

RESEARCH REPORT

# Building a More Equitable Community

Pasts and Potential Futures for Brownsville, Brooklyn

Mark Trekson

Lily Robin

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This initiative was brought to fruition through collaboration with the Brownsville Community Justice Center (BCJC), notably under the leadership of Ionna Jimenez, Project Director, and Deron Johnston, former Director of Community Development. This project, which aims to provide a comprehensive overview of resources within the Brownsville community, builds on previous collaborations between BCJC and the Urban team that had focused on public safety and creative placemaking. We extend our gratitude to Ionna Jimenez and Deron Johnston for their key contributions and insights which enriched the development and execution of this initiative.

We also thank Mary Bogle, who provided technical review of this report.

# Executive Summary

**This report intends to provide a framework for developing an equitable development theory of change for Brownsville, Brooklyn. Brownsville is a neighborhood facing significant social and economic challenges but also one with a strong history and presence of community activism and action. A key goal of this report is to review and synthesize themes from existing research, proposals, and projects focused on the neighborhood.**

The main sections of this report are:

- A short overview of the economic and social situation in Brownsville. We reviewed the built environment, property ownership and patterns, safety, and small-business capital flows as areas of particular interest to this work.
- A review of existing studies on Brownsville. We reviewed the content of 18 plans with dozens of initiatives and identified themes, common challenges, strategy types, and areas of focus.
- A high-level 10-year equitable development plan focused on mobility out of poverty, with four main components: economic opportunity, education and youth development, housing, and the built and social environment. We discuss how this plan fits into existing efforts and other potential options for making local economic development efforts more inclusive.

Finally, we present recommendations for next steps for local policymakers, advocates, organizations, and the community. Given the range of existing work already taking place, we focus less on a given initiative and more on building a framework where the community can learn and build together. We then recommend three themes: ongoing research and community assessment, identification and tracking of initiatives over time, and building community and stakeholder support.

As noted above, existing initiatives already exist that could play key convening roles in these efforts going forward. The Brownsville Hub Cooperative, a community-based hub and incubator involving multiple organizational partners, is in the midst of a three-year implementation phase focused on access, ownership, self-sufficiency, and youth development. Based on our review of local community characteristics, plans, and projects, the Hub Cooperative's framework and focus are promising and can help serve as the sort of local platform to build locally designed equitable development efforts in the next decade.



# Building a More Equitable Community

To grapple with the full nature of community development, it is important to understand that the definition of *community* needs to account not just for the place, but also for its people. Without accounting for people, community development efforts—and economic development more broadly—may see progress in a place but miss challenges and stresses facing that place’s existing residents. Seemingly positive outcomes, from housing value to development, tend to signal displacement of and additional economic and social burdens on longer-term, less-resourced existing residents. Framing community development as equitable and inclusive has therefore become particularly important: it is an effort to put the people first.

Of course, this is not easy. But efforts around the country with these aims in mind have at least pointed to potential options for building more inclusive community development approaches. This study uses an equitable community development frame to investigate existing plans and efforts and future opportunities for the Brownsville neighborhood of Brooklyn, New York, and develops a theory of change to identify equitable development pathways over the next 10 years. Brownsville has a long and rich history as a site of community action, protest, and planning, but also of challenges related to economic opportunity, safety, and coordination.

Brownsville has been the site of multiple planning and visioning exercises in recent years. Although they have offered numerous innovative solutions across a range of topical areas, it is less clear how they all fit together. This presents an opportunity to draw together learnings and proposals from these already-developed plans for how to build a stronger community, identify gaps that may still exist and need further support to draw out, and build a systematic approach for equitable community development in the years ahead.

The goal of this report is to lay out these possible futures and identify a potential path and theory of change for equitable development for Brownsville in the years ahead. It also builds on previous projects the Urban team has worked on with the Brownsville Community Justice Center (BCJC), an initiative of the Center for Justice Innovation that seeks to improve community safety through offering programming for young people and undertaking improvements to the neighborhood’s built environment. While those studies focused on creative placemaking initiatives, the broader goal of this study is to provide the groundwork for a 10-year equitable development plan, focused on mobility out of poverty—including economic, housing, and criminal justice components—and identifying pathways to

align city-led efforts such as the work of the Brownsville Plan with local efforts such as the Brownsville Cooperative Hub. Another goal is to identify ways to align these efforts with other potential resource and programmatic supports. Urban worked with BCJC to identify the parameters and goals of this study and met throughout the engagement to discuss progress, findings, and recommendations.

