



November 16, 2016

Brownsville Neighborhood Planning Progress Report

01 Introduction

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Brownsville Progress Report

Why: A Collective Vision for the Neighborhood and Coordinated City Efforts

Building off the Brownsville 100 Days to Progress initiative, the NYC Department of Housing Preservation and Development (HPD) launched a community-based planning process in the summer of 2016 to develop a shared vision and plan for the future of Brownsville. Working with residents, elected officials, community-based organizations, and other government agencies, HPD is hosting a series of public workshops, implementing an online engagement tool, and participating in community events between July 2016 and spring 2017. The process will result in the creation of a neighborhood plan to ensure that agencies working in the neighborhood are coordinated and that the many programs and investments underway – including the redevelopment of vacant city-owned land – are working towards common objectives for the people that live, work, and play in Brownsville. This report summarizes findings from the “Learn” phase of this process: July to September 2016. The following pages include initial data research about the neighborhood, as well as the vision, goals, guiding principles, and main concerns identified through public engagement to date.

This report will inform the subsequent phases of the process.

How: Public Engagement

HPD began the process by reviewing past Brownsville studies and planning documents, as well as analyzing data on the neighborhood’s demographics and built environment. Following initial desktop research, the team spoke one-on-one with community stakeholders about the process and gathered key concerns and ideas on how to ensure an inclusive, transparent, and effective process. HPD also convened and continues to meet with a group of 30 community partners to advise the agency on how to ensure broad public participation.

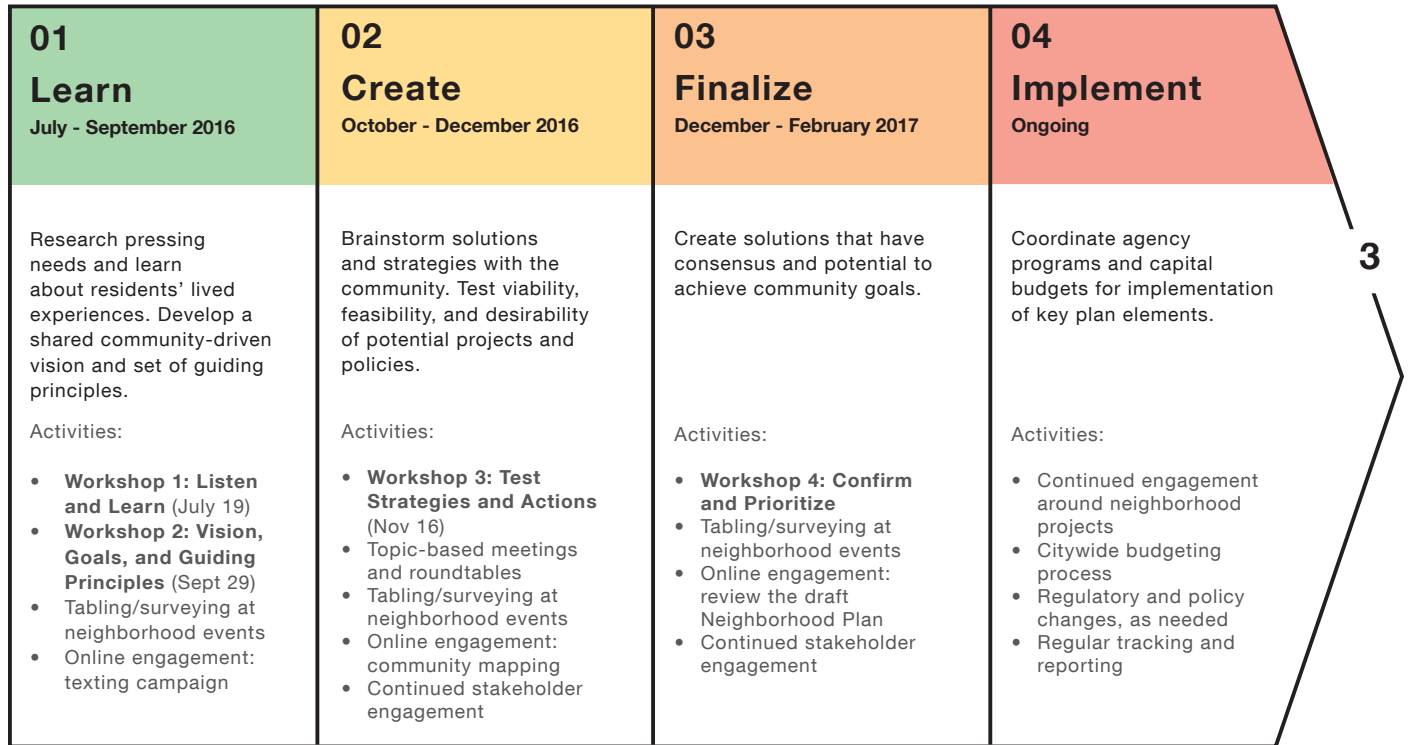
The planning process formally kicked off with a workshop on July 19, 2016. Over the summer, HPD staff tabled at neighborhood events, such as BMS Summerfest and National Night Out, and conducted a texting and web campaign through coUrbanize.com. A second public workshop was held on September 29, 2016. Outreach for the workshops was conducted with the help of the community partners and local elected officials through email blasts, social media, and street flying.

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Youth add their ideas at National Night Out.

Draft Timeline and Planning Process



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For more information on the process, visit courbanize.com/brownsville.



Outreach in Numbers

500+

residents, business owners, and people that work in the neighborhood

200+

comments posted or texted through coUrbanize

700+

bilingual flyers posted in the neighborhood in local businesses and high-traffic areas

30

community partner organizations

20

city agencies and mayoral offices

BMS Summerfest | July 16, 2016 | 140 Participants



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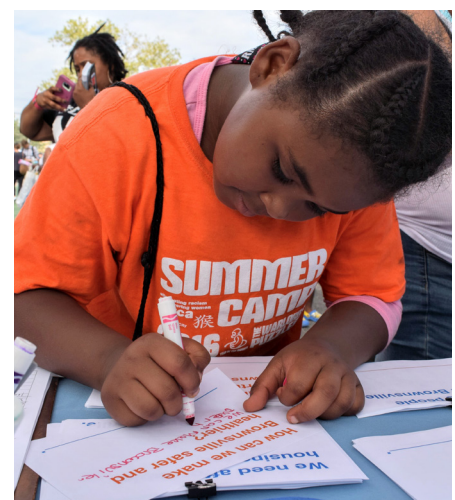
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Live on Livonia | September 10, 2016 | 70 Participants



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National Night Out | August 2, 2016 | 150 Participants



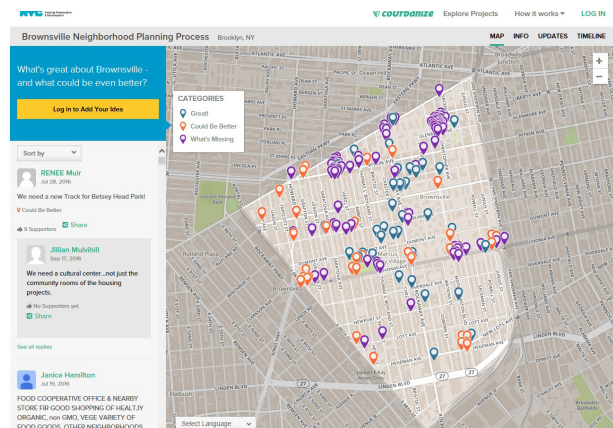
CoUrbanize

HPD has created a centralized location on the web for community members to find information regarding the planning process and add their ideas. Community members were able to submit feedback by visiting the website or texting responses to questions posted on signs throughout the neighborhood. A total of 192 comments were received, with 81 comments through text and 111 comments from the website. The most common themes that surfaced are summarized below and are also incorporated into the feedback described throughout this document. Visit courbanize.com/brownsville to view the full map of comments.

- Brownsville has many community assets, including a network of youth and social service programs, community gardens, and other open space and recreational facilities.
- On the Pitkin Avenue corridor, respondents want more grocery stores that sell fresh, healthy food options and sit-down restaurants at a range of price points.
- Along Livonia Avenue, respondents want educational programming to engage youth as well as conversion of unused land to new housing.
- Near Rockaway and East New York Avenues community members want to see a public amenity to encourage local engagement such as a YMCA, media space, or wellness center.
- Many felt that the eastern side of Livonia Avenue would benefit from improved amenities such as street lighting and a community space with free activities and events.
- Some respondents identified a need for additional surface parking for teachers at nearby schools.



