second, we propose shifting commercial overlays eastward along Sutter Avenue in order to improve connectivity between the Sutter Avenue L station and the Pitkin Avenue commercial corridor. Third, upzoning the Pitkin and Rockaway Avenue commercial corridors to a C4-5A district will increase both residential and commercial density. It is important to note that these changes are not intended to spur clearance and redevelopment of currently active parcels, but to stimulate development on underused soft sites and vacant lots. Any new developments that result from zoning changes must adhere strictly to the streetscape design guidelines laid out in the previous section.



more intensive commercial areas along Pitkin Avenue.

Any residential developments constructed in C4-3A districts must adhere to R6A zoning requirements. R6A districts require height limits and street wall lineup provisions to ensure that new development would be in context with the scale of existing buildings. R6A permits residential and community facility uses to an FAR of 3.0. Building heights are limited to 60 feet at the street and 70 feet overall after a 10- to 15-foot setback from the street, producing six- to seven-story buildings. R6A districts can also include provisions for the Inclusionary Housing Program thus ensuring high quality housing and the provision of communal and recreation facilities in new housing.

*Shifting Commercial Overlays to Improve Connections:*

The second zoning change that we recommend is the removal of commercial overlays along Sutter Avenue between Ralph Avenue and Rockaway Avenue, where commercial development is meager, and the establishment of new C2-4 overlays along Sutter Avenue between Mother Gaston and Van Sinderen Avenue, and along Van Sinderen Avenue between Sutter Avenue and Pitkin Avenue. This would encourage commercial development on the streets that lead from the Sutter Avenue L station to the main shopping strip on Pitkin Avenue, making the journey more pleasant, more convenient, and safer for shoppers.

*Rezone C8-2 Districts to Improve Streetscape Continuity:*

The commercial strip between Eastern Parkway and East New York Avenue, running from Ralph Avenue to Stone Avenue, currently zoned for heavy commercial and auto uses (C8-2), ought to be rezoned as a C4-3A district, which will permit the development of office spaces and large commercial projects with integrated retail. The heavy commercial uses, especially the auto body shops on this strip break up the streetscape along north-south thoroughfares and serve as a visual and psychological barrier. The C4-3A district would allow for light retail and a residential floor area ratio (FAR) of 3.0, the equivalent of the R6A district. This mixture of residential and commercial uses will create a more active and inviting area for pedestrians and shoppers. A C4-3A zoning district is a contextual district that allows regional and local commercial uses, all housing types, and community facilities.

The proposed C4-3A district permits a maximum building height of 70 feet, with a base height of 30 to 40 feet. The streetwalls of all newly constructed buildings in C4-3A districts must line up with those of adjacent buildings. Parking is required for 50% of all dwelling units, and the number of spaces for commercial and community facility parking varies based on use. Parking is waived when fewer than 25 spaces are required for all uses on a zoning lot. Given the current character of Ocean Hill-Brownsville's residential districts and those permitted in C4-3A districts, the proposed rezoning will create a subtle transition between residential areas and

C2-4 districts allow Use Groups 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 7, 8, 9, and 14, which include uses such as plumbing and electrical shops, small bowling alleys and movie theaters, funeral homes, small repair shops, printers, and caterers. This proposal would map commercial overlays to a depth of 100' to reflect the typical depth of existing lots along these corridors and to prevent commercial uses from encroaching on residential side streets.

*Rezoning the Pitkin and Rockaway Avenue Commercial Corridors:*

*Rezoning the Pitkin and Rockaway Avenue Commercial Corridors:*

Finally—and most importantly—we recommend changing the zoning of the Rockaway and Pitkin Avenue commercial strips from C4-3 to C4-5A, which is a contextual district that allows regional and local commercial uses. Doing so would improve the likelihood of attracting larger “anchor” retailers by increasing the commercial FAR from 3.4 to 4.0 and the residential FAR from 2.43 (R6 equivalent) to anywhere from 4.0 to 4.6 (R7A equivalent) depending on whether or not developers take advantage of inclusionary zoning bonuses. Maximum base height ranges from 40 to 65 feet, and the

maximum building height is 80 feet after a setback from the street. Parking is required for 50% of the residential units and requirements vary by use for commercial space. The successful R7A development on Bristol Street between Pitkin and East New York Avenues, immediately adjacent to the primary study area, stands as a testament to the suitability of a C4-5A rezoning for this area. Zoning that allows for higher density development could increase the customer base in Ocean Hill-Brownsville and allow for a better mix of income.

Commercial districts allow for a wider range of commercial uses than commercial overlays, and higher commercial FARs would incentivize retailers by providing them with larger spaces. Furthermore, in a mixed-use commercial district, commercial uses can occupy several floors of a development, while overlays permit commercial uses only on the ground floor.

In addition to the incentives provided by higher commercial FARs, higher residential FARs would increase street activity and expand retailers' potential customer base. Because the C4-5A district is a contextual district in which street-wall and building heights are limited, this rezoning would not significantly disrupt Brownsville's physical landscape. Furthermore, all residential developments in C4-5A districts must participate in the Quality Housing Program, which requires developers to provide interior amenities, including communal interior space and recreational areas. A C4-5A rezoning would incentivize developers to initiate large mixed-use projects with sizable commercial spaces and ample quantities of high-quality housing along Brownsville's two largest commercial arteries.

**B. Increase Customer Base Through Residential Rezoning**

*Upzoning Residential Districts from R6 to R7A:*

Currently, the residential sections of the study area are mostly zoned R6, which is considered medium density and, unless the quality housing option is chosen, does not have a height limit and can take up a small proportion of the lot. In order to encourage increased residential density while constraining building height, we recommend rezoning the R6 districts in the area immediately adjacent to the newly rezoned Pitkin and Rockaway commercial district, bounded by East New York Avenue and Sutter Avenue

at the North and South, and Ralph Avenue and Junius Avenue to the West and East, to R7A quality housing districts. In an R7A district, the maximum permitted FAR is 4.0, and the street wall is limited to between 40 and 65 feet, depending on street width. Above that height, buildings must have setbacks of between 10 and 15 feet, again depending on street width. An R7A zone would encourage higher-density development without significant alteration of the present urban form. Additionally, developments in R7A districts are subject to the stipulations of the Quality Housing Program detailed in the previous section.

*Taking Advantage of Opportunity Sites in Residential Districts:*

Upzoning R6 districts to R-7A would encourage development on two lots that we have identified as key opportunity sites. The first lot, at the southeastern corner of the intersection of Rockaway Avenue and Chester street, is small, but with an R-7A rezoning, it could serve as the site for a mid-size quality housing development. The second site,

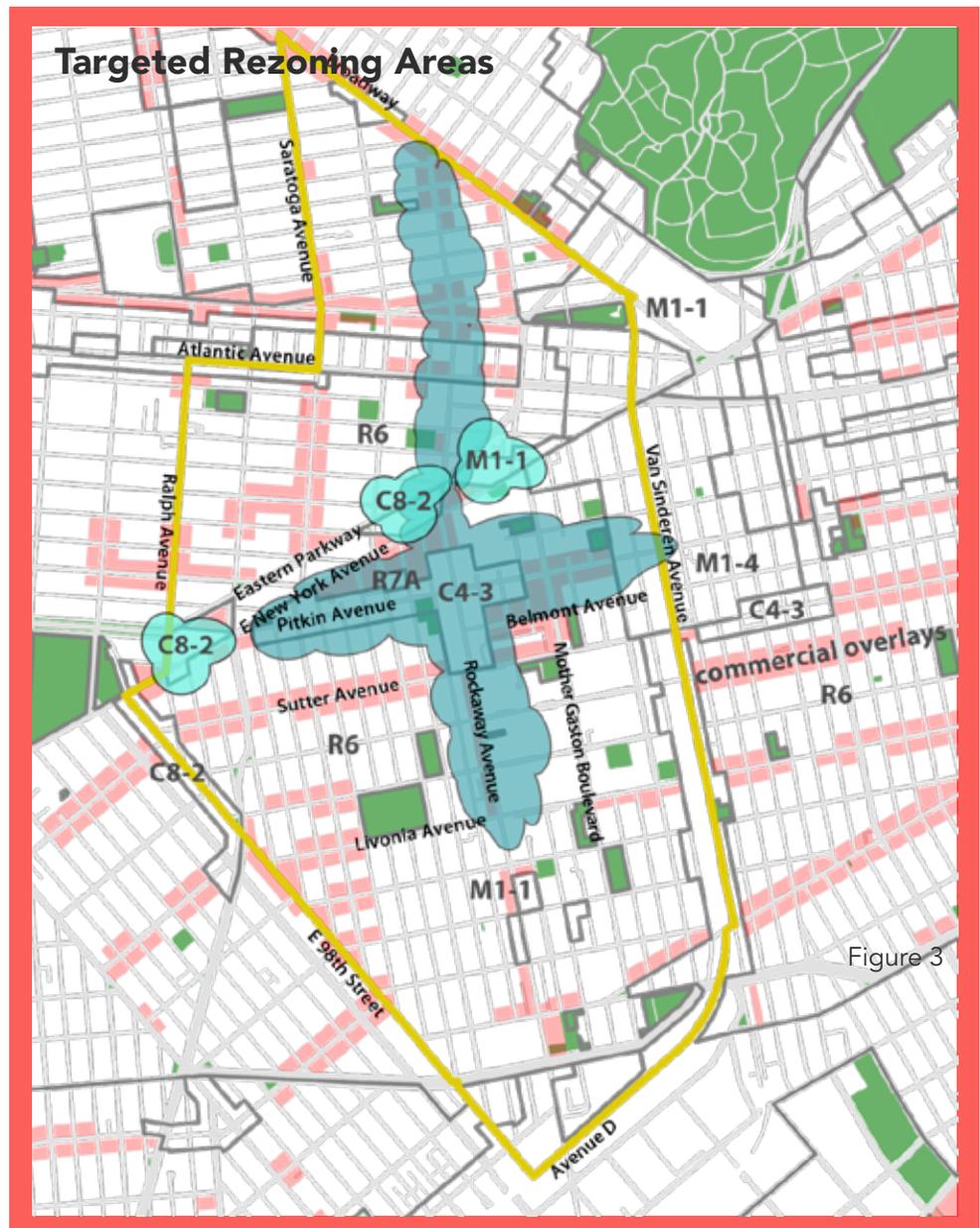


Figure 3

a large, city-owned vacant lot on Rockaway Avenue across from Glenmore Road, presents an opportunity for residential development. While current R6 zoning encourages tall buildings with low lot coverage and FAR on large lots, R7A zoning would encourage a high FAR building with a continuous street wall. Such a development would increase residential density and improve the streetscape, making the long stretch of Rockaway and Chester Avenues between East New York Avenue and Pitkin Avenue more inviting to pedestrians.

### **Strategy 3: Improve Sidewalk for a Better Shopping Experience**

Streets provide an opportunity to shape and add character to the community. In addition, public streets should be places where business is conducted, people meet, and a sense of community is formed. The improvements suggested in this section are intended to increase the quality of the pedestrian environment and create a streetscape that will unify the visual and thematic experience of the retail corridors on Pitkin Avenue (from Van Sinderen Avenue to Eastern Parkway Extension and Rockaway Avenue (from Fulton Street to Livonia Avenue).

#### **A. Improve Sidewalk condition**

On both Pitkin and Rockaway the sidewalks are uneven and cracked, or have been patched badly. Leveling-out the grade of sidewalks would not only mean safer streets for children, elderly and disabled, but would also improve access for strollers and wheelchairs. In terms of design, it would give a sense of continuity and care that is currently absent.

One major limitation of this strategy is that building owners are responsible for the sidewalks in front of their properties. In order to overcome this obstacle, the BID or a similar entity could encourage or owners take care of their sidewalk. Through the coordinated efforts by citizen brigade, property owners can be held accountable by reporting them to 311 or "sponsoring" and fixing them themselves.

#### *Sidewalk and Crossing Design:*

Sections of Rockaway Avenue sidewalks are narrower or broader than the recommended 5 feet.<sup>2</sup> Although this leads to discontinuity in the streetscape, these sidewalk sections can present new opportunities. Extra-wide sections can be adorned with various urban design elements and amenities. For example, Pitkin Avenue has a sidewalk wide enough to allow for the expansion of restaurants and sidewalk cafes, benches, and other urban design elements. Also, to improve pedestrian circulation and accessibility to these sections, crosswalks should be repainted at every intersection or added where they are missing.

Although Brownsville corridors are currently zoned C4-3, our zoning recommendations for a rezoning to a C4-5A will  
2 DOT NYC Manual

allow for a special type of tinted concrete material for the sidewalk. This dark tint visually enhances the sidewalk and emphasizes the urban character in areas with great commercial and retail density. As suggested by the NYC DOT Design Manual, and for the benefit of public health, the use of interlocking permeable concrete or porous asphalt should be demanded in these sidewalks to mitigate storm water run-off.<sup>3</sup>

#### **B. Improve Sidewalk furniture (trees, benches, bike racks, recycling and waste disposal**

##### *Street Trees:*

In order to further improve the streetscape, more trees should be planted on certain blocks. Tree-lined retail districts create a better environment for the resident and shopper. MillionTreesNYC can help merchants harness the power of trees to improve the look and appeal of their stores and shopping districts. This citywide public-private program launched by the Parks Department and New York Restoration Project has a stated goal of planting and caring for one million new trees across the City's five boroughs over the next decade, Ocean Hill-Brownsville should take full advantage of providing shade and comfort to its residents through this program.

The DOT street design guidelines show that different types of trees help users identify the primary use of a street. Having different types of trees in both corridors (Pitkin Avenue and Rockaway Avenue) will help to emphasize the identity and character of both strips. This will also create a unique visual image, differentiating both corridors from other commercial streets. To determine the species of trees best suited to Brownsville's retail corridors and locate best practices for street tree placement, consult the City of New York Parks and Recreation Tree Planting Guide of 2009, which provides guidelines about spacing requirements, tree pit dimensions, grouping planting, species selection and other requirements regarding care and maintenance of trees.

##### *Benches:*

Pitkin and Rockaway Avenues are mostly devoid of street seating. Not only are there no bars or cafes, but the public space of the sidewalk is not welcoming to the tired walker. The only spaces where there are benches are the bus stops, and only one in every three stops has a bench. Placing benches along Pitkin and Rockaway Avenues could make Brownsville's retail corridors more accommodating to pedestrians and shoppers. In addition to providing pedestrians with stopping points, benches can lend an attractive and welcoming look to the sidewalk.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>3</sup> DOT, Street Design Manual, 197 [http://www.nyc.gov/html/dot/downloads/pdf/sdm\\_lores.pdf](http://www.nyc.gov/html/dot/downloads/pdf/sdm_lores.pdf)

<sup>4</sup> DOT, Street Design Manual, 197 [http://www.nyc.gov/html/dot/downloads/pdf/sdm\\_lores.pdf](http://www.nyc.gov/html/dot/downloads/pdf/sdm_lores.pdf)

**Current Conditions on Pitkin Avenue**



**Rendering of Pitkin Avenue with Contextual Zoning**



### *Bike racks:*

Along the Pitkin and Rockaway corridor, there is only one bike rack. Placing one rack at least every two blocks along Pitkin and Rockaway Avenues could encourage bike users. The racks should be installed by NYCDOT in strategic locations near subway stops, such as Broadway Junction, Atlantic Avenue, Sutter Avenue, Rockaway Avenue Rockaway Avenue, and Junius Street).

### *Trash and Recycling Receptacles:*

Although there are many waste receptacles along the Pitkin and Rockaway Avenue commercial corridors, it appears that none of them are used for recycling. One way to create more sustainable neighborhoods is to have recycling receptacles next to regular garbage cans. Indeed, the visibility of recycling receptacles, adorned with informative signage can be quite useful in stimulating recycling. Sponsoring organizations such as the BID or another non-profit may purchase and place custom waste receptacles.

Though every corner in the primary study area features a waste receptacle, these are still insufficient. Garbage cans on Pitkin and Rockaway Avenues are consistently over-full, exacerbating the poor image of both corridors. Overflowing waste receptacles are not only unsightly; they pose a public health hazard. Additionally, wastes are not separated according to the materials of which they are made. Having different bins for different types of waste distribute the volume of waste across multiple receptacles, thus reducing the risk of overflow.

## **Strategy 4: Improve Access to the Retail Corridors**

Although Community District 16 has a wide range of transit options, access to the Pitkin and Rockaway Avenue retail corridors is limited. The neighborhood's subway stops are far from the two corridors, and signage directing travelers from transit stops to shopping areas is all but nonexistent. Furthermore, Ocean Hill-Brownsville's citywide profile is very low. For many, it is an "out of sight, out of mind" neighborhood.

### **A. Wayfinding and Subway Connections**

Though not just a problem in Ocean Hill-Brownsville, lack of signage and wayfinding result in difficult navigation and lost connections throughout the area. Since none of the area's subway stations (Broadway Junction J,Z,A,C,L, Atlantic Ave L, Sutter Ave L, Livonia L and Junius 3 trains, as well as the East New York Long Island Rail Road station) are located right on the main shopping corridors of Pitkin, Rockaway, and Belmont avenues, it is often challenging and disorienting to find one's way from the stations to the stores. This is especially true on the L train, which travels above ground next to Junius Street and the IBZ - the lack of signage directing riders to Pitkin Avenue or nearby destinations may leave

them thinking that they are stranded in the middle of an industrial park with few other pedestrians and minimal street activity, when they are, in actuality, only two short blocks from Brownsville's main shopping strip.

New wayfinding maps on street corners would increase the customer base by directing pedestrians, motorists, and cyclists to the retail corridor and important historical sites. These new maps should be modeled after other signage used throughout the city. Wayfinding products are also an invaluable opportunity to brand Brownsville Works!, the BID, and locations of the pop-up stores. The signage should reinforce the goal to speak in a unified voice about Ocean Hill-Brownsville and build presence. Efforts to increase lighting around the entrances and exits of subway stations in Community District 16 should be coordinated with improved wayfinding in order to increase riders' sense of safety and guide them from stations to retail corridors.

The connections between the Broadway Junction station and the East New York LIRR station are also difficult to navigate. Although an announcement is made on subways passing through Broadway Junction Station telling passengers that there is a connection to the Long Island Rail Road, it proves almost impossible to find your way to the other station. The easiest way to get to the LIRR station is to travel through the dark, narrow pedestrian underpass under Atlantic Avenue. Signs along Van Sinderen directing travelers from Broadway Junction to the LIRR and vice-versa would not only help many people, but could also potentially increase ridership at the East New York LIRR stop, a station that has very low ridership levels. The Broadway Junction area should also have signs directing visitors to Pitkin and Rockaway Avenues, as well as maps of the whole area with points of interest, such as the ones in Downtown Brooklyn.

