From Strengths to Solutions: An Asset-Based Approach to Meeting Community Needs in Brownsville
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Acknowledgements

CCC’s Brownsville Community Asset Mapping project and the resulting report was made possible through a grant by the Stella and Charles Guttman Foundation.

CCC is incredibly grateful to the dozens of Brownsville residents who took time to speak with us about the issues outlined in this report. We also owe thanks to several organizations working in the Brownsville community who assisted with this report in a variety of ways. These organizations include: Brooklyn Public Library/Brownsville Branch, Brownsville BID, Brownsville Youth Association, Center for Court Innovation/Brownsville Community Justice Center, Community Solutions/Brownsville Partnership, Institute for Community Living, Power of 2, SCO Family of Services.

Finally, we owe thanks to the government agencies who we consulted with throughout our data collection efforts: Administration for Children’s Services, the Center for Economic Opportunity, the Children’s Cabinet, Department of City Planning, Department of Education, Department of Health and Mental Hygiene, the Human Resources Administration/Department of Homeless Services.

March 2017
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Executive Summary

Since 1944, Citizens’ Committee for Children of New York (CCC) has engaged colleagues in government, philanthropy, and direct service in data-driven discussions about the needs of children and families in communities throughout New York City and the practical solutions to address those needs. For more than two decades, we have maintained the nation’s most comprehensive database tracking the well-being of the city’s children and families, and we make that information available to the public through a free online tool called Keeping Track Online. We analyze this data in CCC’s Community Risk Ranking and Keeping Track of New York City’s Children publications. Together, these data tools have helped CCC describe the conditions faced by New York City’s children citywide, across each borough, and in each of the city’s 59 community districts.

Historically, much of the data used to describe the status of children and families has focused on needs and risk factors, and these indicators are commonly collected through a variety of state, local, and federal government sources. For example, CCC’s Community Risk Ranking examines data related to child poverty, family homelessness, infant mortality, educational test scores, teen idleness, and violent felony rates among others. Yet we know that children’s outcomes are defined by a complex interplay of both risk factors and the assets or resources that exist to help children and their families overcome barriers to well-being. We also know that in order to effectively improve outcomes for children and families, we must target our solution-seeking at the most local level and engage community stakeholders in our efforts to unearth the opportunities that are present.

For these reasons, CCC has undertaken a comprehensive effort to establish a method through which to identify assets or resources in New York City communities, starting with the neighborhood of Brownsville in Brooklyn. We began by leveraging our Keeping Track database to provide a foundation for our understanding of the needs of Brownsville’s children and families. We then met with colleagues in government, nonprofit, and academic organizations to identify data on key assets or resources that should be present at the community level. Asset data were then collected from a wide range of local government agencies to illustrate the services, supports, and infrastructure that exist in Brownsville. To ensure we presented a complete picture of the challenges, strengths, and opportunities present in Brownsville, we engaged residents and organizations working in the community throughout our process. These conversations helped to identify issues that were revealed through the data that required closer examination, raised additional areas of concern for which data needed to be explored, and provided a deeper understanding of the story the data was telling from the perspective of those living and working in the community. This was instrumental in gaining insights on issues such as a lack of sufficient resources, conditions within the community that limit access to services, and concerns about quality that may drive residents away from available resources.

Brownsville

The neighborhood of Brownsville in Brooklyn is home to over 61,000 residents, including nearly 19,000 children. Brownsville is one of several communities in New York City where outcomes along traditional measures of well-being are consistently well below the city average, with children and families experiencing high rates of poverty, crime and homelessness, and poor outcomes in health and education. In the 2016 edition of CCC’s annual Community Risk Ranking, the Brownsville-Ocean Hill community district ranked 4th out of 59 community districts in overall risk, making it one of the highest ranked communities in terms of cumulative risk to well-being. Our analysis illustrates the extent to which children in Brownsville are not faring as well as their peers across the borough and city.
We also found there to be a shortage of many fundamental resources that should exist in any New York City community. Public transportation options, banks, food retail, housing support services, and after-school and summer programs for older youth are just some examples of resources that appear to be lacking. In other areas—such as childcare and medical care—issues related to convenience and quality, respectively, seem to serve as a deterrent to resource utilization. And the fear of crime and violence in the community means that fewer people are using the resources—from parks to libraries to youth services—that do exist.

Throughout our conversation with community-based organizations and residents, it became very clear that the greatest asset to the community of Brownsville are the individuals who live and work there. The residents we spoke to expressed great pride in their community and are looking for ways to improve the prospects of their neighborhood. In many cases, they echoed the findings of our research, pointing to a lack of resources in the community as a significant hurdle to meeting basic needs.

Many residents cited a lack of childcare and insufficient transportation options as impediments to finding and holding a job. They took issue with the quality of medical care facilities and schools in the area and expressed a willingness to travel whenever possible to access higher quality healthcare and education options. A lack of affordable housing and support services designed to keep residents in their homes were also frequently mentioned by residents as resources that were lacking in the neighborhood. And the absence of productive activities for older children was cited as a possible reason for high crime rates, which is the number one concern for many community members.

Importantly, there is ample opportunity for targeted, strategic interventions that can help the community overcome the many challenges it faces. And making an impact in one area can improve outcomes in others. More employment opportunities for older youth might make the community safer. Increased safety could lead to more young people taking advantage of existing parks and/or after-school or summer programs, which could improve their health and education outcomes. Increased licensed childcare capacity could lead to higher rates of employment among parents, and increasing household income can, in turn, lead to improved housing stability for young children to grow in.

Much work is already underway in Brownsville, both through public sector programs and the dedication of many nonprofit organizations and individuals. However, we are hopeful that this assessment of needs and resources will inform continued advocacy in the Brownsville community and work with the City administration and New York City Council.

From our data collection and analysis, in-district meetings and focus groups, CCC has developed 14 broad recommendations of areas where there is opportunity for government, philanthropic and community based organizations, and residents to work together to improve outcomes for children and families in Brownsville:

**Economic security**
- Expand adult education and skills training programs for unemployed and underemployed adults with low levels of educational attainment.
- Ensure that public transportation is affordable and accessible for all residents. Explore subway alternatives in areas that are hard to reach in the neighborhood.
- Expand efforts to utilize public vacant lots as opportunities for new affordable housing and other projects that could lead to job creation and economic development or improved access to services and supports in the community.
- Explore opportunities to provide training and employment opportunities for residents while addressing necessary maintenance and repairs to housing and other infrastructure.

**Housing**
- Improve conditions in NYCHA public housing by resolving backlog of maintenance issues and ensuring buildings are in compliance with all codes and regulations.
- Increase presence of housing support and legal services to keep residents in their homes and assist clients in finding permanent, stable and affordable housing.

**Health**
- Incentivize the opening of additional food retail—particularly in the southern part of Brownsville—and ensure that healthy food options are available to all Brownsville residents year-round.
- Explore opportunities to improve access to healthy affordable foods in the community such as shuttle or bus service to supermarkets in neighboring districts, and to increase awareness of the USDA pilot program, set to commence in August 2017, which will allow SNAP recipients to purchase groceries online.
Conduct outreach to ensure that residents are aware of medical and mental health services and encourage utilization of necessary services, particularly pre-natal care for pregnant women and mental health services.

**Education**
- Ensure that licensed childcare capacity is sufficient to meet demand for all age groups, and conduct city supported outreach campaigns to increase awareness of and enrollment in childcare and pre-k programs.

**Youth**
- Ensure presence of after-school and summer programs and activities for all age groups, particularly older children.

**Family and Community**
- Ensure that streets are well lit, particularly near subway stations and along routes to and from schools, parks, libraries and other resources for young people.
- Convene public safety and elected officials, community leaders, and other stakeholders to address safety concerns and policing in the community.
- Build upon existing community-based outreach efforts to spread information on key public services, including but not limited to child abuse and neglect prevention, mental health services, and licensed childcare. These efforts should aim to improve trust between residents, city agencies, and the nonprofit community so that residents are not fearful of accessing necessary services.
- Explore opportunities to integrate and co-locate services to more conveniently and effectively meet children and family needs.

CCC is hopeful that the community-driven efforts underway can be accelerated and expanded upon, and our broad recommendations point to the need to create or expand necessary programs, as well as invest in extensive community outreach and collaboration. Neighborhood residents should inform policy interventions and be made aware of available resources, so that greater trust can be built among city agencies, nonprofit organizations, and residents who are all eager to improve child and family well-being in Brownsville.
I. Introduction

The neighborhood of Brownsville in Brooklyn is one of several neighborhoods in New York City where outcomes along traditional measures of well-being—from income to education—are consistently well below the city average. In the 2016 edition of our annual Community Risk Ranking—which analyzes data across multiple dimensions of child well-being—the Brownsville-Ocean Hill community district ranked 4th out of 59 community districts in overall risk, making it one of the highest risk communities in New York City—and the highest risk community in Brooklyn—for children.

The risk ranking highlights vast disparities in well-being across the city, while also illustrating how risks are interrelated. In addition to overall risk, we look at individual domains to see how communities are faring in the areas of economic security, education, health, housing, youth issues, and family and community. Many of the communities that are high risk in one domain are high risk in several others. This is the case for Brownsville-Ocean Hill, which was among the highest risk community districts in nearly every domain. In communities where multiple risks concentrate, children and families face significant obstacles in having their basic needs met and realizing their full potential.

While the risk ranking is illustrative of how barriers to well-being concentrate, we know that data exclusively focused on risks presents an incomplete picture of a community. Brownsville is far more than a high-risk community; it is home to thousands of residents who take great pride in their neighborhood and are deeply committed to improving conditions for those who live there. Residents also have the support of many dedicated individuals and organizations who are striving to help Brownsville residents meet the challenges they face.

Community asset mapping provides an illustration of both the needs of a community and available resources. Asset mapping can help community stakeholders, foundations and government leaders determine whether existing resources are—or are not—meeting a community’s needs so that strategies for community development can be implemented accordingly.
About This Report

This report was informed by data collected from dozens of sources, including the United States Census Bureau’s American Community Survey and the New York City Department of City Planning (DCP). We were also able to hear directly from Brownsville residents through meetings with community stakeholders and five focus groups with residents. (For a full list of data sources and focus group details, see Appendix III). These conversations were incredibly helpful in gaining insight into the community that only residents and those who work in Brownsville could provide. Focus group participants directed us to issues that needed to be addressed; provided observations and opinions that supported the data we were collecting; and provided much-needed context for our asset data collection and analysis. For example, it is one thing to know that a hospital exists in a certain location; it is much more helpful to know how residents feel about accessing care there.

We have divided the findings of our research into five areas, similar to the way we look at risk: economic security, health, education, housing, and youth, family, and community. In each area, we first look at data on outcomes to understand what the needs of the community are. In the economic security section, for example, we look at household income and poverty among several other data points. We then explore the assets or resources in the community related to that area. Health assets, for example, include food retail, open spaces and medical and mental health facilities.

Assets were primarily identified from DCP’s facilities files, but were also provided upon request by various city agencies and other sources. And in each section, we provide an overview of organizations and programs that are already in place to help residents meet their needs. While these overviews are not meant to be exhaustive, they provide several examples of city and nonprofit efforts that are helping Brownsville residents address the challenges they face. Finally, in each section, we provide our takeaways, informed by our data collection and conversations with residents.

How We Define Assets

When we refer to assets or resources in a community, we are looking at supports, services, and infrastructure that promote the upward mobility and healthy development of children and families. In most cases, we are looking at specific resources that either do or do not exist in the community; in other cases—most notably, public vacant lots—we are looking at sources of potential development. While the assets we include are not meant to represent everything a resident might consider a resource, we did our best to identify resources that should be available to all children and families and for which data was available. It was not in the scope of this project to do a block-by-block evaluation of the neighborhood to identify other possible assets. In some instances—particularly in the housing domain—we identify things that could be seen as assets if they were of high quality and adequately serving their intended purpose. This, however, is not always the case, and residents have varying views on the benefit of these resources to the community.

A Note on Geography

The focus of this report is the neighborhood of Brownsville. However, some data is only available at the larger community district level. In these cases, we are looking at Brooklyn Community District 16, which contains the neighborhoods of Brownsville and Ocean Hill, and is referred to as Brownsville-Ocean Hill. In a smaller number of cases, data is only available for the census designated geography (or PUMA) that includes the Brownsville-Ocean Hill community district along with the neighborhood of East New York (Pennsylvania Avenue). This will be referred to as Brownsville (PUMA). For more information on geography, see Appendix I.

How We Measure Risk

CCC’s Community Risk Ranking looks at 18 different indicators across six domains of well-being - economic security, housing, health, education, youth, and family and community—to determine where risks to child well-being are concentrated. We then rank New York City’s 59 community districts from highest to lowest risk, within each domain and overall. The ability to identify where risks concentrate is important, as research tells us that the presence of multiple risk factors has a cumulative negative effect on child development and child well-being. In this report, we use our risk ranking indicators as a foundation for assessing the presence of risk factors in the neighborhood of Brownsville.
Community Overview

The neighborhood of Brownsville covers 1.09 square miles and is home to over 61,000 residents, making it the 18th most populous of Brooklyn’s 50 neighborhoods and the 12th most densely populated. Over three-quarters of Brownsville residents are black, nearly one-fifth are Latino, and there are very small shares—less than one percent—who are white, Asian or some other race.

With nearly 19,000 children, Brownsville has the eighth largest child population among Brooklyn neighborhoods, and its share of population under the age of 18 is significantly higher than in Brooklyn and New York City as a whole. This is the case for children under the age of five—who make up nearly one in ten Brownsville residents—as well as those between ages five and 17. Nearly one-third of Brownsville’s population is under the age of 18, compared to 24 percent in Brooklyn and 21 percent in New York City.

We know from our risk ranking that risks concentrate in the Brownsville-Ocean Hill community district across multiple areas of well-being, and looking specifically at Brownsville reveals that children there are growing up with significant challenges. Children are significantly more likely to live in single-parent households, and are significantly less likely to score proficient on state-mandated exams, than their peers in Brooklyn and across New York City. Brownsville residents also deal with higher rates of child poverty, infant mortality, youth unemployment and families entering homeless shelters.

Against this backdrop, it is incredibly challenging to ensure that children and families in Brownsville have the opportunities they need and deserve to realize their full potential. The large child population in Brownsville—including very young children—provides an opportunity for the city to implement strategies to improve outcomes in Brownsville at the earliest stages of a child’s development.
II. Economic Conditions

The impact of household and neighborhood economic conditions on child well-being has been well documented. Growing up in an economically insecure household can cause stress—on both parents and children—that can impact a child’s health and cognitive and behavioral development.1 Our community risk ranking measures risk in the economic security domain by looking at child poverty, median income for families with children, and parental employment instability.2 In this section, we provide an overview of the economic conditions in Brownsville by looking at these indicators, and additional data on employment and wages. We also explore the presence of assets—subway infrastructure, public vacant lots, and financial institutions—that can help improve the economic prospects of community residents.