HPD placed 24 signs throughout the neighborhood asking residents to text their ideas.



The homepage of the CoUrbanize site asks: What's great about Brownsville, and what could be even better?



Participants at Workshop 1 use the CoUrbanize website.

What: Building Off of Earlier Work

This planning process should build off the many reports, plans, and studies completed in recent years by neighborhood residents and community-based organizations.* HPD has reviewed the results of past planning efforts and has shared detailed summaries of those with the other agencies involved in the process. Below are some key takeaways from the studies and plans reviewed by HPD.

- Redevelop vacant land on Livonia Avenue and elsewhere to benefit the community
- Provide new housing that is affordable to extremely low and low income households to enable families to expand and relocate
- Upgrade and retrofit NYCHA developments, and better integrate them into the greater community
- Add new retail and mixed-use development along Pitkin, Rockaway, and Belmont Avenues
- Expand job training and youth programming to support economic development
- Decrease crime, and gun violence in particular, through additional programming, policing, design, and a positive relationship between residents, program officials, and law enforcement
- Rehabilitate playgrounds, parks, and other community facilities through increased investment
- Implement traffic calming measures along Howard Avenue, Blake Avenue, and other key intersections to make the neighborhood safer and more walkable/bikeable
- Better connect subway and train stations with surrounding uses and each other, including making them ADA-compliant

- Increase neighborhood connectivity by removing unnecessary obstructions, adding more lighting and seating, making streetscape improvements, and increasing signage throughout the neighborhood and NYCHA developments
- Promote dialogue between neighbors on the issues affecting the community

Vision, Goals, and Guiding Principles

Establishing a vision, goals, and guiding principles ensures that city agencies are coordinated in supporting the Brownsville community’s priorities, and that a structure for accountability is in place. They were developed over the course of the public engagement process to date, and we will continue to return to this section throughout the remainder of the process to ensure our strategies are in line with and working towards the broader vision and goals of the community.

Vision

What the community wants to see over the long term

A healthy, affordable, and economically vibrant Brownsville, where individuals and families can live, work, play, and thrive.

Goals

How this planning process can help the community achieve its larger vision

- Build new affordable housing and neighborhood amenities
- Create retail along Livonia Avenue
- Promote public safety by developing vacant space, activating key corridors, and improving mobility
- Create jobs and job training opportunities for

*Previous studies reviewed include At Home in Brownsville: A Plan for Transforming Public Housing (Hunter College 2014); Brownsville Works! A Strategic Economic Development Plan (Economic Development Committee, Brooklyn CB16, 2012); Community Board 16 Statement of District Needs FY 2016; Healthy Brownsville: A Report for Brooklyn Community Board 16 (Hunter College 2016); Brownsville: Opportunity and Strength in the Heart of Brooklyn (Pratt Institute 2015); Next Generation NYCHA: A Community Vision for Van Dyke Houses (NYCHA 2014); HOPE Summit II Final Report (Brownsville Partnership and The Municipal Art Society 2014); and Community Perceptions of Brownsville: A Survey of Neighborhood Quality of Life, Safety, and Services (Center for Court Innovation 2011).

neighborhood residents, especially young people

- Support small businesses and local economic development
- Improve health through investments in parks, streets, housing, and community facilities
- Support arts that reflect the neighborhood's history and character, and promote opportunities for local artists to participate in revitalization activities

safety, and economic empowerment

- Integrate community education and ownership into the process and outcomes
- Improve transparency, accountability, and relationships between government and community
- Identify gaps, priorities, and needs in order to most efficiently use limited resources
- Establish measureable outcomes and clear expectations

Guiding Principles

Important things to keep in mind as we engage in this process

- Recognize, celebrate, and build on Brownsville's assets and community power
- Leverage public investments to accomplish multiple goals, with emphases on health,

In addition to the vision, goals, and guiding principles, each of the following sections outlines key concerns and priorities that have emerged over the course of the process to date. This information will help inform the development of specific projects and strategies to accomplish the broader community goals.



02 Housing and Neighborhood Design

Land Use

Brownsville is primarily residential in character, with a wide variety of building forms. Much of the neighborhood, particularly north of Livonia Avenue and east of Rockaway Avenue, is defined by large “superblocks” and towers that were created through the urban renewal activities of the 1960s and 1970s. Smaller single- and two-family homes are the predominant building types west of Rockaway Avenue and south of Livonia Avenue. Many of these small homes, such as the Nehemiah houses, were built as a result of community organizing and city investment starting in the 1980s.

Retail and services are limited, especially in the southern part of the neighborhood. The main commercial areas are found along Pitkin and Belmont Avenues, with about 16 blocks of businesses selling a range of goods, from clothing and shoes to furniture, food, and other convenience goods. The Pitkin Avenue Business Improvement District (BID) has served the area since 1993 with beautification, security, and marketing efforts. Although Pitkin and Belmont Avenues are home to many businesses, about 40% of all upper floors are empty, according to a 2014 study by the Department of Small Business Services (SBS). Retail in the rest of the neighborhood is fragmented, such as on Rockaway Avenue, where only a few clusters of businesses exist.