The connection between the Livonia L and Junius Avenue 3 subway stations is also problematic. Though these stations are located right next to each other, the connection is not a free transfer, nor is it easily navigable. Improved signage and a free, above-ground transfer between the two stations would improve transit connectivity and accessibility to and from Brownsville. Lobbying for this free transfer should be conducted by community members and coordinated by Brownsville Works! as part of the infrastructure campaign.

In order to better serve mobility-impaired riders, The MTA should renovate subway stations in Community District 16 so that they are fully handicapped-accessible. The Utica Avenue 2 stop is a good example of a local subway station that is ADA compliant. The station has two elevators, one from the street to the subway mezzanine and from the mezzanine to the subway platforms.

### **B. Increase Bus Route Frequency**

During AM peak periods, buses are extremely congested. Reducing the time between buses to four minutes during the AM rush hour could reduce congestion while increasing ridership. In order to improve access to the shopping corri-

dors the community groups and the business owners should lobby the elected officials and the MTA to provide a direct bus route from the Broadway Junction Transit hub to along the Pitkin Avenue Shopping Corridor.

### **C. Create More Robust Bike Network**

In order to improve multi-modal transportation access and increase the use of bicycles, the NYCDOT, working with community groups, should determine the most appropriate locations for bicycle lanes in Ocean Hill-Brownsville. Potential locations include Mother Gaston Boulevard and Pitkin Avenue. These would provide safe north-south and east-west routes for cyclists who need to get to, from, and around Ocean Hill-Brownsville. The Pitkin Avenue BID has been working with businesses to discuss the option of a bikelane on Pitkin Avenue that would connect to Eastern Parkway. Concerns over lost parking are high amongst business owners, but surveys of customers indicate that this concern is not shared.

### **Strategy 5: Public Service Fix Blitz & Community Participation**

This campaign aims to involve the community to lobby for structural improvements in Ocean Hill-Brownsville. The idea is for Brownsville Works! to start a campaign of community participation. The campaign starts by reaching out to community members and business owners to participate in creating an inventory of damaged public spaces that need to be repaired by public agencies. For example, potholes, damaged sewers, damaged tree pits, missing garbage cans, and sidewalks repairs should all be recorded and reported. One tool that could be used would be the Brownsville Loop technology which enables people to geo-code information about the built environment. This would allow Brownsville Works! to train and work with community members, teaching them to be "citizen scientists" and passing the onus onto community stakeholders. Once the inventory has been crowd-sourced, it can be used as a campaign tool by reporting the efforts to news outlets and by flooding the 311 system.

311 is New York City's main source of government information and non-emergency services. Once all these items are reported community members shall follow up with the 311. In many cases the issues get repaired, and, if after a period of time the issues don't get repaired, the records of phone calls made to 311 will be brought up to the Council Member's office who can then address the unsolved issues by contacting the agencies directly involved. The power of using both the 311 service and something like the Brownsville Loop would be that it proves beyond reasonable doubt that people are concerned about these issues. Using the Brownsville Business and Community Portal to publish updates based on crowd-sourced data about urban conditions will be a great way to connect these efforts to the greater environmental justice community in New York City.

# CONCLUSION

Ocean Hill-Brownsville has a unique heritage in which people have always fought to make their lives better. For two centuries and counting, it has been a place where people come to make a new start and build community. From its earliest history, Ocean Hill-Brownsville has been a place where people rely on each other to make their community a better place, and through building a sense of community, the residents have been able to engage the forces of New York City with a unified voice. While the ability of residents to advocate for structural improvements has been hampered by housing and economic development strategies, which have worked to dismantle community vitality, the people of Ocean Hill-Brownsville can overcome these challenges by reinvigorating the historical spirit of cooperation, entrepreneurialism, progressive activism, and neighborhood solidarity.

Given the set of interlocking challenges facing the economic vitality of Ocean Hill-Brownsville, it is crucial to approach the issues in a holistic matter. Any attempt to tease out and rectify the situation must effectively interface with New York City agencies and economic forces while simultaneously building the social capital in the community to bridge gaps between property and business owners and the residents. Using these five achievable goals laid forth in this plan, Ocean Hill-Brownsville can be transformed into a place of increased community and economic activity, which will improve the conditions for those who live and do business in Brownsville. Pursuing these strategies will increase the customer base, improve the climate for businesses and local employment, and strengthen economic development by leveraging Brownsville's unique history and sense of place.



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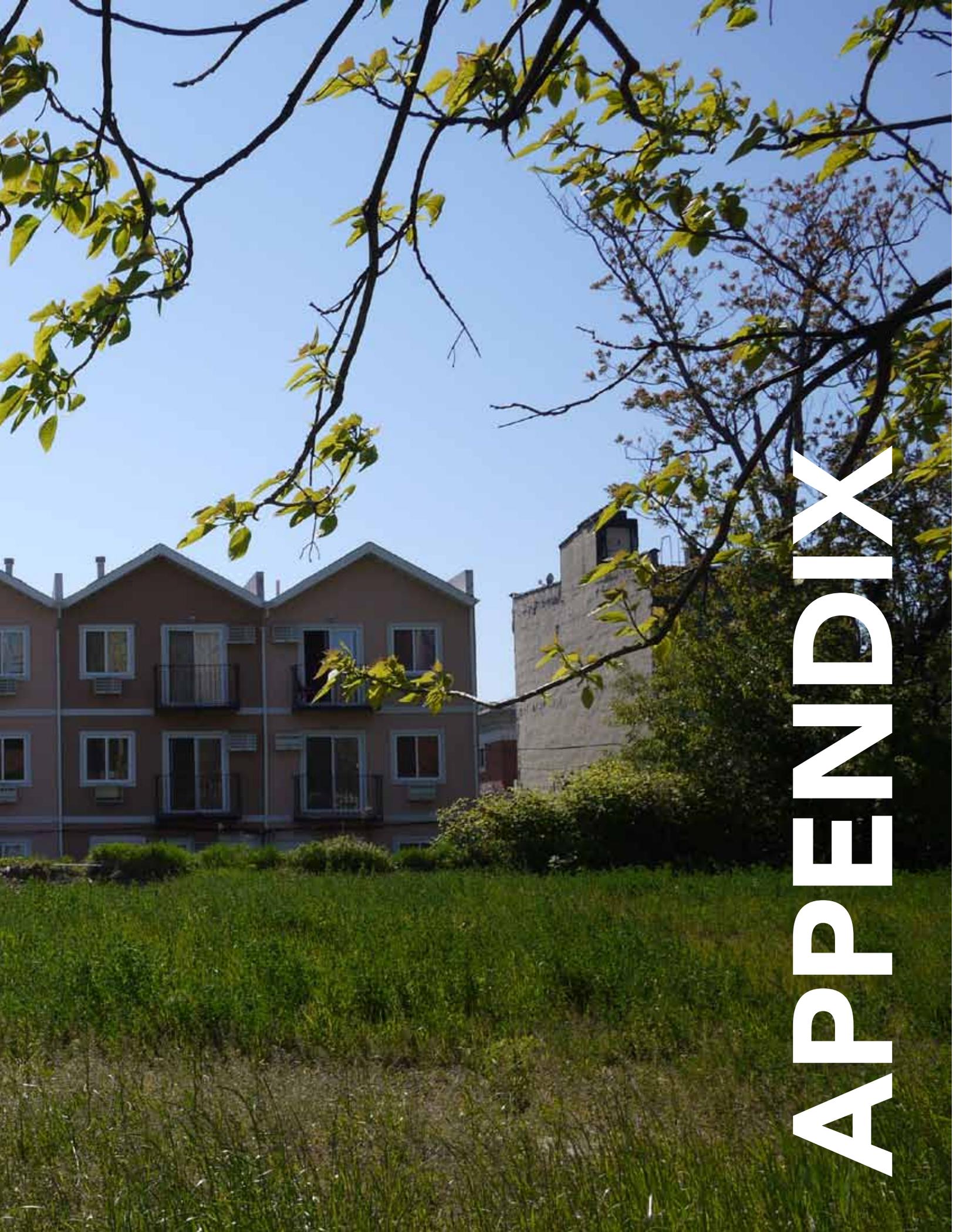
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# APPENDIX

# APPENDIX I: ANALYSIS

## DEMOGRAPHICS

The demographic characteristics in Brownsville present a variety of challenges in terms of creating a retail development strategy. Brownsville residents face economic and structural challenges such as high rates of poverty and unemployment, poor access to affordable housing, fragmented families and high rates of single parent households, and high crime. In the following section we examine demographic trends and explore how they relate to economic and retail development. The discussion section will examine how economic development strategies can be tailored to meet the specific needs of Brownsville's most economically challenged populations; Single-women led households, youth, and parolees.

### Methodology

In undertaking a demographic analysis of Brownsville/Ocean Hill, a variety of data sources were utilized. Most of the socio-economic data came from the American Community Survey (ACS) 2005-2009 for PUMA5 04007.<sup>1</sup> At the time of this study, the ACS five-year summary contains the most accurate sociodemographic data available. The study also contains demographic information gleaned currently available 2010 Census data for Community District 16. Unfortunately, more detailed, census tract-level information remains unavailable. The 2010 census information is based on 2010 census tract boundaries, whereas data from ACS estimates are based on 2000 census tracts and 2000 (Public Use Macro Areas) PUMA boundaries. While using two sets of boundaries complicates analysis and makes longitudinal analysis difficult, tract boundaries invariably change between censuses, and there is no way to avoid this problem.

One inevitable disadvantage of using PUMA data is that the boundary encompassing Brownsville also includes a section of East New York, which is not directly within the study area. We used PUMA data for socio-demographic data because ACS methodology produces significant margins of error at the census tract level. For this reason, we will be using 2005-2009 5 year estimates at the PUMA level.

### Summary

Community District 16 suffered dramatic population loss during the 1970's, falling from a population of 122,589 in 1970 to 73,801 in 1980.<sup>2</sup> This decline coincided with severe deterioration of housing stock and widespread abandonment of private property. Much of the housing destroyed during the 1970's has been replaced by single story, owner-occupied Nehemiah housing, and although the population has been slowly increasing, Community Board 16 is currently home to 36,000 fewer people than it was in 1970. As of 2009, The PUMA area that includes Ocean Hill, Brownsville, and parts of East New York has an estimated population of 114,591. At 75.8% of the total population, Non-Hispanic Black/African American are the largest racial group in the area. Hispanics or Latinos comprise 20.6% of the population. Altogether, Hispanics and African Americans account for 96.4% of the study area population, which is much higher than either Brooklyn or New York City as a whole.<sup>3</sup>

### Population Decrease and the Urban Form

Between the years of 1970 and 2010, Brooklyn's population decreased by 3.73%, while the population of New York City as a whole increased by 3.53%. During the same time period, Brownsville's population decreased by 29.47%, the starkest population decline in Brooklyn. Only 3 community districts had larger population losses between 1970 and 2010, all of which are in the Bronx; Mott Haven (-34%), Longwood (-47.5%), and Crotona Park East (-47%).<sup>4</sup> Large groups of people have the ability to quickly flee declining neighborhoods, but the urban form is not so fast to change. Retail vacancies, outdated zoning codes, and stretches of underserved blocks are all symptoms of population loss.

### Age and Gender

One of CD 16's most notable demographic characteristics is the high proportion of females. In the 2010 census, 56.2% of CD 16 residents were female. This is evidenced by the high concentration of retail and apparel stores for women. Beginning with the cohort aged 16 to 20 and carrying through the remainder of age cohorts, women outnumber men by a significant margin.<sup>5</sup>

1 U.S. Census Bureau. (2010. ) PUMA5 04007 2005-2009 Five-Year Summary Files.

2 U.S. Census Bureau. (2011). Table PL-P1 CD: Total Population New York City Community Districts 1970, 1980, 1990, 2000 and 2010. Retrieved from [http://www.nyc.gov/html/dcp/pdf/census/census2010/t\\_pl\\_p1\\_cd.pdf](http://www.nyc.gov/html/dcp/pdf/census/census2010/t_pl_p1_cd.pdf)

3 U.S. Census Bureau. (2011). Table PL-P1 CD: Total Population New York City Community Districts 1970, 1980, 1990, 2000 and 2010. Retrieved from [http://www.nyc.gov/html/dcp/pdf/census/census2010/t\\_pl\\_p1\\_cd.pdf](http://www.nyc.gov/html/dcp/pdf/census/census2010/t_pl_p1_cd.pdf)

4 U.S. Census Bureau. (2011). Table PL-P1 CD: Total Population New York City Community Districts 1970, 1980, 1990, 2000 and 2010. Retrieved from [http://www.nyc.gov/html/dcp/pdf/census/census2010/t\\_pl\\_p1\\_cd.pdf](http://www.nyc.gov/html/dcp/pdf/census/census2010/t_pl_p1_cd.pdf)

5 New York City Department of City Planning. (2010). SF1-P7 CD Total Population by Age Groups and Sex, 2010. Retrieved from [http://www.nyc.gov/html/dcp/pdf/census/census2010/t\\_pl\\_p1\\_cd.pdf](http://www.nyc.gov/html/dcp/pdf/census/census2010/t_pl_p1_cd.pdf)

A number of factors contribute to the gender disparity in Brownsville. Anecdotal evidence suggests that many people do not accurately report their living arrangements in order to continue receiving public assistance and stay in public housing. It is also likely that some men leave Brownsville in order to pursue employment opportunities elsewhere. Although these two phenomena may account for some of the gender disparity, available data suggest that the criminal justice system is of particular importance. Men are much more likely to be incarcerated than women. According to data collected by the Justice Mapping Center, which tracks prison admission rates at the zip code level, men from the three zip codes encompassing Brownsville are between 27 and 54 times more likely than women to be admitted to prison. Within these three zip codes, men have a prison admission rate of between 9.71 and 10.62 per 1000, compared to women who are admitted to prison at a rate of between 0.3 and 0.4 per 1000.<sup>6</sup>

Community District 16 has an aging population. Between the 2000 and 2010 census, the number of residents under the age of 18 declined by 16.5%, from 30,939 to 25,831. Shifts in under-18 population varied by race: the black under-18 population declined by 20%, while the Hispanic under-18 population held relatively steady, falling by only 3.8%. Conversely, the over-18 grew by 11.5% between 2000 and 2010. Amongst adults, the black population grew by 9.4%, and the Hispanic population grew by 23.6%. For Community District 16's Hispanic and black populations, the gender gap increases with age. After the age of 78, each age group has twice as many females as males.<sup>7</sup>

### Household Characteristics

In looking at comparing Brownsville to the greater New York community, we use ACS five-year summary files.<sup>8</sup> As one would imagine based on the gender disparity in Brownsville, the most common household type are female led households, which account for 41.7% of all households, twice the average of both Brooklyn (20.8%) and New York City (18.4%).<sup>9</sup> The high concentration of female led households with children (25.7%), again, more than twice that of Brooklyn (10.6%) and New York City (9.5%), presents numerous social challenges for retail development; female led households where a husband is not present need to balance working and providing for their family while ensuring that their children are taken care of while they are at work. Gender-based income disparity further exacerbates this challenge; median income for full-time working women in Brownsville is only 88% of men's median income (\$31,779 vs \$35,832). This disparity is larger than those of Brooklyn (women make 93% as much as men), and in New York City as a whole (92.7%). As a result of the high proportion of women-led households and the gendered wage gap, many Brownsville households have less disposable income to stimulate retail growth.

Nationally, unemployment levels have been dropping for all major racial groups except African-American, 15.8% of whom were unemployed in December, 2010. In 2009, the unemployment rate in Brownsville was 13.8%.<sup>10</sup> Female led households and young people in Brownsville were more likely to experience poverty than the rest of the population; 48.1% of female led households were at or below the poverty level, and 45.7% of people under 18 lived in poverty.<sup>11</sup> Female led households were 3 times more likely to live in poverty than married families with children in Brownsville. 34.3% of the senior population in Brownsville lived at or below the poverty level, nearly twice the average of New York City. Overall, 35.80% of all people in Brownsville were living below the poverty level in 2009, nearly double the citywide rate<sup>12</sup>.

### Nationality and Nativity

72.7% of the population are native-born Americans, while the other 27.3% were born in other countries, primarily Latin America (90.9%). 55.4% of the population consists of naturalized U.S. Citizens, while 44.6% are non-citizens. 17.9% of households in the study area speak Spanish at home, while 78% speak English only<sup>13</sup>.

Historically, Brownsville has always experienced high rates of population turnover. According to the ACS, people in the area still move frequently; 21.7% of residents moved to the neighborhood after 2005, 31.4% between 2000-2004, and 22.5% between 1990-1999.<sup>14</sup> Less than a quarter of the population has been living in the same unit for more than twenty years. High rates of residential mobility inhibit the formation of community bonds, which are useful for forming institutions and partnerships that can effectively address social issues at the community level. From the 1950's through the 80's, demographic changes and high rates of residential turnover led to the disintegration or relocation of several key community

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nyc.gov/html/dcp/html/census/demo\_tables\_2010.shtml

6 New York State Division of Criminal Justice Services. (2008). Retrieved from <http://www.justiceatlas.org/>

7 New York City Department of City Planning. (2010). Pl-P2 CD Total Population, Under 18 and 18 Years and Over by Mutually Exclusive Race and Hispanic Origin and Total Housing Units, 1990-2010. Retrieved from [http://www.nyc.gov/html/dcp/html/census/demo\\_tables\\_2010.shtml](http://www.nyc.gov/html/dcp/html/census/demo_tables_2010.shtml)

8 U.S. Census Bureau. (2010.) PUMA5 04007 2005-2009 Five-Year Summary Files.

9 U.S. Census Bureau. (2010.) PUMA5 04007 2005-2009 Five-Year Summary Files.

10 U.S. Census Bureau. (2010.) PUMA5 04007 2005-2009 Five-Year Summary Files.

11 U.S. Census Bureau. (2010.) PUMA5 04007 2005-2009 Five-Year Summary Files.

12 Ibid

13 Ibid

14 Ibid

institutions, including the Hebrew Educational Society and the Brownsville Boy's Club.<sup>15</sup> Not only does transiency stifle the ability of Brownsville residents to politically organize and address common social issues, it prevents businesses from forming lasting relationships with their customers.