Community Overview

Nearly 24,000—or 40 percent—of Brownsville’s residents live below the federal poverty level, which was $20,160 per year for a family of three in 2016. This includes over 14,000 people who live in deep poverty, meaning their income is below 50 percent of the federal poverty level. Brownsville’s poverty rate is nearly double the poverty rate for New York City as a whole and is the second highest of any neighborhood in Brooklyn. Over 9,000 children—54 percent of children in Brownsville—are growing up in poor households, including nearly 3,000 children (57 percent) under the age of five. Research has shown that young children’s early brain development can be particularly vulnerable to the impacts of poverty.3

Brooklyn Neighborhoods with Highest Poverty Rates

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Neighborhood</th>
<th>Population</th>
<th>Poverty Rate</th>
<th>Child Poverty Rate</th>
<th>Deep Poverty Rate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 Williamsburg</td>
<td>31,880</td>
<td>56.5%</td>
<td>64.1%</td>
<td>27.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Brownsville</td>
<td>59,537</td>
<td>40.0%</td>
<td>54.0%</td>
<td>23.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 East New York</td>
<td>30,169</td>
<td>39.4%</td>
<td>56.7%</td>
<td>22.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 Borough Park</td>
<td>108,926</td>
<td>37.3%</td>
<td>49.5%</td>
<td>12.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 Seagate-Coney Island</td>
<td>28,649</td>
<td>37.1%</td>
<td>43.1%</td>
<td>14.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brooklyn</td>
<td>2,549,012</td>
<td>23.4%</td>
<td>33.4%</td>
<td>10.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New York City</td>
<td>8,219,906</td>
<td>20.6%</td>
<td>29.7%</td>
<td>9.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

High rates of poverty in Brownsville are driven by low rates of employment that result in very low household incomes. The median household income in Brownsville is just over $25,000, third lowest among Brooklyn neighborhoods and significantly lower than the borough wide median household income (nearly $47,000) and less than half of the citywide median household income (nearly $53,000).5

Fewer than half of working age (16-64 years old) Brownsville residents are employed, the lowest among Brooklyn neighborhoods and far below the 64 percent borough wide rate. Fewer than 60 percent of working age Brownsville residents are in the labor force—meaning they are working or actively looking for work—compared to over 70 percent borough and citywide. In the Brownsville-Ocean Hill community district, 57 percent of children live in households where neither parent worked full-time, the highest rate in the city.

2 The parental employment instability indicator measures the share of children living in households where neither the householder or a spouse worked full-time.
4 The NTA of Williamsburg is a small sub-section of a larger area that is commonly referred to as Williamsburg. Unlike the larger area, this sub-section has very high rates of poverty and other poor outcomes.
5 The median income for families with children in the Brownsville-Ocean Hill community district is just over $22,000.
Reasons for not being in the labor force among the working age population range from illness or disability to school enrollment or family responsibilities. Low labor force participation rates could also be the result of discouragement due to few employment opportunities. Brownsville residents we spoke to suggested job opportunities were scarce in the community, while also citing reasons such as insufficient childcare options and poor public transportation as reasons for not working or looking for work. Data from the Census Bureau’s County Business Patterns, which looks at employment and the number of establishments by zip code, confirms that Brownsville is in an area where businesses and jobs are relatively scarce. Residents we spoke to noted that businesses located in Brownsville rarely hire members of the community, and that employment that can be found is often temporary.

At $25,600 in 2014, median earnings for workers in Brownsville are in the bottom ten of Brooklyn neighborhoods, but higher than several neighborhoods where workers are more heavily concentrated in the low-wage sectors of retail trade and accommodation and food services. Nearly one out of five workers in Brownsville are employed in either retail trade or accommodation and food services, only marginally higher than the borough wide share. Brownsville workers are more heavily concentrated in the healthcare and social assistance sector, where nearly one-third of Brownsville workers are employed. Though this sector does contain some middle to higher wage industries and occupations, job growth in this sector over the last decade has been dominated by the home health care services industry, among the lowest paying industries in the city. Given low levels of educational attainment and relatively low earnings, it is reasonable to assume that a significant share of Brownsville residents working in the healthcare and social assistance sector are employed in lower paying industries—such as home health care services—within that sector.

It is well established that higher rates of educational attainment lead to greater rates of employment and earnings, and workers increasingly need at least some post-secondary education to compete in the labor market. In Brownsville, over a quarter of residents age 25 and older lack a high school diploma and another 37 percent have only a high school diploma. Just one in ten have a Bachelor’s degree or higher. This stands in stark contrast to other Brooklyn neighborhoods where more than two-thirds of adults have a Bachelor’s degree or higher.

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6 CCC analysis of Bureau of Labor Statistics Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages data

Brooklyn Neighborhoods with Lowest Rates of Educational Attainment

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Neighborhood</th>
<th>Bachelor’s degree and higher</th>
<th>No High School Diploma</th>
<th>High School Diploma</th>
<th>High School Diploma or less</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 Williamsburg</td>
<td>8.3%</td>
<td>30.5%</td>
<td>36.9%</td>
<td>67.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Brownsville</td>
<td>9.7%</td>
<td>27.2%</td>
<td>36.8%</td>
<td>64.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 East New York (Pennsylvania Ave)</td>
<td>9.7%</td>
<td>29.3%</td>
<td>37.8%</td>
<td>67.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 Cypress Hills-City Line</td>
<td>11.4%</td>
<td>28.6%</td>
<td>42.1%</td>
<td>70.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 East New York</td>
<td>12.9%</td>
<td>22.1%</td>
<td>42.4%</td>
<td>64.5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Brooklyn 31.6% 21.1% 26.9% 48.0%
New York City 35.0% 19.9% 24.4% 44.3%

Share of Unbanked and Underbanked

Community Assets

In the following section, we analyze three assets that could ease economic hardship in Brownsville: financial institutions, vacant lots, and subway infrastructure. Financial institutions can help foster the accumulation of individual savings and wealth; public vacant lots can be used for economic and community development; and subway infrastructure can connect local residents to economic opportunities within and beyond Brownsville’s borders.

Financial Institutions

Access to mainstream financial institutions is a key component of individual and community financial health. Accounts at federally insured institutions provide households opportunities to deposit funds, conduct basic financial transactions, accumulate savings, and access credit. Access to banking institutions provides a much needed foundation for financial stability and for building a household’s assets.

In New York City, it is estimated that 360,000 households are unbanked, meaning they do not have an account at an insured institution. An additional 780,000 households have an account at a financial institution but also rely on alternative financial service (AFS) providers to meet their financial needs. These households are considered underbanked. AFS providers are check cashers, payday lenders, rent-to-own stores, pawn shops, and other institutions that can help meet immediate financial needs. AFS providers can expose households to potential predatory practices such as exorbitant fees due to a lack of regulation and consumer protection.

New York City households are more likely to be unbanked and underbanked than households nationwide, and households in Brownsville (PUMA) have the third highest unbanked rate and ninth highest underbanked rate out of 55 PUMAs in New York City. Nearly three out of ten households in Brownsville (PUMA) do not have a bank account, compared to just over one in ten citywide. Over half of households in Brownsville (PUMA) are either unbanked or underbanked.

Brownsville residents we spoke to mentioned that there were opportunities in the neighborhood for adults to obtain a high school equivalency degree. However, it is possible that many of the same obstacles that make finding employment a challenge—namely transportation and childcare—also stand in the way of adults participating in programs where they can receive a high school diploma. One program mentioned by residents is located in a public housing development, which, according to residents, would not be attended by those who live in other public housing developments due to concerns over safety. The inability to access certain resources due to safety concerns was a common theme that emerged in discussions with residents.

Brownsville: An Enriched Banking Development District

The New York State Banking Department created the banking development district (BDD) program in 1997. The BDD program provides incentives (e.g. public deposits) for banks to open branches in communities where no or few bank branches exist.

In 2003, New York City adopted its own BDD program using city funds to help establish bank branches where they were most needed. The Banking Development Working Group, a partnership between the New York State Banking Department and several New York State and City agencies, was created in 2004 to promote the new city BDD program. The working group identified eleven communities, including Brownsville, which were lacking in mainstream banking institutions. These communities are eligible for ‘Enriched BDD’ status and banks that establish a presence in these neighborhoods through the BDD program are eligible for combined incentives from state and city agencies. The ‘Enriched BDD’ program has resulted in branch openings in six of the eleven identified communities, but not in Brownsville.9

There are two banking institutions—Chase and Banco Popular—with a total of three branches located in Brownsville. Chase has two branches, one on Pitkin Avenue and another on 98th Street, which are situated within a mile’s distance of each other. Banco Popular’s single branch can be found between Chase’s two branches on Pitkin Avenue.

The map below shows that mainstream financial institutions are scarce in and around Brownsville. This is particularly true for residents located in the southern portion of Brownsville. The blue area of the map below represents residents who live within half a mile of a banking institution.10 Residents in the yellow area do not live within walking distance of any banking institution; this area is home to over 12,500 adults, or nearly one-third of Brownsville’s adult population.

Brownsville Banks

9 New York State Banking Department. 10 Years In: A Review of the Banking Development District Program. May 2010.

10 For this analysis the ‘geometric centroid’ of the census tract had to fall within a distance of half mile of the banking institution for the branch to be considered within walking distance.
Vacant Lots

Vacant lots are traditionally viewed as problematic in urban landscapes. They are often considered a sign of blight, disinvestment and a safety hazard in the neighborhood environment. However, a growing amount of research urges localities to repurpose vacant lots for economic, social or ecological uses that engage and support marginalized communities. In this view, vacant lots can be leveraged as key assets for social and economic development.

For this analysis we focus on vacant lots held publicly, specifically any vacant lot that lists New York City or a New York City government agency as the owner. Around half of the 730,810 square feet of vacant lot space in Brownsville is publicly held, adding up to 357,123 square feet, or the equivalent of 7.5 football fields.

The development potential of a lot can be limited by physical attributes such as parcel size and shape irregularity, and regulatory attributes such as zoning. It is beyond the scope of this project to comprehensively survey the vacant lots in Brownsville for their physical attributes; however, an analysis of zoning regulations was conducted. Nearly half (49 percent) of publicly available vacant lots are zoned residential, around half (51 percent) are zoned non-residential, and a little less than one percent are classified as miscellaneous.

New York City already has programs in place that aim to utilize vacant lots to stimulate economic activity, including in Brownsville. Other cities across the country can also provide examples of how to use vacant lots to benefit the community. The over eight acres of publicly held vacant lot space in Brownsville represent an opportunity for New York City and the Brownsville community to find creative ways to stimulate economic growth.

Public Vacant Lots

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12 While information on irregular shaped lots and lot size is available on the PLUTO file, many smaller parcels of land and irregular lots are adjacent to each other forming larger, “regular” lots, which made it difficult to eliminate parcels based on this criteria.

13 For our analysis building class codes were used to organize the data. Residually zoned vacant lots include “zoned residential” and “primarily zoned residential” lots, and not residential includes “not zoned residential” and “not zoned residential, but Adjacent to Tax Class 1 Dwelling.” Miscellaneous lots are defined as “Department of Real Estate and Other Public Places.”
Examples of Vacant Lot Use

Through the New York City Economic Development Corporation’s Opportunity for Neighborhood Economic Excellence NYC initiative, the Vacant Lot Activation Program is utilizing city owned vacant and underutilized lots to stimulate economic development and increase commercial investment in under-served areas. By offering business support services, community event spaces and affordable rent, the program supports small businesses and local entrepreneurs. The initiative created MGB POPS, a former local pop-up market located on Mother Gaston Boulevard.

In and around Brownsville, vacant lots are also being developed into affordable housing. In 2014, Habitat for Humanity broke ground on a 15-home development on Mother Gaston Boulevard, just outside of Brownsville in Ocean Hill. Vacant lots in Brownsville and East New York are being utilized for Livonia Commons on Livonia Avenue, a complex of 800 affordable units.

The New York City Department of Housing, Preservation and Development (HPD) has been soliciting community input for plans to develop vacant lots in Brownsville.14 With the help of community stakeholders, HPD is holding public meetings and collecting input through an interactive online mapping tool. While HPD’s priorities include affordable housing and retail spaces, residents are also expressing the need for youth recreation centers, supermarkets, and community spaces.

Subway Infrastructure

Public transportation is an important cornerstone of urban life. It increases access to jobs, especially for neighborhoods where fewer local employment opportunities exist and vehicle ownership is less common.15 Public transit also connects communities to other vital services like health care facilities, schools, food retailers, and childcare providers.

Subway Stops

- 3 Train Stops
- A Train Stops
- C Train Stops
- L Train Stops

Four subway lines—the 3, A, C, and L trains—run in or around Brownsville, connecting residents to western and southern Brooklyn, and Manhattan’s west side.16 Subway accessibility is limited in western Brownsville, where over 15,000 adults—or 36 percent of Brownsville’s adult population—live within half a mile of only the 3 train line. The 3 train—the sole line that runs through the center of Brownsville—does not operate in Brooklyn (and lower Manhattan) from midnight to 5:30 a.m. During these hours, subway accessibility for western Brownsville residents is reduced to nothing. Residents of central and eastern Brownsville are within walking distance of two or more subway lines.


16 The A express stop at Broadway Junction offers a free transfer to the C, J, L, and Z lines. However, the actual entrance to the J, L, and Z lines is outside the established proximity threshold, even as the A/C entrance falls within it. This is why the J, L, and Z stops at Broadway Junction are not reflected on the map.
Brownsville residents we spoke to did not feel like they had adequate transportation options and that there were several problems with the options they do have. Residents said that subway and bus service was unreliable and difficult to access for the elderly and mothers with small children, since many subway stations do not have elevator access. And in an area with limited options, necessary maintenance work on subway lines and stations has been problematic. In April 2015, the Rockaway Avenue station on the 3 train line closed for repair for several months, followed by the other Brownsville stations on the 3 line. The Rockaway Avenue station re-opened months behind schedule in March 2016, but the Sutter Avenue-Rutland Road and Junius Street stations were slated to be closed from October 2016 through spring 2017. Residents also noted the lack of a free transfer between the Livonia Avenue L station and the Junius Street 3 station, which are only two blocks apart. The MTA Chairman acknowledged that a free transfer between these two stations should have happened long ago, but won’t take effect until 2019 when designated funds become available. Brownsville residents were particularly upset at the lack of a free transfer, with many noting that similar transfers were free in other parts of the city, adding to their perception that Brownsville is often left behind in the minds of city leaders and decision makers.

The limited access and reliability of subways in Brownsville may contribute to Brownsville workers having among the longest commute times for workers living in Brooklyn. According to census data, 70 percent of Brownsville workers use public transportation to get to work, an even higher share than New York City (56 percent) and Brooklyn (62 percent) as a whole. Thirty-seven percent of Brownsville workers report a commute of an hour or more, the sixth highest figure of all Brooklyn neighborhoods. Brownsville residents report longer commutes than those in many neighborhoods that are just as reliant on public transportation and even further from the primary job centers in Manhattan. This includes East New York—Brownsville’s neighbor to the east—where 70 percent of workers report using public transportation, but only 27 percent report a commute of over one hour, despite being further from Manhattan than Brownsville.

**Economic Conditions - Efforts Underway**

*The Brownsville Partnership*

The Brownsville Partnership's 5,000 Jobs Campaign aims to help 5,000 residents join the workforce by the end of 2018. The campaign hosts on-site recruitment services providing resume and interview preparation and referrals. The Center for Employment Opportunities (CEO) has partnered with the Brownsville Partnership to focus on job preparedness and placement for formerly incarcerated men and women in the Brownsville community. The Center’s programs consist of a five-day life skills course and offer transitional employment to help individuals attain skills and confidence.

*Jobs-Plus*

Jobs-Plus can be found in several public housing developments throughout New York City, including in Brownsville. The program offers career counseling services, financial education, and community support to increase employment outcomes and bolster community economic growth in public housing communities.

*Ocean Hill and Brownsville Neighborhood Improvement Association*

The Economic Growth and Development initiative of the Ocean Hill and Brownsville Neighborhood Improvement Association (OHBNIA) works to create access to economic resources, increase neighborhood marketability, and identify opportunities for development within the area. OHBNIA was involved in the MGB Pop-Up Marketplace (discussed on page 15).