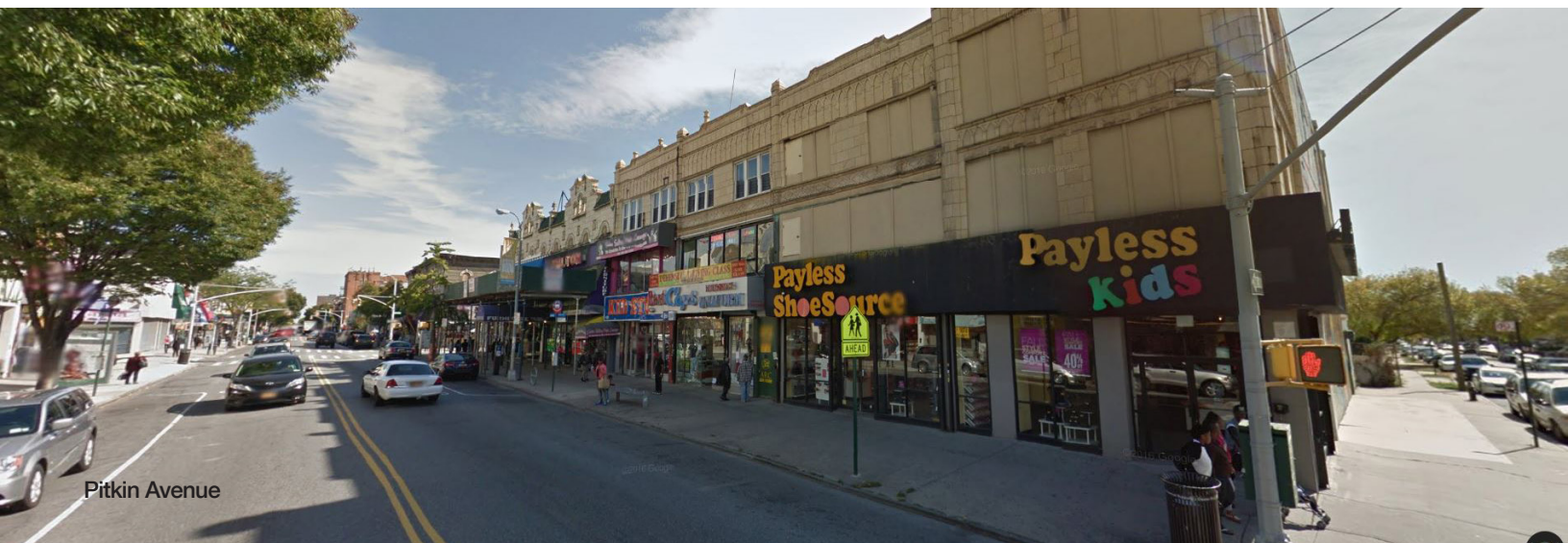
Low scale walk-up buildings



Multi-family NYCHA elevator buildings



Privately owned multi-family elevator buildings



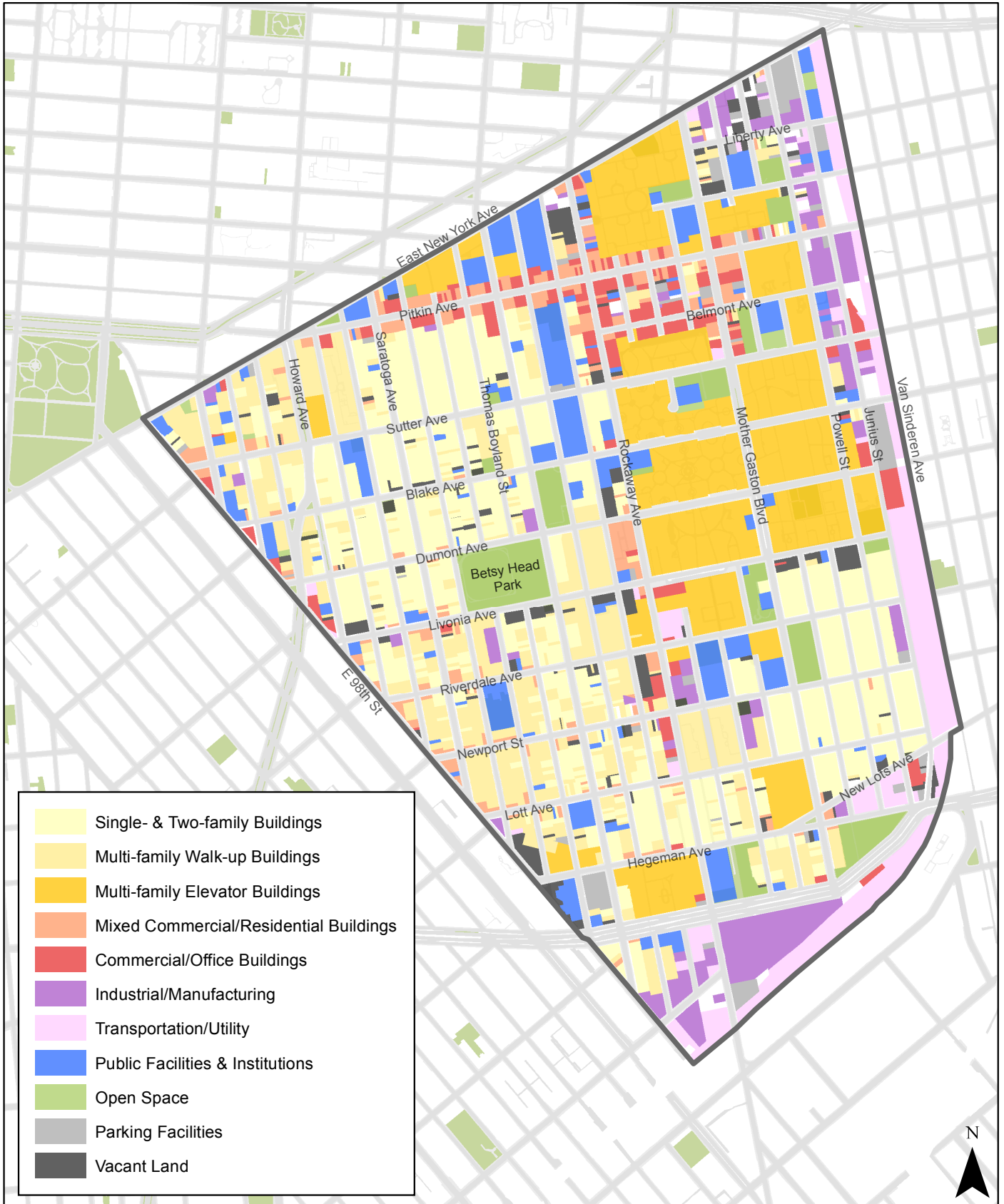
Pitkin Avenue

Land Use in Brownsville

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02 Housing and Neighborhood Design



Source: MapPLUTO 2015v1

Land use is controlled by zoning, which regulates the uses permitted on a site, the size of new buildings, and urban design. There are three types of zoning districts: residential, commercial, and manufacturing. Most of Brownsville is zoned for medium-density residential and community facility buildings. Commercial uses, such as retail and office space, are allowed in certain areas, such as along Pitkin, Belmont, and Sutter Avenues, and portions of Rockaway Avenue. The neighborhood also contains manufacturing districts, which allow for industrial and some commercial uses, and a portion of the East New York Industrial Business Zone (IBZ).

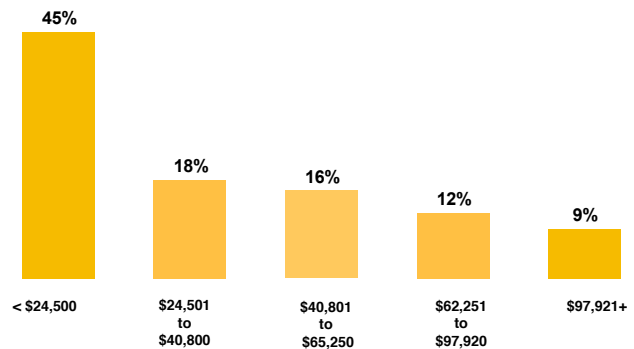
Incomes and Affordability

Households in Brownsville earn a range of incomes. The median household income is \$27,231, which is considerably lower than in Brooklyn or New York City overall, where the median incomes are \$42,215 and \$51,865, respectively². While median incomes in Brooklyn and New York City have increased significantly since 2000, incomes in Brownsville have remained relatively constant.³

About 85% of Brownsville residents rent their homes—a much larger proportion compared to Brooklyn or NYC overall. Of those who rent, nearly 60% are rent burdened, meaning they spend more than a third of their total household income on housing costs.⁴

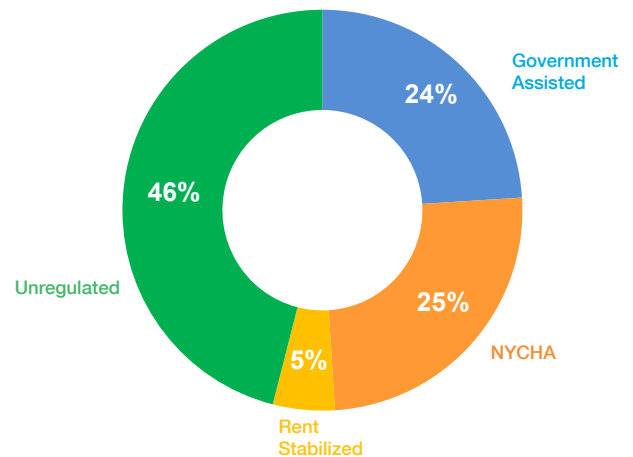
Despite these trends, Brownsville has a significant stock of regulated affordable housing, including one of the highest concentrations of public housing developments in the city. Approximately 25% of all households live in apartments managed by the New York City Housing Authority (NYCHA), and a similar number of homes have been financed through various city, state, and federal housing programs.

Household Incomes in Brownsville



Incomes are shown for a three-person household (HUD 2016)
Source: American Community Survey 5 Year Estimates 2008-12