## Education

Educational attainment has a significant influence on the types of jobs available to a person, and as a person's educational attainment increases, they tend to earn more money which translates into more disposable income, which could be spent locally and stimulate the retail environment, providing opportunities for local businesses to hire new employees. Increased disposable income could also be an encouragement for an entrepreneur to start their own business venture. Unfortunately, there are limited options for higher education in Brownsville, and educational equity has been a paramount concern for many community stakeholders throughout the decades.

In Brownsville, 71.2% of the population has a high school diploma or higher, 17.5% has an associate's or higher, and 10.8% has a bachelor's degree or higher. While the percentage of people in Brownsville who have a high school education (71.2%) is only slightly lower than the rates for Brooklyn (77.7%) and all of New York City (79%), levels of higher education are far below Brooklyn and New York City averages.<sup>16</sup>

Education levels are important to retail and commercial development in Brownsville for several reasons. First, there is a strong correlation between the level of education and incarceration rate,<sup>17</sup> with less educated people having a higher rate of incarceration. Educational attainment is correlated to the amount of earnings a person makes over the course of their lifetime, and higher levels of family income influence a child's level of educational attainment.<sup>18</sup> Among Black, Hispanic, and White males, college entry levels were nearly the same when normalized by family income, indicating the family income is a key factor in describing the disparity of educational attainment.<sup>19</sup> As employment and income are related to educational attainment, people who are unable to find legitimate work often turn to crime to make ends meet.<sup>20</sup> People who have been incarcerated often have a difficult time finding work as they may exempt from certain forms of employment, and they may also be subject to background checks by employers. Breaking the cycle of incarceration and unemployment is essential for economic development in Brownsville, and providing gainful employment to ex-felons and parolees should be of particular focus considering that 83% of New York felons who re-entered the criminal justice system were unemployed at the time of re-entry.<sup>21</sup>

## Housing Patterns

Housing affordability is a major issue for most Community District 16 residents, and the lack of home ownership opportunities has an impact on a person's ability to achieve upward mobility, purchase discretionary items, and use disposable income to pursue business ventures. When coupled with the fact that NYCHA housing is only available to people within a certain income range, and that increased earnings could lead to forced displacement, the state of housing in Brownsville is not conducive to opportunities for personal advancement.

Brownsville has the highest concentration of public housing in the country.<sup>22</sup> There are an estimated 44,250 housing units in the study area, 89.9% of which are occupied. Of the occupied housing units, 79.8% are renter-occupied, which far exceeds the Brooklyn average of 69.2% and the New York City average of 66.1%. Renters have less access to capital than homeowners; they cannot leverage their homes for loans or receive various tax benefits associated with homeownership. The median gross rent in the study area is \$709, which is far lower than rental prices in Brooklyn (\$977) and New York City (\$1,029). As a function of lower income, rent exceeds 30% of household income and is therefore unaffordable for 58.1% of households in Brownsville. This is above the average for Brooklyn (53%) and New York City (50.5%).<sup>23</sup>

The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development defines housing that costs over 30% of a family's income as unaffordable or burdensome.<sup>24</sup> Housing costs in excess of 30% of a family's wages may mean that other basic necessities

15 Pritchett, Wendell. (2002). *Brownsville, Brooklyn*. Chicago: The University Press.

16 U.S. Census Bureau. (2010. ) PUMA5 04007 2005-2009 Five-Year Summary Files.

17 Dillon, Sam. (2009, October 8). Study Finds High Rate of Imprisonment Among Dropouts. *New York Times*. Retrieved from [http://www.nytimes.com/2009/10/09/education/09dropout.html?\\_r=1](http://www.nytimes.com/2009/10/09/education/09dropout.html?_r=1)

18 Cameron, Stephen V., Heckman, James J. (2001, June). The Dynamics of Educational Attainment for Black, Hispanic, and White Males. *Journal of Political Economy*, Vol. 109, No. 3 (June 2001). pp. 455-499. Retrieved from <http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.1086/321014>

19 Ibid

20 Grodin, Jaclyn. (2005) In *New York, Rising Teen Drop-out and Incarceration Rates*. *Washington Square Review*, Spring 2005. Retrieved from [http://journalism.nyu.edu/publishing/archives/wsr/article/rising\\_rates/](http://journalism.nyu.edu/publishing/archives/wsr/article/rising_rates/)

21 Anderson, Dave. (2008). *Working to Reduce Recidivism: Employment as the Key to Offender Reintegration*. JIST Publishing. Retrieved from <http://www.hrcrossing.com/article/270120/Working-to-Reduce-Recidivism-Employment-as-the-Key-to-Offender-Reintegration/>

22 Sun, Feifei. (2012, January 31). *Brownsville: Inside One of Brooklyn's Most Dangerous Neighborhoods*. *Time*. Retrieved from <http://lightbox.time.com/2012/01/31/brownsville-brooklyn/#1>

23 U.S. Census Bureau. (2010. ) PUMA5 04007 2005-2009 Five-Year Summary Files.

24 (<http://www.hud.gov/offices/cpd/affordablehousing/>)

such as health care, food, and education, are not being met. By extension, the more a family has to pay for housing as a percentage of their total income, the less they have for discretionary spending for items such as entertainment, leisure, clothing, higher education and training, and crafts. These spending patterns in turn shape the retail and commercial environment of an area; those stores providing basic non-discretionary items such as food and basic clothing can survive, but businesses offering discretionary items will not flourish.

Due to the high concentration of NYCHA facilities in the study area, 36% of the housing units are in buildings with more than 20 units. The second most common type of housing, which comprises 19.8% of the housing stock, consists of 3 or 4 unit structures. Opportunities for homeownership are far lower than in other parts of the city, and for those people who do own homes, it is not affordable.<sup>25</sup>

Most housing in the study area (78.9%) was built before 1979.<sup>26</sup> An aging housing stock has implications for affordability; older, less-efficient appliances, maintenance issues, and poorly-insulated dwellings drive up utility costs. Based on historical precedents in Brownsville, deteriorating housing stock could lend itself to large-scale redevelopment projects. While certain recent redevelopment projects, such as the failed Hope VI development at Prospect Plaza, stand as prominent reminders of the potential pitfalls of redevelopment, large renovation projects and material and system upgrades could create greener and healthier structures, produce opportunities for local employment, and lower utility and management costs.

### **“Million Dollar Blocks” and the Criminal Justice System**

The concept of the “Million Dollar Block” emerged from the realization that certain city blocks have such high rates of incarceration that the cost of imprisoning individuals from those blocks exceeds \$1 million each year. Brownsville is home to several Million Dollar Blocks. Not only does this trend place a financial burden on taxpayers, but the fear of crime poses a substantial challenge to creating a retail environment in which residents feel safe, particularly at night. Recent events in Brownsville, namely the shooting that claimed the life of a young mother on a Friday afternoon at the intersection of Pitkin and Watkins, illustrate just why people are afraid to shop on Pitkin Avenue.

According to the Justice Mapping Center, the average rate of prison admission for the three zip codes that fall entirely or partially within CB 16 is 4.69 per 1,000 residents.<sup>27</sup> While these numbers are extremely high compared to the Brooklyn rate of 1.93 per 1000, the difference between male and female rates of prison admissions in Brownsville is staggering. Prison admission rates in the three zip codes that make up the Brownsville area are between 25 and 32 times higher for men than women: the rate for men was 10.34 per 1,000, while the rate for women was .36 per 1,000. Of prison admissions in Brownsville, approximately 40% are the result of parole or probation violations.

The three zip codes also account for a disproportionate percentage of all prison admissions in Brooklyn when compared to their share of Brooklyn’s population. Zip code 11233 was home to 7.5% of people admitted to prison in Brooklyn, although this zip code accounts for only 2.6% of Brooklyn’s population. Zip code 11212 accounted for 8% of admissions and made up 3.3% of the population, and zip code 11207 accounted for 8.2% of all of Brooklyn’s prison admissions while only accounting for 3.5% of the total population.<sup>28</sup>

In addition to higher-than-average rates of prison admission, Brownsville has a disproportionate percentage of parolees. On December 15th, 2008, there were 540 parolees in zip code 11207. This accounted for 10.47% of all parolees in Brooklyn, although this zip code accounts for only 3.47% of the total population of Brooklyn. Zip code 11233 had 453 parolees, accounting for 8.78% of all parolees while only making up 2.56% of the population, and zip code 11212 was home to 6.34% of parolees while making up 3.31% of the population of Brooklyn.

Despite New York State being ranked as the state with the least amount of roadblocks for people with criminal records<sup>29</sup>, residents who have been in the criminal justice at some point in time face immense challenges upon reentry to society. There are over 65 million Americans with criminal records,<sup>30</sup> and for those with “unsealed” convictions, there are numerous obstacles to being a productive member of society; federal and state restrictions hinder employment, can eliminate voting rights, and deny access to student loans and public assistance. The Higher Education Act of 1998 prohibits people with drug-related felonies from receiving grants, loans, and financial assistance,<sup>31</sup> despite overwhelming evidence showing that people with higher levels of educational attainment are less likely to commit crimes. Even if a person was arrested

25 U.S. Census Bureau. (2010. ) PUMA5 04007 2005-2009 Five-Year Summary Files.

26 Ibid

27 New York State Division of Criminal Justice Services. (2008). Retrieved from <http://www.justiceatlas.org/>

28 Ibid

29 Legal Action Center. (2004). AFTER PRISON: ROADBLOCKS TO RE-ENTRY. Retrieved from [http://www.lac.org/roadblocks-to-reentry/upload/lacreport/LAC\\_PrintReport.pdf](http://www.lac.org/roadblocks-to-reentry/upload/lacreport/LAC_PrintReport.pdf)

30 O’neill, Heather. (2012, January). Thinking Outside the Box. Workforce Management. January 2012. Retrieved from <http://www.highbeam.com/doc/1G1-277898192.html>

31 Legal Action Center. (2004). AFTER PRISON: ROADBLOCKS TO RE-ENTRY. Retrieved from [http://www.lac.org/roadblocks-to-reentry/upload/lacreport/LAC\\_PrintReport.pdf](http://www.lac.org/roadblocks-to-reentry/upload/lacreport/LAC_PrintReport.pdf)

and never convicted, some penalties still impact them,<sup>32</sup> and although it is illegal to ask during an interview whether or not someone has been arrested, this happens.<sup>33</sup> Employers are legally allowed to ask prospective job applicants whether or not they have been convicted of a crime, although there is a national movement to make this prohibited<sup>34</sup>.

## Institutionalized Population

From a retail development strategy, shelters and imprisoned individuals threaten retail corridor vitality because they do not have disposable income and they make people feel unsafe. Shelter residents typically do not have excess amounts of disposable income (except perhaps people who are staying in shelters for safety or domestic dispute situations), and shelters do not create an environment conducive to shopping, retail, or commercial development. For the people staying in the shelters, they probably do not feel connected to the community and may be aware of the fact that they may not be welcome in the community. This rift prevents people from developing a sense of place and forming the types of social ties that are conducive to business.

As a result of “as of right” development, shelters are typically sited in industrial areas with little retail development, or in buildings that would serve a higher purpose as commercial space. Unfortunately there is little that can be done to prevent shelters from moving in, and despite community outrage and organization, developers do not need discretionary approvals from local politicians.

According to 2010 census data at the census tract level, 2827 people in Brownsville live in group quarters.<sup>35</sup> Group quarters counts include institutionalized populations staying in correctional facilities (136) and nursing facilities (462), as well as non-institutionalized populations in college and military housing (0) and shelters (2,229). A remarkable 1 in 30 Brownsville residents live in group quarters, compared to Brooklyn’s rate of 1 in 69. It is important to keep in mind that there are several colleges and other institutions with group quarters elsewhere in Brooklyn that contribute to the borough-wide number. In reality, Brownsville’s concentration of shelters is far greater than the borough-wide average: 1 in 38 Brownsville residents live in shelters, compared while the rest of Brooklyn has a rate of 1 in 139 residents. Brownsville also has a higher rate of adults in correctional facilities than Brooklyn: 1 in 624 compared to 1 in 1048.<sup>36</sup> It is no wonder that Brownsville has a reputation as a warehouse for various unwanted populations. The impending addition of yet another shelter at the corner of Herkimer and Sackman will substantially increase the issues posed by the high concentration of shelters in Brownsville.

## Discussion

From a retail development perspective, there are several demographic trends that pose challenges to a maintaining a vibrant retail atmosphere in Brownsville. First, a smaller customer base makes it more difficult for retail operations to stay afloat, as there are simply not enough people to purchase goods and services from the businesses currently located in Brownsville; a neighborhood of 86,000 cannot support the same volume of commerce as a neighborhood of 120,000. The existing customer base can hardly support extant retail establishments. It is not large or strong enough to support new entrepreneurs or the types of new businesses people want in Brownsville. Recommendations will therefore focus on increasing the customer base, reinvigorating retail corridors through zoning and streetscape design changes, and laying the groundwork for creative partnerships between landowners holding vacant properties and entrepreneurs and nonprofits looking to establish themselves in Brownsville.

Low levels of educational attainment by Brownsville residents also stifle creative business development and entrepreneurial endeavors. Without the skills and confidence provided through higher education and job training, it is hard for local residents to develop sound business plans to or to gain employment in high paying industries, which usually require a certain level of education. Equitable access to education and job training are essential to stimulating economic growth and strengthening retail corridors in Brownsville.

The disproportionate concentration of female-led households is an impediment to retail development because, on average, women earn less than men and thus have less disposable income; median earnings for females are \$31,779 and \$35,832 for men.<sup>37</sup> Furthermore, people living in single-parent households are more likely to be convicted of crimes and to exhibit low educational attainment. The challenges of being a single mother can outweigh the willingness to take risks associated with starting a business, particularly when women make less money than men. This trend has a rippling effect

32 O’neill, Heather. (2012, January). Thinking Outside the Box. Workforce Management. January 2012. Retrieved from <http://www.highbeam.com/doc/1G1-277898192.html>

33 Legal Action Center. (2011). Criminal Records and Employment. Retrieved from [http://www.lac.org/doc\\_library/lac/publications/CriminalRecordsAndEmployment.pdf](http://www.lac.org/doc_library/lac/publications/CriminalRecordsAndEmployment.pdf)

34 O’neill, Heather. (2012, January). Thinking Outside the Box. Workforce Management. January 2012. Retrieved from <http://www.highbeam.com/doc/1G1-277898192.html>

35 New York City Department of City Planning. (2010). Table P-1 CT: Group Quarters Population by Group Quarters. Retrieved from [http://www.nyc.gov/html/dcp/html/census/demo\\_tables\\_2010.shtml](http://www.nyc.gov/html/dcp/html/census/demo_tables_2010.shtml)

36 Ibid

37 U.S. Census Bureau. (2010.) PUMA5 04007 2005-2009 Five-Year Summary Files.

through Brownsville as there are many more women than men who are heading households and earning income. While addressing the root causes of this trend are beyond the scope of this report, several recommendations will focus on methods of bringing entrepreneurial training to women in Brownsville and for increasing the opportunity for people to access educational opportunities, gain business planning skills and certifications, and identify potential funding sources for business ventures.

Lack of parental supervision and constructive opportunities for recreation in the neighborhood contribute to crime in Brownsville. Using crime data for Brooklyn zip codes, we can see a correlation between prison admission rates and low-income, single-parent led households, and unemployment. According to numerous interviews with community stakeholders, an extensive informal day care economy has developed in response to the high rate of working single mothers in Brownsville.

Although Brownsville has the highest concentration of public housing in the country, there is a shortage of affordable housing. Nearly two-thirds of households pay more than 30% of their monthly income in housing costs. As a result, Brownsville residents, especially renters, do not have access to disposable income. This is a hurdle to consumer purchasing power, and also an obstacle for potential entrepreneurs who want to start businesses, but do not have access to start-up capital.

High rates of crime pose serious safety concerns for shoppers, and Brownsville's high rate of prison admission traps many residents in a vicious cycle of incarceration and unemployment. A survey of Brownsville residents shows that concerns about safety drive potential shoppers to other neighborhoods, taking disposable income to businesses that do not directly benefit the people of Brownsville. Recommendations will examine best practices in creating safety through environmental design, strategic urban design interventions, and placemaking activities. People who have criminal records often have challenges finding work, and of most people who are reintroduced into the criminal justice system are unemployed at the time of their re-incarceration. Recommendations focus on strategies to encourage local hiring of parolees and informing residents of Brownsville of their legal rights when it comes to employment.

## BUSINESS AND EMPLOYMENT INVENTORY

To better understand and evaluate the opportunities and obstacles facing the Ocean-Hill/Brownsville Community, we conducted an economic analysis using business establishment and employment data released by the U.S. Census Bureau (County Business Patterns, CBP) and the Bureau of Labor Statistics (Quarterly Census Employment Wages, QCEW). Using these datasets, we were able to estimate the number of jobs by sector and identify specific areas of growth and weakness within Community District 16's economy. To complement these economic analyses, we distributed two surveys in order to better understand the characteristics and needs of Community District's 16 customers and the business owners.

### Methods of Analysis: Understanding Brownsville-Ocean-Hill's Economy

#### Methodology

Both the CBP and the QCEW release annual and quarterly employment and establishment data at the national, state, and county level. Unfortunately, these employment data are not released at the census tract level, making it difficult to analyze and present a clear picture of economic activity within Ocean-Hill/Brownsville. We have bypassed this problem by using the data provided by the CBP of the registered number of establishment and their size (estimated by range of employees) at the zip-code level. By multiplying the registered number of establishments by the median of the range of employees, we have created a rough estimate of the number of people employed in each sector. Because the Ocean-Hill/Brownsville encompasses three zip-codes (11207, 11212, and 11233), it was necessary to create a composite study area for the purposes of our economic analysis (Figure 5.3-(1)).

#### Workforce Patterns and Economic Base-Analysis

In 2009 approximately 59% of the workforce in Community District 16 was employed in three sectors: Health Care and Social Assistance (40%), Transportation (12%), and Retail (13%) (Figure 1). This employment distribution roughly mirrors the borough wide workforce distribution, with Health Services (34%) and Retail (12%) as the primary sectors of employment. Given the predominance of the Health Care, Social Assistance, and Retail sectors in the Community District 16 economy, how do the economic trends of Brooklyn and New York City affect Ocean-Hill/ Brownsville? Why is Transportation such a predominant economic force? Are these sectors local strengths or future weaknesses? The answers to these questions can not only help us identify the strength and weaknesses of the Community District 16 economy; it can also allow us to better evaluate and define the economic opportunities that have the potential to be sustainable in the long run.