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**Entrepreneurs Making Brownsville Home**

*Claus Meyer’s Culinary School and Restaurant*

International restaurateur Claus Meyer—whose restaurant, Noma, in Denmark has been named the best in the world—is bringing a restaurant and culinary school to Brownsville, scheduled to be opened in early 2017. The restaurant intends on serving food that represents the traditional cuisine of the neighborhood at an affordable price. And the restaurant will double as a culinary school, where local residents can attend free of charge and graduates will receive a food handler’s license.

*Three Black Cats Café and the Dream Big Innovation Center*

In June 2016, the Three Black Cats Café opened, with the Dream Big Innovation Center opening right next door. The Dream Big Foundation—a nonprofit that helps entrepreneurs in underserved communities—helped three sisters who grew up in Brownsville open the café. While the café serves coffee and baked goods, the Dream Big Innovation Center serves as a resource for local aspiring entrepreneurs.
Takeaways

Low levels of educational attainment and geographic isolation from the primary job centers in Manhattan are among the reasons Brownsville has the lowest rate of employment in Brooklyn. Brownsville residents also pointed to a lack of childcare options as a reason many residents are out of work, and in many cases, out of the labor market entirely (childcare options in Brownsville will be discussed later in this report). Low levels of employment translate to low household incomes and among the highest rates of poverty in New York City.

Brownsville residents expressed frustration at the lack of job opportunities in their neighborhood, including the fact that neighborhood establishments often do not hire local residents. At the same time, they were understanding of the fact that in the current labor market, at least a high school diploma is usually required to get even the most basic job. Residents felt that in many cases they had enough skills for a job even without the required education. Those who were employed—often through nonprofit initiatives—were incredibly grateful for the opportunity.

Opinions on City programs that help with employment were mixed. One resident spoke glowingly about Jobs Plus, saying they would help with every step of the job search, from resume building to interview preparation. Other residents had less favorable opinions of public assistance programs that required benefit recipients to look for work. Some residents said that caseworkers were more concerned with checking off the required bureaucratic boxes than actually finding a suitable job for benefits recipients. Many complained that they were treated with a lack of respect. However, residents also expressed empathy with caseworkers who are likely burdened with large caseloads and do not have the time to spend with individual clients.

Our analysis confirmed that insufficient access to public transportation is an issue for many Brownsville residents, particularly those who live within walking distance of only the 3 train, which does not run from midnight to 5 a.m. Many residents we spoke to complained about the lack of public transportation options and poor subway and bus service. Public transportation is especially critical for the economic prospects of Brownsville residents, since establishments and jobs in the area are relatively scarce, and a vast majority of Brownsville workers rely on public transportation to get to work.

The over 360,000 square feet of publicly held vacant lots in the neighborhood represent an opportunity for community and economic development. New York City should learn from and expand upon previous efforts—including MGB POPS in Brownsville—and can look to cities across the country for more examples of vacant lot use.

The neighborhood of Brownsville is limited in banking institutions, which can provide a much needed foundation for financial stability and for building a household’s assets. Despite the creation of Banking Development Districts, meant to increase the presence of bank branches in under-served communities, there are only three bank branches within walking distance to Brownsville residents, and many residents do not live within walking distance of a single bank branch.

Many Brownsville residents find themselves in a precarious economic situation, relying on public benefits, and in some cases the kindness of friends and neighbors, to get by. Residents we spoke to were very aware of the community-wide challenges, and those who knew of helpful programs or organizations were eager to spread the word to their fellow residents. But more needs to be done to ensure that residents can acquire the education and skills they need to find employment, find the childcare they need, and get to and from jobs with reliable public transportation options.
III. Health

Early childhood health can determine the quality of health and overall well-being throughout the life span. In this section, we explore our community risk ranking indicators of infant mortality, low birth weight and children without health insurance, along with additional factors that impact both children and their families. We also investigate the presence of assets—food retail, open spaces and medical and mental health providers—that can help improve health and mental health outcomes and promote a healthy lifestyle.

Community Overview

Much of the data in this section is only available at the community district level, so our analysis focuses on Brooklyn Community District 16, which includes the neighborhoods of Brownsville and Ocean Hill and will be referred to as Brownsville-Ocean Hill. As with other low-income neighborhoods, there are significant disparities in health outcomes between Brownsville-Ocean Hill and New York City as a whole. In some cases, we see an inconsistent trend line in Brownsville-Ocean Hill as opposed to the more consistent improvement over time in Brooklyn and New York City.

Pregnancy Outcomes and Infant Health

Disparities in pregnancy outcomes and infant health begin even before birth, as new mothers in Brownsville-Ocean Hill are more likely to have had late or no prenatal care than women in Brooklyn and New York City. In 2014, the share of women who had late or no prenatal care in Brownsville-Ocean Hill was at its highest point since 2000 and twice the borough wide rate. Late or no prenatal care can contribute to a range of complications and health issues for newborn babies, including low birthweight and premature death.

Late or No Prenatal Care

Preterm Birth

Low Birthweight

Infant Mortality Rate


Inadequate prenatal care likely contributes to the higher share of preterm births in Brownsville-Ocean Hill. Preterm birth has been identified as a leading cause of low birthweight, long-term neurological disabilities and infant death, among a number of other health problems. Though the preterm birth rate in Brownsville had been trending down from 2011 to 2013, it increased in 2014 and was higher in 2014 than it was in 2007.

The infant mortality rate (IMR)—the number of infants who died within one year of birth per 1,000 babies born—is widely used as a proxy for community health because of its association with other risk factors such as economic conditions and access to quality health care services. Though the IMR in Brownsville-Ocean Hill has been cut in half from 12.5 in 2002 to 6.1 in 2014, there have been several years in the last decade—including in 2013—when the IMR increased from the year before. This inconsistent trend line stands in contrast to Brooklyn and New York City, where the trend has been slower but more stable in a positive direction. The IMR disparity between Brownsville-Ocean Hill and Brooklyn was larger in 2014 than it was in 2005.

As children in Brownsville-Ocean Hill get older, they continue to experience health hardships at greater rates than children in other neighborhoods. In Brownsville-Ocean Hill, the rate of child asthma hospitalizations is 61 per 10,000 children (ages 5-14), the eleventh highest rate out of 59 community districts and nearly twice the citywide (36) and Brooklyn (32) rate. Asthma attacks are often triggered by exposure to poor housing conditions and other environmental hazards such as pollution.

Mental Health

While it is difficult to provide a direct estimate of how many children in Brownsville-Ocean Hill are in need of mental health services, national prevalence rates suggest that 8 percent of 0-4 year olds have behavioral problems and 20 percent of 5-17 year olds have a diagnosable mental health disorder. We also know that specific circumstances—including poverty, child abuse and neglect, family or community violence, and having a parent with a mental health disorder—elevate children’s risk for developing mental health issues. There is evidence that many of these factors are present at high rates in Brownsville. We have already documented the economic hardships found in the community; later in this report we look at high rates of child abuse and neglect and community violence.

The adult psychiatric hospitalization rate shows a high need for mental health services. The adult psychiatric hospitalization rate in Brownsville-Ocean Hill is 1,727 hospitalizations per 100,000 adults, the second highest rate in the city and more than double the citywide (684) and Brooklyn (734) rate. For both children and adults, poor mental health can have a detrimental effect on physical health and can impact the ability to manage responsibilities such as school or work. Prevention and early intervention can minimize the impact of these mental health challenges.

Health Insurance Coverage

In looking at health insurance coverage, we are able to focus specifically on the neighborhood of Brownsville and find that coverage is on par with the rest of Brooklyn. Eighty-eight percent of Brownsville residents have health insurance, comparable to the borough wide rate (87 percent). Among children under the age of 18, Brownsville is similarly right around the borough wide rate, with 96 percent of children having health insurance. Two-thirds of children in Brownsville have health insurance through a public program such as Medicaid, the fifth highest rate among Brooklyn neighborhoods, and well above the borough wide rate of 52 percent.

Life Expectancy

The factors discussed in this section can contribute to a range of health issues throughout the lifespan, and ultimately, a shorter life expectancy. In Brownsville-Ocean Hill, life expectancy is 74.4 years, the lowest of any community district in New York City and seven years shorter than the citywide life expectancy (81.1 years).
Community Assets

We have identified several assets in Brownsville that can help meet health needs, reduce health disparities and otherwise promote a healthy lifestyle for Brownsville residents. These assets are grouped into three broad categories: medical and mental health treatment services, food security, and open spaces.

Mental Health Services

Research shows that the need for mental health services is higher in communities that are coping with multiple stressors, such as high rates of poverty, unemployment, violence, and incarceration. There are eleven mental health facilities in and around Brownsville. Two of these facilities—one in southern Brownsville and another in the neighboring community of East Flatbush—offer residential mental health treatment for youth. There are eight locations—four for both adults and children and four exclusively for adults—offering non-residential mental health treatment. All of these facilities are outside the borders of Brownsville. There is also a school-based mental health clinic in PS 327 that offers comprehensive mental health services, but only for students of PS 327.

Residents of Brownsville we spoke with recognized that the multiple stressors related to poverty and violence in the community likely increase the need for mental health services, especially for children. At the same time, parents expressed concern that asking for help related to a mental health issue might lead to involvement from the Administration for Children’s Services, New York City’s child welfare agency.

### Mental Health Services

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Site Number</th>
<th>Agency</th>
<th>Site Name</th>
<th>Service Type</th>
<th>Age Group</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
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<td>Brookdale Hospital Inpatient Unit</td>
<td>Hospital-Based Inpatient Care</td>
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<td>Clinic Treatment</td>
<td>Child</td>
</tr>
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<td>Adult</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
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<td>ICL East New York Pros</td>
<td>Clinic Treatment</td>
<td>Adult</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
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<td>Geriatric Outreach Team</td>
<td>Outreach</td>
<td>Adult</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Institute for Community Living</td>
<td>Bushwick ACT Team</td>
<td>Assertive Community Treatment</td>
<td>Adult</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Institute for Community Living</td>
<td>Central Brooklyn ACT Team</td>
<td>Assertive Community Treatment</td>
<td>Adult</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Promoting Specialized Care and Health</td>
<td>PSCH–Horizon Project I</td>
<td>Congregate Treatment</td>
<td>Adult</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Promoting Specialized Care and Health</td>
<td>PSCH–Horizon Project II</td>
<td>Congregate Treatment</td>
<td>Adult</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>BRC</td>
<td>BRC Fulton House</td>
<td>Congregate Treatment</td>
<td>Adult</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Brookdale Hospital</td>
<td>Brookdale Hospital CMHC Adult Clinic</td>
<td>Clinic Treatment</td>
<td>Adult</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>HELP</td>
<td>HELP Women’s Center</td>
<td>On-Site Rehabilitation</td>
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<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Institute for Community Living</td>
<td>Geriatric Outreach Team</td>
<td>Outreach</td>
<td>Adult</td>
</tr>
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<td>Family Resource Center</td>
<td>Family Support Services (Children and Family)</td>
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<td>Institute for Community Living</td>
<td>Highland Park Center</td>
<td>Clinic Treatment</td>
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<td>8</td>
<td>East New York Diagnostic and Treatment Center</td>
<td>East New York Diagnostic and Treatment Center</td>
<td>Assertive Community Treatment</td>
<td>Both</td>
</tr>
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<td>9</td>
<td>The Jewish Board</td>
<td>Brownsville Child Development Center</td>
<td>Family Support Services</td>
<td>Child</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Medical Care

There are fourteen medical care facilities in and around Brownsville, a majority of which are operated by either Brookdale University Hospital and Medical Center or Brownsville Multi-Service Family Health Center (BMS). Nine of these facilities offer medical care for both adults and children, including five facilities with prenatal care. There are four medical facilities that offer rehabilitation or assisted living exclusively for adults or seniors. There is also a school-based clinic found on the Thomas Jefferson campus, which houses four small high schools exclusively serving students and the families of students attending school on the Thomas Jefferson campus.

Residents of Brownsville expressed concerns over a range of issues related to accessing medical care. Despite data showing relatively high rates of health insurance coverage, many residents said they lacked health insurance—in some cases because their income took them just above the threshold to qualify for Medicaid—and that they waited until health issues necessitated a trip to the emergency room before accessing care. Residents who did have Medicaid said that many facilities did not accept their insurance. Though many residents rely on Brookdale University and Hospital Center, which operates several of the facilities found right outside of Brownsville’s borders, they complained that the quality of service and care was poor, even referring to it with the derisive nickname of “Brokedale”. Many residents preferred to go to Kings County Hospital which is around two miles outside the center of Brownsville—provided they had a way to get there. Much of the conversation with residents around accessing medical care had to do with going to hospitals or urgent care centers, rather than seeking preventive care and regular check-ups from a primary care physician.

### Medical Care

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Site Number</th>
<th>Agency</th>
<th>Site Name</th>
<th>Age Group</th>
<th>Prenatal</th>
</tr>
</thead>
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<td>Brookdale Hospital Medical Center</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Brookdale Hospital</td>
<td>Brookdale Urgent Care Center</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Schulman and Schachne Institute For Nursing And Rehabilitation</td>
<td>Adult</td>
<td>No</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Brookdale Physicians Dialysis Associates, Inc</td>
<td>Child/Adult</td>
<td>No</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Schulman &amp; Schachne Inst for Adhc</td>
<td>Adult</td>
<td>No</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Brookdale Clinics</td>
<td>Urban Strategies/Brookdale Family Care Center</td>
<td>Child/Adult</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Mic Womens Health Srv-Eastern Parkway</td>
<td>Adult</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Brownsville Multi-Service (BMS)</td>
<td>Brownsville Multi-Service Family Health Center</td>
<td>Child/Adult</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>BMS</td>
<td>Bms Dental Genesis</td>
<td>Child/Adult</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>BMS</td>
<td>Bms at Genesis</td>
<td>Child/Adult</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>BMS</td>
<td>Bms Isis at Bristol</td>
<td>Adult</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Thomas Jefferson High School</td>
<td>Brownsville Child Health Clinic</td>
<td>Child</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Bushwick Center</td>
<td>Bushwick Center for Rehabilitation And Health Care</td>
<td>Adult</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Centerlight</td>
<td>Centerlight Healthcare</td>
<td>Adult</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Analysis of Mental Health and Medical Services
The Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) of the United States Department of Health and Human Services uses a standardized physician to population ratio to assess if there is a shortage of mental health, dental care and primary care professionals in an area. According to the HRSA, the psychiatrist to population ratio should be 1: 30,000; the dentist to population ratio should be 1: 5,000; and the primary care physician to population ratio should be 1: 3,500. In the context of Brownsville those ratios are equivalent to the presence of two psychiatrists, 12 dentists and 17 primary care physicians.

The number of mental health and medical care facilities in Brownsville suggests that, in the strict sense defined by the HRSA, there is likely not a shortage of healthcare professionals in Brownsville. (Although there is only one stand-alone dental facility, Brookdale Hospital has a full dental care unit). However, it is important to consider—as the HRSA acknowledges—that that the needs of a community vary according to a number of factors. The high prevalence of poverty, community violence and other factors likely justify a larger presence of health professionals in the community. Another consideration is that mental and medical care sites are likely utilized by residents of neighboring communities and some facilities may not be easily accessible to many Brownsville residents.

Food Security
Food insecurity—the inability to access an adequate amount of affordable, nutritious food—can lead to a range of health issues and be a cause of poor academic performance among children. For those with low incomes, one tool in combatting food insecurity is the federal Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), often referred to as food stamps. Brownsville households are more reliant on SNAP than Brooklyn and New York City households overall. In New York City, about one in five households rely on SNAP benefits, and that rises to about one in four Brooklyn households. In Brownsville, 45 percent of households rely on SNAP, including nearly 60 percent of households with children.