Regulatory Status of Housing in Brownsville



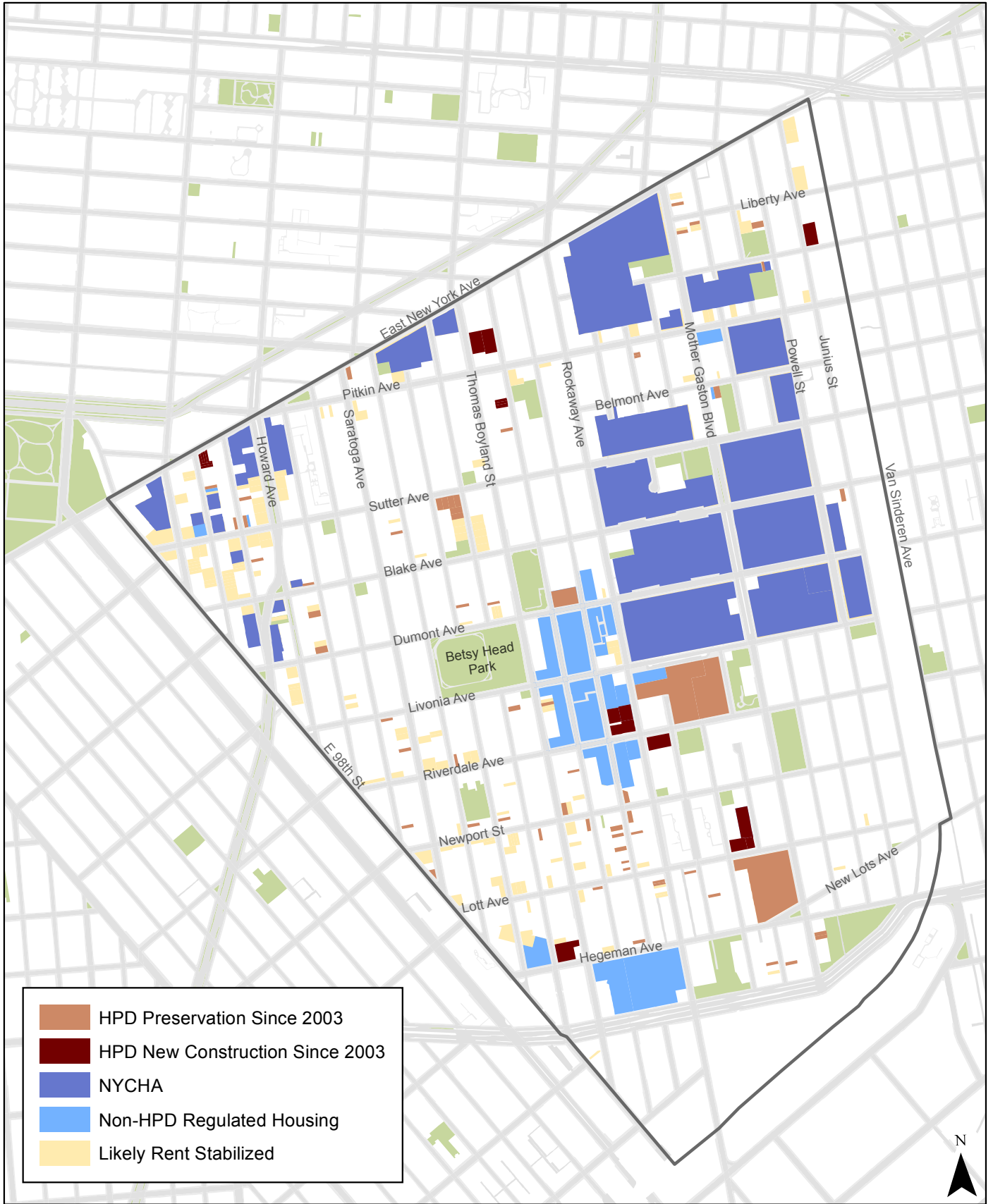
Based on sub-borough boundaries that approximate CD 16
Source: HPD Division of Research and Evaluation 2014

Affordable Housing Assets in Brownsville

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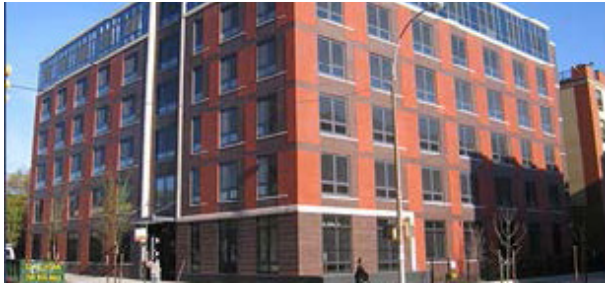
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02 Housing and Neighborhood Design



Sources: MapPLUTO 2015v1, HPD data: GA_stock_SHIP_ONLY_01262016_v3.xls, 2015_12_3_HNY and NMHP through FY16Q1 Categorized.xls

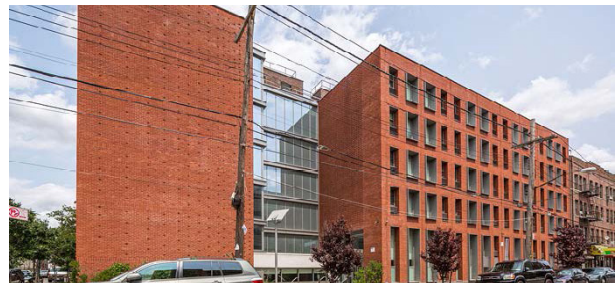
 **Recent Investment**



[211 Riverdale Ave.](#)

Completed 2014 | New Construction

- 66 apartments for low income seniors
- Serves older adults making 50% of AMI or less (\$40,800 for a three-person household)
- Financed with HPD's Supportive Housing Program



[The Hegeman](#)

Completed 2012 | New Construction

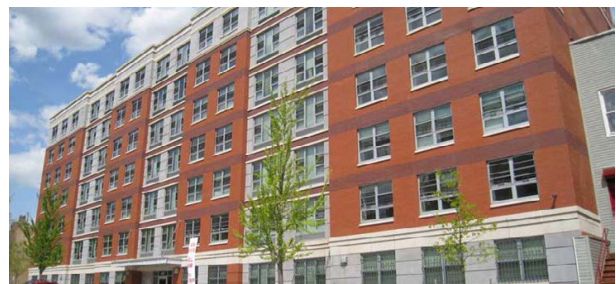
- 161 apartments with supportive services
- 100 for formerly homeless single adults
- Financed with HPD's Supportive Housing Program



[420 Watkins St.](#)

Completed 2010 | Preservation

- 525 rental units
- \$39M rehabilitation
- 226 units receive Section 8 assistance
- Financed with HUD's Multi-Family Program
- Serves households making 50% of AMI or less (\$40,800 for a three-person household)



[445 Hopkinson St.](#)

Completed 2010 | New Construction

- 168 rental units across 2 buildings
- Over 80% are 2 and 3 bedrooms
- 8 units for formerly homeless families
- Financed with HPD's Cornerstone Program
- Serves households making 40%-90% of AMI (\$32,640-\$73,440 for a three-person household)

Since 2004, HPD has financed the preservation of 5,059 and the construction of 2,671 affordable apartments in Brooklyn Community District 16 (CD16), including but not limited to senior housing and supportive housing for formerly homeless families and individuals and other special needs populations. There are a number of new mixed-use developments underway in the neighborhood today, with potential for creating up to 2,000 new units of affordable housing in the coming years.

What We Heard

Throughout the public engagement process, the main themes we heard around housing and land use related to the importance of a more economically vibrant and socially integrated community. Participants shared their desire for the vacant city-owned sites be used to build housing for a range of incomes, build ownership and pride in the neighborhood and its history, and bring people together:

- Strategies to keep people in the neighborhood and bring community together, because family and great people are what make Brownsville home
- Affordable housing for a range of incomes and varying needs—for singles, large families, formerly homeless, formerly incarcerated, seniors, and young professionals (to help serve young people who left for college and want to return to the neighborhood)
- Homeownership opportunities, including land ownership, cooperatives, and rent-to-own programs
- More support and resources for homeowners, especially those who may be in foreclosure, need help financing repairs, and/or are experiencing harassment to sell
- Sit-down restaurants, entertainment amenities, and other community event and recreational spaces, including movie theaters, bowling alleys, skating rinks, and art galleries, in the ground floors of new buildings
- Spaces for small businesses, healthy supermarkets, and other entities that will serve the needs of the neighborhood
- New development to promote local artists and art that reflects the neighborhood character and its different cultures, and tells its history (e.g., interactive kiosks, murals, and sculptures featuring Brownsville historical figures, such as a Brownsville Walk of Fame)

Workshop participants discuss community development on the Pitkin Corridor.



03 Community, Workforce, and Economic Development

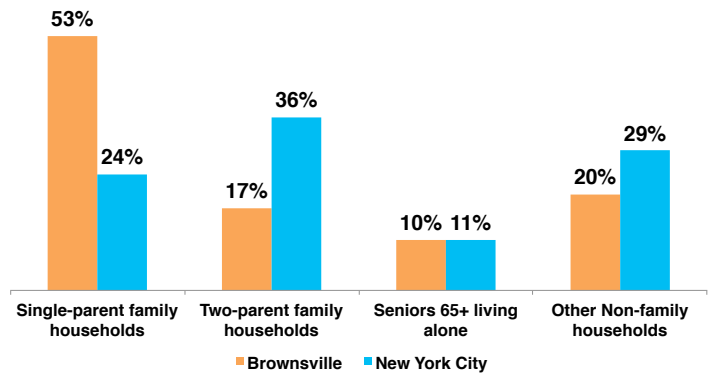
Youth and Community Development

Brownsville has a younger population than New York City overall, with about one third of all residents aged 20 years or younger. In addition, many children are growing up in single-parent households.⁵

Brownsville currently has 46 programs funded by the NYC Department of Youth and Community Development that serve youth and families, ranging from afterschool programs, community centers, youth employment and federally funded neighborhood development programs.