This report is organized around the idea that Brownsville already has many building blocks that can be used to build a more equitable community development ecosystem. It is organized into three main sections:

- a review of how the neighborhood context offers both challenges and opportunities
- an examination of existing neighborhood plans and reports to identify key themes, ideas, and actors
- a road map aiming to put those pieces together, where we lay out a 10-year equitable development theory of change for the neighborhood and provide concrete ideas for activities to make that happen

To do this work, we conducted a range of analyses, including document review, data analysis on neighborhood indicators (using both local data resources and a review of investment data), and engagement with local stakeholders (including interviews and feedback opportunities). The document review included reviewing reports, news articles, and websites that discuss projects and interventions that affect the Brownsville community. These documents were gathered through conversations with stakeholders and targeted internet searches. We collected a total of 22 documents with publication years ranging from 2001 to 2022 (appendix A). Each document was reviewed for a description of community challenges as well as specific strategies to improve the community. We tracked each strategy in a matrix with a separate row for each activity or step of a strategy and categorized strategies into distinct types and focus areas. These categories were developed through a directed content approach identifying themes of types and focus areas across strategies. We then shared the categories with partners at Brownsville Community Justice Center (BCJC) and other stakeholder interviewees for input and refinement. Data analysis included mapping and descriptive statistics of neighborhood indicators, such as investment data.

## Brownsville Context

Every community has many facets. Here, we present an analysis of some features that play a key role in neighborhood conditions:



- the **built environment** and how it shapes how people live, work, and get around the neighborhood
- how **property ownership** affects local conditions and highlights the centrality of some—particularly public—stakeholders
- **neighborhood safety** and its influence on local social, health, and economic conditions
- **economic opportunity**, which we examine through an analysis of small-business lending capital flows and home mortgage lending

## The Built Environment

Brownsville’s built environment—which includes its buildings, street grid, and where housing, businesses, and industries are located—has the fingerprints of mid-20th-century planning all over it, from the “superblock” street grid found in New York City Housing Authority (NYCHA) developments, to well-specified and distinct commercial, residential, and industrial zones, to the scale and scope of housing found across the neighborhood (Pritchett 2001).

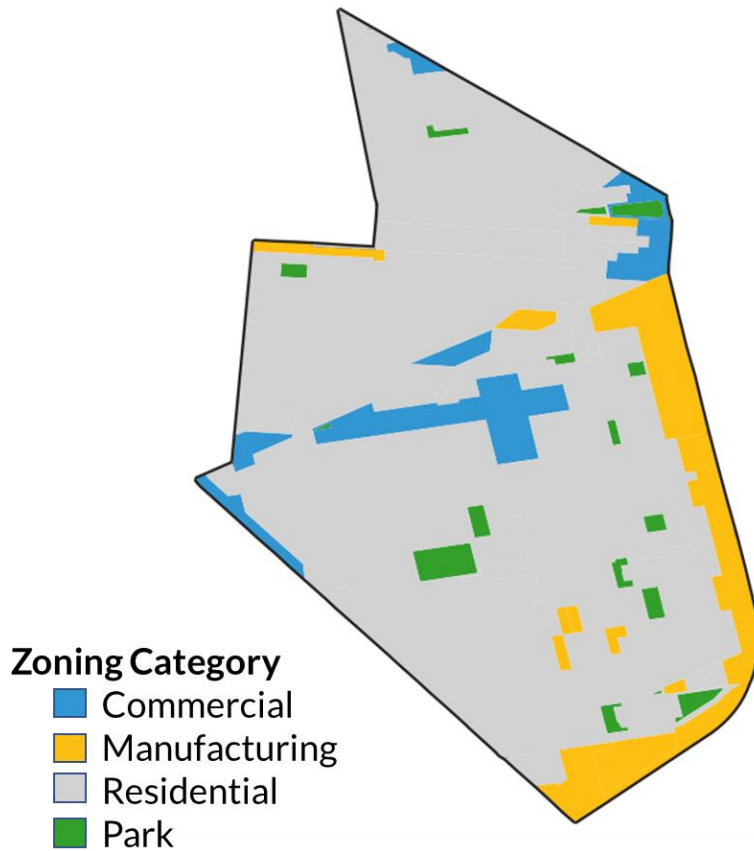
Figure 1 illustrates zoning patterns in Brownsville. Brownsville is zoned primarily residential (grey) with a strip of commercial-zoned land (blue) on the northwest side of the neighborhood and a strip of manufacturing-zoned land (yellow) across the eastern and southern sides of the neighborhood. There are also a few small parks (green) throughout the neighborhood and one larger park, Betsy Head Park, near the middle of the neighborhood.

The local built environment also lends a sense of isolation of Brownsville from surrounding neighborhoods: the elevated MTA line along Livonia Avenue and 98th Street provides subway access but creates a visual barrier, while the elevated rail lines (both MTA and freight) along the neighborhood’s eastern and southern boundaries more fully limit the number of through streets. Otherwise, large arterial roads (Rockaway Parkway to the southeast and Eastern Parkway and Atlantic Avenue to the north in particular) are designed more for car traffic than pedestrian connectivity.

Almost half of the lots in Brownsville are residential, including a limited number of residential multifamily buildings with elevators. While this is likely due in part to the number of smaller residential rowhouses, it is an important consideration when thinking about accessible housing for Brownsville residents. More than 10 percent of lots in the neighborhood are mixed residential and commercial, about 5 percent of lots are commercial and office space, and about 5 percent are industrial and

manufacturing. The remaining lots are for transportation, utilities, public facilities and institutions, open space and outdoor recreation, and parking.