Food Pantries and Soup Kitchens
In addition to SNAP benefits, emergency food providers play an important role in reducing food insecurity. When families are faced with the impossible choice of purchasing food or paying for other necessities such as rent or utilities, emergency food providers can offer much needed relief. There are a total of 27 emergency food service providers in and around Brownsville, including 17 food pantries, five soup kitchens and five joint food pantry/soup kitchen programs. Brownsville is home to eleven of those programs; the other 16 programs are found in Brownsville’s neighboring communities, in close proximity to many Brownsville residents.

Households Receiving SNAP Benefits

26 Ibid.
Emergency Food Services

- Food Pantries
- Soup Kitchens
- Joint Food Pantry/ Soup Kitchen

Farmers’ Markets

There are a total of six farmers’ markets accessible to Brownsville residents, including three— the Brownsville Pitkin Ave Youthmarket, the Brownsville Rockaway Youthmarket and the Project EATS Marcus Garvey Village Farm Market—that are located in areas that would otherwise be underserved by more traditional food retail. Central and southern Brownsville would experience an extreme scarcity of food retail without these farmers’ markets.28

Despite the presence and strategic placement of farmers markets in Brownsville, there are still barriers to accessibility. All of the farmers’ markets found in Brownsville are open only one day per week, and hours of operation typically range between four to six hours. Like most farmers’ markets in New York City, Brownsville’s markets are open seasonally, from July to November, significantly reducing the availability of healthy food retail options for half of the year. These limitations make it difficult for residents, particularly those working non-traditional work hours, to regularly depend on farmers’ markets for healthy food options.

Traditional Food Retail

Our analysis of food retail in Brownsville was informed by the guidelines established in the Department of City Planning and New York City Economic Development Corporation’s Going to Market food retail shortage report. In that report, the Department of City Planning uses an optimal ratio of 30,000 square feet of food retail to 10,000 neighborhood residents, and includes only name brand food stores of over 10,000 square feet. Our analysis retains the size threshold of 10,000 square feet, but expands the criteria to include non-name brand grocery stores. Pharmacies and 99 cent stores were not included.

There are eight food retailers meeting the 10,000 square feet threshold in Brownsville, providing a total of 182,000 square feet of food retail space. This means the food retail to population ratio for Brownsville is 29,758 square feet per 10,000 people, resulting in a food retail shortage of between 1,400 and 1,500 square feet. The food retail map reveals that this shortage is likely felt most acutely in southern and central portions of Brownsville where food retail options are limited. In fact, 39 percent of Brownsville residents do not live within walking distance of a food retailer meeting the requirements outlined above.

Food Retail

- Within Quarter-Mile Distance to Food Retail
- Further than Quarter-Mile Distance to Food Retail
- Traditional Food Retail (accepts SNAP)
- Farmers’ Markets (accepts SNAP)

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28 In this section, accessibility is defined as within a walking distance of a quarter-mile, a threshold established by the Department of City Planning and the New York City Economic Development Corporations’ Going to Market food retail shortage report.
Open Space

Open spaces support health by encouraging physical activity, which can positively impact both physical and mental health. Research suggests that simply having contact with nature has a range of medical benefits. The map of open spaces in Brownsville includes larger parks and playgrounds, as well as smaller green spaces within the neighborhood.

According to the City Environmental Quality Review (CEQR), the City strives for an optimal ratio of 2.5 acres of open space per 1,000 residents. In Brownsville, where there are 39 acres of recreational open space, the ratio is .64 acres per 1,000 residents, approximately one-fifth the benchmark proposed by the CEQR. In order to reduce the open space shortfall, there would need to be an additional 114 acres of open space in Brownsville, a land area approximately one-eighth the size of Central Park. Young people we spoke to did appreciate Betsy Head Park and Betsy Head Pool, an outdoor Olympic pool that is among the largest pools in Brooklyn. In August 2016, it was announced that Betsy Head Park was among five parks in the city receiving $30 million in city funds for renovations. The Brownsville Recreation Center is also slated to receive nearly $17 million for reconstruction in the City’s latest budget.

In addition to the apparent shortage of open space in the community, safety concerns prevent many residents from utilizing resources such as parks and other open spaces. Residents worry about crime at specific places of interest, but also on the way to and from different parts of the neighborhood. Many residents do not feel safe on certain streets or walking near certain public housing developments, especially if they live in a different development.


Health—Efforts Underway

**BMS Family Health & Wellness Centers**

BMS Family Health & Wellness Centers operate out of ten service sites throughout Brownsville and East New York. The center provides numerous clinical services including adult medicine, cardiology, dentistry, gastroenterology, infectious disease, nephrology, ob/gyn, optometry, and pediatrics. The center also houses the Brownsville Community Residential Center (BCRC) consisting of a twenty-one bed co-ed community residence for individuals between the ages of 18 and 65 diagnosed with a chemical dependency problem. BCRC offers Alcoholics and Narcotics Anonymous meetings along with individual and group counseling.

**Healthy Start Brooklyn**

A collaboration between the NYC Department of Health and Mental Hygiene and Fund for Public Health in New York, the Healthy Start Brooklyn program (HSB) works to improve the health and well-being of women, infants and families in Brownsville by providing support services, education and training to reduce infant mortality, premature birth and illness. HSB collaborates with community organizations and government agencies to provide a range of practices and evidence-based programs.

**Institute for Community Living**

The Institute for Community Living provides case management services and mental health assistance. In addition to residential programs, the institute has opened mental health clinics in and around Brownsville to provide medical and psychiatric care to those with special needs. The programs incorporate positive behavior support practices, wellness self-management and family empowerment initiatives to strengthen therapy outcomes and ensure effectiveness. The Institute for Community Living also has a Family Resource Center in the center of Brownsville which is staffed by parents and caregivers of children with special needs who serve as family advocates.

**Brownsville Neighborhood Health Action Center**

Neighborhood Health Action Centers are part of the City’s larger initiative to increase community-based programs in communities at risk for chronic disease and premature death. The Action Centers provide space for public health entities such as the health department, medical providers, community-based organizations and non-profit agencies to work together in NYC’s at-risk neighborhoods. They provide primary and mental health care, wellness and critical health programs, social service connections, and a community space for community public health planning.

**Brownsville Action Community for Health Equality (BACHE)**

The Brownsville Action Community for Health Equality (BACHE) program is branched under the Brooklyn Perinatal Network, Inc. Its focus is to eliminate health disparities pertaining to infant mortality and low birth weight babies in Brownsville. The Action Community serves to identify and aid at-risk pregnant or parenting women in Brownsville.

**Brownsville Child Development Center (BCDC)**

The Jewish Board’s Brownsville Child Development Center (BCDC) opened in January 2017 and is home to a specialty early childhood behavioral health clinic, a screening and consultation program, Child-Parent Psychotherapy preventive services, and a Children’s Health Home.

**Building Healthy Communities (BHC)**

BHC is an inter-agency, public-private partnership designed to improve health outcomes in underserved communities across New York City, including in Brownsville. The three goals of the initiative are to increase access to physical activity, expand access to affordable food, and make improvements in public safety. BHC supports the urban farm at Brownsville’s Howard Houses.
Takeaways

As with many high poverty neighborhoods, health outcomes in Brownsville are poor compared to Brooklyn and New York City as a whole. Pregnancy and birth outcomes reveal that too many mothers in Brownsville are not receiving timely and adequate pre-natal care, potentially contributing to high rates of preterm birth, low birthweight and infant mortality. Disparities in health outcomes continue throughout the lifetime; the life expectancy of Brownsville-Ocean Hill residents is the lowest among all community districts, and is nearly seven years shorter than for New York City as a whole.

Enrollment in SNAP and several food pantries and soup kitchens in the neighborhood help to ensure that residents have access to enough food. However, some residents complained that they were not able to get enough food to feed their family at food pantries. Food retail stores are clustered in the northern part of the neighborhood, leaving those in the southern part of Brownsville with few if any food retail options within walking distance. While there are a number of farmer’s markets, there are issues with accessibility due to limited hours of operation.

Open space is also limited in Brownsville, as our analysis reveals a shortfall of over 100 acres relative to the City Environmental Quality Review’s optimal ratio of 2.5 acres of open space per 1,000 residents. For many residents, safety concerns are a barrier to accessing the parks and other open spaces that do exist. Several young people we spoke to did talk about going to the park and swimming pool in the community; however, many young people, and especially parents expressed a great deal of hesitation about children being outside, especially in the evening.

Medical and mental health services are primarily found away from the center of Brownsville, and may not be sufficient to meet the needs of the community, especially when considering factors that can impact physical and mental health such as poverty and exposure to crime and violence. Many residents feel frustrated in how difficult it is to access quality medical care, whether for reasons related to health insurance or the quality of care at nearby facilities. Some residents had experienced first-hand how a serious health issue in the family can lead to a loss of job, income and housing. It seemed that many residents were reliant on urgent care centers and emergency rooms, with some intentionally delaying care until they could go to the emergency room.

Residents are aware of how living in poverty and in a high-crime area might bring about mental health issues, particularly for children. Many of the residents we spoke to said there was not a stigma around mental health in the community, and that they would access care if it was necessary and available. However, there is a hesitancy to address mental health issues in children due to a fear of child welfare agency involvement. Parents were very concerned that bringing up a mental health issue might lead to unnecessary involvement from the Administration for Children’s Services, which for many residents equates to having children removed from the home.
IV. Education

Education has long been considered the best path out of poverty, and higher levels of educational attainment are more important than ever in obtaining employment. In this section, we provide an overview of our community risk ranking indicators in the education domain—early education enrollment, performance on Common Core ELA and Math exams for 3rd through 8th graders, and high school graduation rates—and we explore the presence of assets such as childcare services, universal pre-kindergarten programs, and public and charter schools.

Community Overview

According to the latest Census data, 60 percent of Brownsville 3 and 4 year olds are enrolled in either a public or private early education program, on par with the citywide rate and slightly behind the borough wide rate of 64 percent. As we discuss in the next section, student performance at Brownsville public schools is well behind borough and citywide performance levels.

Brownsville’s Public Schools

Brownsville was home to 24 public schools that served nearly 8,000 students in the 2014-15 school year, and seven charter schools serving an additional 3,800 students. Two schools—the General D. Chappie James Middle School and the General D. Chappie James Elementary School—were closed after the 2014-2015 school year. It should be noted that public school students in New York City have the choice to attend high school—and in some cases, middle school—anywhere in the city through the Department of Education’s school choice system. Young people we spoke to were knowledgeable about the application process, and many chose to attend high school outside of Brownsville.

The demographics of Brownsville schools closely mirror those of the neighborhood, with more than three-quarters of students being black and a little over one-fifth Latino. Nearly 9 out of 10 students are economically disadvantaged, meaning they were below 185 percent of the federal poverty level, qualifying them for free lunch. By comparison, 74 percent of students in Brooklyn and 73 percent of students citywide qualified for free lunch. Students in Brownsville public schools are also more likely to have a disability than students in Brooklyn and New York City overall, but are less than half as likely to be English language learners.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Race</th>
<th>Brownsville Public Schools</th>
<th>Brooklyn Public Schools</th>
<th>New York City Public Schools</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>0.8%</td>
<td>17.1%</td>
<td>15.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black</td>
<td>76.3%</td>
<td>35.4%</td>
<td>25.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian</td>
<td>1.0%</td>
<td>17.2%</td>
<td>16.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Latino</td>
<td>21.1%</td>
<td>28.8%</td>
<td>41.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student with Disability</td>
<td>22.9%</td>
<td>18.5%</td>
<td>19.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English Language Learner</td>
<td>6.7%</td>
<td>14.3%</td>
<td>14.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Free lunch</td>
<td>88.6%</td>
<td>73.6%</td>
<td>72.7%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


33 Public schools in our analysis refer to public, non-charter schools. We also exclude District 75 schools from our analysis. District 75 schools and programs are located all over the city and provide educational, vocational, and behavior support programs for students who have significant cognitive delays, sensory impaired or multiply disabled.
Student Performance—Common Core

In the 2014-2015 school year, fewer than one-third (30 percent) of third through eighth grade students citywide scored proficient on the Common Core English Language Arts (ELA) test, and just over one-third (35 percent) were proficient in math. Proficiency rates were slightly better in Brooklyn. However, in schools located in Brownsville, only 18 percent of third through eighth grade students were reading at grade level and 19 percent were proficient in math.

Student Performance—Graduation and Dropout Rates

Students in Brownsville high schools are far less likely to graduate than those in other neighborhoods. In 2015, just 37 percent of students in Brownsville high schools graduated on time, compared to 67 percent of students borough and citywide.34 This was by far the lowest graduation rate for any Brooklyn neighborhood with more than one high school.35 High school students in Brownsville also dropped out at a slightly higher rate (12 percent) than their citywide (9 percent) and Brooklyn (8 percent) peers. However, it should be noted that three of Brownsville’s five high schools are transfer schools geared toward older, under-credited students who have not succeeded in traditional settings. It is not surprising that students attending transfer schools would not graduate on time. In the next section, we will look at the performance of individual schools.

We have presented data on schools in Brownsville, but we cannot assume that these schools are only attended by Brownsville residents. Young people we spoke to emphasized that they try to attend high school outside of Brownsville for reasons ranging from the academic reputation of schools to concerns over safety in the school and community. While we do not have data on graduation outcomes based on where students live, a recent report revealed that students living in the Brownsville-Ocean Hill community district had the second lowest graduation rate of any community district in New York City.36

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34 On time graduation refers to students who graduated by June after four years of instruction.
35 Sunset Park East and Seagate-Coney Island each had one high school with a cohort under 75 and a graduation rate under 15 percent.
Community Assets

Our analysis of educational assets in the community focuses on resources that help prepare children for school success and support emotional and social growth. These include childcare and pre-kindergarten sites, as well as traditional public schools and charter schools that serve students from elementary through high school.

Subsidized Childcare for Low-Income Families

For low-income families in New York City, there are two ways to secure subsidized childcare. The first is through EarlyLearn NYC, a system of childcare programs contracted by the Administration of Children’s Services that are available through community based organizations (center-based) or family childcare networks (home-based). For simplicity, we will refer to EarlyLearn providers as contracted care. For families on public assistance—and a smaller number of other low-income families—childcare can also be secured outside of the contracted care system by obtaining a voucher from ACS. Vouchers can be used to purchase childcare at childcare centers or licensed family childcare programs, or for informal care provided by friends, neighbors or family members.

Contracted Childcare in Brownsville

Brownsville is home to 27 sites that offer ACS contracted childcare services. This includes eight daycare centers with a capacity to serve nearly 640 children. An additional 19 home-based sites have the capacity to serve 75 children, for a total contracted care capacity of just over 700 children. We estimate that 85 percent (or just under 5,000) of Brownsville’s roughly 5,700 children under the age of 5 are income-eligible for ACS-contracted childcare programs, suggesting a potentially significant shortage of capacity relative to the number of eligible children. As the map shows, contracted care is limited in several pockets of Brownsville.

Voucher Redemption in Brownsville

ACS-issued vouchers were redeemed at 73 licensed childcare sites in Brownsville. Sixty-five of these sites were home-based and provided childcare for a total of 254 children. Six non-contracted daycare centers provided services to nearly 120 children (two centers primarily serving children through the contracted system also provided services to a small number of families using vouchers).

Vouchers were also redeemed at 121 informal care sites serving nearly 200 children. Informal care can overstate the existence of childcare providers. By definition, informal care is provided by a family’s extended social network whose services may not be available to most residents. For example, a grandmother may be willing to help provide care for her grandson, but not to her unrelated neighbor’s child. Additionally, informal care providers are not required to be licensed or to meet education requirements, which could reduce the quality of the learning environment for children.

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37 To be eligible for EarlyLearn, families must earn no more than 275 percent of the poverty line and either work 20 or more hours per week; have a child receiving protective or preventive child welfare services; or attend an approved school or training program. Source: Bringing it all Home, Center for New York City Affairs. May 2016.