In addition to these youth programs, there are several community facilities that serve as cornerstones in the neighborhood such as the Brooklyn Public Library Brownsville, the Gregory Jackson Center for Brownsville, the Brownsville Multi-Service Family Health Center, the Brownsville Heritage Center, and the Brownsville Recreation Center. These centers, along with several other community-based organizations and school facilities, provide the neighborhood with social services, youth programs, community development, and workforce training.

Brownsville Household Composition

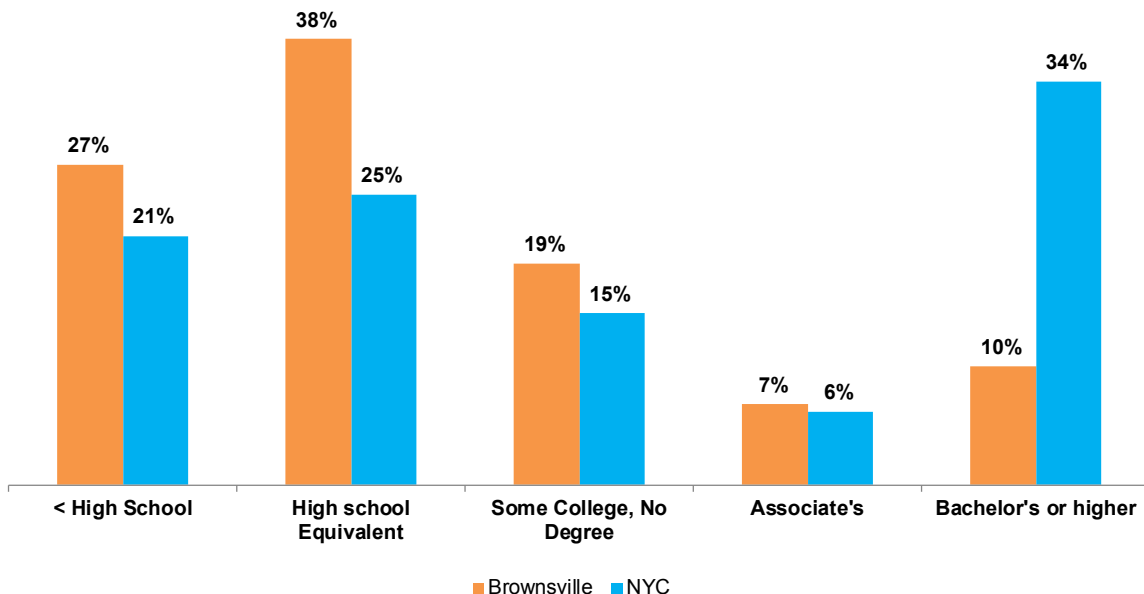


Source: ACS 2009-2013 5 Year Estimates

Employment and Workforce Development

About 38% of the population works in educational services, health care, and social assistance. Retail is the next largest employer (13%), followed by transportation, warehousing, and utilities (9%). Very few residents work in construction, manufacturing, and information, which traditionally can be higher paying jobs and, in some cases, have lower barriers to entry.⁶

Brownsville Educational Attainment



Approximate Total Number of Households: 20,700
 Source: ACS 2009-2013 5 Year Estimates
 *Based on Brownsville NTA

Brownsville's unemployment rate, at 15%, is high compared to Brooklyn and New York City as a whole, where the unemployment rate is about 11%. Only 17% of the population has an associate, bachelor, or other post-secondary degree, compared to 40% of residents in New York City. About 40% of elementary school students miss 20 days of school or more, the highest rate of absenteeism in the city.⁷ The poverty rate in Brownsville is 37%, almost double the rate of Brooklyn (23%) and New York City (20%).⁸

A new Workforce1 Center will be opening this fall at 2619 Atlantic Avenue in East New York. The center is intended to serve East New York and Brownsville residents, who will no longer have to travel to Downtown Brooklyn to access

workforce services. In addition to its core program offerings, the center will offer career development and job matching services coupled with employment workshops for specifically for residents coming out of the criminal justice system. Through the new HireNYC program, the Workforce1 Center will also post job openings for affordable housing projects that are under construction.

Brownsville is one of five community districts throughout the city with the lowest access to internet service. Only about 60% of households have access to a broadband connection at home, compared to 70% in Brooklyn.⁹ LinkNYC, implementing the Mayor's plan to bring kiosks that supply free wi-fi in neighborhoods, has begun conducting outreach in the neighborhood and identifying opportunities for new kiosks.



East New York Industrial Business Zone

The East New York IBZ is an important industrial area that is home to approximately 250 businesses and over 3,000 jobs, specializing in manufacturing, construction, and transportation. While much of the IBZ is in East New York, more than 20 blocks of Brownsville are part of the IBZ.

NYC Economic Development Corporation (EDC) recently conducted a study of the IBZ with Councilmember Espinal, local businesses, and stakeholders, which will result in over \$16.7 million in new capital investments, including for streetscape improvements to Van Sinderen and Sutter Avenues, new high-speed commercial broadband access, and renovations to the East New York Industrial Building. EDC is also pursuing a set of 20 recommendations aimed at strengthening and growing the industrial sector in East Brooklyn and creating new, quality jobs for local residents.



Illustrative rendering of planned streetscape improvements at the intersection of Van Sinderen and Sutter Avenues

Businesses and Retail

The most common businesses in Brownsville include physicians' offices, restaurants, beauty salons, religious organizations, and convenience stores. The total number of businesses in the neighborhood has seen a rise since 2010, reaching over 1,300 in 2015.¹⁰

Unmet demand, or retail leakage, is calculated as the difference between buying power (demand) and retail sales (supply) with a defined trade area. According to Retail Market Place 2016 data, there is an unmet demand of \$94 million in Brownsville, meaning there is a lot of opportunity to attract new business or expand existing ones to meet the demand in the community.

The largest employers in Brownsville include JMP Bakery, Crossroads Juvenile Center, Brooklyn 73rd Police Precinct, and public and charter schools.¹¹

What We Heard

Throughout the public engagement process, the main themes we heard around community, workforce, and economic development were the desire to see more education and skill-building opportunities, create more spaces for the community to gather, and enhance outreach and awareness about existing programs and services:

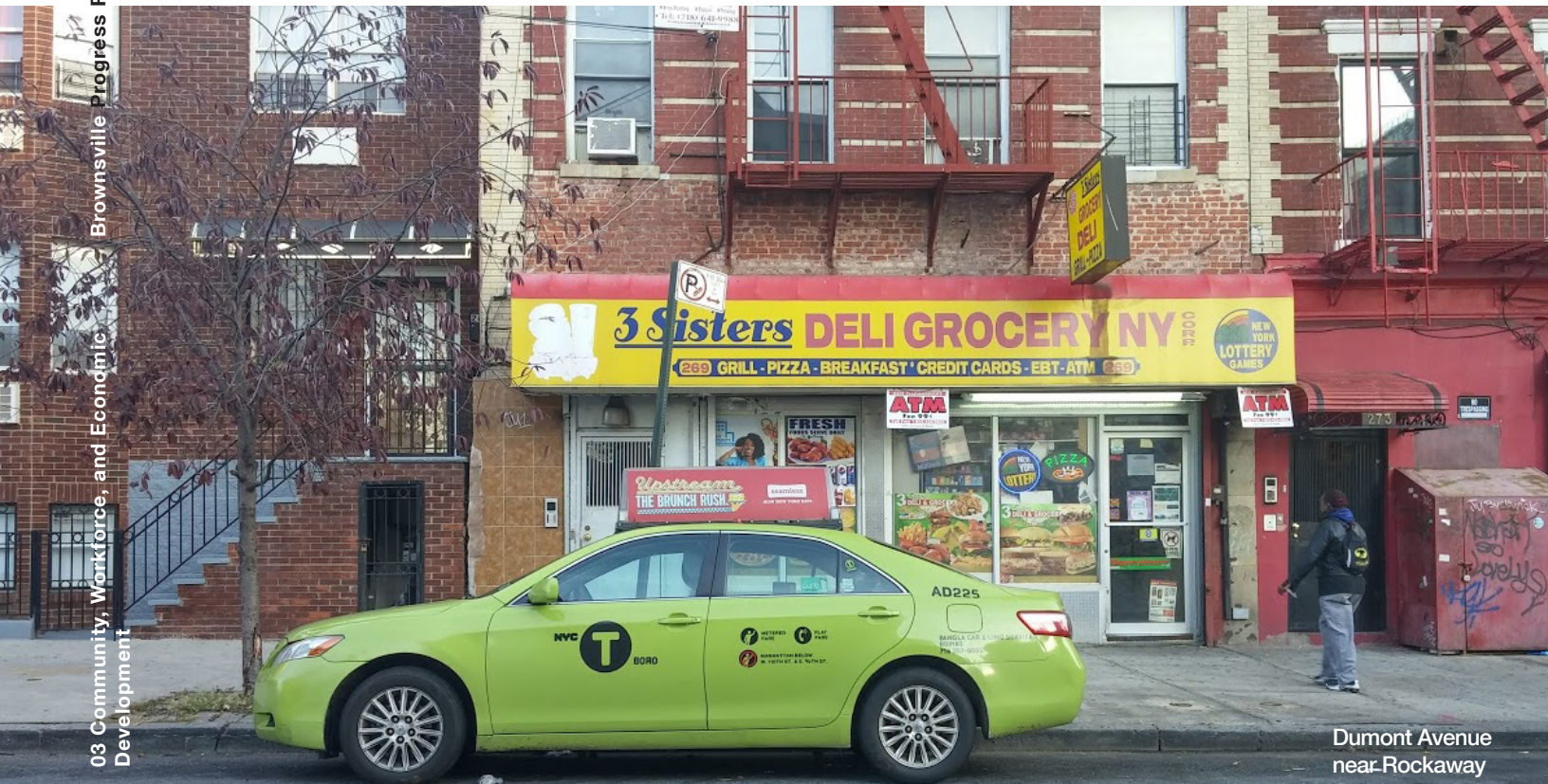
- More education-focused hubs and business capacity-building services that can provide alternatives for families to support their children and provide space for young adults to build their passions (e.g., STEM centers, arts centers, business incubators, co-working spaces, etc.)
- More job training and skill-building programs, particularly around trades, technology, entrepreneurship, and small business assistance, co-working spaces, and local hiring initiatives to prepare residents for opportunities emerging in the neighborhood



- More art and support for local artists in the neighborhood, including opportunities for local vendors and artists, as well as mentorship, resources, and support
- More life-skills workshops on topics including healthy eating/cooking, exercise, managing finances, parenting, running a business, and computer skills
- More multi-purpose recreation and cultural centers that also offer general resources, trainings, fitness and health classes, and other intergenerational activities to bring people together (such as a YMCA, Boys and Girls Club, or other spaces similar to Restoration Plaza in Bed-Stuy)
- Better marketing of existing services, including centralized information in high-traffic areas (e.g., kiosks), block ambassadors to communicate relevant information, and help from elected officials to conduct mailings

Participants also expressed pride in the Pitkin Avenue corridor and wanted to see expansion of services and entertainment options, as well as opportunities to connect local business with workforce development:

- More family-oriented entertainment spaces and sit-down restaurants that stay open late to help keep streets active and improve the image of commercial areas
- More banks or credit unions
- Beautification and public space amenities, such as street furniture, attractive and welcoming signage, more potted plants, street trees, wi-fi kiosks, and benches to improve the image of Pitkin and Belmont Avenues
- A more community-oriented feel on Belmont, filled with quality products, clothing, retail, coffee shops, and boutiques where local designers have a chance to start
- Desire for neighborhood businesses that will prioritize local hiring



Dumont Avenue
near Rockaway
Avenue

04 Health and Safety

Community Health

The City of New York is focused on making Brownsville a safer and healthier community because of serious health inequities experienced by Brownsville residents. Hospitalization rates for diabetes, asthma, alcohol, drugs, and mental health in Brownsville are all double the rates in Brooklyn and the rest of the city.¹² These health problems add up to a life expectancy in Brownsville that is 11 years shorter than in the Financial District. While there are important institutions that provide health services to the neighborhood, including the Brownsville Multi-Service Family Center and Brookdale Hospital, there is also a great need for more preventive care resources and environmental interventions.

A person's health should not be determined by his or her ZIP code. Building Healthy Communities (BHC), a new Mayor's Office initiative, is bringing together city agencies, businesses, and community leaders to create greener, cleaner, safer, and healthier community

life in Brownsville and 11 other neighborhoods citywide. BHC is working with partners to increase access to fresh food, improve opportunities for physical activity, and promote safe and vibrant public spaces.

Since January 2016, BHC has worked with community partners in Brownsville to support two youth-run farm stands, a farm-share program by Isabahlia Ladies of Elegance Foundation at the Powell Street Garden, youth sports programming by the Friends of Brownsville Parks, and a map and guide promoting opportunities for community health and wellness. In partnership with NYCHA, Green City Force, and resident leaders, BHC helped to build a new farm at Howard Houses, connecting residents to beautiful green space and free fresh produce.

Brownsville also has a strong network of park and garden resources, including Betsy Head Park and the new Imagination Playground, the Brownsville Recreation Center, and two dozen other parks, playgrounds, and gardens. The



Brownsville Neighborhood Health Action Center

The Brownsville Neighborhood Health Action Center will be a dynamic center where organizations, community residents, and staff from the New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (DOHMH) will work together to advance neighborhood health. The Action Center is located at 259 Bristol Street and will offer health care services and advocacy through the co-location of city agencies, community based organizations, clinical providers, and DOHMH programs to address health inequities. It will build upon existing work to promote active transportation options (walking and cycling), increase healthy food options by working with bodegas and farmers markets, and establish healthier school environments.

Goals

- Co-locate services (clinical, social services, city agencies, and community based programs) and refer residents to neighborhood assets both in the facility and the surrounding neighborhood
- Address root causes of health inequity through innovative programs and policies
- Hiring individuals and organizations together to develop a common agenda to address health inequities

Services

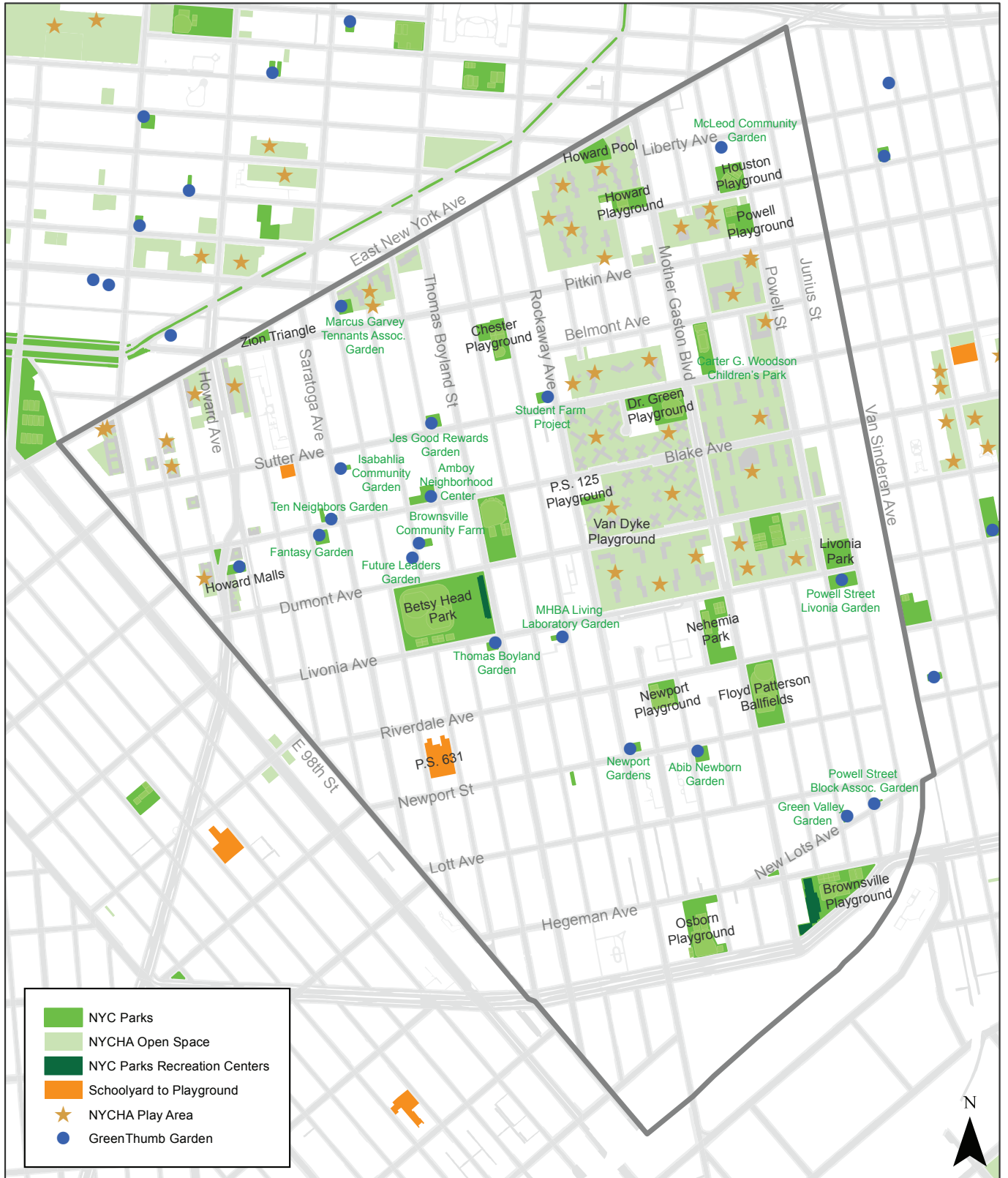
- Primary, mental health, and dental care
- Classes and programs
- Community space for groups to work on neighborhood health planning
- Links to social services