### Workforce Patterns

In the section that follows, we rely on economic base and shift-share analyses to explain why Brooklyn experienced a more sustained growth in its Retail sector when measured against the Brooklyn, and whether Community District 16 contributed to this growth. We also explore the primacy of the Health Services sector and Transportation, as well as the implications

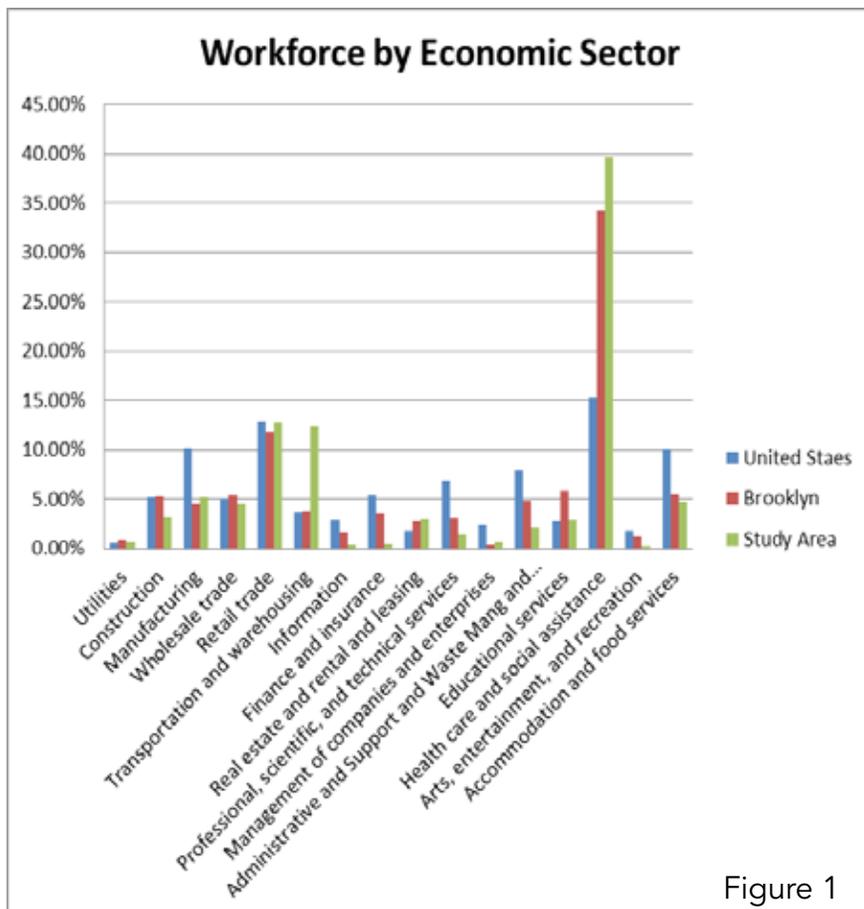


Figure 1

of the absence of a diversified economy. This will allow us to propose recommendations that can be linked to the economic trajectories of Brooklyn and the City. Doing so will help us identify the economic contributions Community District 16 can make to overall economic prosperity through a coordinated linkage of its land-use, community, and workforce assets.

#### Indices of Growth

Our period of analysis (2007-2009) has been defined by the loss of jobs due to the Recession of 2007-2009 (5.05% national job loss). As expected, most sectors of the economy experienced a sharp decline of employment, with the notable exception of the Health and Education sectors, which have experienced continued growth since 1998.

#### Economic Weaknesses and Strengths

Although the study area experienced job gains in several sectors (Table 1), compared to the national economy only Transportation and Warehousing, Real Estate and Rental and Leasing, and Health Care and Social Assistance are the only sectors that show strength. The location quotients for these sectors are 3.38, 1.71 and 2.59 respectively. This study

Change in Employment (2007-2009)					
NAICS code	NAICS code description	United States	Brooklyn	Study Area	
All Sectors	Total Employment	-5.1%	0.5%	-1.3%	
22----	Utilities	3.0%	85.2%	-49.3%	
23----	Construction	-17.9%	-2.5%	-15.6%	
31----	Manufacturing	-12.7%	-19.7%	-15.5%	
42----	Wholesale trade	-2.3%	-4.1%	0.6%	
44----	Retail trade	-6.1%	-1.1%	-0.6%	
48----	Transportation and warehousing	-5.4%	1.4%	53.3%	
51----	Information	-3.3%	-8.5%	23.4%	
52----	Finance and insurance	-5.8%	-15.0%	-11.5%	
53----	Real estate and rental and leasing	-8.4%	-7.0%	11.9%	
54----	Professional, scientific, and technical services	-4.2%	-1.8%	60.4%	
55----	Management of companies and enterprises	-8.6%	-41.7%	-92.4%	
56----	Administrative and Support and Waste Mang and Remediation Srvs	-9.2%	13.0%	-10.7%	
61----	Educational services	5.3%	11.3%	32.8%	
62----	Health care and social assistance	4.4%	4.2%	9.1%	
71----	Arts, entertainment, and recreation	0.1%	13.5%	-28.9%	
72----	Accommodation and food services	-1.1%	15.0%	32.3%	

Table 1

NAICS code	NAICS code description	Total Workforce by Economic Sector (2009)		Percentage Change in Employment (2007-2009)		Total Change in Employment (2007-2009)			Location Quotients		National Growth Share		Industrial Mix Share		Local Share Component			
		United States	Brooklyn Study Area	United States	Brooklyn Study Area	United States	Brooklyn Study Area	Brooklyn Study Area	Brooklyn Study Area	Brooklyn Study Area	Brooklyn Study Area							
All Sectors	Total Employment	114,509,626	484,947	11418	-5.1%	0.5%	-1.3%	6,094,629	2,292	145								
22----	Utilities	641,552	4,268	77	3.0%	85.2%	49.3%	18,795	1,963	-75	1.57	1.20	-116	-8	186	12	1,893	-79
23----	Construction	5,967,128	25,589	362	-17.9%	-2.5%	15.6%	1,300,755	646	67	1.01	0.61	1,326	22	3,370	55	4,049	10
31----	Manufacturing	11,632,956	21,878	599	-12.7%	-19.7%	15.5%	1,687,216	5,351	-110	0.44	0.52	1,376	-36	-2,073	-54	1,902	-20
42----	Wholesale trade	5,827,769	26,436	523	-2.3%	-4.1%	0.6%	957,161	-610	-9	1.07	0.90	1,393	-26	759	14	456	15
44----	Retail trade	14,802,767	57,072	1,462	-6.1%	-1.1%	-0.6%	197,081	-1,129	3	0.91	0.99	2,915	-74	588	-15	2,893	80
48----	Transportation and warehousing	4,155,604	18,092	1,403	-5.4%	1.4%	53.3%	235,628	243	488	1.03	0.38	902	-46	-56	-3	1,201	337
51----	Information	3,288,109	8,229	40	-3.3%	-8.5%	23.4%	111,204	-761	8	0.59	0.12	454	-2	160	2	467	9
52----	Finance and insurance	6,171,240	17,152	58	-5.8%	-15.0%	11.5%	377,628	-5,038	-8	0.66	0.09	1,020	-3	144	0	1,874	-4
53----	Real estate and rental and leasing	2,036,590	13,289	347	-8.4%	-7.0%	11.9%	187,585	-996	37	1.54	1.71	722	-16	483	-10	209	63
54----	Professional, scientific, and technical services	7,835,965	15,262	170	-4.2%	-1.8%	60.4%	339,978	-272	64	0.46	0.22	785	-9	139	2	374	98
55----	Management of companies and enterprises	2,851,450	1,552	76	-8.6%	-41.7%	92.4%	267,952	-1,111	-924	0.13	0.27	135	-51	94	-35	882	-638
56----	Administrative and Support and Waste Mang and Remediation Srvs	9,060,987	23,858	239	-9.2%	13.0%	10.7%	922,674	2,741	-29	0.62	0.26	1,067	-13	884	-11	4,693	-4
61----	Educational services	3,200,553	28,247	328	5.3%	11.3%	32.8%	161,168	2,858	81	2.08	1.03	1,283	-12	2,629	26	5,512	68
62----	Health care and social assistance	17,531,142	165,791	4,525	4.4%	4.2%	9.1%	731,495	6,669	377	2.23	0.59	4,041	-10	14,989	391	279	195
71----	Arts, entertainment, and recreation	2,010,339	5,987	27	0.1%	13.5%	28.9%	1,772	710	-11	0.70	0.13	267	-2	271	2	705	13
72----	Accommodation and food services	11,443,293	26,678	545	-1.1%	15.0%	32.3%	121,571	3,489	133	0.55	0.48	1,172	-21	928	26	3,733	137

Table 2

is further indication that the Ocean Hill-Brownsville economy is in desperate need of diversification. Appendix X summarizes the weak and strong industries within our study area and by zipcode.

Even when broken down by specific industries, there is a considerable concentration of successful industries that are highly specialized or tied strictly to the primary economic sectors. These industries are land-use intensive (i.e. School and Employee Bus Transportation, Charter Bus Industry, and Other Transit and Ground Passenger Transportation), highly specialized (Manufacturing and Reproducing Magnetic and Optical Media), or highly susceptible to national market trends (Lessors of Real Estate).

### Shift-Share Analysis

To probe more deeply on the growth and decline of these industries a shift-share analysis was performed. The Shift-Share Projection Technique is used to account for the differences within an industry's local growth rate; it attempts to explain this difference by attributing local growth shares due to: 1) local business competitive advantage (Local Share Calculation); 2) the industry's growth/contracting spurs (Industrial Mix Share); and 3) national trends (National Growth Rate).

Table 2, summarizes the employment lost in the analysis period of 2007-2009 for all economic sectors. Because of the

national economic decline of the 2007-2009, we would expect that the National Growth Share would be minimal if not negative, the overall industrial advantages were limited to the economic sectors that have sustained growth throughout the Crisis (Educational Services; Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation, and Accommodation and Food Services); this was particularly the case for Brooklyn which fared relatively well for those sectors hardest hit by the economic downturn. It is interesting to note that there also appears to be a general local competitive advantage within our study area, unfortunately when we look at the specific industries, we note the pattern identified above: strength in highly concentrated sectors and an undiversified economy.

## ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

In formulating an economic development strategy for Ocean Hill-Brownsville tailored to the neighborhood's unique needs, it is important to look at all of the components that make up the economy of Ocean Hill-Brownsville. This begins with identifying the strengths, weaknesses, and opportunities of this place in the context of regional competition and emerging trends of public-private partnerships. Both of which have contributed positively to New York City overall and been detrimental to Ocean Hill-Brownsville's ability to sustain a thriving economy. This chapter, in conjunction with the chapter on Business and Employment Inventory, will focus not only on the challenges Ocean Hill-Brownsville faces, but also the opportunities it presents.

Economic Development refers to the long-term, concerted actions of policymakers and communities that promote the standard of living and general economic health of a specific area. Different stakeholders have variable scales in mind as they are concerned with the economic development of a particular place. City, State, and Corporate stakeholders often focus on the regional scale, as economy at this level is contingent upon access to globalized markets and larger economic patterns. Small businesses and community groups are more concerned about strengthening the economic conditions of their neighborhood for the sake of their own bottom line and in the interest of their fellow community members. Regardless of scale, economic development efforts in the form of physical improvement, workforce development, PILOT (Payment in Lieu of Taxes), and attractive incentives all work in tandem to create a more whole place that can offer the ingredients for individual upward mobility and increased tax revenue.

The primary goals of economic development are to retain and increase local employment, which positively impacts the community. By extension, and the justification for providing government subsidies and incentives, the local tax base is increased through this new local employment.<sup>1</sup> Increased local employment also raises home and property values<sup>2</sup> and is generally favored by the people who are able to benefit from this process. One potential downside of economic development from a placemaking and community preservation perspective is the potential for the increased value of real estate, which could drive out the people who helped create the community. While increased property values benefit landowners and the local tax base, it can also raise rents and lead to displacement of vulnerable populations. In the case of Ocean Hill-Brownsville, 80% of housing units are renter occupied (ACS 2005-2009), however, the large portion of NYCHA units are not as susceptible to the forces of gentrification and rising rents as private forms of housing. In short, the process of upward mobility usually comes at the expense of one group of people; for example, a business may choose to relocate for better tax incentives, meanwhile its previous community loses the anchor industry. In this case, economic development and its associated benefits for one area may induce poverty, disinvestment, and economic decline in another.

A high level of leadership is necessary to coordinate stakeholders involved in economic development strategies and implementation. For a successful economic development strategy to take effect, residents, business owners and managers, nonprofit and community agencies, government officials, and increasingly large corporations all need to be brought to the table and convinced to share a vision and provide capital.<sup>3</sup> A 1999 survey of city administrators showed that economic development strategies being employed involved local Chambers of Commerce (77% of those surveyed), private business (55%), citizen advisory boards (50%), public/private partnership (41%), state government (30%), utilities companies (29%), and a private economic development foundation (22%). This survey showed that the most common focus of development strategies was the manufacturing industry (70%), followed by retail and service industries (68%).<sup>4</sup> These trends are reflected in the New York City Economic Development Corporation's firm commitment to preserving manufacturing in the city. This strategy involves offering attractive incentives at the city scale which strategically overlap with state and federal incentives. For example, New York City Industrial Business Zones tend to coincide with Federal Empowerment Zones and New York State Empire Zones (which have been discontinued). Ocean Hill-Brownsville does not have Empowerment or Empire Zones, and although it does have an Industrial Business Zone, it is fairly unattractive from a financial perspective when compared to areas such as the South Bronx, which has much better incentives and connectivity to freight trains, interstate trucking, and shipping. Unfortunately, it appears that less local strategy is focused on retail, which is currently Ocean Hill-Brownsville's main export industry.

### Regional Competition

"Economic development increases a regional economy's capacity to create wealth for local residents. Development depends upon the deployment of a region's building blocks - labor, financial capital, facilities and equipment, know-how, land, other physical resources, and public and private infrastructure."<sup>5</sup>

Many different stakeholders are involved in economic development policy formation, but the key difference is the focus of the stakeholders and determining how benefits will be distributed. In the case of Ocean Hill-Brownsville, it is most important to examine the strife between the City's regional focus and decline of the neighborhood's economy as a function of the regional focus. To combat the destructive forces of regional competitiveness, many communities in New York City

1 Bartnik, Timothy J. (1995). Economic Development Strategies. Retrieved from <http://www.upjohninst.org/publications/wp/95-33.pdf>

2 Bartnik, Timothy J. (1991). Who Benefits from State and Local Economic Development Policies? Upjohn Institute for Employment Research. Kalamazoo, MI: W. E.

3 Mier, R., Fitzgerald, J. (1991) Managing Economic Development. Retrieved from <http://edq.sagepub.com/content/5/3/268.full.pdf+html> p. 271-2

4 International City/County Management Association. (1999) Retrieved from <http://www2.icma.org/upload/bc/attach/{BB7BE8BE-87B1-4F15-9211-5DBC84E45681}ed99web.pdf>

5 Kane, Matt. (2004). Public-Sector Economic Development: Concepts and Approaches. Retrieved from <http://econ2.econ.iastate.edu/classes/crp274/swenson/CRP523/Readings/econdevelopmentmattkane.pdf> p. 2

have taken it upon themselves to secure their positioning by leveraging placemaking and community building to secure local employment, job retention, and workforce development strategies tailored to their constituents' needs. Currently, there is no central organization in Ocean Hill-Brownsville coordinating these efforts.

Top-down regional economic development policy has been criticized as picking which businesses will succeed and which will fail,<sup>6</sup> as resources are allocated within a region to best position the ability of the region to compete in a global economy. This often comes at the detriment of neighborhood businesses or community anchors, as factories and large stores are relocated to suit regional needs. In Ocean Hill-Brownsville, this is evidenced by M. Slavin and Sons relocating to the South Bronx in order to capitalize on various incentives. This contributed to the decline of Belmont Avenue and Brownsville's historic reputation as a produce and fish shopping center. Regional priorities can also be seen in the largely underutilized East New York Industrial Business Zone; manufacturing companies are usually encouraged to relocate to IBZs with better access to freight and transportation. As a result, many precious manufacturing lots are used for bus storage, recycling, or lay vacant. This suits New York City's needs, not Ocean Hill-Brownsville's.

Creating jobs through economic development is also more likely to impact the region's workforce; 80% of jobs created in a labor market through economic development strategies go to people who do not live locally<sup>7</sup> Interviews with key stakeholders suggest that many people from Brownsville don't work in the neighborhood industrial business zone, which is perhaps the most likely point of intervention in regional economic development policy. The mean travel time for workers in Brownsville is 47.2 minutes<sup>8</sup>, suggesting that most people who live in Brownsville do not work in Brownsville.

### **Increased Role in Public-Private Partnerships**

Literature about economic development in the United States recognizes a shift from industrial sectors to public-private partnerships focusing on manufacturing retention, small-businesses, and venture capitalism.<sup>9</sup> The decline of urban manufacturing jobs and harmful urban renewal policies in the 1960's led to an upswell of critique about the politics of who was benefiting from economic development policy. Since the 1980's, private-public partnerships have been becoming more prevalent in carrying out economic development, largely as a function of governments aiming to leverage their regional stance and to maintain anchor industries.<sup>10</sup> New York City has been aiming to compete with cities like San Francisco by providing support for venture capitalists in the technology sector, offering shared office space and capital investments.

Public sector economic development aims to identify and build upon the strength and competitive advantage of a local economy while distributing the benefits across the region.<sup>11</sup> The public-sector supports economic development through recruiting key industries through monetary incentives, improving existing businesses, and creating ideal environments for industry development.<sup>12</sup> The public sector is interested in economic development because development patterns carry externalities (displacement, strains on infrastructure, social impacts related to wages), and coordination of economic development can maximize a localities ability to capitalize on its unique position, geographic clustering, and export economy.<sup>13</sup> As the business sector analysis for the zip codes encompassing Ocean Hill-Brownsville has shown (see Business and Employment Inventory Chapter in Appendix), there are not many advantages for high-paying industries; the retail sector scores high, and this is evidenced on the streets by excessive retail clothing and apparel shops. Although these are not typically seen as quality jobs, their presence does contribute to Brownsville's reputation as a place to shop for cheap clothing. Without a strong hold on this sector, it is unclear how the retail corridors in Ocean Hill-Brownsville would perform. For this reason, it is in the best interest of the community to retain these establishments. Unfortunately, there are not as many New York City incentives for retail establishments, although Small Business Services does offer training and assistance to improve business strategies.