**FIGURE 1**  
**Zoning in Brownsville**



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Source: Urban Institute analysis of New York City GIS Zoning Features, available at <https://www.nyc.gov/site/planning/data-maps/open-data/dwn-gis-zoning.page>.

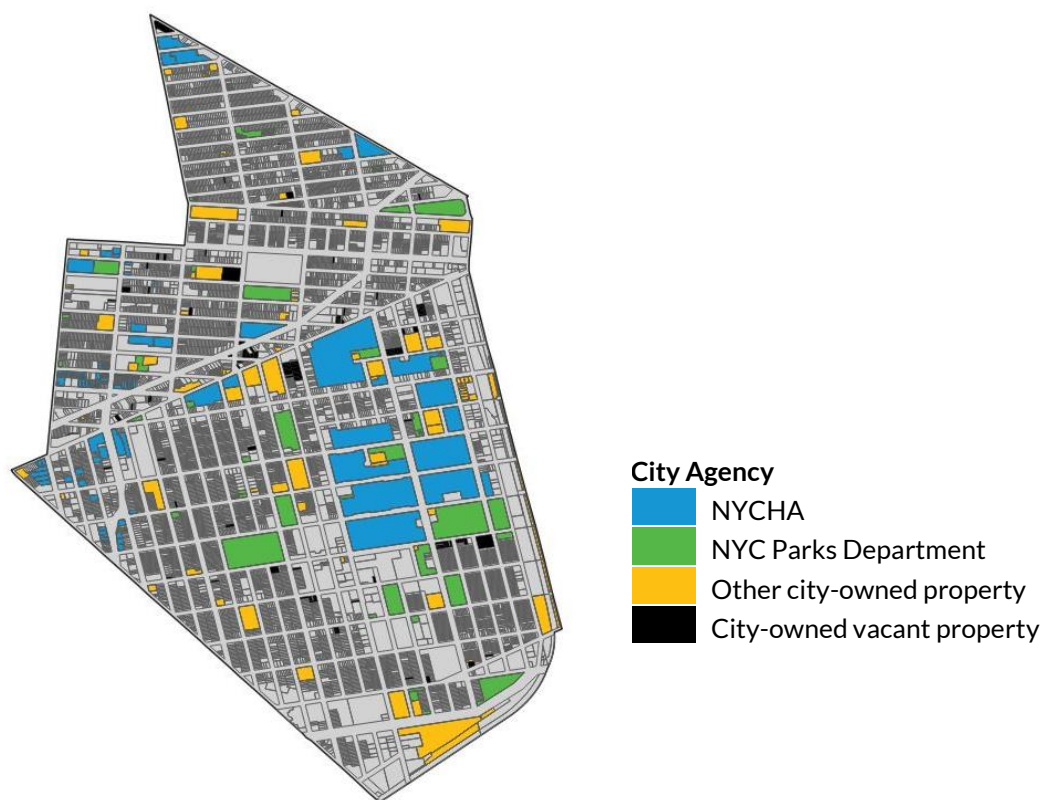
## Property Ownership

A key feature of Brownsville is the extent of publicly owned land in the neighborhood. In total, 492 lots totaling 35,309,146 square feet are owned by city entities. NYCHA is the single largest property owner, and the Parks, Housing Preservation and Development, and Education departments are also key stakeholders. NYCHA owns 128 lots totaling 4,694,276 square feet of land in Brownsville. The Parks Department owns 114 lots totaling 2,591,130 square feet; the Housing Preservation and Development Department owns 124 lots totaling 360,073 square feet; and the Department of Education owns 33 lots

totaling 1,248,314 square feet. Looking at the density of city-owned property in Brownsville compared with the rest of the city, Brownsville has one of the highest densities (figure 2), demonstrating the importance of accounting for and engaging with public landowners.

Also noteworthy is the amount of vacant land: as of recent reporting, there are 164 small vacant lots scattered throughout the neighborhood's residential blocks, accounting for a total area of 1,042,564 square feet. This is about 18 percent of lots in the neighborhood and 3 percent of the total area of lots in the neighborhood. Most vacant lots are city-owned, with some of the vacant lots having mixed ownership and others owned by another public authority.

**FIGURE 2**  
**Property in Brownsville: Public Ownership and Vacant Land**



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**Source:** Urban Institute analysis of New York City GIS Zoning Features and City Owned and Leased Properties, <https://www.nyc.gov/site/planning/data-maps/open-data/dwn-gis-zoning.page> and <https://www.nyc.gov/site/planning/data-maps/open-data/dwn-colp.page>.

**Note:** Property ownership does not include Mitchell-Lama housing or other hybrid ownership models.

## Neighborhood Safety

Brownsville residents face numerous issues related to public safety. The neighborhood has some of the highest rates of incarceration and reported crime in New York City and a historically tense relationship with law enforcement, as it was the epicenter of the New York City Police Department's controversial stop-and-frisk initiative.

Although affecting the entire neighborhood, issues of public safety are particularly salient for young people. Research has shown the importance of understanding the relationships between childhood trauma and crime,<sup>1</sup> and young people perceive different parts of the neighborhood as being more or less safe than others based on where they live. This has led to a balkanized social geography, making access to resources or amenities more difficult (Treskon and Esthappan 2018; Treskon 2021).