38 Center-based care through EarlyLearn is available to children from six weeks to four years old; home-based care through EarlyLearn is available to children from six weeks to three years old.
Childcare Sites, Licensed non-Contracted (private providers)

Childcare Sites, Licensed non-Contracted (private providers)

Childcare Capacity

There are significant differences in capacity when looking at contract care by age group. Nearly 90 percent of contract care seats are for pre-school age children, with only 12 percent for infants or toddlers. For infants, more vouchers were redeemed for informal care than there were contracted care seats available (35 compared to 22). By contrast, the 115 vouchers redeemed for informal care for preschoolers was a relatively small fraction of the contracted seats available for that age group. While informal care may be the only option for families with non-traditional working hours or limited access to contract care sites, research shows that children in formal settings receive higher quality care, and have better reading and math skills before entering kindergarten.

Childcare Sites

Childcare Sites

Voucher Redemption (Informal Care)

Childcare in Brownsville by Type and Age Group

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>EarlyLearn Capacity</th>
<th>Licensed non-contracted</th>
<th>Informal (all home based)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Infant</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Center based</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Home based</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Toddler</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Center based</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Home based</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preschooler</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Center based</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Home based</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

39 Infants = six weeks old to less than one-year. Toddlers = one year olds to less than three years. Preschoolers = three and four-year-olds.

Pre-K for All

Preschoolers also benefit from a second resource. New York City’s Pre-K for All, which was implemented by the DOE in the fall of 2014, has significantly increased the capacity of early education programs for four-year-olds. New York City’s Pre-K for All programs are available from September to June in DOE schools, DOE operated Pre-K centers, and ACS contracted early education centers.

Brownsville is home to eighteen Pre-K for All programs with a total capacity to serve over 800 children. Ten programs are located in public schools or otherwise operated by the DOE. The other eight programs are operated by community based organizations through ACS contracts. The map of Pre-K programs shows that residents in part of northeastern Brownsville have several programs to choose from that are easily accessible, but many residents have far fewer options or may need to walk a greater distance for Pre-K programs.

Schools (K-12)

In many cases, the relative quality of a school is assessed by looking at student performance. Earlier in this report, we saw that student outcomes in Brownsville schools are quite poor. In this section, we look at the performance of specific schools in Brownsville, as well as data on teachers and staff that could further our understanding of schools in Brownsville outside the traditional scope of student performance.

Brownsville Public Schools

In many Brownsville schools, fewer than 1 in 10 students scored proficient on Math and ELA exams. The schools where students exceeded borough and citywide proficiency rates—IS 392 and PS 189—are screened schools, meaning students do not have to be zoned for that school to attend and are admitted based on test scores, grades and other factors. At IS 392, selection criteria include an entrance exam with priority given to students living in school district 23, followed by residents of Brooklyn. There were only 90 seats for 740 applicants in 2015. At PS 198, which serves K-8 students, 6th grade admission is prioritized for those who attended the school in 5th grade and to residents of school district 17. There were only 121 seats for 263 applicants in 2015. While we do not know whether students attending IS 392 and PS 189 live in Brownsville, the demographics of those schools do closely mirror those of the neighborhood.
As mentioned in the previous section, three of Brownsville’s five high schools are transfer schools catering to under-credited students who have not succeeded in traditional settings. These schools have very low on-time graduation rates. At Brooklyn Democracy Academy, only 14 percent of students graduated on time and more than one in five dropped out.

The two non-transfer high schools in Brownsville have graduation rates that are significantly higher. With a four-year graduation rate of 61 percent, Teachers Prep High School is not far off the city and borough wide average. However, the graduation rate at both schools has decreased significantly in recent years, going against the citywide trend.
**Teachers and Staff**

There does not appear to be a shortage of teachers or professional staff at Brownsville schools. The student to teacher ratio is approximately 14:1 in Brownsville schools, compared to 17:1 for Brooklyn. In Brownsville schools, there are 101 students for each professional staff member, compared to nearly 120 students in Brooklyn.

Across the city, including in Brownsville, fewer than 1 percent of teachers are teaching without valid certification. However, a slightly higher share of teachers in Brownsville are teaching out of certificate compared to Brooklyn overall, meaning they are not teaching the grade level or subject matter for which they are certified. While teachers in Brownsville schools are slightly less likely to have fewer than three years of experience, they are also less likely to be highly qualified (a Master’s degree plus 30 additional credits). We also find that in District 23—where the vast majority of Brownsville schools are located—teacher turnover is the highest among Brooklyn school districts, particularly for teachers with less experience.

**Public School Teachers and Staff**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Student teacher ratio</th>
<th>Student to professional staff ratio</th>
<th>Teaching out of certificate</th>
<th>Fewer than three years of experience</th>
<th>Master’s degree +30 credits or doctorate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Brownsville</td>
<td>14.4 to 1</td>
<td>100.7 to 1</td>
<td>16.1%</td>
<td>9.1%</td>
<td>38.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brooklyn</td>
<td>16.8 to 1</td>
<td>119.8 to 1</td>
<td>12.1%</td>
<td>11.5%</td>
<td>47.4%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Teacher Turnover by School District (Brooklyn only)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Turnover - all teachers</th>
<th>Turnover - teachers with &lt; 5 years experience</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Community and Renewal Schools**

There are five community schools in Brownsville, where students and their families can access a range of social, health, and mental health supports. PS 156 Waverly has support services provided through a partnership with the New York City Community Learning Schools Initiative, Inc. and Brownsville Academy High School has services provided through a partnership with CAMBA. The community school model is also being implemented in the 94 schools—three in Brownsville—designated as renewal schools. These schools are among the lowest performing schools in the city. In addition to transforming renewal schools into community schools, there is also an extra hour added to the school day and other strategies to improve student performance. The three renewal schools in Brownsville are: PS 165 Ida Posner, PS 284, and PS 298 Dr. Betty Shabazz. The Partnership with Children, Inc. has partnered with all three schools to provide support services.

**Brownsville Charter Schools**

One out of three students attending school in the neighborhood of Brownsville do so at a charter school, more than five times the borough wide share of around 6 percent. Compared to students at Brownsville public schools, students at Brownsville charters are more likely to be black and far less likely to be Latino. Interestingly, the share of those who qualify for free lunch goes from 89 percent at Brownsville public schools to 64 percent at Brownsville charters. This is in contrast to charters borough wide where the share of students eligible for free lunch is almost exactly the same as in traditional Brooklyn public schools.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Brownsville Public Schools</th>
<th>Brownsville Charter Schools</th>
<th>Brooklyn Charter Schools</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total Enrollment</td>
<td>7,970</td>
<td>3,795</td>
<td>35,448</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td># of schools</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Race</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>0.8%</td>
<td>0.4%</td>
<td>4.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black</td>
<td>76.3%</td>
<td>87.5%</td>
<td>69.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian</td>
<td>1.0%</td>
<td>0.5%</td>
<td>1.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Latino</td>
<td>21.1%</td>
<td>9.3%</td>
<td>22.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student with Disability</td>
<td>22.9%</td>
<td>12.3%</td>
<td>15.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English Language Learner</td>
<td>6.7%</td>
<td>1.3%</td>
<td>3.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Free lunch</td>
<td>88.6%</td>
<td>64.0%</td>
<td>72.8%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Students in Brownsville charter schools perform significantly better on ELA tests than students in traditional Brownsville public schools. The share of students who score proficient on the ELA exam in Brownsville charter schools is 11 percentage points higher than in traditional public schools, and is right around the borough and citywide level for public school students. Interestingly, across the borough and city at large, charter school students do not fare better on the ELA exam than their peers at regular public schools, and in Brooklyn they actually fare worse.

Charter school students do perform better on the Common Core Math exam at both the borough and citywide level, and in Brownsville schools, the pass rate at charter schools is more than double the rate at traditional public schools (44 percent versus 19 percent).

While students in selective and charter schools are performing at the citywide level—or better—on ELA and Math exams, there are still many schools where performance levels are among the lowest in the city. School choice may be a valuable tool for some Brownsville residents to attend higher performing schools, and in many cases, attend schools in different neighborhoods. However, students attending traditional public schools in Brownsville are performing well below the citywide average, suggesting a need for greater resources and supports in those schools.
Education—Efforts Underway

**Ocean Hill Brownsville Neighborhood Improvement Association**
The Educational Enrichment and Opportunity initiative of the Ocean Hill Brownsville Neighborhood Improvement Association (OHBNIA) provides youth mentorship and empowers youth to pursue higher education. The initiative partners with local schools to deliver more resources per classroom using nationally sponsored programs such as Box Tops for Education.

**Early Learning Center at YWCA-NYC**
The Brownsville Early Learning Center (ELC) at the YWCA serve 30 Brownsville children between ages two and five. Its programs are developed around an evidence-based curriculum to ensure and promote early literacy, intellectual curiosity and positive learning habits.

**SCO Family of Services- FirstStepNYC**
SCO Family of Services operates multiple early childhood education centers in Brownsville, offering full day year-round programs promoting healthy development and preparing children for school. FirstStep NYC is co-located with PS/IS 41 and provides early education services to at-risk children and families ages six weeks to five years. Parents also receive services from a Family Support Specialist. SCO also operates home visiting and parental attachment programs in the community.

**Brooklyn Kindergarten Society**
The Brooklyn Kindergarten Society (BKS) works to improve early education for children residing in Brooklyn’s most vulnerable neighborhoods. BKS provides childcare centers and enrichment programs to ensure a smooth transition to kindergarten. BKS has locations at NYCHA’s Seth Low Houses and the Nat Azarow Children’s Center.

**Single Shepherd**
NYC’s Single Shepherd program targets students in grades 6-12 in Districts 7 and 23 to achieve higher rates of high school graduation and post-secondary enrollment. The program provides a dedicated counselor to every family to guide children from middle school to college. Nineteen of Brownsville’s 23 public schools serve students between 6th and 12th grade, and 17 of these schools are located in District 23.

In addition to the organizations and locations mentioned above, ACS EarlyLearn programs are also provided at childcare centers by the following organizations: Friends of Crown Heights Educational Centers, PAL World of Creative Experiences Head Start, The Salvation Army, and Brightside Academy—Belmont.
**Takeaways**

New York City’s contracted childcare system—EarlyLearn NYC—has 27 sites operating in Brownsville with a capacity to serve over 700 children in both center and home-based settings. According to our analysis, ACS-issued vouchers were redeemed at nearly 200 sites serving 500 children. These sites include licensed center and home-based providers, but the vast majority of vouchers were used for informal care provided by friends, families, and neighbors.

In many cases, informal childcare is occurring outside of any affiliation with ACS. Residents spoke of watching their friends’ or neighbors’ children, in many cases free of charge, or for whatever amount the parent could afford to pay. Considering half of Brownsville workers are employed in industries where employees are often asked to work non-traditional hours (retail, accommodation and food services, and healthcare and social assistance), it is possible that formal childcare options in the community are not available at the hours they are needed.

It is also likely that a lack of capacity is playing a role in the reliance on informal care. There are roughly 5,700 children under the age of five in Brownsville. However, there are just over 700 ACS contracted childcare seats and just over 800 pre-K seats, for a total of around 1,500 contracted seats. A vast majority of contracted childcare seats are for pre-school aged children. For infants and toddlers, insufficient capacity may be increasing reliance on informal care.

Educational outcomes are relatively poor for students attending traditional public schools in Brownsville. Few students—outside those attending screened or charter schools—in third through eighth grade are passing Common Core English Language Arts and Math exams, and graduation rates—even when not including transfer high schools—are lower at Brownsville high schools than across the borough and city.

The New York City Department of Education is hoping to turn around struggling schools through the community school model and the designation of renewal schools. Renewal schools will receive additional resources and feature an extended school day, and community schools partner with local community-based organizations to provide a range of social supports and services to students and their families. Several schools in Brownsville have been designated renewal and community schools.

Most of the high school students we spoke to attempt to attend school outside of Brownsville. Students—in many cases with significant guidance from their parents—look to attend schools with a better academic reputation and away from the community’s safety concerns. According to students, schools in Brownsville are not a refuge from the violence in the neighborhood, and the students we spoke to only attend school in the neighborhood if they are unable to get into other high schools.
V. Housing

Stable housing can play an important role in a child’s development, as housing instability can impact a child’s social, emotional and academic growth. As part of our community risk ranking, we examine rent burden, rental overcrowding, and families entering homeless shelters to assess risk in the housing domain. In this discussion, we also look at housing quality, before turning to an examination of the neighborhood’s housing assets such as public housing, homeless shelters, and housing support services.

Community Overview

As with many New York City neighborhoods, a vast majority of Brownsville households rent rather than own their homes. Eighty-six percent of Brownsville households rent, compared to 71 percent of Brooklyn and 68 percent of New York City households. Even more distinguishable about Brownsville is the share of households living in public housing. More than one-third (36 percent) of all households in Brownsville are families living in NYCHA developments, representing over half (52 percent) of all families in Brownsville.

Since NYCHA residents pay a maximum of 30 percent of their income on rent, Brownsville does not have higher than average rent burdens, especially considering its low median income. Around three out of ten Brownsville households face extreme rent burdens—paying at least 50 percent of their income on rent—which is in line with the borough wide rate. Brownsville is around the middle of the pack compared to other Brooklyn neighborhoods, and significantly better off than areas such as Borough Park where nearly half of households are extremely rent burdened. Brownsville is below the borough wide rate in rental overcrowding, which measures the share of households in which there is more than one person per room. This is the case in fewer than 1 in 10 households in Brownsville compared to 12 percent in Brooklyn.

NYCHA housing also likely accounts for the fact that median rents in Brownsville are the second lowest among Brooklyn’s 50 neighborhoods at $720 per month. Seagate-Coney Island, another area with a significant concentration of public housing, has the lowest median rent at $629 per month. And 37 percent of Brownsville households pay less than $500 a month in rent, also only behind Seagate-Coney Island. We will discuss NYCHA housing in greater detail in the next section of this report.

Housing Quality

While lower rents and rates of rent burden are beneficial to residents, there are serious issues with the quality of housing in Brownsville. Significant attention—from housing advocates and the media—has been paid to conditions at NYCHA housing and the backlog of repairs needed at many developments. Issues with housing quality can also have a detrimental effect on health. Lead poisoning as a result of deteriorating paint can impact brain and nervous system development, and conditions such as water leaks and pest infestation are associated with poor health including respiratory conditions such as asthma. Data from the New York City Housing and Vacancy survey reveals that many residents in the Brownsville PUMA—both in public housing and in private apartments—face serious issues with their housing. Two-thirds of residents in this community report that housing in their neighborhood is only fair or poor—as opposed to good or excellent—compared to 27 percent in Brooklyn and 23 percent in New York City.

Housing Conditions

- Fair or poor housing
- At least 1 maintenance deficiency
- 3 or more maintenance deficiencies

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Seventy percent of Brownsville (PUMA) residents reported at least one maintenance deficiency in their apartment and 32 percent reported three or more, the highest figure among 18 Brooklyn PUMAs. By comparison, in Bensonhurst, the Brooklyn PUMA with the lowest rate of maintenance deficiencies, only 35 percent of households reported one maintenance deficiency and 3 percent reported three or more.

Brownsville (PUMA) is among the top Brooklyn neighborhoods—and far above the borough wide and citywide rates—for a host of housing issues. For example, households in this community ranked first in New York City, and were more than twice as likely as Brooklyn and New York City households overall, in needing to use extra heating equipment to heat their homes. A lack of proper heating is a serious issue, particularly during the winter, and the need to use extra heating equipment can be a financial burden on those with limited incomes.