Another primary focus of public sector economic development is to retain and attract skilled people and industries that contribute to the economic base by providing high-paying jobs. To contribute to this goal, workforce development and skill-training programs are essential to not only attract private investment, but to ensure that local residents will be hired<sup>14</sup>. Again, these trends play out on a regional and not a local scale. Public-sector economic development also focuses on building the capacity of an area to lure private developers and businesses. This manifests as investment in physical infrastructure such as transportation, education and job-training, safety enhancements, and tax and regulatory incentives that remove financial risk and capital expenditures associated with opening a business.<sup>15</sup>

The last few decades of economic development can be described as local governments sharing in the potential risk and

6 Bartnik, Timothy J. (1995). Economic Development Strategies. Retrieved from <http://www.upjohninst.org/publications/wp/95-33.pdf> p.2

7 Bartik, Timothy. (1993). Who Benefits From Local Job Growth—Migrants or the Original Residents? *Regional Studies* 27, number 4 (1993): 297–311.

8 U.S. Census Bureau. (2010. ) PUMA5 04007 2005-2009 Five-Year Summary Files.

9 Mier, R., Fitzgerald, J. (1991) Managing Economic Development. Retrieved from <http://edq.sagepub.com/content/5/3/268.full.pdf+html> p. 270

10 Kane, Matt. (2004). Public-Sector Economic Development: Concepts and Approaches. Retrieved from <http://econ2.econ.iastate.edu/classes/crp274/swenson/CRP523/Readings/econdevelopmentmattkane.pdf> p. 6

11 Kane, Matt. (2004). Public-Sector Economic Development: Concepts and Approaches. Retrieved from <http://econ2.econ.iastate.edu/classes/crp274/swenson/CRP523/Readings/econdevelopmentmattkane.pdf> p. ii

12 Kane, Matt. (2004). Public-Sector Economic Development: Concepts and Approaches. Retrieved from <http://econ2.econ.iastate.edu/classes/crp274/swenson/CRP523/Readings/econdevelopmentmattkane.pdf> p. 4

13 Ibid, p. ii

14 Ibid

15 Ibid, p. 1

benefits that were traditionally reserved for the private sector.<sup>16</sup> As a function of public investment in creating a more attractive business environment, it is hoped that increased private investment will fuel a cycle of growth as jobs are created, local income increased, and demand for goods and services increased. This will end up leading to more investment and job creation, creating a virtuous cycle that could not occur without public support as other regions compete to attract these same businesses.<sup>17</sup>

### **Placemaking and Economic Development**

Economic development interventions often begin by looking at a perceived needs and fitting individual solutions to address those needs. For example, local firms cannot find local talent, so a job-training program is implemented in a public-private partnership between the company looking to hire and the local government. Affordable office space is lacking, so the government provides a property tax incentive to build a new office park. These strategies are often devoid of the uniqueness offered by place and may contribute to fragmentation of a place or community.<sup>18</sup> In light of the regional focus of economic development strategies, attracting the right people with the leadership to promote local needs is key, and one way to stave off regional forces is through creating a sense of place.<sup>19</sup> This strategy works on several fronts; it makes the neighborhood more attractive to potential businesses, creates community which can lead local hiring, and creates a virtuous cycle of local investment. Placemaking is an effective strategy for a community the size of Ocean Hill-Brownsville. Local economic development is increasingly reliant upon custom-designed strategies developed between local business leaders and government actors.<sup>20</sup> Marketing a community's competitive advantage, particularly through the internet, is increasingly important to attract new businesses and to ease the customer-business relationship. In New York City, we can see this type of marketing being coupled with placemaking efforts in the Southern Boulevard Merchant's Association, who have put together a marketing brochure detailing benefits of the community while highlighting its unmet needs. The idea is to attract more businesses to the area and to generate excitement about the neighborhood amenities.

The business and non-profit community are often better positioned than elected officials to work towards placemaking because they are less concerned with election cycles<sup>21</sup> and are more likely to have a long running relationship with the neighborhood. This being said, actively engaging local officials is a must. In looking at neighborhoods in New York City which have successfully taken on economic development strategies as a way to lift up neighborhood conditions, it is apparent that strong local community leaders are steering the efforts. This success is not accomplished alone; local organizations are able to garner political support from their constituents, which in turn produces support from local representatives. This chain of events can lead to the acquisition of precious resources from New York City and State agencies focusing on economic development strategies and placemaking efforts. Successful organizations with strong financial track records are able to branch out to the national scale and secure funding for placemaking campaigns from foundations who specialize in this type of work.

### **Vacancies and Weak Climate**

Although retail vacancies pose a threat to street vitality and employment, they also offer great potential for creative solutions. Business owners from nearby neighborhoods may chose to locate in Brownsville because it is cheaper. This could occur through a strategic marketing campaign targeting neighboring communities. Cheap space in old buildings is a key ingredient in Jane Jacobs recipe for creating a great neighborhood, as they provide opportunities for residents and businesses to enter a neighborhood without huge financial exposure. Vacant or underutilized retail spaces have also been used across the country as a holding space for innovation. Many communities have inspired property owners of vacant spaces to temporarily offer their spaces as a "Pop-Up" location for local entrepreneurs and artists. These efforts have been shown to successfully launch new businesses, lead to retail leases, and revamp the image of areas with traditionally poor reputation.

It is apparent that regional economic development policy and the overall gains in New York City have come largely at the expense of undervalued communities like Ocean Hill-Brownsville. As the City and the New York City Economic Development Corporation continue to support manufacturing preservation and technology incubators in areas other than Ocean Hill-Brownsville, a homegrown economic development strategy based around placemaking efforts emerges as a proven and opportune strategy. Marketing Ocean Hill-Brownsville's unique offerings while focusing on physical and community interventions to make Ocean Hill-Brownsville a more desirable place for business will create a virtuous cycle in which local residents find gainful employment, new businesses move into the neighborhood, and underutilized space is leveraged to contribute to Ocean Hill-Brownsville's unique character.

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19 Ibid, p. 9

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## PROPERTY AND BUSINESS OWNERSHIP

### Property ownership along the retail strip:

Analysis was completed on property owners in the Brownsville area. We focused our research on property owners along the retail corridors. The question that we were looking to answer was: Are building owners living and working in same area as their buildings are located? We know from our research that businesses in the area are not "homegrown business"; this showed in our property search as well, where almost all owners lived outside the focus area. We analyzed 66 buildings in the Brownsville area and only two of these properties had a Brownsville address. We also identified in our searches ownership patterns; from the 1960s and 1970s buildings were owned by single persons, but in late 1990s and 2000s, a more corporation-based model of ownership began. This new corporation model's primary concern is profit for its shareholders, and that has its disadvantages for the community. Brownsville properties are predominantly corporate-owned. Understanding the patterns of property ownership is an important tool in understanding the community investment level it has in itself, meaning that if you own a building and live in the area your time is spent in the community where your assets are. Brownsville in the 1920's to 1950's was a Jewish enclave and this community had a balance of property owners and home-grown businesses. Today in Brownsville that is not the case; buildings are owned by a corporation and home-grown businesses are hard to find.

In this section, we collected data on property ownership, and we checked to see if taxes were paid-up. We collected data using a five-point criteria, this helps us compare shopping areas to each other. The criteria are:

1. Ownership.
2. Taxes
3. Mortgages
4. Distressed properties (liens)
5. Vacancies

The next step was finding the location where cost per square foot was the highest and that brought us to the corner of Pitkin and Rockaway Avenues which ranges from \$35 to \$50 per sq. foot. What also makes Pitkin and Rockaway Avenues fetch higher rents is this intersection has two major bus routes the B14 and B60. Both have strong ridership in the area. This showed in our customer survey that expressed shoppers came to the strip via buses. Moving away from this area the price of sq. footage drops to \$25 to 35 per sq. foot. We took the five point criteria and compared different areas of the retail strip to each other.

When we look at the four corners of Pitkin and Rockaway Avenues the commercial spaces there are Chase Bank, and (2) tax services, one a Jackson Hewitt and the other an H&R Block. The Jackson Hewitt building is a seasonal business becoming a tax-office during the tax season. At other times it is a variety store that sells clothes. This is not the case with the H&R Block which is not in use for 7 months of the year, and is an empty space for the retail corridor.

The other stores are a pet store, beauty-Store, and two variety stores. There are two vacant store fronts on the block. We analyzed 13 building and of those buildings they are owned by 10 corporations. None of these corporations had a Brownsville/Ocean Hill address. (Most had a Manhattan address, two had a Los Angeles, CA address). There were no properties experiencing foreclosures and/or liens on and all taxes were paid-up in full.

If we look into another retail area along Rockaway south of Pitkin three blocks long we get a different picture. We analysed 16 buildings along that Avenue, of those buildings there were (4) churches, (3) bodega, (2) 99 cent stores, and (4) vacant storefronts. Rents on average cost \$25 to \$35 per sq. foot. The biggest owner is 165 Rockaway LLC, which has an address in Ocean Parkway Brooklyn, this store is "Bargain Hunter" one of the big variety/homestore in the area. Of the 16 buildings 5 had liens on them and three were in some sort of foreclosure process.

During our search it was discovered that a Norman P. Rapport owned many properties in the area. His corporation is based in Manhattan and it is known as Pitrock Realty, Corp. One of the surprising facts that we learned was that all properties were owned outright without any mortgages on them.

## ZONING AND LAND USE

Here are two tables that present the existing zoning and land use conditions of the two retail strips that make up our study area. One table is dedicated to Pitkin Avenue, starting on the west of the corridor, on Ralph street. One table is dedicated to Rockaway Avenue, it starts north from Broadway and heads south. Following the tables are the zoning code explanations.

### Pitkin Avenue

Between	Zoning	Land Use	Details
Eastern Parkway and Howard Avenue	R6A with C2-4 overlay; C8-2	One and two family residence, commercial use, Industrial Manufacturing, Some vacant lots	
Howard Ave and Grafton St.	R6 with C1-3 overlay	Multifamily-Residence (walkup). Mixed Residential and Commercial	
Grafton St and Watkins St	C4-3	Mixed Residential and Commercial	24 blocks total Commercial District
Watkins St and Christopher St	R6 with C2-3 overlay	Mixed Residential and Commercial, Few Industrial/Manufacturing, Few Vacant lots, One Public facility/ Institution	4 blocks total
Christopher St and Powel Street	R6 with C2-3 overlay	Multifamily-Residential	Public Housing
Powel St and Van Sinderen Ave.	M1-4	Mostly Industrial/Manufacturing, few Mixed Residential and Commercial, Vacant Land and few Parking lots	

### Rockaway Avenue

Between	Zoning	Land Use	Detail
Broadway and Sumpter	R6, with C2-3 commercial overlay	One and two family residence and mixed residential and commercial	
Sumpter and Hall Street	R6	One and two family residence and mixed residential and commercial and public facilities and institutions	
Hull to Herkimer	R6, C2-3 commercial overlay	Residential and commercial overlay, one and two family housing	Rockaway Subway stop
Herkimer and Atlantic	R5, one lot of C2-3 commercial overlay	One vacant lot, commercial use, mixed residential and commercial	
Atlantic and Dean	R6	Many vacant lots and some commercial use on the east, one superblock with mixed residential and commercial on the west	Public housing, Tower in the park, the building doesn't follow the street, a lot of unused floor space
Dean and Bergen	R6, C2-3 commercial overlay	One vacant lot, industrial use, mixed residential and commercial, One and two family residence, public facilities and institutions	
Bergen and St Marks	R6	One vacant lot, public facilities and institutions, One and two family residence	
Eastern Parkway and East New York- East side	R6, C2-3 commercial overlay,	Industrial, mixed residential and commercial, parking, commercial, transportation utility	
Eastern Parkway and East New York – West Side	C8-2 district	Commercial use, Public facilities and institutions	
East New York Avenue and Glenmore Avenue	R6, C2-3 commercial overlay	Mix residential and commercial, commercial, Public facilities, Vacant Land, industrial manufacturing	
Glenmore Avenue and Sutter Avenue	R6	Mixed residential and commercial, predominance of commercial use, vacant lots and parking	
Sutter Avenue and Livonia – East side	R6	Multi Family residence	Tower in the park-style public housing, no streetwall, large swaths of unused greenspace
Sutter Avenue and Livonia- West Side	R6, C2-3 commercial overlay	One and two family residence, Mixed residential and commercial, facilities and institutions, few vacant lots	

## Study Area Zoning Analysis

### R6

The study area consists primarily of medium-density R6 residential zones with C1 and C2 commercial overlays. In R6 districts, there are two development options. Under the height factor rules, permitted residential floor area ratios (FAR) range from .78 to 2.43 depending on the open space provided. For community facility uses (Use Groups 1-4) the permitted FAR is 4.8. Building envelopes for buildings developed under the height factor have no set height limit and are regulated by the sky exposure plane. Off-street parking is required for 70% of the dwelling units.

In R6 districts, developers may utilize the optional Quality Housing program which permits up to 2.2 FAR with a maximum building height of 55 feet on narrow streets (75 feet in width or less), and up to 3.0 FAR with a height limit of 70 feet on wide streets (greater than 75 feet in width).

In R6 districts off-street parking is required for 50% of the dwelling units and may be waived if the number of parking spaces is less than five.

C1 and C2 are commercial overlay districts that permit "local shopping and services" where the bulk is controlled by the underlying residential district with maximum commercial floor area-ratio of up to 2.0.

### C8

The study area contains a large C-8 heavy commercial district between Eastern Parkway and East New York Avenue, running from Ralph Avenue to Stone Avenue. Because automotive shops and businesses with large parking lots are permitted in C-8 districts, such businesses have proliferated along this strip, creating a visual and psychological barrier between the northern and southern portions of the neighborhood. C-8 carries undesirable uses that cannot mix with residential uses. The C8-2 district regulations allow all commercial uses up to FAR 2.0 or FAR 4.8 for community facilities or mixed commercial and community facility buildings. Height is governed by a sky exposure plane.

### C4

The area around the intersection of Pitkin and Rockaway Avenues, which is zoned C-4-3 presents a unique opportunity for more intense commercial uses. With a maximum commercial FAR of 3.4, lots in the C-4 district could accommodate larger retail and commercial enterprises, but leaves little room for increased residential development, which is key to maintaining a high level of pedestrian activity and increasing commerce in the study area. In the C4-3 the equivalent for residential is R6. The R6 allows for the Quality Housing program and some inclusionary housing but it is not mandatory.

The C4-3 district regulations permit commercial buildings of up to 3.4 FAR, residential and mixed commercial/residential building of up to 2.43 FAR under height factor regulations and 3.0 using the Quality Housing regulations (R6 equivalent). Community facility buildings may build to a maximum FAR of 4.8. There is no firm height limit in C4-3 districts if height factor regulations are utilized; rather, height is governed by a sky exposure plane.

Existing Overlays: C1-1 C1-3 C2-1 C2-3 C2-4 (others than Rockaway 200 and 150 feet wide)

All of the commercial overlays date to 1961, with the exception of the C2-3 district along Livonia Avenue between East 98th Street and Strauss Street, and along Rockaway between Sutter Avenue and New Port Street which was mapped in 1987. C1 overlays permit basic small-scale retail shops and offices (Use Groups 1-6). C2 overlays permit a slightly broader range of service uses, such as funeral homes and repair shops (Use Groups 1-9 and 14). C1 and C2 overlays have a maximum FAR of 2.0 when mapped in R6 districts, though commercial uses are limited to the first floor when residences are located above. Most commercial uses within C1-3 and C2-3 overlays are required to provide one off-street parking space for each 400 square feet of commercial space, with a waiver for uses requiring less than 25 spaces.

The C2-3 overlays allow a slightly broader range of service uses, such as funeral homes and repair services and are mapped along Pitkin avenue, east of Watkins Street and Sutter Avenue between Watkins Street and Mother Gaston Boulevard. In R6 districts, the commercial FAR can be up to 2.0, while in R5 districts the maximum is 1.0.

C1 districts permit Use Groups 1 through 6, while C2 districts permit Use Groups 1 through 9 and 14.

Commercial Overlay located in Rockaway and the commercial District of Pitkin is discontinuous for no apparent reason. Pitkin Avenue is currently zone C4-3 between Grafton Street and Watkins Street, when it changes to R6 with a commercial overlay of C2-1 up to Powell Street where the zone changes to M1-1. (Instead of increase commercial uses towards these areas which happen to be closer to the Junction Subway Station.) Rockaway is zoned mostly as R6 with commercial overlays (different commercial overlays C1-1, C1-3, C2-1, 100 feet wide that interrupts in different sections. Creating patches over this corridor with commercial stores and other with no commercial uses.

Along Junius Street and Powell Street there is a M1-1. These blocks are part of the IBZ that continues on the neighboring community district 5. A manufacturing area is an asset for the area since it could contribute to the creation of jobs, on the other hands the specific location of this block are close to the subway station stops at Sutter Avenue, Livonia Avenue and Broadway Junction which are great area to increase commercial uses and residential density.

M1-1 districts are intended for light industry, although heavier industrial uses can be located within M1-1 districts if they meet performance standards set forth in the Zoning Resolution. Commercial uses are also allowed and the maximum FAR for all permitted uses is 1.0. Residential uses are not allowed. Maximum building height is regulated by a sky exposure plane.

### **Retail Corridor Land Use Analysis**

The five most common active ground-floor uses along commercial strips in the study area were apparel retailers (16.2% of storefronts), delis and grocery stores (10.4%), beauty salons (8.5%), food service establishments (8.5%), and variety/discount stores (4.9%). Together, these uses account for 48.5% of storefronts in the study area. A retail mix that skews so heavily toward discount apparel stores and delis is unhealthy, and increasing retail diversity is essential to fostering economic development in Brownsville. Though improving retail mix is a major goal of this project, vacant storefronts are the second most common ground-floor use along the retail corridors, and decreasing retail vacancy is both key to improving retail mix and an important goal in its own right.

The land use study revealed that 14% of ground-floor commercial spaces in the study area were vacant. This rate is on par with the borough-wide rate of 14.1%, but borough-wide retail vacancy figures were last collected in 2009, when the city's economy was somewhat weaker than it is today. Furthermore, the 2009 vacancy study excluded chain stores from its count, inflating the figure by neglecting to count thriving non-locally owned businesses.# In our vacancy count, we did not consider seasonally vacant storefronts, such as those containing income tax assistance firms, to be vacant even though they are not in active use throughout most of the year. Thus, our analysis does not reflect how the proliferation of such businesses in Brownsville has artificially increased the vacancy rate.

The vacancy rate in the upper floors of buildings with ground-floor commercial uses is even more staggering than the retail vacancy rate. 35.4% of buildings for which we could determine upper-floor occupancy status were vacant above the first floor. This figure does not include the many buildings in which the upper floors, originally intended for residential use, were being used for storage space, nor does it include one-story buildings, which comprise 13.6% of the total commercial stock in the study area. The chronic underuse and vacancy of the upper floors of buildings along retail strips in the study area has far reaching effects for population density, public safety, the provision of public funds and resources, and many other factors vital to economic development in Brownsville.