To focus on shooting incidents as an example, reported shooting incidents had been dropping before the pandemic but increased substantially in 2020; over time, the highest concentration of shooting incidents was in the east-central part of the neighborhood, east of Rockaway Avenue (Treskon 2021). More recently, incident counts have decreased again: as of mid-2023, shooting incidents are down 40 percent from the same period in 2022 and down 37 percent from 2021.<sup>2</sup>

There have been significant local efforts to respond to issues around local community safety. The Brownsville Safety Alliance pilot, for example, involved a short-term withdrawal of police from a stretch of Mother Gaston Boulevard and replacement with a mix of violence interrupter and crisis management group staff, along with city agency and community organization nonprofit booths.<sup>3</sup> The initiative, now known as "Brownsville In Violence Out,"<sup>4</sup> continues to operate multiple times a year.<sup>5</sup> Other organizations, such as BCJC, have linked their youth development programming to issues of public safety, focusing both on human capital and the physical environment to engage young people (Treskon and Esthappan 2018).

## Capital Flows and Economic Opportunity

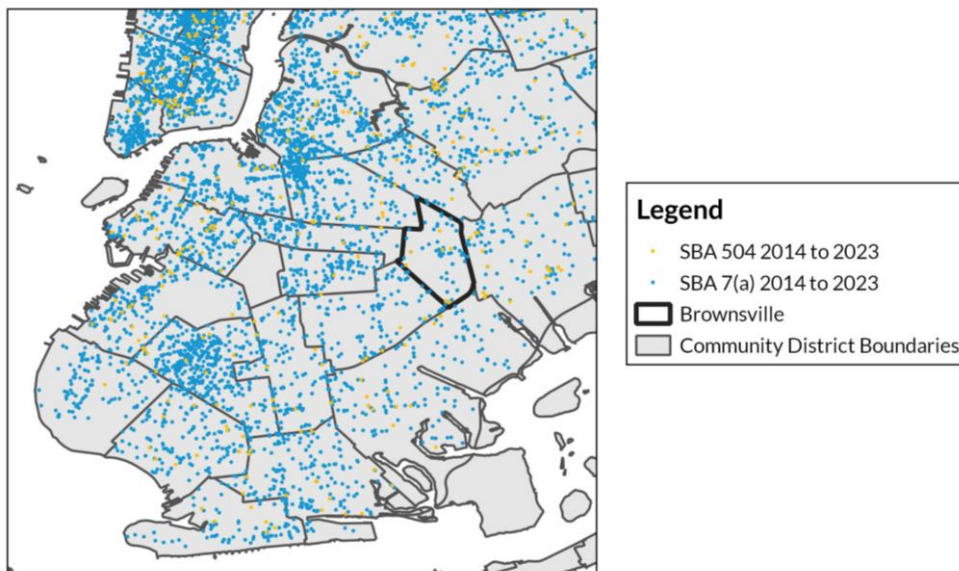
Examining the flows of capital—whether through business lending, home lending, or other sources—helps us understand the patterns of investment in the neighborhood. There are many ways to examine capital flows, although here we focus on US Small Business Administration (SBA) lending and home mortgage lending.

## SMALL-BUSINESS LENDING

Examining SBA lending over time lets us examine how much capital is flowing into Brownsville to business owners. The two programs we focus on in this report are the 7(a) program and the 504 program. 7(a) loans are SBA's largest loan program; they provide loans for working capital, refinancing business debt, and purchasing furniture, fixtures, and supplies. Loans are made through regular lenders.<sup>6</sup> The 504 program provides long-term, fixed-rate financing for fixed assets to promote job creation and business growth. These loans are made through Certified Development Companies, community partners that promote local economic development.<sup>7</sup> 504 loans tend to be used by more-established businesses for equipment or real estate, while 7(a) loans are more commonly used as operating capital particularly useful to smaller and newer businesses.

Figure 3 shows the location of SBA 7(a) and 504 loans made in Brooklyn since 2014. Unsurprisingly, the highest concentration of loans shown are in lower Manhattan; in Brooklyn, the largest concentrations are in the northern and northwestern parts of the borough, with another large concentration in Borough Park. The density of loans in Brownsville is somewhat in the middle: considerably lower than neighborhoods to its west but higher than those to its south and east.

**FIGURE 3**  
**SBA Lending in Brooklyn: 2014 through March 2023**



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**Source:** Urban Institute analysis of SBA loan program data. Datasets available at <https://data.sba.gov/en/dataset/7-a-504-foia>.

**Note:** Date used is fiscal year loan was approved. Loans are recorded through March 31, 2023.

Investigating SBA lending specifically in Brownsville shows how these loans have generally clustered in Brownsville’s northeast, particularly along Belmont and Pitkin Avenues and the eastern manufacturing-zoned portion of the neighborhood adjacent to the L subway line (figure 4). Outside of this area, most loans have been relatively small, projected to support 10 or fewer jobs. Rockaway itself, and Pitkin west of Rockaway, have seen relatively limited SBA lending activity.