Brownsville (PUMA) residents are also more likely to report issues with the physical structure of their home. Twenty-two percent reported cracks or holes in ceilings and walls, compared to 14 percent in Brooklyn and 12 percent citywide. More than a quarter reported broken plaster or cracking paint in ceilings and walls, and similar numbers reported water leakage. As previously mentioned, these issues can have serious health consequences. Many Brownsville residents we spoke to echoed the data’s findings, saying their apartments were in need of serious repair and that it was incredibly difficult to have maintenance issues addressed.

New Affordable Housing
Brownsville residents feel there is a lack of affordable housing options and that new plans for affordable housing in the neighborhood do not help those who truly need it. Residents expressed a great deal of concern over gentrification, saying that new apartments were being built for those with higher incomes and that current low-income residents would be pushed out of their apartments to make room for individuals who could pay more in rent. Many residents we spoke to said they fall well short of the minimum income required to be eligible for affordable units, and that very few units are available for a large number of applicants.

An example of this can be seen in the recent lottery for affordable apartments at 1740-1760 Prospect Place. The most inexpensive apartment is a one-bedroom at $689 per month, and households must earn at least $24,995 to be eligible. However, half of Brownsville households earn less than $25,000 a year, including nearly a quarter who earn less than $10,000 per year. For those who meet the income requirement, there are only three units available at that monthly rent, out of what is likely to be hundreds, if not thousands, of applicants. It is a similar situation for a family of three looking for a two-bedroom apartment. There are two-bedroom apartments available for $835 per month, but there are only six of these units and the minimum income requirement is over $30,000 per year. It is unsurprising that many Brownsville residents feel that new affordable housing being built in their neighborhood is not for them.

Residents also worry that public housing, despite its prevalence in the community, may not be there for them much longer. NYCHA has made plans to turn many developments into Section 8 housing, meaning the units would be privately run and residents would receive vouchers to pay rent. This transition is already under way at Brownsville’s Seth Low Houses. Brownsville residents fear that this is part of a process that will eliminate the only housing they can afford.

Family Homelessness
Many residents we spoke to have concerns that new affordable housing in the neighborhood will bring an influx of higher income residents, driving up rents and leaving current residents homeless. The Brownsville-Ocean Hill community district has the third highest number of families entering homeless shelters in Brooklyn, behind East New York-Starrett City and Bedford-Stuyvesant. Forty-four percent of all families entering homeless shelters in Brooklyn come from these three out of Brooklyn’s 18 community districts. Adding Crown Heights North-Prospect Heights and East Flatbush-Farragut-Rugby means that five community districts including and surrounding Brownsville-Ocean Hill account for 59 percent of Brooklyn’s families entering homeless shelters.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Community District</th>
<th>Families Entering Homeless Shelters</th>
<th>Rate per 1,000 Households</th>
<th>Share of Brooklyn families entering homeless shelters</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Brownsville-Ocean Hill</td>
<td>385</td>
<td>8.8</td>
<td>13.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>East New York-Starrett City</td>
<td>564</td>
<td>10.6</td>
<td>19.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bedford-Stuyvesant</td>
<td>461</td>
<td>9.3</td>
<td>15.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crown Heights North-Prospect Heights</td>
<td>222</td>
<td>4.3</td>
<td>7.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>East Flatbush-Farragut-Rugby</td>
<td>266</td>
<td>5.8</td>
<td>9.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 Community Districts including and surrounding Brownsville-Ocean Hill</td>
<td>1,898</td>
<td>7.8</td>
<td>59.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13 Remaining Brooklyn Community Districts</td>
<td>998</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>31.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*There were actually 3,215 families entering homeless shelters in Brooklyn, but 319—or 10 percent—were from unknown community districts.
**Community Assets**

Discussing housing assets in Brownsville can be a complicated matter. On the one hand, housing that is capped at 30 percent of income can be viewed as an asset for those who would not be able to afford apartments at market rates. Homeless shelters can also be viewed as an asset for those who have lost their homes and have no other way to put a roof over their head. At the same time, both NYCHA housing and homeless shelters—citywide, but particularly in Brownsville—are often criticized for their quality and are not viewed by many residents as assets.

**NYCHA**

With 15 public housing developments, Brownsville has the largest concentration of public housing of any New York City neighborhood. Two of Brownsville’s housing developments, Van Dyke II and Woodson, exclusively house seniors, while the remaining thirteen developments are open to residents of all ages. Over 18,000 Brownsville residents, nearly one-third of the population, live in a NYCHA housing development.

**NYCHA Developments**

- 1) Woodson
- 2) Howard
- 3) Howard Ave
- 4) Hughes
- 5) Low Houses
- 6) Ralph Ave Rehab
- 7) Sutter Ave-Union St
- 8) Tapscott St Rehab
- 9) Tilden
- 10) Van Dyke I & II
- 11) 104-14 Tapscott St
- 12) Brownsville
- 13) Garvey (Group A)
- 14) Glenmore Plaza

As the table above shows, average household incomes at Brownsville public housing developments are very low—considerably lower than the neighborhood average—and the vast majority of households are female-headed.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Development Name</th>
<th>Average Income</th>
<th>Share of Female Headed Household</th>
<th>Total Population</th>
<th>Child Population</th>
<th>Share of Child Population Under 4-years-old</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>104-14 Tapscott St</td>
<td>$19,969</td>
<td>93.3%</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>22.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brownsville</td>
<td>$21,501</td>
<td>82.9%</td>
<td>3,306</td>
<td>984</td>
<td>15.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Garvey (Group A)</td>
<td>$19,209</td>
<td>78.1%</td>
<td>849</td>
<td>264</td>
<td>15.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Glenmore Plaza</td>
<td>$23,500</td>
<td>79.2%</td>
<td>841</td>
<td>212</td>
<td>22.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Howard</td>
<td>$22,206</td>
<td>82.0%</td>
<td>1,930</td>
<td>614</td>
<td>11.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Howard Ave</td>
<td>$25,500</td>
<td>83.6%</td>
<td>372</td>
<td>130</td>
<td>13.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hughes</td>
<td>$23,665</td>
<td>84.0%</td>
<td>1,409</td>
<td>494</td>
<td>13.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low Houses</td>
<td>$21,209</td>
<td>79.7%</td>
<td>1,440</td>
<td>480</td>
<td>17.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ralph Ave Rehab</td>
<td>$23,930</td>
<td>86.3%</td>
<td>288</td>
<td>94</td>
<td>18.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sutter Ave-Union St</td>
<td>$28,060</td>
<td>86.9%</td>
<td>259</td>
<td>96</td>
<td>25.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tapscott St Rehab</td>
<td>$24,467</td>
<td>85.2%</td>
<td>368</td>
<td>116</td>
<td>18.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tilden</td>
<td>$22,839</td>
<td>84.2%</td>
<td>2,628</td>
<td>886</td>
<td>15.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Van Dyke 1</td>
<td>$22,268</td>
<td>85.3%</td>
<td>4,028</td>
<td>1,332</td>
<td>14.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Van Dyke 2</td>
<td>$14,550</td>
<td>54.5%</td>
<td>130</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Woodson</td>
<td>$12,894</td>
<td>63.2%</td>
<td>439</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All Brownsville Developments</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>81.6%</td>
<td>18,356</td>
<td>5,724</td>
<td>15.4%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Public Housing Conditions in Brownsville

The New York City Public Housing Authority (NYCHA) has received considerable attention from both the media and housing advocates documenting often deplorable living conditions and a seemingly unmanageable backlog of repairs at public housing developments throughout the city. According to a report from the Office of the Comptroller—using data from the 2014 New York City Housing and Vacancy Survey (HVS)—many conditions related to the structure of NYCHA buildings and maintenance deficiencies at individual apartments have continued to worsen since the first HVS was released in 2002.43 In a recent investigation, elevated blood lead levels were found in residents of New York’s Public Housing, likely due to peeling paint in the aging complexes.44

A recently released audit highlighted the backlog of repairs at NYCHA developments. The audit found that NYCHA misreported repair counts and closed complaint tickets without resolving issues.45 Additionally, NYCHA was found to significantly minimize the extent of its backlog in work orders when compared to the backlog calculated by auditors. NYCHA is facing a severe budget shortfall, making it difficult to imagine repairs could be fast-tracked through an infusion of necessary capital and resources. To date, NYCHA requires about $16.5 billion to make necessary housing improvements and repairs.

The table below shows the extent to which NYCHA developments in Brownsville are in need of repair. The oldest NYCHA development in Brownsville—named Brownsville—has over 400 non-current work orders and 83 Department of Buildings violations. Brownsville’s Howard development has 49 Environmental Control Board Violations, far more than any development in the neighborhood, to go along with 343 non-current work orders. Tilden and Van Dyke I also have high numbers of work orders and violations.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Development</th>
<th>Age of Development in Years, as of 04/30/15</th>
<th>Number of Non-Current Work Orders</th>
<th>Number of Outstanding DOB Violations</th>
<th>Number of Outstanding Environmental Control Board Violations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>104-14 TAPSCOTT STREET</td>
<td>42.5</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BROWNSVILLE</td>
<td>67.1</td>
<td>410</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GARVEY (GROUP A)</td>
<td>40.2</td>
<td>189</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GLENMORE PLAZA</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>136</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HOWARD</td>
<td>59.4</td>
<td>343</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HOWARD AVENUE</td>
<td>26.8</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HUGHES APARTMENTS</td>
<td>46.9</td>
<td>188</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LOW HOUSES</td>
<td>47.4</td>
<td>167</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RALPH AVENUE REHAB</td>
<td>28.4</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SUTTER AVENUE-UNION ST</td>
<td>19.7</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TAPSCOTT STREET REHAB</td>
<td>29.3</td>
<td>145</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TILDEN</td>
<td>53.9</td>
<td>487</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VAN DYKE I</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>533</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VAN DYKE II</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Homeless Shelters
As previously discussed, Brownsville and its surrounding communities contribute a disproportionate share of families entering shelters in Brooklyn. Perhaps because of this, ten family and five singles homeless shelters are located within a half-mile distance of Brownsville. Those fifteen shelters account for more than 20 percent of all homeless shelters in Brooklyn.

As the map shows, the cluster of shelters is consistent with the areas that have the highest rates of family homelessness. The presence of homeless shelters in these areas might be seen as a benefit to homeless families from these neighborhoods who can remain close to friends, family, and other community ties. However, residents in Brownsville expressed a great deal of concern over the number of shelters in their neighborhood. There is a feeling in the community that the neighborhood may turn into a “dumping ground” (in the words of Brownsville residents) of places such as homeless shelters that other communities do not want.

Resident also felt that shelters in the neighborhood were not places that families could go to improve their situation and find long-term stable housing. Residents complained that conditions in shelters were deplorable and that staff do not treat shelter residents with dignity or respect. Residents felt that individuals and families in the shelter system are put into the first apartment that can be found, often with no plan for how the family can pay for the apartment going forward.

Housing Support Services
Our research revealed three locations where Brownsville residents can go for housing related support. Two of those locations offer preventive services meant to keep individuals and families out of the shelter system. The Department of Homeless Services’ Homebase program is operated by the Ridgewood Bushwick Senior Citizens Council, Inc. (RBSCC) and is located in eastern Brownsville. Legal Hand is a free legal consultation service offered by the Center for Court Innovation on Rockaway Avenue. There is also a homeless drop-in center on Atlantic Avenue operated by CAMBA, offering meals, showers, and other case management services to homeless individuals.
Brownsville residents do not feel they have adequate support in their efforts to secure and maintain decent, affordable housing. One resident told of how she received a list of apartments with vacancies from a helpful nonprofit, but was hung up on or ignored by building managers. Residents are hesitant to utilize HRA's One Shot Deal - a one-time emergency grant for people who can’t meet certain expenses such as rent. Applying requires a trip to an HRA job center, of which there are several in Brooklyn but none in Brownsville. According to residents, the One Shot is a helpful, short-term solution, but does not help to ensure that tenants can make rent going forward and avoid going back into arrears. Many residents expressed the opinion that more supports were necessary to address precarious housing situations before they reached the point of homelessness.
Housing—Efforts Underway

Supportive Housing in Brownsville

New York City supportive housing offers permanent, affordable housing with support services through the NY/NY I, II and III agreements. These agreements have been put in place over the last three decades to provide supportive housing to the homeless and mentally ill. The most recent agreement widened the eligible population to include chronically homeless and at-risk families, youth exiting foster care and psychiatric hospitals, and those with substance abuse issues.

Supportive housing is typically provided by community based organizations and funded by private, city, state, and federal dollars.

The Hegeman

The Hegeman—located across Brookdale Hospital—is a supportive housing development serving 100 formerly homeless single adults and 61 low-income working adults. The certified energy efficient building has on-site resident and community gardens, fitness room and a computer lab.

Genesis Neighborhood Plaza and

Genesis Neighborhood Plaza II

Genesis Neighborhood Plaza provides 52 apartments for low-income and formerly homeless families and Genesis Neighborhood Plaza II is a 98-unit housing complex providing individuals and families affordable and supportive housing. Genesis Neighborhood Plaza features a full-service medical clinic and a domestic violence program. At Genesis Neighborhood Plaza II, HELP USA provides case management services, and mental health and substance abuse counseling through a partnership with Services for the Underserved.

Bergen Saratoga Apartments

In June 2016, NYC Housing Preservation and Development announced the opening of Bergen Saratoga apartments, made up of 80-units in Brownsville. The five-story development includes computer rooms, a library, and a children’s play area. The development combines affordable housing and supportive housing for those formerly homeless in Brownsville. The building developers have collaborated with CAMBA to provide supportive services and rent subsidies at the Bergen Saratoga supportive housing units.

CAMBA Housing Ventures (In Development)

CAMBA Housing Ventures is developing an affordable and supportive family housing complex using space at NYCHA's Van Dyke houses with 100 units for families with CAMBA providing on-site support services. Support services will include financial literacy, healthcare access, mental health care, employment services, education and job training, and family services. This project is expected to conclude in Spring of 2017.
Takeaways
Brownville residents face serious issues with housing affordability and quality. NYCHA developments all over New York City have been under increased scrutiny in recent years for unresolved maintenance issues and apartment conditions that are in some cases unfit for living. NYCHA developments in Brownsville are no exception and have some of the highest backlogs for repairs in the city.

Those who do not live in NYCHA housing have similar concerns about the quality of their housing. Maintenance deficiencies from heating equipment breakdowns to broken plaster and cracked ceilings and walls were reported at high rates across residences in the Brownville area. Many of these deficiencies can have serious health consequences on residents, especially children.

Residents of Brownsville are generally somewhat dismissive of new plans to bring affordable housing to the neighborhood. Those with limited incomes stressed that even “affordable” housing units would not be affordable to them, and that units that are truly affordable for residents are so limited in number that there is little chance of obtaining one through the City’s lottery system. Residents also expressed concern that much of the new housing being created will only contribute to gentrification of the neighborhood, and longtime residents will be pushed out in favor of those who can pay higher rents.

Resources to help with housing issues seem to be limited, and those that do exist face challenges in addressing housing needs. There are supportive housing units located throughout Brownsville, but many of those are only available for those who have been homeless or are dealing with mental health or substance abuse issues. There are a number of homeless shelters in the area, but, according to residents, the services provided there are of little help in finding a stable housing situation.

In many ways, residents of Brownsville feel as if their concerns are not prioritized and that the city’s progress often passes them by. This is most evident in the area of housing. Even as the city unveils new plans for affordable housing and new developments open in the neighborhood, many Brownsville residents feel left out. There are serious concerns that the neighborhood will quickly become gentrified, as new tenants who can pay more rent will displace current residents, causing them to become homeless. Application fees, minimum income requirements, and long odds due to the City’s lottery system mean that the city’s plan for affordable housing does little to ease residents’ concern; if anything, residents feel that the new plans are part of the problem.
VI. Youth, Family and Community

The period between childhood and adulthood presents a unique set of challenges for young people and their families. In our community risk ranking, we look at teen birth rate, youth unemployment and teen idleness as risk factors for older children and youth.