Brownsville Parks and Gardens

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04 Health and Safety



Sources: NYC Department of Parks and Recreation

neighborhood has 18 Green Thumb community gardens and new large-scale farms at Howard Houses and Marcus Garvey Village.

The New York City Department of Parks and Recreation recently announced a new program, Anchor Parks, with the goal of investing \$150 million in transformative capital improvements at one regional park in each borough. The city selected parks that anchor the communities they serve—by providing a stabilizing, centering force for surrounding communities. The program will seek to transform significant parts of these well-loved parks so that they better serve their communities, offering a once-in-a-generation chance to make an old park new again. Betsy Head Park was selected and will be allocated \$30 million in capital funding under this program. Parks is conducting a series of community workshops in 2016 and 2017 to work with community residents to create a vision for the park and prioritize capital improvements.

Through the Community Parks Initiative (CPI), NYC Park is working with communities to re-imagine small, neighborhood parks and completely transform them through capital renovation. Over the next two years, NYC Parks will be investing nearly \$9 million into

Newport Playground and Saratoga Ballfields. In addition to these CPI investments, NYC Parks is in the design phase for \$18 million worth of improvements to the Brownsville Recreation Center. Renovations are projected to span Spring 2018 through Fall 2019.

Public Safety

In addition to its health inequities, Brownsville also experiences an epidemic of violence. Brownsville has the highest rate of non-fatal assault hospitalizations in the city, at 180 per 100,000 adults, almost three times the rate of Brooklyn as a whole. Overall, there were about 3,700 instances of one of the seven major felonies since 2013. Brownsville has the second highest incarceration rate in the city, with 348 out of every 100,000 adults incarcerated, which is nearly four times the citywide rate.¹³

The Mayor's Action Plan for Neighborhood Safety (MAP) is a comprehensive strategy to reduce violence in public housing developments experiencing high rates of crime. Since launching in June 2014, MAP has worked to improve the built environment, enhance access to programming and jobs, and help residents and city agencies interact to bring down crime.



Recent Capital Investment in Brownsville

Betsy Head Imagination Playground

NYC Parks cut the ribbon on Betsy Head Imagination Playground in April 2016. This is the first permanent imagination play space in Brooklyn, and only the second to be built worldwide.

The concept behind the Imagination Playground is to encourage creative, child-directed play. Inspired by tree houses, the Betsy Head playground includes a plant-filled space on multiple levels, water play, sand, and a play area with loose parts and blocks. The project also reconstructed the handball and basketball courts and installed an outdoor adult fitness area.

Investment: \$5M

Status: Completed December 2015

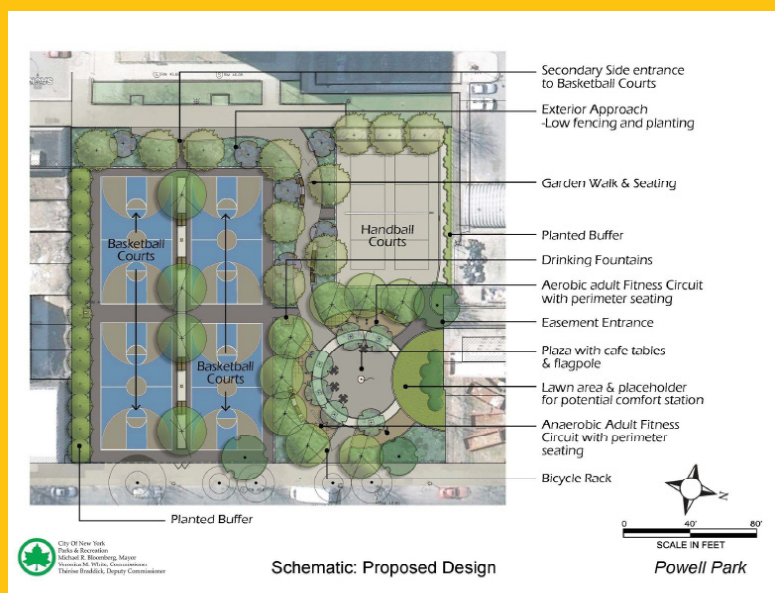


Powell Playground

At Powell Playground, NYC Parks is reconstructing the basketball and handball courts, and creating a new adult fitness area.

Investment: \$2.3M

Status: Ribbon cutting held on October 13, 2016



MAP has been focused on 15 public housing developments in which 20% of all violent crime in public housing is concentrated. In Brownsville, MAP is working in Brownsville Houses and Van Dyke Houses. MAP is led by the Mayor's Office of Criminal Justice, who works with numerous city agencies to develop crime prevention strategies through strengthened partnerships with residents. The Mayor's Office is also supporting local "violence interrupters" to de-escalate conflicts peacefully and – with CAMBA – offering job training, conflict mediation, and mentoring for young people.

In partnership with local residents and community-based organizations, the New York City Department of Probation (DOP) opened its first Neighborhood Opportunity Network (NeON) office in 2011 at the Brownsville Multi-Service Center. The key pillars of the NeON model are building networks, working with people on probation in their own community, and community engagement. NeONs offer a wide range of services, many of which are open to other community residents in addition to people on probation, such as classes, employment preparation, mentoring, access to health insurance and municipal identification, literacy programs, and arts and sports programming.

What We Heard

Throughout the public engagement process, the main themes we heard around health and safety involved the interconnectedness of health and safety with education, economic development, housing, and urban design:

- Residents are proud of Brownsville's parks, gardens, events, and programs

- The Brownsville Recreation Center and Betsy Head Park are great assets/resources for the community, but they are in need of renovation
 - Betsy Head Park needs lighting at night, beautification with public art, more attractive fencing, new bathrooms, an improved track, new benches, better landscaping, more outdoor exercise stations, and more convenient points of entry and connectivity
- More fresh, healthy, and affordable food options are needed in the neighborhood; residents report that supermarkets in the area have poor quality, foods that are expired, and limited variety
 - Desire for more farmers markets, food co-ops, and affordable organic food stores, such as Trader Joe's
 - Education around the importance of these types of foods is also needed
- More spaces to learn and practice being healthy together as a community, such as a recreation center that offers fitness classes, healthy cooking, and more
- More active spaces to improve safety, especially along Livonia Avenue
 - Could be achieved through increased retail, better programming, more lighting, security cameras, better transitions between sidewalk and parks, and more art and interactive features in public spaces
 - Dark locations that pose security problems include Junius and Powell Streets between Livonia, Dumont, and Newport Avenues; around Marcus Garvey Village; and east of Rockaway Avenue
- More police and improved community relations to prevent crime and violence and help residents feel safer

05 Infrastructure and Transportation

Brownsville is separated from adjacent neighborhoods on all sides by transportation infrastructure. The L train right-of-way and MTA rail yards define its eastern edge with the IBZ. In the north, East New York Avenue, Eastern Parkway, and Atlantic Avenue are all particularly wide streets with difficult pedestrian crossings. Linden Boulevard in the south is a major east-west connector between Brooklyn and Queens and serves as a barrier to East New York and Canarsie. To the west of Brownsville, the elevated train along East 98th Street and Rockaway Parkway divide the neighborhood from East Flatbush/Remsen Village. These physical barriers serve to make it more difficult for Brownsville residents to access nearby jobs, education, and services.