# STREETSCAPE AND URBAN DESIGN

A design survey was conducted along Rockaway and Pitkin Avenues in order to analyse the existing physical conditions of the two retail corridors. The survey took into account the sidewalk's condition and the featured infrastructures, trees, emergency phones, benches, poles, bus stops, lights, and glazing. Two maps were created summarizing this block-by-block analysis. This analysis section is divided into four parts, first the southern part, from Livonia Avenue to Pitkin Avenue, the northern part of Rockaway Avenue, from Pitkin Avenue to Fulton Street, and secondly the east part of Pitkin Avenue, from the Eastern Parkway to Rockaway Avenue and finally the west part of Pitkin Avenue, from Pitkin Avenue to Van Sinderen Avenue.

## **1. Rockaway Avenue - Between Livonia Avenue and Pitkin Avenue**

The section of Rockaway Avenue between Livonia and Sutter Avenues is marked by vast, wide sidewalks adjacent to large NYCHA buildings on the Eastern side of the street, and short mixed-use, commercial and residential buildings on the western side. On the western side of the street, there are several highly visible NYPD closed-circuit cameras, while the eastern side of the street, with its wide sidewalks and meagre pedestrian traffic, is quite desolate. As Rockaway Avenue moves north toward Pitkin Avenue, and the density of both pedestrians and buildings increases, the aesthetic qualities of the streetscape improve due to the presence of street trees. The sidewalk decreases in width considerably, but there remains a comfortable path for pedestrians going either direction. There are some inconsistencies in street walls and glazing along this stretch, but these differences may be necessary to support many of the businesses leading toward the busier Pitkin Avenue Corridor, particularly fabric stores, which display items outside of their windows. Though some inconsistencies are justifiable, others are not, and the lack of street wall and glazing consistency on this section of Rockaway Avenue has a negative impact on the pedestrian and shopping experience.

## **2. Rockaway Avenue –From Pitkin Avenue to Fulton Street**

The section of Rockaway Avenue between Pitkin Avenue and Fulton Street is characterized by a dearth of trees, lack of retail continuity and commercial design uniformity as well as many blocks with unsafe pedestrian environments. Although some trees dot the avenues, their absence along many portions of the corridor prevent the streetscape from having a pleasant and welcoming feel. In addition, the strip suffers from inconsistent commercial design and a lack of retail continuity. There are large sections of Rockaway Avenue north of Pitkin Avenue that do not have ground floor commercial spaces, and existing businesses often have greatly divergent awning designs, creating a lack of design uniformity. Furthermore, there are numerous instances of sidewalks too narrow for pedestrian use (approximately 3 ft wide), broken sidewalks, and sidewalk obstructions. These narrow sidewalks exist in spaces where property owners have extended their properties past the legal lot line, in clear violation of setback regulations. The lack of a continuous street-wall impedes the pedestrian experience. Furthermore, there are large stretches of broken and uneven sidewalks all along the corridor, and sidewalk obstructions such as electrical cords and hoses can pose a threat to pedestrians. Improving design consistency, street wall continuity, and sidewalk quality is essential to creating a welcoming environment along this stretch Rockaway Avenue.

## **3. Pitkin Avenue - Between Eastern Parkway Extension and Rockaway Avenue**

Pitkin Avenue between Rockaway Avenue and Eastern Parkway Extension is a vibrant commercial strip with many thriving businesses and heavy foot traffic. It has approximately 3 trees per block and sidewalks approximately 15 feet wide in most areas. The lack of glazing on many ground floor retail establishments and out-of-scale commercial signage are the two largest street design problems facing Pitkin Avenue. Additionally, the sidewalk in some areas needs to be repaired and leveled, and the continuity of the tree line has to be restored in order to facilitate smooth circulation of pedestrians.

## **4. Pitkin Avenue - Between Rockaway Avenue and Van Sinderen Avenue**

The stretch of Pitkin Avenue between Rockaway and Van Sinderen Avenues comprises two special districts: The East New York Industrial Business Zone (IBZ) and the Pitkin Avenue Business Improvement District (PABID). These two portions of Pitkin Avenue are completely distinct in terms of both feel and design.

The IBZ, as the name implies, contains mostly industrial uses and, as a result, is an unappealing area for pedestrians. The IBZ essentially cuts the PABID off from the nearest subway stop, the "L" station at Sutter Avenue. As one approaches the PABID, sidewalk quality improves, but only marginally. Street trees, though few in number emerge, and the shops along this stretch are open on a more consistent basis than in other sections of the study area. Several streets that intersect with Pitkin Avenue in this area, including Christopher Avenue, Osborn Street, and Thatford Avenue come to dead ends at the housing projects north of Pitkin Avenue. The discontinuity of these streets and the commercial vacuum that it creates need to be addressed.

To conclude, both Pitkin and Rockaway Avenues suffer from a lack of continuity in the landscape. This discontinuity owes its existence to a variety of factors: the diversity of the architecture along the avenues, from high rise New York City Housing Authority buildings to beginning of the century two story buildings; street-walls with too much or too little signage and glazing; inconsistency of first floor uses, from residential to commercial; changes in the width of the sidewalk; and the lack of street furniture in certain places such as trees and benches.

# TRANSPORTATION

## Introduction

This section is an analysis of the existing transportation system and issues of transit access within Brownsville. Timely transit access to, from, and within Brownsville is very important to the neighborhood's economic security. Residents who work outside of the neighborhood must be able to get to and from their jobs in a timely manner, and good transit access within and from outside Brownsville widens the potential customer base of Brownsville's retail establishments. Enhancing multi-modal connections to Brownsville's two main shopping corridors, Pitkin and Rockaway Avenues, is critical for increasing the shopping on the corridors.

## Subways and the Broadway Junction Transit Hub

Community District 16 has a wealth of transit options, but the connections between subway stations and the Rockaway and Pitkin Avenues retail corridors are poor. Most stations in the area are distant from the intersection of Rockaway and Pitkin Avenues and, at current, there are no buses that allow passengers departing at Broadway Junction, the district's major transit hub, to directly connect to Brownsville's two retail corridors. This lack of direct bus connections to the retail center makes it difficult for people to get to retail corridors from subway stations. Improving transit access to the retail corridors will boost their customer base and encourage commuters to shop on the corridors on their trips to and from Manhattan and to other points in Brooklyn. Currently, subway access to these two corridors is limited because the stations are distance from the shopping corridors, and connections between subways and other forms of transit, such as buses and LIRR commuter rail are difficult to navigate. The subways are not sign to inform potential customers about the shopping corridors and wayfinding on pedestrian walkways leading from subway stations to the retail corridors further exacerbates this issue.

The table below indicates the lack of proximity of Brownsville subway station to the center of the retail shopping corridors.<sup>22</sup>

Station	Lines Served	Walking Distance to Intersection of Pitkin And Rockaway Avenues
Broadway Junction	A, C, J/Z, L	14 blocks
Atlantic Ave	L	12 blocks
Sutter Avenue	L	10 blocks
Livonia Avenue	L	13 blocks
Junius Street	3	12 blocks
Rockaway Avenue	3	5 blocks
Rockaway Avenue	C	9 blocks
Chauncey Street	J, Z	18 blocks

Besides access to the retail corridors Brownsville residents require timely access to Manhattan were there many potential jobs for Brownsville residents with the appropriate skills and education.

22 From Google Maps

## Brownsville Ocean Hill Subway Ridership and Travel Time

Station	Lines Served	Daily Ridership in 2010 <sup>60</sup>	Travel Time to Mid-Manhattan or Lower Manhattan <sup>61</sup> *
Broadway Junction	A, C, J/Z, L	8441	A: 36 Minutes L: 25 Minutes C: 41 Minutes J/Z: 22 Minutes
Atlantic Ave	L	1440	26 Minutes
Chauncey Avenue	L	2984	25 Minutes
Sutter Avenue	L	4205	27 Minutes
Livonia Avenue	L	2,678	28 Minutes
Junius Street	3	2,153	44 Minutes
Rockaway Avenue	3	5,715	42.5 Minutes
Rockaway Avenue	C	4,971	33 minutes

\* Times during the AM peak ( Midtown to 42 street), Lower Manhattan( Chamber Street), J, Z or Union Square(L)

The main transit hub in Brownsville is the Broadway Junction Subway Station. The station is a major transit hub, but daily ridership has been decreasing in recent years. According to a 2011 MTA count, daily ridership in the station declined from 8,712 in 2007 to 8,411 in 2011.<sup>23</sup> The hub provides Brownsville residents with access to Manhattan and other sections of Brooklyn. Five subway lines run through Broadway Junction: The A (Fulton-8th Avenue Express), the C (Fulton-8th Avenue Local), the J/Z (Broadway Brooklyn-Jamaica), and the L (Manhattan-Canarsie). According to September 2007 study, persons entering and exiting at Broadway Junction account for no more than one-quarter of all passengers at Broadway Junction.<sup>24</sup> Riders transferring between trains account for a vast majority of activity at the station.<sup>25</sup> Therefore, the station serves as a key transfer point for non-Brownsville residents who are travelling to other parts of the City.

Access is a significant issue at the Broadway Junction transit hub. There is only one entrance, and the station is not hand-capped accessible. The station does have two down and two up escalators. Although there are bus connections at the station, multimodal connections are in need of improvement to the Pitkin and Rockaway Avenue shopping corridors. The lone entrance is on Van Sinderen Avenue, and people transferring to the buses are required all wait in a small area for four buses lines. There are three additional subway stations on the L line in the project's study area: Atlantic Avenue, Sutter Avenue, and Livonia Avenue. These stations are all nearby to medium-density New York City public housing projects. In addition to the L stations, the 3 train serve stations at Junius Street and Rockaway Avenue. Moreover, the C and J/Z trains serve a station at Rockaway Avenue and the Chauncey Street. Overall subway usage in the Brownsville increased from 2007 to 2011. Nevertheless the stations are not among the highest use ones in the City or in Brooklyn, for none of the stations have usage above 10,000 on an average weekday.<sup>26</sup>

Poor subway access presents a big problem for the Pitkin Avenue shopping corridor. The L station at Sutter Avenue is only three blocks from the Pitkin Avenue commercial strip, but the route to the corridor is desolate and poorly lit. Moreover, the station is 10 blocks away from the intersection of Pitkin and Rockaway Avenues. The next nearest station, the Rockaway Avenue 3 train station borders on the Rockaway Avenue commercial corridor, but is a ten to fifteen minute walk from the heart of the commercial district at the intersection of Pitkin and Rockaway Avenues.

### Buses

The bus routes that run through the study area are generally well-used, but weekday ridership has been flagging since 2007, while weekend ridership has increased only modestly. Aside from the B14, B35 and B60 routes, most of the bus that runs through the study area stop at Broadway Junction transit hub. None of these routes, however, run between the transit hub and along Pitkin Avenue. Travel times on the B60 from the Broadway Junction train station to the Pitkin Avenue Shop-

23 [http://www.mta.info/nyc/facts/ridership/index.htm#chart\\_s](http://www.mta.info/nyc/facts/ridership/index.htm#chart_s)

24 [http://www.nyc.gov/html/dcp/html/transportation/td\\_broadway\\_junction.shtml](http://www.nyc.gov/html/dcp/html/transportation/td_broadway_junction.shtml)

25 [http://www.nyc.gov/html/dcp/html/transportation/td\\_broadway\\_junction.shtml](http://www.nyc.gov/html/dcp/html/transportation/td_broadway_junction.shtml)

26 [http://www.mta.info/nyc/facts/ridership/index.htm#chart\\_s](http://www.mta.info/nyc/facts/ridership/index.htm#chart_s)

ping Center, the intersection of Pitkin and Rockaway Avenue is 8 minutes.

Improving transit connections between subway stations (Broadway Junction, Rockaway Avenue, Sutter Avenue) and Brownsville's retail corridors is essential to neighborhood economic development. In addition to bringing shoppers to the neighborhood, buses carry Brownsville residents to and from the neighborhood. During both AM and PM rush hours, buses in Brownsville run every 5 to 9 minutes but weak connections to much faster subway lines limit the utility of buses to commuters. The B60 runs from the General Mall Facility to Crown Heights/Utica Avenue and it runs every 12 minutes during the AM and PM peak periods. The B12 runs from Alabama Avenue/East New York and Ocean Parkway and it runs every 5 minutes during the AM Peak and 8 minutes during the PM peak. The B14 runs from Utica Avenue/Eastern Parkway in Crown Heights, then through Brownsville via Pitkin Avenue and down Mother Gaston Boulevard, then Sutter Avenue in East New York, terminating at the Brooklyn General Mail Facility. The B15 runs approximately every 15 minutes. The B25 runs from Broadway Junction/Alabama Avenue and Furman Street/Fulton Landing; it runs every 7 minutes during the AM peak and 8 minutes during the PM peak. The B35 runs from McDonald/Church Avenues to Mother Gaston Blvd/Hegman Avenue and the route runs every 6 minutes during the AM peak and 8 minutes during the PM peak. The B83 runs from East New York and the General Mall Facility and the route runs every 6 to 9 minutes during the AM peak and every 6 to 9 minutes.

The BM2 express line that runs from Broadway Junction to 57th Street and 2nd Avenue in Manhattan takes approximately one hour and twenty minutes to reach midtown Manhattan, far longer than a subway train from any of the stations in the area. The MTA has implemented select bus service along various routes in New York City, but aside from Atlantic Avenue, no thoroughfares in the Community District 16 would be candidates for select service. On "Select" buses, customers purchase tickets before boarding and can use three entrances to do so, substantially reducing boarding and exit times. Thus reducing the traffic times on the bus route. A select bus route on Atlantic Avenue would improve access to Brownsville.

### **Long Island Railroad**

The East New York LIRR station, located beneath Atlantic Avenue at Van Sinderen Place, is an underused asset. The two lines that serve East New York station do not provide riders with direct access to Penn Station. Instead, they run between Nassau County, the Rockaways, and Atlantic Terminal in Downtown Brooklyn. Signage leading to the LIRR station from other modes of public transit is extremely poor, and the station, which lacks ticket agents, is only accessible via a dark, poorly maintained pedestrian underpass. As a result of these issues, the station has an average daily ridership of only 1,127 people per day.<sup>27</sup> There is a pedestrian underpass at the station. One of the reasons for the low ridership at the station is that people do not feel safe.

### **Bicycle and Pedestrian Infrastructure**

Aside from a bicycle path along Eastern Parkway, there is very little designated bicycle infrastructure in the study area. In Northern Brownsville there are bicycle lanes<sup>28</sup> on Bergen Street from Howard Avenue to Mother Gaston Boulevard and on St Marks Street from Howard Avenue to Eastern Parkway but these lanes do not provide access to the retail corridors. Pitkin and Rockaway Avenues lack both bicycle lanes and racks. Likewise, pedestrian infrastructure in the neighborhood is in need of attention. Moreover, as indicated in the streetscape section of the report there is only one bicycle rack and no bicycle lanes on the shopping corridors. Also, as illustrated in the Land Use and Urban Design portions of the report, sidewalk widths and conditions vary wildly throughout the neighborhood, and wayfinding from key transit stops to the Rockaway and Pitkin Avenue retail corridors is very poor. There are neckdowns on the sidewalks that do not facilitate the movement of wheelchairs as indicated in the land use section of the report.

### **Automobile and Truck Infrastructure**

Average automobile usage on Pitkin Avenue and Rockaway Avenue is 5,790 and 4,500 cars per day, respectively. During peak hours, traffic on both roads is very heavy. Pitkin Avenue runs in the East West from the Eastern Parkway to Cross Bay Boulevard. The traffic congestion increases the time it takes to get to the Pitkin Avenue shopping corridor. The congestion makes the Pitkin Avenue shopping corridor a less desirable location for shopping. Hence the congestion may be a contributing factor in reducing shopping on the retail corridors. During Saturday afternoon's traffic on Rockaway Avenue toward the 3 line is very congested and on Pitkin Avenue there is very heavy traffic in both directions.

The only designated through truck route in the area is on Atlantic Avenue. There are 2 local truck routes along East New York Avenue and Rockaway Avenue.<sup>29</sup> The Community District 16 Community Needs Assessment Statement indicated that there has been increasing truck traffic on the local street system in recent years, which, as mentioned above, strains local infrastructure and endangers pedestrians and cyclists. The lack of designated truck routes makes the nearby IBZ an undesirable location for business. Furthermore, the lack of truck routes slows commerce in the area by making it more dif-

27 <http://lirr42.mta.info/stationInfo.php?id=14>

28 [http://www.nyc.gov/html/dot/downloads/pdf/2011\\_northern-brownsville-study.pdf](http://www.nyc.gov/html/dot/downloads/pdf/2011_northern-brownsville-study.pdf)

29 [http://www.nyc.gov/html/dot/downloads/pdf/2011\\_northern-brownsville-study.pdf](http://www.nyc.gov/html/dot/downloads/pdf/2011_northern-brownsville-study.pdf)

difficult for goods to get to and from Brownsville's commercial businesses.

### **Parking**

There are several parking facilities in Brownsville: Canarsie Municipal Parking Lot, and the Grant Avenue Municipal Parking Lot. On Pitkin and Rockaway Avenues, most of the parking spaces are occupied during the night after 5:00 PM. The parking spaces are almost occupied on Saturday afternoons. Because the parking spaces are usually occupied it is difficult for drivers to come Pitkin Avenue to shop. There is a fee-based parking lot on Rockaway Avenue, just south of Pitkin Avenue, but this does not provide automobile owners with as strong an incentive to shop in Brownsville as ample free and street-side parking would.

### **Highways**

The Jackie Robinson Parkway, the only highway in the Ocean-Hill/Brownsville area, has an average daily volume of 69,000 automobiles.<sup>30</sup> Trucks are prohibited on the Parkway, limiting freight access to the neighborhood and encouraging truck drivers to use local streets, which stresses local infrastructure and presents a safety hazard. The lack of highway truck access makes the IBZ not a desirable location for manufacturing activities. The highway terminus on Pennsylvania Avenue is only five blocks from Pitkin Avenue, offering car owners good access to and from Queens, but highway access to Manhattan and the rest of Brooklyn is limited.

### **Para-Transit**

Because the subway stations in Brownsville are not handicap accessible are not in proximity to the Pitkin Avenue shopping corridor Para-Transit is an alternative mode of transportation that can be used by Brownsville residents to reach the shopping corridors.