We also know that children are greatly influenced by their families and the communities that surround them. In the family and community domain, we look at adults without a high school diploma, children in single-parent families, and the violent felony rate. In the following section, we examine these indicators, along with child welfare agency involvement. We also look at available assets and services—including public safety services, preventive services, after-school and summer programs, and public libraries—that can help families—and young people in particular—stay on a positive path.

Community Overview

Children and families in Brownsville face a multitude of challenges across areas of well-being. In many cases, single parents are attempting to face these challenges without the support of another parent. Eight out of ten children in Brownsville live in a single-parent household, possibly posing additional challenges for parents balancing work, family and other responsibilities.

These challenges can impact the community in a variety of ways. Parents under the stress of raising children in poverty and young people transitioning to adulthood with limited opportunities may be more likely to engage in behavior that exacerbate the community’s struggles.

Child Welfare Services

Many of the lowest income neighborhoods in New York City are those with the highest rates of involvement with the Administration for Children’s Services (ACS)—New York City’s child welfare agency—and Brownsville-Ocean Hill is no exception. In 2014, there were 1,644 abuse and neglect investigations involving 2,786 children, meaning one out of every 13 children in Brownsville-Ocean Hill was involved in a child abuse or neglect investigation.

In 46 percent of cases, the investigation supported the claim of abuse or neglect. Brownsville-Ocean Hill’s victimization rate of 39.1 children per 1,000 is the highest out of the city’s 59 community districts and is more than double the rate of Brooklyn (14.1) and New York City (14.7). Allegation types are relatively similar across the city; around 55 percent of allegations are for neglect, 15 percent are for physical abuse and 10 percent are for educational neglect.

High rates of victimization among children in Brownsville-Ocean Hill lead to more young people in the foster care system. In 2014, 212 young people from Brownsville-Ocean Hill were placed in the foster care system, the third highest number among New York City community districts. The rate of 6.1 foster care placements per 1,000 children is the highest among the city’s community districts, and is almost triple the Brooklyn and New York City rates (2.1 and 2.3, respectively).

The impact of child abuse or neglect depends on multiple factors but can include long-term physical, psychological and behavioral consequences. Studies show that infants who have experienced maltreatment are more likely to experience cognitive delays and engage in risk-taking behavior as adolescents and adults. Young people in the foster care system—particularly those who age out of the system—have poor educational outcomes and face significant difficulty transitioning to adulthood.

Victimization and Foster Care Placement Rate

46 Adult educational attainment is covered in the Economic Conditions section.
47 This only includes children who live in a household where a parent is the head of household, and excludes children living in households where grandparents or other relatives are the head of household.
**Youth Employment**

As children in Brownsville reach their adolescent and young adult years, they continue to face challenges and experience outcomes that place them at a disadvantage in becoming independent, economically self-sufficient adults. We have discussed the challenges young people in Brownsville face in graduating from high school and going on to college. Young people in Brownsville also face challenges in finding employment. Research shows that youth employment can have positive effects on future employment and earnings and a range of social behaviors from civic participation to family formation.\(^{50}\) In Brownsville, only 21 percent of 16-24 year olds are working, the lowest figure among all Brooklyn neighborhoods and well below the 34 percent borough wide rate. It is perhaps less concerning that only 7 percent of 16-19 year olds are employed, since the vast majority of these young people are in school.\(^{51}\) It is more concerning that only one-third of 20-24 year olds are working—the lowest among Brooklyn neighborhoods—since the vast majority of these young adults are not in school.

**Teen Births**

Nearly nine percent of all births in Brownsville-Ocean Hill are to teenage mothers, the highest rate among Brooklyn community districts and fifth highest in New York City. The teen birth rate of 26.1 live births per 1,000 teenage girls is above the Brooklyn and citywide rates (21.8 and 20.8 respectively) though the teen birth rate in Brownsville has decreased significantly.

Research shows that teenage mothers are more likely to drop out of high school and only about one in 10 complete a two or four-year college program. This limits their ability to obtain a job paying family-sustaining wages. Children born to teenage mothers are also at greater risk for a range of negative outcomes, including dropping out of high school, juvenile delinquency and unemployment as an adult.\(^{52}\)

**Teen Birth Rate**

![Teen Birth Rate Graph](image)

\(^{50}\) Andrew Sum, Robert Taggart, and Ishwar Khatiwada. The Path Dependence of Teen Employment in the U.S. Implications for Youth Workforce Development Policy. Center for Labor Market Studies. Northeastern University. 2007.

\(^{51}\) The teen idleness rate—the share of 16-19 year olds who are neither in school nor in the labor force—in the Brownsville-Ocean Hill community district is 13 percent, compared to 8 percent in Brooklyn and 7 percent in New York City.


**Crime and Safety**

A majority of the residents we spoke to—from teenagers to the elderly—cited crime and safety as their number one concern in the neighborhood. Research has shown that exposure to violence for children increases the likelihood of behavioral problems and that reducing exposure to violence and crime can have a positive effect on youth development.\(^{53}\)

In 2015, there were 11.7 violent felonies (murder, rape, robbery, and felony assault) per 1,000 residents in Precinct 73, which covers the Brownsville-Ocean Hill community district. This was the third highest rate of all precincts in New York City, only behind precincts covering East Harlem in Manhattan and Mott Haven in the Bronx. Precinct 73’s overall felony rate was also third highest in the city, and the overall crime rate was fifth highest among New York City’s 77 police precincts. Crime in New York City has gone down in the last decade and a half, including in Brownsville where the violent felony rate is down 31 percent since 2000. However, the reduction in violent felonies in Brownsville is less than the 44 percent borough wide reduction in violent felonies during that time.

High crime rates, particularly for felonies and violent felonies, have a range of consequences for neighborhood residents. Most directly, it can cause serious physical injury to the victim of a crime. The injury assault rate in Brownsville-Ocean Hill is 180 non-fatal assault hospitalizations per 100,000 residents, highest in the city and nearly three times the citywide (64) and Brooklyn (66) rates. And the incarceration rate for adults (16 years and older) in Brownsville-Ocean Hill is 348 incarcerations per 100,000 adult residents, second highest across the city’s 59 community districts, and more than three times the citywide (93) and Brooklyn (96) rates.

High rates of involvement with the criminal justice system is not limited to adults. Young people in Brownsville-Ocean Hill are involved in the juvenile justice system at higher rates than their peers in other parts of the city. Youth detention admissions from Brownsville-Ocean Hill represented 15 percent of Brooklyn youth detentions (161 out of 1,041), despite representing less than 5 percent of the borough’s child population. Around three-quarters of these detention admissions were for young people age 14 to 16.

Along with the tangible effects of crime and violence—hospitalizations, incarceration and youth detention—the general sense of living in an unsafe neighborhood clearly impacts the day-to-day life of Brownsville residents. Many residents commented that hearing gunshots or witnessing violence was commonplace, and that this kept them from venturing outside of their homes. According to residents, many of the community assets that exist in Brownsville would be utilized more if residents felt safer going to and from their homes to different parts of the neighborhood. Residents also mentioned that many streetlights in the neighborhood were not working and that if streets were simply better lit, it would lead to a more secure feeling for residents. As the map of felony assaults shows, crime in Brownsville is somewhat concentrated in and around public housing developments, but is certainly not limited to those locations.

Community Assets
Our analyses of community assets related to youth, family and community include services that seek to provide safety, stability and productive activities for young people and their families. Specifically, we look at public safety services, preventive services, after-school and summer programs, and public libraries.

Public Safety Services
The Fire Department of New York (FDNY) has two fire houses in Brownsville and the New York Police Department’s (NYPD) 73rd precinct is located along the northern boundary of the neighborhood. The Crossroads Juvenile Center, one of two secure detention centers in New York City for youth who have been accused of committing serious offenses is located to the east of the NYPD station. To the west is the Brownsville Community Justice Center (BCJC), operated by the Center for Court Innovation. BCJC provides alternatives to incarceration and aims to reduce crime by offering social services and programs for young people.

The relationship between police and low-income, communities of color can be complex, and this seems to be the case in Brownsville. While Brownsville residents are very concerned about crime in their community, they felt that increased police presence has little effect. Many said that officers are not responsive until a violent crime has been committed. Some residents spoke of police officers treating members of the community disrespectfully, and favored a more community-oriented approach where officers get to know neighborhood residents. It should also be noted that in Brownsville—like the rest of the city—there is an auxiliary police force comprised of uniformed volunteers who patrol the neighborhood and report conditions requiring police involvement, as well as the NYPD Housing Bureau, who provide security in public housing developments.
As previously discussed, child abuse and neglect can have a lasting impact on children’s health and mental health outcomes, and lead to negative behaviors later in life.\textsuperscript{54} ACS offers preventive services that aim to reduce the risk of child abuse and neglect and address issues before placement into foster care becomes necessary. In Brownsville, these services include general preventive services that provide a range of support services to low risk families; Family Treatment Rehabilitation (FTR), which is appropriate for high-risk families dealing with illicit substance use or a mental health disorder; and Structural Family Therapy (SFT), a family therapy intervention that aims to change the ways family members interact with each other.\textsuperscript{55} In addition, more specialized services are available at the borough and citywide level. In most cases, families are not seeking out preventive services, but are being referred as a result of a report of abuse or neglect.

A map of ACS preventive services reveals two service providers located in Brownsville. According to ACS, Brownsville families are also referred to four sites in neighboring communities for preventive services. A single service provider located to the south of Brownsville offers both general preventive and FTR services. And three additional sites are located east of Brownsville offering FTR, SFT and general preventive services. However, these sites might be difficult to access for many Brownsville residents.


After-School and Summer Programs

High quality after-school and summer programs provide a number of benefits to youth, families, and communities. Participating in after-school programs can improve academic performance while reducing risky behaviors such as drug use and criminal behavior. Parents also benefit from the peace of mind that their children are in a safe, structured environment.

Brownsville is home to six sites offering a total of eleven Department of Youth and Community Development (DYCD) after-school programs. In addition to the six sites found in Brownsville, there are six sites offering after-school services near Brownsville, offering a total of twelve programs.

The most common program type found in Brownsville is the Comprehensive After School System of New York City (COMPASS), formerly known as Out of School Time (OST). COMPASS programs are generally targeted at younger children (in elementary and middle school). After-school programming for teens and young adults are more difficult to find in Brownsville.

While there seems to be a fair amount of programming in Brownsville geared toward younger children, Brownsville residents expressed a need for more programs and activities for older children and youth. This could take the form of more formal recreation and sports programs, employment opportunities or mentorship programs, all of which are missing from the community, according to residents. Many of the people we spoke to—including young people—cited a lack of after-school and summer recreational activities as a potential reason many young people engaged in negative behaviors including criminal activity. As the map and table show, programming for high school aged youth is not as common as programs for elementary and middle school students, and with few exceptions, programs for older children are not centrally located in Brownsville.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Site Number</th>
<th>Agency</th>
<th>Site Name</th>
<th>Program</th>
<th>Grade/Age</th>
<th>Program Type</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Sports and Arts in Schools Foundation, Inc.</td>
<td>Brooklyn Collegiate</td>
<td>COMPASS</td>
<td>High School Middle School</td>
<td>After-School Program</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Police Athletic League</td>
<td>JHS 275</td>
<td>Beacon</td>
<td>6 and older</td>
<td>After-School Program</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Brownsville Beacon PAL</td>
<td>Summer Youth Employment</td>
<td>14-to-24</td>
<td>Jobs &amp; Internships, Youth Employment</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>The Salvation Army</td>
<td>Brownsville Community Center</td>
<td>COMPASS</td>
<td>Elementary</td>
<td>After-School Program</td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Brownsville Community Center</td>
<td>COMPASS</td>
<td>High School</td>
<td>After-School Program</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Brownsville Community Center</td>
<td>COMPASS</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>After-School Program, Summer Program, Summer Camp</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Central Brooklyn Economic Development Corporation (CBEDC)</td>
<td>CBEDCD</td>
<td>COMPASS</td>
<td>High School</td>
<td>After-School Program</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Sports and Arts in Schools Foundation, Inc.</td>
<td>I.S. 252, Arthur Somers School</td>
<td>COMPASS</td>
<td>Middle School</td>
<td>After-School Program</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Neighborhood SHOPP Casa Boricua Senior Center</td>
<td>COMPASS</td>
<td>Middle School Youth</td>
<td>After-School Program</td>
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<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Research Foundation of CUNY</td>
<td>I.S. 323</td>
<td>Beacon</td>
<td>6 and older</td>
<td>After-School Program</td>
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<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>CAMBA</td>
<td>P.S./I.S. 298 Dr. Betty Shabazz</td>
<td>COMPASS</td>
<td>Middle School</td>
<td>After-School Program</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>P.S./I.S. 298 Dr. Betty Shabazz</td>
<td>COMPASS</td>
<td>Elementary</td>
<td>After-School Program</td>
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<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>New York Junior Tennis League</td>
<td>P.S. 219 Kennedy-King School</td>
<td>COMPASS</td>
<td>Elementary</td>
<td>After-School Program</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>University Settlement Society of New York, Inc.</td>
<td>COMPASS</td>
<td>Elementary</td>
<td>After-School Program</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>P.S. 219 Kennedy-King School</td>
<td>COMPASS</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>After-School Program, Summer Program, Summer Camp</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>YWCA of the City of New York (Main Branch)</td>
<td>P.S. 327 Dr. Rose B. English</td>
<td>COMPASS</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>After-School Program, Summer Program, Summer Camp</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>P.S. 327 Dr. Rose B. English</td>
<td>COMPASS</td>
<td>Elementary</td>
<td>After-School Program</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Brooklyn Bureau of Community Services</td>
<td>P.S./I.S. 174 Dumont School</td>
<td>COMPASS</td>
<td>Elementary</td>
<td>After-School Program, Summer Program, Summer Camp</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Groundwork, Inc.</td>
<td>P.S./I.S. 328 Phillis Wheatley</td>
<td>COMPASS</td>
<td>Elementary</td>
<td>After-School Program</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>P.S./I.S. 328 Phillis Wheatley</td>
<td>COMPASS</td>
<td>Middle School</td>
<td>After-School Program</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>P.S./I.S. 328 Phillis Wheatley</td>
<td>COMPASS</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>After-School Program, Summer Program, Summer Camp</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*N/A are for COMPASS programs, for which no grade/age was shown in the data*
Public Libraries

Libraries provide communities with access to books, media and other resources while playing a key role as community and cultural centers. In an increasingly digital world, libraries have evolved into technology centers that provide community residents with access to the internet and computers. This is especially important for Brownsville residents, as households in the Brownsville-Ocean Hill community district are less likely to have internet access at home than any community district in New York City. Forty-five percent of households in Brownsville-Ocean Hill lack a computer or high-speed internet access, compared to 25 percent citywide.

Brownsville is home to the Brownsville and Stone Avenue public libraries and the East Flatbush branch is accessible to residents in the southwest portion of the neighborhood. The branches are all open from Monday through Saturday and offer at least one program daily. Programs include literacy and education workshops, arts and crafts, and age-specific technology time. A majority of Brownsville Library programs were geared toward younger children (birth to five years) and include play dates and art activities. The Stone Avenue Library offers free lunch during the summer to individuals eighteen years of age and under through the Summer Meals initiative. The East Flatbush Library was unique in that it included more programs for teens and also included computer literacy skills for older adults and a family movie night.
Youth, Family, and Community—Efforts Underway

Center for Court Innovation
The Center for Court Innovation (CCI) is a non-profit organization originally founded as a public/private partnership between the New York State Unified Court System and the Fund for the City of New York. Its projects involve community based violence prevention, incarceration alternatives, and reintegration initiatives. In addition to its active reform efforts, CCI also performs research on innovative programs to determine effectiveness in the justice community.