Transit

Brownsville is served by two subway lines and seven bus routes. The elevated 3 train bisects the neighborhood along Livonia Avenue, at once serving as the main connector to the rest of the city and the main physical barrier between the

northern and southern part of the neighborhood. The L train, which connects the neighborhood with northern Brooklyn and Manhattan, runs along the eastern edge of the neighborhood. Access to this train, however, is limited by an at-grade rail right-of-way that runs the length of Brownsville. Workshop participants described the stairways and bridge that connect the Livonia Avenue stop to Brownsville as “Dead Man’s Pass.”¹⁴ Despite limited access to the subway system, 71% of Brownsville residents commute by train or other forms of public transportation.¹⁵

Beginning in April 2015 and continuing through Spring 2017, the MTA is performing station renewal projects at six stations along the 3 line in Brooklyn: Sutter Avenue-Rutland Road, Saratoga Avenue, Rockaway Avenue, Junius Street, Pennsylvania Avenue, and Van Siclen Avenue. Station renewal projects include platform improvements; repair of structural steel supports; replacement of platform windscreens and guardrails; mezzanine façade replacement; and other structural repairs.



New median and bus stop being installed on Linden Blvd and Thomas Boyland Street.



Streets

In 2015, as part of the Vision Zero initiative, the New York City Department of Transportation (DOT) released pedestrian safety action plans for the five boroughs, analyzing crash data to determine the priority corridors, intersections, and areas where pedestrians are most often killed or severely injured. In Brownsville, there have been more than 300 vehicle collisions since 2013 where a pedestrian or bicyclist was injured or killed. Because pedestrian fatalities and severe injuries occur with greater frequency in Brownsville than they do in many other parts of Brooklyn, DOT is prioritizing the neighborhood for safety projects. The agency has recently completed installing a network of bike lanes throughout the neighborhood that were planned in coordination with DOHMH and the local community, and it is planning another round of outreach in 2017 to inform expansion of the bike network.

DOT is also working to implement traffic and safety improvements on Linden Boulevard between Kings Highway and 78th Street in Queens, which includes the entire stretch of the corridor in Brownsville. The improvements include reconstructing and widening concrete



Bioswales in Queens

medians for shorter and safer pedestrian crossings, expanding pedestrian signal crossing times where possible, and upgrading roadway markings to clarify vehicle movements and reduce speeding. DOT is completing its work in Brownsville west of Van Sinderen Avenue this fall. Brownsville and Ocean Hill have recently seen the completion of 842 specially designed rain gardens. They resemble standard street tree pits, except that they vary in size, have curb cuts that allow stormwater to enter and overflow if they become saturated, and have been designed in a way that will allow them to each manage up to 2,500 gallons of water during a storm. In addition to creating more attractive, landscaped sidewalks, the rain gardens will reduce the burden on the city's combined sewer system.

At public workshops, Brownsville residents repeatedly raised cleanliness and sanitation as major concerns in the neighborhood. As a result, the New York City Department of Sanitation (DSNY) has increased enforcement patrols to address dumping and other street conditions in the neighborhood. As part of CleanNYC, DSNY has restored Sunday and holiday litter basket collection service on major commercial strips in Brownsville. As a result of these efforts, Brownsville's scorecard increased to 89% of

streets rated acceptably clean in FY 2016 – up from 84% in FY 2015.

In addition, Brownsville’s recycling diversion rate increased from 7.8% in FY 2015 to 8.3% in FY 2016, and DSNY continues to focus on increasing recycling rates through improved outreach. In partnership with NYCHA, DSNY is expanding recycling service to all public housing residents by the end of 2016 and has conducted trainings and workshops for NYCHA staff and residents. DSNY has also enrolled several buildings in the re-fashionNYC and e-cycleNYC programs to reuse and recycle textiles and electronic waste. As of 2016, 50 buildings with 4,129 households are enrolled in e-cycleNYC. Between e-cycleNYC and electronic waste collection events, Brownsville residents diverted nearly 13,000 pounds of electronic waste for recycling in fiscal year 2016. DSNY has also worked with local community groups to support community composting efforts and greening initiatives in Brownsville.¹⁶

What We Heard

Throughout the public engagement process, the main themes we heard around transportation and infrastructure related to the need for safety, accessibility, beautification, and new amenities in public space throughout the neighborhood:

- More traffic calming and other Vision Zero improvements, as well as repairs to potholes, cracks, and other road maintenance issues
- Dangerous intersections along Livonia Avenue that could use pedestrian safety measures (such as stop or yield signs, speed bumps, etc.) include East 98th Street, Rockaway Avenue, Junius Street, and Powell Street – where people cross for station entrances or cross mid-block from housing complexes. Other dangerous intersections include those along East New York Avenue, Pitkin Avenue at Mother Gaston Boulevard and Howard Avenue, and around Heritage House
- Better lighting is needed throughout the neighborhood, especially along Livonia Avenue under the elevated train and Pitkin and Belmont Avenues
- Better accommodation for those with special needs, particularly along the elevated train
- Pedestrian experience improvements, including gardens or public art in plazas, seating tables, planters, wi-fi kiosks, trash cans, and other interactive elements
- More art that celebrates Brownsville history and culture incorporated with infrastructure
- More garbage cans and increased frequency of street cleaning, as well as campaigns against litter
- Better connections for bicycles to and from Eastern Parkway/Prospect Park and Canarsie Pier/Jamaica Bay Greenway



Elevated train structure on Livonia Avenue

This report summarized the Learn phase of this planning process, where HPD and partner agencies worked with the community to define a vision, goals, and guiding principles for the future of the Brownsville neighborhood. This report will be used to inform subsequent phases of the process.

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Create

The goal of the Create phase is to begin developing strategies and ideas that can solve problems identified within the community, as well as test their ability to meet the economic, physical and social goals of the community. During this phase, HPD will host a workshop to gather concrete feedback for future housing development on city-owned land (November 16). NYC Parks is hosting the first in a series of public visioning sessions to plan for \$30 million of investment into Betsy Head Park. During this phase, HPD will also host a series of online surveys to gather feedback on potential strategies for the neighborhood.

Finalize

Starting in early 2017, HPD will synthesize and combine all of the work completed to date into a single neighborhood plan, which will serve as a starting point for implementation. It will be a document that will serve as the basis for future city investments, actions, and approvals. The plan will also outline next steps (short, medium, and long term) toward implementing strategies that achieve community objectives.

Endnotes

- 1 American Community Survey 2009-2013
- 2 American Community Survey 2008-2012
- 3 U.S. Census 2000 and American Community Survey 2008-2012
- 4 Housing and Vacancy Survey 2014
- 5 American Community Survey 2009-2013
- 6 American Community Survey 2009-2013
- 7 NYC Department of Education, 2013-2014
- 8 American Community Survey 2009-2013
- 9 Office of NYC Comptroller Scott M. Stringer. Internet Inequality: Broadband Access in NYC, December 2014.
- 10 Infogroup, Inc. 2016. From ReferenceUSA database.
- 11 Infogroup, Inc. 2016. From ReferenceUSA database.
- 12 NYC Department of Health Community Health Profiles: Brooklyn CD16 - Brownsville 2015.
- 13 NYC Department of Corrections, 2013.
- 14 The MTA 2015-2019 Capital plan includes \$45 million to plan, design, and construct a new passenger connection between the Canarsie line (L) at Livonia Avenue and the New Lots line (3) at Junius Street.
- 15 American Community Survey 2009-2013
- 16 NYC Department of Sanitation, 2016