Places for Para Transit picks ups in proximity to Brownsville are 880 Alabama Avenue and 234 Logan Avenue. The Alabama Avenue Para Transit location is 23 from the intersection of Rockaway and Pitkin Avenues.<sup>31</sup> The Logan Avenue location is only 4 blocks from Pitkin Avenue but is 44 blocks from the intersection of Pitkin Avenue and Rockaway Avenue.<sup>32</sup> Thus, the Para Transit Service does not provide handicapped residents with easy access to the Pitkin and Rockaway Avenue shopping corridors. This lack of access also reduces the potential base for the shopping corridors.

### **Taxis Cabs**

Like most areas outside of Manhattan and the airports, Brownsville is poorly served by Yellow Medallion Taxicabs. Under the new New York State Taxicab Law, livery cabs now have permission to operate on Brownsville streets, which should improve cab access in the neighborhood. This improved cab access could allow more Brownsville residents to shop on the Pitkin Avenue shopping corridor.

In 2011 the New York City Department of Transportation issued a report, Northern Brownsville Transportation Study that analyzed pedestrian and bicycle issues, parking, and public transportation: buses, subways, and railroads. The report makes recommendations on improving the conditions on several streets in Northern Brownsville. The improvements include re-stripping, traffic signal changes, neckdowns, sign markings, and crosswalk improvements. These improvements when implemented will improve Brownsville transportation system and improve safety for pedestrians In contrast, the transportation analysis in this study has focus has been on improving access to the Pitkin Avenue and Rockaway Avenue retail corridors.

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30 [www.nyc.gov/html/dot/download/pdf/nyc\\_screenline\\_report\\_2010.pdf](http://www.nyc.gov/html/dot/download/pdf/nyc_screenline_report_2010.pdf)

31 Google Maps

32 Google Maps

## APPENDIX II: LEADERSHIP/BOARD DEVELOPMENT

### 147 West 24th Street

The organizations FIERCE the Audre Lorde Project, the Sylvia Rivera Law Project and Queers for Economic Justice: All lease out a floor of office space in this building. Each of these organizations works broadly in social justice work with LGBT and gender non-conforming individuals in the areas of youth outreach, legal assistance, organizing communities of color, and so on. These organizations share clients and members and so it follows for them to be housed under one roof and have collaborative events.

### Bikkurim

Provides free office space, free and subsidized capacity-building consulting, small stipends, access to local and national networks, and a strong peer community with other Jewish start-up initiatives. Organizations being incubated are in the office for only one year.

Website: <http://www.bikkurim.org/>

### Brownsville Loop

The Brownsville Loop is a project being run by the Brownsville Partnership using Ushahidi software which enables people with smartphones to report conditions to a map where unsafe conditions, streetscape issues, and community events can be mapped. This type of software has been effectively used around the world in areas where users primarily connect to information via cell phone after a disaster, or in places where no other digital infrastructure exists. Increasingly, cellphones are becoming people's central point of connection to the internet.

Website: <http://bvilleloop.com/>

### Cause Effective

Cause Effective works with nonprofits in need of help organizing themselves and their events in order to fulfill their mission and best serve their constituents. As an organization they have helped thousands of clients become more efficient, strategic and profitable, thereby contributing to the health and well-being of countless communities and individuals.

CONTACT:

505 Eighth Avenue, Suite 1212, New York, NY 10018

Phone: (212) 643-7093

E-mail: [info@causeeffective.org](mailto:info@causeeffective.org)

Website: [www.causeeffective.org](http://www.causeeffective.org)

### Chashama

"chashama supports communities by transforming temporarily vacant properties into spaces where artists can flourish. By recycling and repurposing buildings in transition, we invest in neighborhoods, foster local talent, and sustain a vast range of creativity, commerce and culture."

NYCEDC, in partnership with Chashama, has made available almost 40,000 square feet of artist studios. Located at the Brooklyn Army Terminal in Sunset Park, emerging artists can access studio space in a variety of sizes.

Website: <http://www.chashama.org/>

### Community Resource Exchange

The Community Resource Exchange (CRE) has the mission to work as a catalyzing force for social change by building the management capacity of nonprofit organizations, advancing the interests of low- and moderate-income individuals and neighborhoods in New York City. This is a strong match for developing out many different areas of work and structure for Brownsville Works.

CONTACT:

42 Broadway, 20th Floor, New York, NY 10004

Randall Quan, Community and Sector Initiatives Managing Director

Email: [rquan@crenyc.org](mailto:rquan@crenyc.org)

Phone: 212-894-8041

Website: [www.crenyc.org](http://www.crenyc.org)

### The Funding Exchange

A national foundation whose motto is Change not Charity, leases the 5th floor of the building. They serve as the manager of the space, which use only a portion of and then lease out to five other organizations with offices on the floor. Together these organizations share a conference room as well as communal office equipment (copier, fax, etc) and socialize and collaborate with one another.

Website: <http://fex.org/>

### General Assembly

Built for Design, Tech, and Entrepreneurs. Offers classrooms, classes, variety of space and services. Currently not offering any more space as it is full, so I don't know how much they cost. Formed by Yale graduates.

Website: <http://generalassemb.ly/>

### Governance Matters

Governance Matters provides nonprofit leaders with the governance resources needed to strengthen their boards and serve New York's communities better. As an organization they have produced and maintain the Good Governance Guide, essential reading help a board of directors their own accountability to how their organization is managed.

CONTACT:

55 West 39th Street, 12th Floor

New York, NY 10018

Phone: 212-447-0925

Email: [admin@governancematters.org](mailto:admin@governancematters.org)

Website: <http://www.governancematters.org>

### **Hot Bread Kitchen**

"Program members pay a yearly membership fee of \$500 to have access to flexible time in our commercial kitchens at sliding scale rates, offering the opportunity to cook or bake their products without the expense of building and equipping their own commercial kitchens. Heavily subsidized membership fees and rental rates are available for applicants whose household income is no more than 250% of the federal poverty level."

Website: <http://hotbreadkitchen.org/hbk-incubator>

### **NYC Non-Profit Assistance**

The City is advancing a variety of initiatives to support the nonprofit sector. These include efforts to reduce costs, improve city contracting procedures, and strengthen nonprofits.

Website: <http://www.nyc.gov/html/nonprofit/html/home/home.shtml>

### **North Star Fund**

This organization manages donors, raising money for grants, and providing technical assistance. It support from better schools, housing and health care, to protecting civil liberties, creating living wage jobs, and advocating for peace, freedom and human rights. The organization offers for its grantees a conference room space free of charge.

Website: <http://northstarfund.org/>

### **The Non-Profit Center Network**

The organization provides office space where the communities can work together and grow together in healthy space.

Website: <http://www.nonprofitcenters.org/>

### **New York Council of Nonprofit, Inc**

The organization provides a collective policy voice for the sector and serves as a crucial support and information provider through quality, cost-saving group purchasing and discounted programs, customized, comprehensive training and technical assistance programs, and the provision of fiscal sponsorship and nonprofit incubation. NYCON is the only nonprofit association in the state, and perhaps, nationally, that provides a wide array of specialized technical assistance services, including legal and financial, to nonprofits of all kinds in a staff-based, multidisciplinary team model.

Website: <http://www.nycon.org/>

### **Nonprofit Coordinating Committee of New York**

Offers an extensive range of member programs and services.

Website: <http://www.npccny.org/>

### **NYU-Poly**

Varick Street Incubator

Targets Digital Media, Cleantech, Biotech, Cybersecurity, Finance, infotech, social media, educational tech, search advertising technology, and mobile applications. Focused on Venture Capital. Works with EDC, ESD, NY Investment Fund, Manhattan and Brooklyn Chamber of Commerce, BEDC, Industrial Technology Assistance Corporation, Business Incubator Association of New York State, Inc. For companies based there, space is free or low cost. For outside companies, space and services are at the below market price of \$400 per month. Virtual tenants are charged \$150 per month. They are also charged a minimal overhead charge to hire NYU-Poly student interns on an hourly basis.

Website: <http://www.poly.edu/business/incubators/160-varick>

### **Pitkin Avenue Business Improvement District**

Currently, the Pitkin Avenue BID has basic information that existing and potential business owners as well as customers need. For existing businesses it has information about the programs and services that it offers as well as links to business resources. For potential business owners, there is information about available retail space, a directory of existing businesses and directions for how to reach Pitkin Avenue. For customers/residents there is information about Pitkin Avenue Placemaking events. Overall, in seeking to redesign their website to have a wider appeal and be more rich with information, Brownville Works and the Pitkin Avenue BID should look to the Southern Blvd. Merchants Association website at <http://southernboulevard.org/> for ideas about design and content.

Website: <http://www.pitkinbid.org/>

### **Support Center for Non-Profit Management**

The Support Center for Non-Profit Management works to increase the effectiveness of nonprofit leaders and their organizations. The organization works with a variety of organizations of different sizes and stages in their development.

CONTACT:

305 Seventh Avenue, 11th Floor, New York, NY 10001-6008

Phone: 212-924-6744

Email: [admin@supportcenteronline.org](mailto:admin@supportcenteronline.org)

Website: [www.supportcenteronline.org](http://www.supportcenteronline.org)

### **Women Innovate Mobile**

WIM is a three-month mentorship driven accelerator program and our first program is taking place in New York City (March 26 to June 29). Our companies will receive \$18,000 in funding, free office space, product development and design support, mobile-marketing promotions, and access to an incredible network of mentors, funders and advisors. In exchange for our investment and services, we receive a 6% equity stake in each company

Website: <http://womeninnovatemobile.com/>

# APPENDIX III: COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT CORPORATIONS CASE STUDIES

## SoBRO

The South Bronx Overall Economic Development Corporation (SoBRO), one of the largest and most established, local economic development corporations in New York City, provides an example for the long-term vision of Brownsville Works. Established in 1972, SoBRO aims to reverse the flight of businesses and jobs from the South Bronx. Recognizing that rebuilding a community would require a multifaceted effort – including replacing vacant lots with housing and viable business enterprises, creating jobs and training local residents for those jobs, and insuring a brighter future for the community's young people – SoBRO's programming has expanded since its founding to meet the growing needs of the greater Bronx community.

Currently SoBRO provides services in the following areas:

- Entrepreneurial and small business development

- Economic revitalization initiatives that help attract business and investment to commercial corridors and encourage businesses to relocate or remain in the Bronx

- Youth education and enrichment programs that combine academic skills, work readiness training, and leadership development activities

- Job training, basic education, and placement services that prepare low-income, unemployed and underemployed adults for the workforce

- Financial literacy training to help workforce participants become self-sufficient.

- Development and management of high performance, affordable and supportive housing for low and moderate income individuals and families and special needs populations

SoBRO's comprehensive approach to economic development, as detailed above, has been extremely successful in revitalizing historically underserved South Bronx neighborhoods. In its 40 years of service, SoBRO has:

- Created the climate for more than \$350,000,000 in capital investment into the South Bronx;

- Managed and encouraged the investment of over \$22,000,000 to rebuild and upgrade commercial districts;

- Helped to create and retain more than 36,000 jobs for area residents;

- Assisted more than 30,000 South Bronx residents in entering the New York City workforce through education and career development programs;

Overall, SoBRO's demonstrated ability to deliver successful programming has positioned it to receive substantial city and state funding, which have allowed its staff to grow to 150 total and 50 in the economic development department in 2011 (check numbers). In addition, an economic development staff of 50 has given SoBRO the capacity to take on a significant role in the economic development of the Bronx as whole. Currently, SoBRO manages all 5 Bronx Industrial Business Zones, the Port Morris Empire Zone, 3 Brownfield Opportunity Area (BOA) zones, and the business improvement districts. Brownsville Works should look to SoBRO as a model for how to address economic development in a comprehensive and long-term manner.

## WHEDCo

The Women's Housing and Economic Development Corporation's (WHEDCo) mission is to create a "more beautiful, equitable, and economically vibrant Bronx." Founded in 1991, their services include energy-efficient affordable housing development, commercial revitalization, micro-enterprise incubation, educational programming, and family support.# Brownsville Works should look to WHEDCo as a paragon of comprehensive and place-based economic development.

Through integrating economic development with other aspects of their programming, WHEDCo creates mutually reinforcing programs that ensure the success of each other. WHEDCo's mixed-use approach to housing development has led to amenities such as urban farms, arts spaces, health clinics, schools, and early childhood centers being incorporated into new developments. In addition, WHEDCo's microenterprise kitchen incubator is located within its flagship housing development, Urban Horizons, providing affordable rental kitchen space to residents and community members, and thereby creating a viable and accessible entrepreneurial development opportunity for them. Similarly, WHEDCo has generated a commercial revitalization initiative on a section of Southern Blvd. close to its Intervale Green Housing Development, to improve the conditions in the neighborhoods overall.

Furthermore, in addition to place-based initiatives in the Bronx, WHEDCo founded the Home-Based Childcare Microenterprise Network, which trains, licenses and provides professional support for home-based childcare providers at 22 locations throughout the 5 boroughs of New York City. The 15-year old Home-Based childcare network reaches 45,000 unlicensed childcare providers a year, and offers trainings in the following subject areas:

- Child Development
- Health and Safety
- Nutrition
- Family Day Care Regulations
- Marketing
- Contracts and Policies
- Accounting and Taxes
- Liability Insurance

WHEDCo's careful integration of economic and community development programs both in the Bronx and citywide is a model for Brownsville Works to emulate.<sup>1</sup>

### **Cypress Hills Local Development Corporation**

The Cypress Hills LDC (CHLDC) combines expertise in local economic development and community organizing to strengthen the Queens neighborhood of its namesake. CHLDC serves some 8,000 residents a year through a comprehensive array of housing preservation, economic development, community organizing and youth and family support services programs and projects. CHLDC was formed by a group of activist residents and merchants in 1983 and is a resident governed organization. CHLDC services include: homeownership counseling, mortgage foreclosure prevention, landlord-tenant advocacy and mediation, tenant organizing, small business technical assistance, job placement and training, summer youth employment, six after school programs and two school-based community centers, an inter-generational Services program, a college access center, a foster care prevention program and services targeted to older, out-of-school youth.

In terms of Economic Development, CHLDC'S programs aim to connect local residents to services. These programs fall under two general categories, that of access to public benefits and small business support. Trained staff members serve as counselors for SEEDCO's computerized screening tool, EarnBenefits, helping users determine eligibility for public benefits such as Food Stamps, the Earned Income Tax Credit, Health Care programs, Childcare, Housing and Utility Assistance, Workforce Training/Career Advancement Trainings, and the necessary documentation and paperwork for such programs. One recent highlight for the organization includes preparing over 1,000 tax returns for low-income residents, bringing approximately \$1.9 million to filers in the 2010 tax season. CHLDC also closely advises and supports local, small businesses through the provision of technical assistance to local merchants and organizing a merchants association.

### **Harlem Congregations for Community Improvement**

Harlem Congregations for Community Improvement (HCCI) aims to provide economic development opportunities and empowerment of Harlem Residents to rebuild their community. Their work focuses in affordable rental housing and ownership, job training, community youth programming, social service and health care intervention. HCCI's Office of Human Capital Development (HCD), established June of 1997 delivers an array of human services including job training, educational opportunities, youth services, and recreational activities, to Harlem residents. HCD runs the Construction Trades Academy, Work Readiness and Placement Assistance, Youth Employment Programs, and Young Adult Supportive Services, for former foster care children aging out of the program.

### **Northwest Bronx Community and Clergy Coalition**

The membership based organization, the Northwest Bronx Community and Clergy Coalition (NWBCCC) seeks social, economic, environmental, and racial justice for families and communities in the Bronx. These aims are accomplished through community organizing that utilizes non-violent confrontation, negotiation, and principled compromise. The Coalition unites the Northwest Bronx communities and a youth organization, Sistas and Brothas United (SBU), in an effort to influence the important decisions that are made about the area, including the delivery of government services, private investment patterns, and major land use considerations.

### **Religion & Community Development**

Faith-based initiatives have the potential for great success in the Ocean Hill- Brownsville setting. As with the Nehemiah Houses, a project of East Brooklyn Congregations and the New York City's Department of Housing Preservation and Development (HPD), taking inspiration from Nehemiah as an Old Testament role model for community redevelopment and change, Christian inspired efforts may serve as a point of entrée into the tasks of Brownsville Works for many of the residents of the community. It is particularly noteworthy to consider the parallels of Nehemiah in the book of his namesake as a source of insight when engaging in community development work. The Book of Nehemiah tells of how Nehemiah, at the court of the king in Susa, is informed that Jerusalem is without walls and decides to restore them. The king appoints him as governor of Judah and he travels to Jerusalem. There he organizes the community to rebuild the walls, giving them work, and motivates the community back into religious practice. It is believed that Jerusalem's name in Hebrew can be explained from this time, both the city of peace and the complete city. Further exploration of such initiatives such as Church partnerships, needs to be explored and made sure its success does not alienate those interested in Brownsville's revitalization but not through a religiously inspired analysis.

## APPENDIX IV: THE LANDMARKING PROCESS

According to the New York City Landmark Preservation Commission (NYCLPC) there is a process by which a building or a district can be designated as landmark. First, a potential landmark must be at least 30 years old and must have a special character or special historical or aesthetic interest or values as a part of the development, heritage, or cultural characteristics of the city, state or nation. Second, the Commission asks members of the public who propose individual properties and district for landmark status to fill out a Request for Evaluation (RFE) form. Third, after the form is completed, the NYCLPC will evaluate the property or district to determine whether it meets the criteria for landmark designation, and may recommend it for consideration by the Commission.<sup>1</sup>

When a building is designated a landmark, the Landmarks Preservation Commission recognizes that a building has special historical, cultural, or aesthetic value and the building is an important part of New York City's historical and architectural heritage. To help protect the city's landmarks from inappropriate changes or destruction, the Commission must approve in advance any alteration, reconstruction, demolition, or new construction affecting the designated building.<sup>2</sup>

Generally, to qualify buildings must be listed as individual landmarks, as part of an historic district of New York City, or on the New York State or National Register of Historic Places.<sup>3</sup>

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1 <http://www.nyc.gov>

2 *Ibid.*

3 Historic District Council. The Advocate for New York City's Historic Neighborhoods. Financial Incentive for Historical Buildings <http://www.hdc.org/financial%20incentives%20brochure.pdf>

# APPENDIX V: HISTORY AND THEORY OF CITY LIGHTING

If street lighting has been part of the urban landscape throughout the past centuries, the perception of its functions and outlooks have changed as a new use of lighting emerged: that is its possibility to contribute to placemaking.