Brownsville Community Justice Center
The Brownsville Community Justice Center (BCJC) is run by the Center for Court Innovation and seeks to reduce crime in the Brownsville community while working to ensure the presence of alternatives for youth that come into contact with the justice system. BCJC offers educational, occupational, social, and health services to youth from the time of their arrest through sentencing and re-entry.

Power of Two
Power of Two coaches parents to provide the best possible care for their babies using the Attachment and Biobehavioral Catch-Up (ABC) program. The program aims to protect children from daily stress and promote academic success, health, and social and emotional well-being.

Brownsville Beacon—PAL NYC
The Police Athletic League Brownsville Beacon Center serves as a center for after-school and summer day camp programs through the city’s Beacon initiative. PAL uses creative programming and provides activities and qualified staff members to the children and adults of Brownsville Beacon. The center promotes a safe space and community plan and works to ensure a safe environment for the children of Brownsville.

NYC Department of Probation—
Neighborhood Opportunity Network (NeON)
A component of the Young Men’s Initiative, the Neighborhood Opportunity Network (NeON) is a network comprised of government agencies, community groups, local businesses, and community residents that works to serve individuals that are on probation and connect them to various resources and services through the NYC Department of Probation. Some of these services include but are not limited to, probation services, employment preparation, educational support, mentorship, literacy programs, and after school activities. NeONs are located throughout NYC—in shared spaces with community-based organizations—including Brownsville. The NeON in Brownsville is located in the same building—as the Brownsville Community Justice Center.

The Early Years Collaborative
The Early Years Collaborative—an initiative of New York City’s Children’s Cabinet—is coordinating efforts with several community-based organizations in both Brownsville and the South Bronx to improve the well-being of New York City children from birth to age three. In Brownsville, the goal of the collaborative is focused on school readiness, secure attachment and safety, and healthy pregnancies.
Takeaways
The number one concern of most Brownsville residents we spoke to was crime and violence in the community. Many residents do not feel comfortable being outside at any time of day due to safety concerns. This is especially true in the evenings, when residents say that a lack of proper street lighting contributes to a lack of safety and security. Residents do not believe that heightened police presence is a solution, and many feel that the police are only responsive after a crime has occurred.

A lack of opportunity for older children and young adults to engage in productive activities was cited as a possible reason for high crime rates in the community. Youth employment in Brownsville is the lowest of any Brooklyn neighborhood, with only one in five 16 to 24 year olds having a job. After-school and summer activities for older children are difficult to find. Parents of younger children also said they had problems finding after-school and weekend activities for their kids. Many young people we spoke with cited Betsy Head Park, Betsy Head Pool and the Brownsville Recreation Center as places to congregate and engage in recreational activities but felt there was a need for more formal recreational opportunities, including sports teams.

Young people we spoke to expressed a variety of feelings in regard to safety and crime in the community. Some chose to not be overly concerned with safety issues and live their lives as they normally would. Others said they were far more cautious, and avoided being outside unnecessarily, worried about being at the wrong place in the wrong time. Youth also had differing attitudes on what might lead young people to engage in criminal activity and what could be done to counteract those issues. Some were more hopeful that after school programming and other productive activities could make a real difference in bringing crime rates down. Others were more pessimistic.

Based on discussions with residents, the fear of crime in the neighborhood clearly impacts the day-to-day lives of Brownsville residents and serves as a deterrent to utilizing community resources. If a lack of recreational or other productive activities for youth is a cause of criminal activity, then more programs and resources providing opportunities for children could have multiple benefits, for the young people and the community at large.
VII. Conclusion

Residents of Brownsville face significant challenges in nearly every domain of well-being. Many households are economically insecure; health and education outcomes are poor relative to the rest of the city and borough; and housing quality and conditions in the community are often not conducive for healthy development. Residents, even while speaking with pride and optimism about their community, have persistent concerns over crime and safety, impacting their day-to-day lives in a way many New Yorkers never have to consider.

Our analysis of resources in Brownsville reveal a shortage of many fundamental resources that should exist in any New York City community. Public transportation options, banks, food retail, housing support services, and after-school and summer programs for older youth are just some examples of resources that appear to be lacking. In other areas—such as childcare and medical care—issues related to convenience and quality, respectively, seem to serve as a deterrent to resource utilization. And the fear of crime and violence in the community means that fewer people are using the resources—from parks to libraries to youth services—that do exist.

Our conversations with residents suggest that there are additional factors influencing the degree to which resources are utilized in the community. In some cases, greater awareness of programs and services could go a long way in ensuring Brownsville residents are taking advantage of opportunities that exist in the neighborhood. In other situations, residents may not be accessing resources because there is a level of mistrust between community members and public institutions that are offering potentially beneficial services. This is particularly true for child abuse and neglect prevention and mental health services.

The multiple challenges many Brownsville residents face—across issue areas—means there is tremendous opportunity for targeted programs in the community. In some cases, opportunity for community development could be leveraged to provide jobs to a community that is severely underemployed. Adding and repairing street lights and other infrastructure, and addressing maintenance issues in the housing stock, are just two examples where neighborhood residents could be trained and employed in fields that can help the community meet its needs. Strategies to ensure adequate childcare and transportation options could also simultaneously provide employment to local residents while improving the prospects of the community at large.

Much work is already underway in Brownsville, both through public sector programs and the dedication of individuals and nonprofit organizations, many of which are referenced in this report. However, we are hopeful that this assessment of needs and resources will inform continued advocacy in the Brownsville community and work with the City administration and New York City Council.

From our data collection and analysis, in-district meetings and focus groups, CCC has developed 14 broad recommendations of areas where there is opportunity for government, philanthropic and community-based organizations to work together to improve outcomes for children and families in Brownsville:

**Economic security**
- Expand adult education and skills training programs for unemployed and underemployed adults with low levels of educational attainment.
- Ensure that public transportation is affordable and accessible for all residents. Explore subway alternatives in areas that are hard to reach in the neighborhood.
- Expand efforts to utilize public vacant lots as opportunities for new affordable housing and other projects that could lead to job creation and economic development or improved access to services and supports in the community.
- Explore opportunities to provide training and employment opportunities for residents while addressing necessary maintenance and repairs to housing and other infrastructure.

**Housing**
- Improve conditions in NYCHA public housing by resolving backlog of maintenance issues and ensuring buildings are in compliance with all codes and regulations.
Increase presence of housing support and legal services to keep residents in their homes and assist clients in finding permanent, stable and affordable housing

**Health**
- Incentivize the opening of additional food retail—particularly in the southern part of Brownsville—and ensure that healthy food options are available to all Brownsville residents year-round.
- Explore opportunities to improve access to healthy affordable foods in the community such as shuttle or bus service to supermarkets in neighboring districts, and to increase awareness of the USDA pilot program, set to commence in August 2017, which will allow SNAP recipients to purchase groceries online.
- Conduct outreach to ensure that residents are aware of medical and mental health services and encourage utilization of necessary services, particularly pre-natal care for pregnant women and mental health services.

**Education**
- Ensure that licensed childcare capacity is sufficient to meet demand for all age groups, and conduct city supported outreach campaigns to increase awareness of and enrollment in childcare and pre-k programs.

**Youth**
- Ensure presence of after-school and summer programs and activities for all age groups, particularly older children.

**Family and Community**
- Ensure that streets are well lit, particularly near subway stations and along routes to and from schools, parks, libraries and other resources for young people.
- Convene public safety and elected officials, community leaders, and other stakeholders to address safety concerns and policing in the community.
- Build upon existing community-based outreach efforts to spread information on key public services, including but not limited to child abuse and neglect prevention, mental health services, and licensed childcare. These efforts should aim to improve trust between residents, city agencies, and the nonprofit community so that residents are not fearful of accessing necessary services.

CCC is hopeful that the community-driven efforts underway can be accelerated and expanded upon, and our broad recommendations point to the need to create or expand necessary programs, as well as invest in extensive community outreach and collaboration. Neighborhood residents should inform policy interventions and be made aware of available resources, so that greater trust can be built among city agencies, nonprofit organizations, and residents who are all eager to improve child and family well-being in Brownsville.
Appendix I

Differences in Geography and Neighborhood Classification

The New York City Department of City Planning created Neighborhood Tabulation Areas that offer the ability to analyze Census data at a geographic level similar to historical New York City neighborhoods. Neighborhood Tabulation Areas consist of whole census tracts and can be found within the boundaries of the Census Bureau’s Public Use Microdata Areas (PUMAs), larger geographic areas which approximate New York City’s community districts.

While the focus of this report is on the neighborhood (or NTA) of Brownsville, some data is only available at the community district level; in these cases, we are looking at Brooklyn Community District 16, which contains the neighborhoods of Brownsville and Ocean Hill. And in a smaller number of cases, data is only available for the PUMA that includes the Brownsville-Ocean Hill community district along with the neighborhood of East New York (Pennsylvania Avenue).57

For many assets, we felt it was useful to include resources that are technically outside of Brownsville, but accessible to its residents. In these cases, we determine if those resources are within walking distance of any Brownsville resident (i.e. within walking distance of the Brownsville neighborhood border). A generally agreed upon measure of walking distance is a ten to fifteen-minute walk, which is roughly equal to a distance of half a mile.58 So for certain assets, we look not only at the resources available within Brownsville, but also those that are within half a mile of Brownsville’s borders.

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57 East New York (Pennsylvania Avenue) should not be mistaken for the much larger neighborhood of East New York.

58 The relationship between destination proximity, destination mix and physical activity; Gavin R. McCormack et al. Preventive Medicine 2008 January
### Appendix II

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Economic Conditions</th>
<th>Brownsville (NTA)</th>
<th>Brownsville-Ocean Hill (CD)</th>
<th>Brooklyn</th>
<th>NYC</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Poverty</td>
<td>40.0%</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>23.4%</td>
<td>20.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child Poverty</td>
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<td>–</td>
<td>33.4%</td>
<td>29.7%</td>
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<td>Median Household Income</td>
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<td>–</td>
<td>$47,966</td>
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<td>Median Household Income for families with children</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>$22,336</td>
<td>$46,889</td>
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<tr>
<td>Employment-Population ratio</td>
<td>48.8%</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>63.7%</td>
<td>64.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Share of Adults with a Bachelor’s or higher</td>
<td>9.7%</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>31.6%</td>
<td>35.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parental Employment Instability</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>56.9%</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>35.4%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Health | | |
|--------|-----------------|-----------------|---------|-----|
| Late or no prenatal care | – | 12.5% | 6.0% | 7.1% |
| Preterm birth | – | 14.0% | 8.4% | 8.8% |
| Low birthweight babies | – | 11.6% | 7.4% | 8.2% |
| Infant mortality rate (per 1,000 live births) | – | 6.1 | 3.8 | 4.5 |
| Health Insurance Coverage | 88.0% | – | 87.0% | 88.6% |
| Life expectancy | – | 74.4 | N/A | 81.1 |
| Adult psychiatric hospitalization (per 100,000 adults) | – | 1727 | 734 | 684 |
| Child asthma hospitalization (per 10,000 children age 5-14) | – | 61 | 32 | 36 |
| Children Without Health Insurance | 5.0% | – | 3.6% | 4.0% |

| Education | | |
|----------|-----------------|-----------------|---------|-----|
| Early Education Enrollment | 60.0% | – | 64.0% | 60.0% |
| Math/ELA Pass rate | Math: 19.2% | – | Math: 36.3% | Math: 35.2% |
| ELA: 18.2% | – | ELA: 31.2% | ELA: 30.4% |
| High school graduation rate | 36.8% | – | 67.0% | 67.2% |
| Dropout rate | 12.4% | – | 8.3% | 9.0% |

| Housing | | |
|---------|-----------------|-----------------|---------|-----|
| Rent burden | 32.5% | – | 30.7% | 28.6% |
| Overcrowded Rental Housing | 8.8% | – | 12.4% | 10.9% |
| Fair or poor housing* | – | 66.0% | 27.0% | 23.0% |
| 3 or more maintenance deficiencies* | – | 32.0% | 15.0% | 14.0% |
| Families entering homeless shelters (per 1,000 households) | – | 8.8 | 4.4 | 3.6 |

| Youth, Family and Community | | |
|----------------------------|-----------------|-----------------|---------|-----|
| Child abuse and neglect victimization rate (per 1,000 children) | – | 39.1 | 14.1 | 14.7 |
| Foster care placement rate (per 1,000 children) | – | 6.1 | 2.1 | 2.3 |
| Teen birth rate (per 1,000 girls age 15-19) | 26.1 | – | 21.8 | 20.8 |
| Youth unemployment rate | – | 27.8% | 20.3% | 19.3% |
| Violent felony rate (per 1,000 residents) | – | 8.7 | 5.1 | 4.6 |
| Teen Idleness | – | 12.8% | 7.5% | 7.0% |
| Children in Single Parent Families | 81.4% | – | 34.5% | 38.2% |
| Adults without a High School Degree | 27.2% | – | 21.1% | 20.0% |

*Data is for the Brownsville-Ocean Hill PUMA*
Appendix III

Data Sources

*Much of the data found in this report—and other indicators on child well-being—can be found on Keeping Track Online at data.cccnewyork.org*

Quantitative and Spatial Data

Community Overview:

Economic Conditions:


Health:


Geographic data on farmers’ markets from Department of Mental Health and Mental Hygiene. *Unpublished Data*. Received on: 03/24/2016.


Geographic data on open spaces from New York City Department of City Planning. *Primary Land Use Tax Lot Output (PLUTO) 15v1*. Retrieved from: http://www1.nyc.gov/site/planning/data-maps/open-data.page and


**Education:**


Geographic data on Childcare and capacity from New York City Administration for Children's Services. *Unpublished Data.*

Geographic data on Pre-K for All from New York City Department of Education. *Unpublished Data.*


Data on school, teachers, and staff from New York State Education Department. Retrieved from https://data.nysed.gov

**Housing:**


Data on families entering homeless shelters from New York City Department of Homeless Services. *Unpublished Data.*


**Youth, Family and Community:**


Geographic data on after school programs from New York City Department of Youth and Community Development. *Unpublished Data.*


**Qualitative Data**

On April 12, we held a meeting of stakeholders in the Brownsville community with help from SCO Family of Services in Brownsville. During this meeting, we shared our goals for the project as well as the types of data we were collecting, and solicited feedback.

From June 21st to July 7th, we held a series of focus groups with residents of Brownsville with the assistance of community-based organizations.

**Focus Group 1:**
Date and time: June 21th, 4:00 p.m.
Location: Brownsville Community Justice Center (BCJC), 444 Thomas S. Boyland St.
Participants: 16 young people between the ages of 14 and 19 involved in BCJC programs

**Focus Group 2:**
Date and time: June 28th, 5:30 p.m.
Location: Power of 2, 400 Rockaway Avenue
Participants: 15 individuals recruited by the organization Power of 2

**Focus Group 3:**
Date and time: June 29th, 11:00 a.m.
Location: Power of 2, 400 Rockaway Avenue
Participants: 17 individuals recruited by Power of 2

**Focus Group 4:**
Date and time: July 7th, 4:00 p.m.
Location: Brownsville Partnership, 519 Rockaway Avenue
Participants: 15 individuals recruited by Community Solutions

**Focus Group 5:**
Date and time: July 7th, 5:45 p.m.
Location: Brownsville Partnership, 519 Rockaway Avenue
Participants: 5 individuals recruited by Community Solutions