**FIGURE 4**  
**SBA Lending in Brownsville by Projected Jobs Created, 2014–2023**

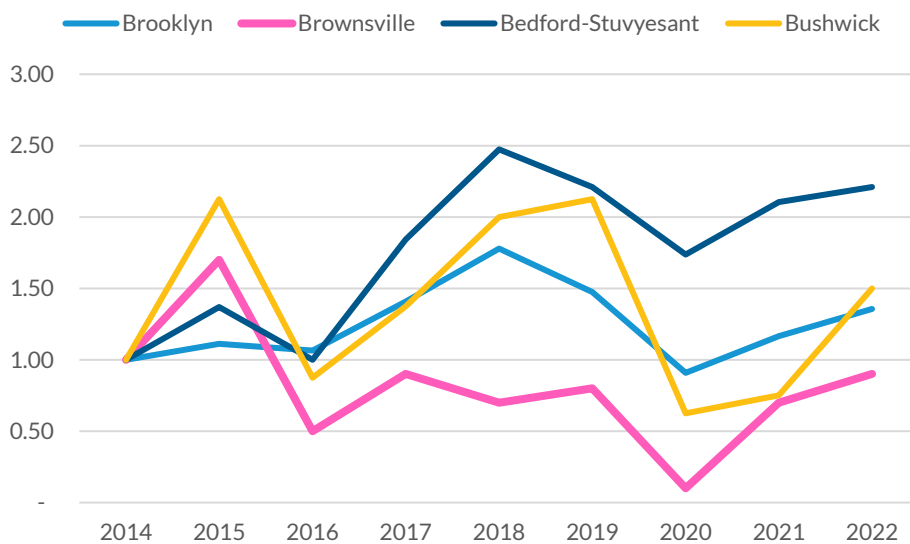


URBAN INSTITUTE

**Source:** Urban Institute analysis of SBA loan program data. Datasets available at <https://data.sba.gov/en/dataset/7-a-504-foia>.  
**Notes:** Date used is fiscal year loan was approved. Loans recorded through March 31, 2023. Neighborhood boundary used for Brownsville is Community District 16.

While SBA loans dropped throughout Brooklyn during 2020 and the height of the COVID-19 pandemic, the drop in Brownsville was particularly pronounced and steeper than that in neighboring Bedford-Stuyvesant or Bushwick (figure 5). As of 2022, loan counts in Brownsville were still below 2014 levels, whereas in Bedford-Stuyvesant more than twice as many SBA loans were made in 2022 as in 2014.

**FIGURE 5**  
**7(a) and 504 SBA Loans: Ratio of Loan Counts to 2014 Baseline**



URBAN INSTITUTE

**Source:** Urban Institute analysis of Small Business Association (SBA) loan program data. Datasets available at <https://data.sba.gov/en/dataset/7-a-504-foia>.

**Notes:** Date used is fiscal year loan was approved. Loans recorded through March 31, 2023. Neighborhood boundaries based on Community Districts (CDs): CD16 for Brownsville, CD3 for Bedford-Stuyvesant, and CD4 for Bushwick.

SBA-supported small-business lending patterns in Brownsville indicate there may be more opportunities to expand lending, particular for smaller-value loans. 7(a) loan averages in Brownsville are nearly twice as high as the average in Brooklyn overall and more than twice as high as those found in neighboring Bedford-Stuyvesant or Bushwick (table 1). The comparison with Bushwick in particular is notable: the total number of projected jobs supported are similar (540 in Bushwick versus 506 in Brownsville), but the total and average loan amounts in Brownsville were considerably higher. Put another way, in Brownsville, there was one projected job supported for every \$93,270 in 7(a) lending, while in Bushwick, there was one projected job supported for every \$61,161 (in Bedford-Stuyvesant, the figure was \$43,663; in Brooklyn overall, it was \$50,151).

Compared with 7(a) loans, there were fewer 504 loans overall, and the loans were for higher amounts on average. In Brownsville, overall 504 activity has been closer to that of Bedford-Stuyvesant than to Bushwick: Brownsville had slightly fewer loans than did Bedford-Stuyvesant, but the loans made were for considerably higher amounts and were projected to support considerably more total jobs (although the projected number of jobs supported in Brownsville was driven largely by two loans projected to support 100 and 106 jobs, respectively). Of the seven 504 loans for which third-party

lender information was available, the lenders were Bank of America, JPMorgan Chase Bank (two loans), Liberty SBF, BankUnited, Flushing Bank, and Gouverneur Savings & Loan Association. Given the potential value of 504 loans for developing relationships between Certified Development Companies and local small businesses, this signals an opportunity for other lending institutions to build more relationships in Brownsville.