In the 20th century, city lights came to be used as a security tool- to ensure traffic order and to deal with criminal issues. Initially, it was believed that increasing the frequency of lamp posts could curb crime. With the emergence of professional lighting designers in the 1990s,<sup>1</sup> street lighting safety plans began to focus more on the quality- that is, the intensity, size, and orientation, of lamps, rather than frequency.<sup>2</sup>

Cities which engaged lighting designers became theater stages, where buildings and people were lit at dusk, and where the user became the actor and spectator of the city. In these first initiatives, lighting was used for aesthetic reasons; the objective was to valorize cities' architectural qualities. As designers learned from their previous plans, it became obvious that what was most important was to shed light for the users of the streets, rather than on the beauty of the monuments.<sup>3</sup> Placemaking through lighting has been used over the past 20 years (the first plan was made in 1989 in Lyon, France) and has proved efficient in solving the issues found in Brownsville. In Philadelphia artistic lighting changes made throughout the city during the 1990's went along with major improvements to the city's safety and economy. The Benjamin Franklin Parkway, the focus of the city's lighting plan, became a vibrant area with major improvements reflected in the number of dinners served at cafés on the Benjamin Franklin Parkway throughout the decade.<sup>4</sup>

Implementation:

New street lights should be installed as soon as possible by NYCDOT's Office of Design and Construction. The artistic lighting plan should be put in place by Brownsville's new non-profit, in close conjunction with residents and artists, as well as the future pop-up network owners. The funding could be achieved through business owners as well as through DOT artistic funds. The artistic lighting plan should start as a temporary event and become permanent, in a similar way to the nuit des docks in St Nazaire, France, where a yearly event was transformed into a daily lighting.

In the 2000s, the city of Saint Nazaire in Loire Atlantic, went through major urban changes that aimed at revitalizing the center of the city, which had lost customers to outer neighborhoods. The nuit des docks (night of the docks) was created when the abandoned docklands were set to light one night a year. The event was a big success that stimulated people to go to a place that had previously been perceived as dangerous, and the city decided to make it a daily lighting show.

As in Saint Nazaire, an artistic lighting plan for Brownsville will create a buzz and make Brownsville residents and other New Yorkers go out to the neighborhood at night. The lighting sites should be chosen by the community and artists, but ideas of potential lighting sites are: the Pitkin theatre, the abandoned police station, the Nehemiah homes, the children's library, and the first public pool at Betsy Head Park. Each of these buildings prove to have some importance in terms of the history of Brownsville which appears to have been forgotten, the event could give light to this history.

Thus a lighting plan could enable Brownsville residents and New Yorkers to see Brownsville in a different, more positive light.

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1 Paquot, Thierry. "Invité(s) Roger Narboni" Revue Urbanisme N 380, octobre 2011.

2 Deleuil, Jean-Michel, et Jean Yves Toussaint. "De la sécurité à la publicité, l'art d'éclairer la vill." Les annales de la recherche urbaine (87): 2000, pp 52-58.

3 Deleuil, Jean-Michel, et Jean Yves Toussaint. "De la sécurité à la publicité, l'art d'éclairer la ville" Les annales de la recherche urbaine (87): 2000, pp 52-58.

4 Urban Affairs and Planning Program. 2010. "Best Practices in Placemaking through Illumination"

# APPENDIX VI: FUNDING STREAMS

Strategy	Funding Agency	Description
Formalize Organizational Structure and Establish a Track Record	Draper Richards Foundations	The foundation partners with entrepreneurs to support and build strong organizations. This is achieved through a multi-year grant (3 years) and provide management assistance to build up essential infrastructure and networking opportunities.
	Unimacrobile Institute	The institute provides its fellows with a 2-week networking workshop at the Summer Institute in Boulder, where they live and work with several leading entrepreneurs. At the Institute, the fellows work on developing their ideas and how to best structure them for success.
	The Echoing Green Fellowship	The fellowship provides a combination of start-up capital, as well as networking, leadership development, and one-to-one support and counseling.
	The Nonprofit Center Network	Organization that provides services to help create and operate successful non-profits.
	The Foundation Center	Established in 1956, the Foundation Center is the leading source of information about philanthropy worldwide. The Center works with organizations to connect them to resources via their comprehensive database on U.S. and international grant makers and their grants.
	Fund for the City of New York	The Fund for the City of New York was established by the Ford Foundation in 1966 with the mandate to improve the quality of life for all New Yorkers. The Incubator/Partner Project Program which provides support to start-up organizations so they can concentrate their energy and resources on program and fundraising connects new organizations with human resources, legal, and tax advice.
Establish a Business Incubator	Sudra Foundation	The Sudra Foundation seeks to foster just and sustainable communities in the United States—communities guided by principles of social justice and distinguished by healthy environments, strong local economies, and thriving cultures. Several potential funding options, the Community Driven Design initiative is particularly noteworthy. Funding for or related to projects for public space that enhance already-built environments, projects that link design issues to neighborhood organizing, and public spaces and facilities in low-income communities all have links to the aims of Browneville Works.
	New Market Tax Credit	NMTC was established in 2000 to encourage development and investment in low-income neighborhoods. Money is granted to an organization that must be certified as a Community Development Entity (CDE) whose mission is to serve or provide investment for low income people or communities. The Community Development Financial Institutions Fund (CDFI Fund), provided by the US Department of the Treasury, provides the tax credits to CDEs, and the CDEs find investors interested in exchanging the tax credits for Qualified Equity Investments (QEI).
Strengthen Business Network	NYC SBS Avenue NYC	The Avenue NYC program Provides a variety of funding opportunities for Business Attraction, BID Formation, Merchant Organizing, Place making, Facade Improvement Management, Neighborhood Economic Development, Special Commercial Revitalization Initiatives, and Capacity Building. Avenue NYC provided \$25,000 in funding for the Upper Avenue District Management Association to create a market analysis and retail attraction plan. We should take into capacity building funding for an appropriate non-profit to focus on placemaking opportunities.
	Capital Access Loan Guaranty Program – NYC EDC	Provides financing up to \$250,000 for small businesses without access to traditional capital lenders for working capital, equipment purchases. This program also introduces small business owners to other opportunities as a result of the EDC partnership with NYC Business Solutions. This could lead small businesses to involve themselves in business planning courses and other training opportunities.
	Industrial Effectiveness Program (IEP) – NYS ESO	Grants up to \$50,000 to small- and medium-sized manufacturers for projects improving productivity. The project helps train managers to be more productive by working with consultants to refine their technical needs assessments and manufacturing process.
	Manufacturing Assistance Program (MAP)	Empire State Development (ESD) MAP assistance is capped at \$1 million for capital investments. Targeted for NYS manufacturers that employ 50 to 1,000 workers, and export at least 30% of their production beyond the immediate region, or supply at least 30% of their production to a prime manufacturer that exports beyond the region. We should explore the shift share analysis to make recommendations for which businesses may qualify.
Foster Entrepreneurial Development	FastTracNewVenture	A seven-session classroom-based "crash course" that helps entrepreneurs determine the viability of their business concepts and develop start-up strategies for their businesses.
	FastTracGrowth Ventures	An eight-session training course that will teach existing business owners how to review and reshape their business models in order to meet the current economic challenges.
	Project Enterprise	A non-profit that serves businesses in New York City's under-resourced communities by providing micro loans, business development services and networking opportunities.
	Action USA	A non-profit lender that caters to low to moderate income businesses. Their loans range from \$50,000 to \$500,000 and they offer financial education services as well.
	Brooklyn Public Library	PowerUP! Competition: \$75,000 start-up capital, free resources and services/databases to help write business plan, marketing, financial projections.
	The New York Women's Foundation	The foundation specifically targets organizations and programs that develop strategies for women and girls to move towards economic security. They specifically look to support those projects/proposals that demonstrate a strategic approach towards achieving equity and fair policies for marginalized communities (these include gender, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, class, religion, and immigration, or citizenship status.)
Create workforce development opportunities	WOTC	The WOTC provides tax credits for a variety of groups. Of particular importance for the studio is the fact that businesses can receive funding for hiring ex-felons and people who are on public assistance. For each new ex-felon hired, the credit is 25% of qualified first-year wages for those employed at least 120 hours, or \$1,500; and 40% for those employed 400 hours or more, or \$2,400. Veterans, summer youth, disabled persons, and people on temporary assistance can also fetch hefty tax credits for employers. This incentive could convince small businesses to help society.
	SBS	The following SBS certifications offer women and minority-owned businesses as well as small construction and construction-related businesses exclusive access to and information about government contracting opportunities, technical assistance, and inclusion on the City's Online Directory of Certified Firms. Completion of certification also offers business owners access to networking events as well as ability to enroll in "Strategic Steps for Growth," a 9-month business management program and corporate alliance program.

Promote Community Building by placemaking	NYS Community Development Block Grant	The NYS CDBG program provides financial assistance to eligible cities, towns, and villages with populations under 50,000 and counties with an area population under 200,000, in order to develop viable communities by providing decent, affordable housing, and suitable living environments, as well as expanding economic opportunities, principally for persons of low and moderate income. The NYS CDBG program provides financial assistance to eligible cities, towns, and villages with populations under 50,000 and counties with an area population under 200,000, in order to develop viable communities by providing decent, affordable housing, and suitable living environments, as well as expanding economic opportunities, principally for persons of low and moderate income.
	New York Main Street	The New York Main Street program provides financial resources and technical assistance to communities to strengthen the economic vitality of the State's traditional Main Streets and neighborhoods. The NY Main Street grant program provides funds from the New York State Housing Trust Fund Corporation (HTFC) to business improvement districts and other not-for-profit organizations that are committed to revitalizing historic downtowns, mixed-use neighborhood commercial districts, and village centers.
	Urban Art	Art is integral to DOT's goal of world class streets. Artists help to transform the landscape from ordinary to extraordinary with temporary, unexpected interventions - colorful murals, dynamic light projections, thought-provoking sculptures.
	The Rockefeller Foundation	New York, NY—Today, The Rockefeller Foundation President Dr. Judith Rodin announced the winners of the Foundation's 2011 New York City Cultural Innovation Fund competition – and with it nearly \$3 million in grants to support local New York City art and artists. Each of the 16 winning New York City-based organizations will receive a two-year grant of up to \$250,000, underscoring the Foundation's commitment to artistic expression and innovation, and bolstering the vital economic impact that the creative sector has on New York City. This year's winners were selected from nearly 400 diverse projects.
	Urban Art Program Track: pARTners	DOT commissions artists to produce site-responsive art in collaboration with community-based organizations. Twice a year, DOT announces a list of Priority Sites owned and maintained by the agency, for artists to respond to with proposals. In addition to Priority Sites, applicants are invited to propose alternate project sites not included on this list. A list of current Priority Sites and site selection tips are included in the application packet. If proposing an alternate project site, applicants are required to submit ideas for review and approval by DOT prior to completing an application.
	The National Endowment for the Arts	The National Endowment for the Arts is an independent agency of the federal government. It award grants to support artistic excellence, creativity, and innovation for the benefit of individuals and communities. Their website provides online training to apply to their grant. Some of the projects that they have supported is the Open House New York here in New York that offer a week free visiting sites around New York.
	ArtPlace	ArtPlace is investing in art and culture at the heart of a portfolio of integrated strategies that can drive vibrancy and diversity so powerful that it transforms communities. ArtPlace works to accelerate creative placemaking by making grants and loans; by striking important partnerships with those who share our passion; with solid but imaginative research; and with communication and advocacy that we hope will influence others to engage in this work. The next round of funding will be announced in September 2012.
Building Preservation	New York Landmark Preservation Commission	Funding for Restoration and Repair in Low-income Households: The New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission administers the Historic Preservation Grant Program, which provides \$10,000 to \$15,000 to help owners restore their homes. This grant covers exterior repairs, primarily of the street facade including masonry rebuilding and mortar repointing, replacement of windows and front doors and cornice restoration. In order to qualify the home must be a designated or proposed New York City landmark. Additionally, owners or their tenants must meet federal guidelines for low- and moderate-income households. The grant requires that the home must be occupied at least for five years after the work is completed, if not the grant funds must be returned.
		Resources for Nonprofits: The Historic Preservation Grant Program for Nonprofits offers grants of up to \$25,000 for nonprofits that own or occupy designated individual or interior New York City landmarks, buildings that are part of an historic district, or listed or eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places. Funds can be used for repairs of the exterior of the building, primarily of the street facade and landmark designated interiors. To qualify the organization must be a charitable, scientific, literary, educational or other entity under Section 501 (c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code.
	New York State Preservation Office	Rehab Initiatives for Business: The New York State Historic Preservation Office administers the Federal Investment Tax Credit Program for Income Producing Properties for the rehabilitation of historic properties. Owners of income producing properties (commercial, industrial, or residential rental) could be eligible for a 20% federal income tax credit for substantial rehabilitation work.
		New York State Historic Tax Credit Program for Income Producing Properties: this is in addition to the previous 20% federal income tax credit, property owners will receive an extra 30% of federal credit value up to \$100,000
New York Landmarks Conservancy	Help to Low-income Property Owners: Rehabilitation of owner-occupied residential buildings may qualify for New York State Historic Homeownership Rehabilitation Tax Credit, of up to 20% of the cost of the work, not to exceed \$25,000.	
	Low-Interest Loans for Property Owners: the Historic Properties Fund offers low-interest loans and project management assistance to owners of historic residential, nonprofit, religious and commercial properties, mostly in low- to moderate- income communities. Loans generally apply to exterior work or structural repairs and range from \$20,000 to \$300,000.	
		Help for Nonprofit owner for Unprotected Historic Buildings: the City Ventures Fund helps nonprofit developers retain and restore the historic details of architecturally significant buildings that are being converted to affordable housing or will serve as a space for other services of benefit to lower income communities. This fund is specifically for buildings that are not designated as landmarks. Grants range from \$5,000 to \$30,000 and in addition to funding, nonprofit developers receive project management support.

Building Preservation	New York Landmarks Conservancy	Resources for Religious Institutions: the Sacred Sites Program provides financial and technical assistance for the maintenance, repair, and restoration of historic religious properties of all denominations throughout New York State. Sacred Sites Grants provide grants of up to \$10,000 for exterior restoration projects with a focus on essential repairs to the primary worship building, such as roofing and drainage system repairs; masonry repointing and restoration; structural repairs; and stained glass window repair and restoration. Additional challenge and consulting services grants may be available.
	Federal Historic Preservation Tax Incentive Program	Federal Historic Preservation Tax Incentive Program, allows an owner of an historic property to donate an historic preservation easement on the exterior of the property to a qualified easement holding organization, and as a result of this donation, claim a tax deduction for the appraised value of the easement.
	New York City Department of Housing Preservation and Development	Under, New York City Department of Housing Preservation and Development, there is one program called Tax Relief for Rehabilitation: The J-51 Program provides tax benefits in the form of a tax exemption and/or a tax abatement to owners for the significant renovation of residential buildings or the conversion of a property into a residential building. To qualify the work must include significant repairs to the street facing façade and be approved by the Landmarks Preservation Commission.
Sidewalk improvement	DOT	Sidewalk Maintenance and Repair DOT's goal is to make the City's 12,750 miles of sidewalks safe for pedestrians and help prevent injuries caused by defective sidewalks. DOT replaces more than 2 million square feet of sidewalk a year, mostly on City-owned property and in residential neighborhoods. Despite the large scale of repairs, this amounts to less than 1% of the City's total sidewalk area each year. DOT relies on property owners to maintain the rest of the sidewalks.
Rezone to Encourage Retail Development and Increased Density	FRESH – EDC	The Food Retail Expansion to Support Health is a product of the Mayor's Food Policy Task force. FRESH provides zoning and financial incentives for grocery store development; both renovation projects and new construction projects are eligible. The city and EDC are primarily interested in bringing in supermarkets to address issues of fresh food availability. Funding requires the establishments to dedicate at least 500 sq. ft. to fresh produce, 30% of usage for perishable goods, and at least 50% for food products meant for home production. Incentives include \$500 for full-time or full-time equivalent employees for up to 25 years, exemption from sales tax for construction materials, additional square footage for mixed-use residential development, lowered parking requirements, and NYSERDA benefits. Brownsville is within the eligible FRESH zoning areas. The FRESH incentive would be perfect for the large opportunity site on Rockaway. A high density mixed-use development could be undertaken to provide fresh food (wine and cheese!), housing, and commercial/retail/office space.
Improve Transportation Access to the Retail Corridor	Federal Highway Administration	Transportation Enhancement Program
		Congestion Mitigation Air Quality Projects Program (CMAQ)
		United States Federal Highway Administration Discretionary Grant Programs
		Transportation Community and System Preservation Program

# APPENDIX VII: LIST OF STAKEHOLDERS, ORGANIZATIONS, AND AGENCIES

## Community Board 16 Elected Officials

Brooklyn Borough President Marty Markowitz  
City Council Member Erik Martin Dilan  
City Council Member Charles Barron  
City Council Member Darlene Mealy  
Congressman Elolphus Towns  
United States Senator Kirsten E. Gillibrand  
United State Senator Charles Schumer  
State Senator Eric Adams  
State Senator John Sample  
State Assemblyman William Boyd Jr.

## Governmental Agencies

Metropolitan Transportation Authority  
New York City Department of City Planning  
New York City Department of Housing and Preservation  
New York City Department of Housing and  
Urban Development  
New York City Housing Authority  
New York City Landmarks Commission  
New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene  
New York City Department of Parks and Recreation  
New York City Police Department  
New York City Department of Transportation  
New York City Employment and Training Coalition  
New York City Metropolitan Transportation Council  
New York State Department of Labor  
New York State Office of State Preservation

## Partners and Collaborators

Accion USA  
African American Planning Commission  
ArtPlace  
The Advocate for New York City's Historic Neighborhoods  
Big Apple Greeter  
Blocks Associations  
Brownsville Heritage House  
Brownsville Young Professionals  
Business Owners  
Community Board 16 Economic Committee  
Day Care Council of New York  
Department of Parks and Recreation of New York City  
FastTrac New Venture  
Groundwork Inc.  
Historic District Council  
Local artists and entrepreneurs  
Municipal Arts Society  
New York City Economic Development Corporation  
New York City New York Council of Nonprofit, Inc.  
New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene  
New York City Department of Transportation  
New York Police Department  
Small Business Services  
The Funding Exchange  
New York Women's Foundation  
Ocean Hill Residents Associations  
Open House New York  
Pitkin Avenue Business Improvement District  
Project Enterprise  
Pratt Design Incubator  
Property Owners  
To Rise Up & Walk  
Urban Justice Center

## Others

South Bronx Overall Economic Development Corporation  
Cypress Hills Local Development Corporation

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