**TABLE 1**  
**7(a) and 504 SBA Loans from 2014 to 2023**

		Brooklyn	Brownsville	Bedford-Stuyvesant	Bushwick
7(a)	Count	3,903	68	318	101
	Total amount	\$1,369,435,100	<b>\$47,194,600</b>	\$96,016,000	\$33,026,900
	Average amount	\$350,867	<b>\$694,038</b>	\$301,937	\$326,999
	Jobs supported	27,306	506	2199	540
504	Number	206	7	11	4
	Total amount	\$279,431,000	<b>\$11,444,000</b>	\$9,042,000	\$7,155,000
	Average amount	\$1,356,461	<b>\$1,634,857</b>	\$822,000	\$1,788,750
	Jobs supported	2,980	244	78	30

**Source:** Urban Institute analysis of Small Business Association (SBA) loan program data. Datasets available at <https://data.sba.gov/en/dataset/7-a-504-foia>.

**Notes:** Date used is fiscal year loan was approved. Loans recorded through March 31, 2023. Neighborhood boundaries based on Community Districts (CDs): CD16 for Brownsville, CD3 for Bedford-Stuyvesant, and CD4 for Bushwick.

## HOME MORTGAGE LENDING

Another way of tracking capital flows into a neighborhood is by analyzing home mortgage lending patterns. These data are available at the census tract level through the Home Mortgage Disclosure Act datasets. Here, we examine recent trends in single-family (one to four units) and multifamily (five or more units) lending in Brownsville and Brooklyn more broadly (table 2).

Overall, even with significant instability caused by the pandemic, home lending trends in Brownsville, particularly for smaller properties, has remained relatively robust. In Brownsville, the number of these loans increased steadily between 2018 and 2021, and the average loan amount has remained above \$500,000. Multifamily lending has been a bit more variable: the number of loans *and* the average loan size was highest in 2018 and 2021 (both figures were lower in 2019 and 2020). Trends in Brownsville have largely mirrored those in Brooklyn as a whole, with single-family lending increasing across all four years and multifamily lending dipping in 2019 and 2020.



All told, these lending patterns indicate substantial capital flows into the neighborhood: the 46 multifamily loans in 2021 represent \$189,120,000 overall, while the 644 single-family loans represent \$350,190,000 overall.

**TABLE 2**  
**Home Mortgage Disclosure Act Loans from 2018 through 2021**

	Count				Average			
	2018	2019	2020	2021	2018	2019	2020	2021
<b>Brownsville</b>								
Multifamily: site-built	45	37	20	46	\$3,669,889	\$2,877,703	\$2,293,500	\$4,111,304
Single-family (1-4 units): site-built	379	430	525	644	\$510,726	\$541,884	\$548,676	\$543,773
<b>Brooklyn</b>								
Multifamily: site-built	1,581	1,441	1,207	1,458	\$4,616,581	\$4,562,314	\$5,079,979	\$5,305,789
Single-family (1-4 units): site-built	17,423	19,166	23,862	32,681	\$572,603	\$629,916	\$615,463	\$672,543

**Source:** Urban Institute analysis of Home Mortgage Disclosure Act data, 2018 through 2021. See <https://ffiec.cfpb.gov/data-publication/>.

## Neighborhood Context: Key Takeaways

In Brownsville, we see a number of salient patterns affecting the existing trajectory of economic development that will shape whatever happens going forward. First, Brownsville is a diverse and large neighborhood with multiple and distinct geographies. This means that initiatives need to account for these spatial and social patterns to be effective and inclusive. Second, significant levels of public ownership mean that local stakeholders are not always “local” per se. For instance, NYCHA properties have their own set of requirements and processes for community input, redevelopment, and design. Third, while they are increasingly being developed, many small vacant lots remain scattered throughout the neighborhood. These lots represent challenges in terms of relative safety as well as opportunities for short-term placemaking and longer-term development. Finally, as our small-business lending analysis shows, lending is happening locally but may not be reaching smaller or newer businesses. Creating a more robust set of capital flows to the neighborhood could tie many of these threads together, knitting together sub-neighborhoods, activating vacant lots, and increasing economic vitality.

## Brownsville as Focus of Study and Planning

To understand the current landscape of strategies in Brownsville, we conducted an online scan of sources pertaining to needs, initiatives, and investments in the neighborhood over the past two decades. We reviewed 4 publications to provide background on the needs and resources in Brownsville and 18 sources discussing specific plans for the community published from 2001 to 2022, which included 82 specific policy and program recommendations. The sources include lists of grants (e.g., the Brooklyn Community Foundation grants); city webpages and press releases on specific initiatives (e.g., NextGeneration NYCHA) and investments (e.g., Girls' Empowerment Center); evaluations (e.g., *Brownsville, Brooklyn Health Impact Assessment: Evaluating Social Entrepreneurship Programs* by Recognizing and Promoting Local Context); assessments of strengths, gaps, and opportunities (e.g., *From Strengths to Solutions: An Asset-Based Approach to Meeting Community Needs in Brownsville*); and strategic plans (e.g., The Brownsville Plan). For a list of sources used in this analysis, see appendix A.

There have been several assessments of strengths and opportunities in Brownsville that discuss the specific needs of the community, existing community assets, and opportunities to fulfill needs by leveraging existing assets (Brooklyn Public Library and TYTHEdesign 2017; CCC 2017; Pratt Institute n.d.; Pratt PSPD Fundamentals of Planning Studio 2015; Studio Gang 2018). There are also several strategic plans for the community that offer different strategies, ranging from environmental design that improves existing physical spaces to increased programming for access to nutritious food and healthy activities (Caulfield et al. 2012; NYC HPD 2021; Pratt PSPD Fundamentals of Planning Studio 2015).<sup>8</sup>

The statuses of these initiatives range from in planning to fully complete. The Brownsville Hub Cooperative, an initiative of Robin Hood Mobility LABs, has undertaken local visioning and planning work, and other initiatives, such as the Crisis Management System, are citywide and ongoing. Most of the sources we found did not provide status updates.

The city-led Brownsville Plan, however, which includes eight of the strategies we identified, does include regular status updates for each step of the eight strategies. The Brownsville Plan was originally developed in 2017 through a community-driven process. Across strategies, as of the December 2021 semi-annual update report (CAHH 2021), almost three-quarters of steps are complete or complete with ongoing work, 8 percent are ongoing, 14 percent are in process, slightly more than 1 percent are design requiring construction that are in a construction phase, and about 3 percent are in a planning, preliminary design, or procurement stage. This ongoing involvement by the city government provides

valuable context for other locally based efforts and potential to align a process that—even with a community engagement process—may be seen as a top-down structure with local bottom-up efforts.

## Existing Stakeholders

Across the proposed and enacted plans we reviewed, we noted 80 different stakeholder organizations involved in planning, implementing, and overseeing plans, including 32 government agencies and organizations, 42 nonprofit organizations, and 6 for-profit organizations. Of organizations leading plans, 3 government agencies were involved in leading the most plans: the NYC Department of Housing Preservation and Development, the NYC Mayor’s Office of Criminal Justice, and the NYC Department of Parks and Recreation. The Department of Housing Preservation and Development has been a key player, as it coordinated the work that went into the 2017 Brownsville Plan (discussed below) and subsequent updates. Despite owning much of the land in Brownsville, the NYC Housing Authority led only 5 of the 18 reviewed plans, but they did/do serve as a partner on 14 plans. While not leading much work, the Brooklyn Community Foundation has provided funding to at least 18 initiatives in Brownsville.<sup>9</sup>

Local community organizations have also been engaged in many of these initiatives as well as their own efforts. The Brownsville Hub Cooperative (part of the Robin Hood Mobility LABs initiative) comprises several core groups, including BCJC, the Central Brooklyn Economic Development Corporation, Brooklyn Community Board 16, Eleven3seven5, the Youth Design Center, and JobsFirstNYC as a consultant. Its advisory board also includes several local and city-level stakeholders.

This multiplicity of stakeholders mirrors the multiplicity of plans for Brownsville: there is both a lot of activity *within* the neighborhood and interest from *outside* the neighborhood. However, this multiplicity presents challenges for ongoing coordination, and some of the largest potential stakeholders (such as NYCHA) are only tangentially involved in local place-based planning and initiatives. Of course, places are not only made up of residents but also formed by broader networks and structures. For Brownsville, this means working within the reality that some potentially crucial stakeholders have their own constraints. As an example, NYCHA has its own structure, mandates, and goals but is limited in what it can do because of federal regulations.

## Plan Themes: Challenges, Strategy Types, and Areas of Focus and Interest

Through our scan of sources, we noted the challenges various interventions aim to address, the types of interventions, and the focus of each intervention. Below, we discuss these identified challenges, intervention types, and intervention areas of focus.

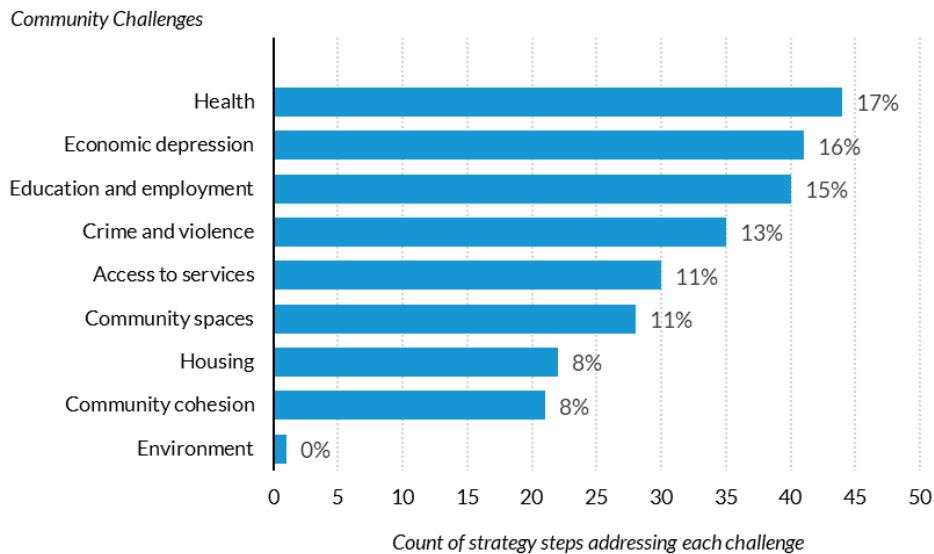
### CHALLENGES

We grouped challenges into the following categories:

- **access to services:** including lack of services; prohibitive cost of services; inaccessibility of services due to physical design of spaces, lack of transportation, and digital access gaps; and lack of access to transportation as a service
- **community cohesion:** including efforts to build bonds between community members and share common ground and experiences
- **community spaces:** including green space, recreational spaces, community centers, vacant spaces, and design of spaces such as lighting
- **crime and violence:** including property crime, violent crime in public, group/gang activity, and domestic violence
- **economic depression:** including financial instability and illiteracy, lack of banking institutions, and lack of community resources and business community
- **environment:** including pollution, contamination, and impacts of climate change
- **education and employment:** including lack of educational opportunities, limited job opportunities, job readiness, and career building
- **health:** including access to health services, access to healthy food, food and nutrition education, exercise, and neonatal and postpartum health
- **housing:** including quality, quantity, affordability, and stability of housing
- **legal system impact:** including surveillance, arrest, incarceration, probation, reentry, and relationships with law enforcement

Across interventions, the challenges most commonly addressed included health, economic depression, and education and employment (figure 6).

**FIGURE 6**  
**Challenges Addressed by Proposed and Enacted Plans**



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Source: Urban Institute analysis of proposed and enacted plans.

### STRATEGY TYPES OF PROPOSED AND ENACTED PLANS

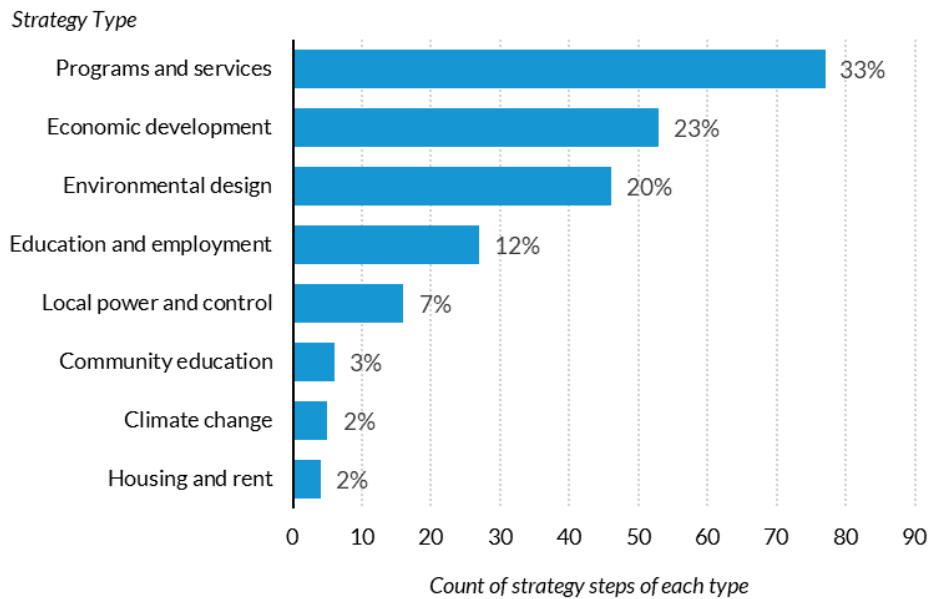
The existing plans and interventions we found in our scan include a range of strategies, grouped as:

- **climate change:** efforts designed to combat climate change and its impacts
- **community education:** efforts to educate the community on a variety of topics through actions such as public messaging campaigns and free classes and workshops
- **economic development:** efforts to increase economic development within the community to improve the business community, increase the community’s ability to meet consumer needs, and improve the financial health of the community
- **education and employment:** efforts to increase educational opportunities, improve education, and increase employment through services such as job training and increasing job opportunities
- **environmental design:** efforts to develop and improve on physical spaces to better serve the community
- **housing and rent:** efforts to increase access to affordable, sustainable, and safe housing
- **local power and control:** efforts to facilitate local power and community control

- **programs and services:** efforts to provide programs and/or services to the community across a range of focus areas

Across interventions, the three most common strategies were programs and services, economic development, and environmental design (figure 7). The programs and services category stands out, in part due to its breadth: these strategy types include cultural initiatives; community center programming; education and employment services; food, nutrition, and health; legal services; recreational activities; and programs targeted to older adults.

**FIGURE 7**  
**Strategy Types of Proposed and Enacted Plans**



URBAN INSTITUTE

Source: Urban Institute analysis of proposed and enacted plans.

Strategies do not stand alone and are often linked together. In the plans studied here, strategies around economic development, programs and services, and environmental design were often linked to strategies in other areas. Economic development strategies were most commonly linked to education, employment, and environmental design; programs and services were most commonly linked to housing and environmental design; and environmental design strategies were most commonly linked to economic development and programs and services. Other strategy types, particularly climate change, community education, and local power and control, were rarely linked to other strategy types.

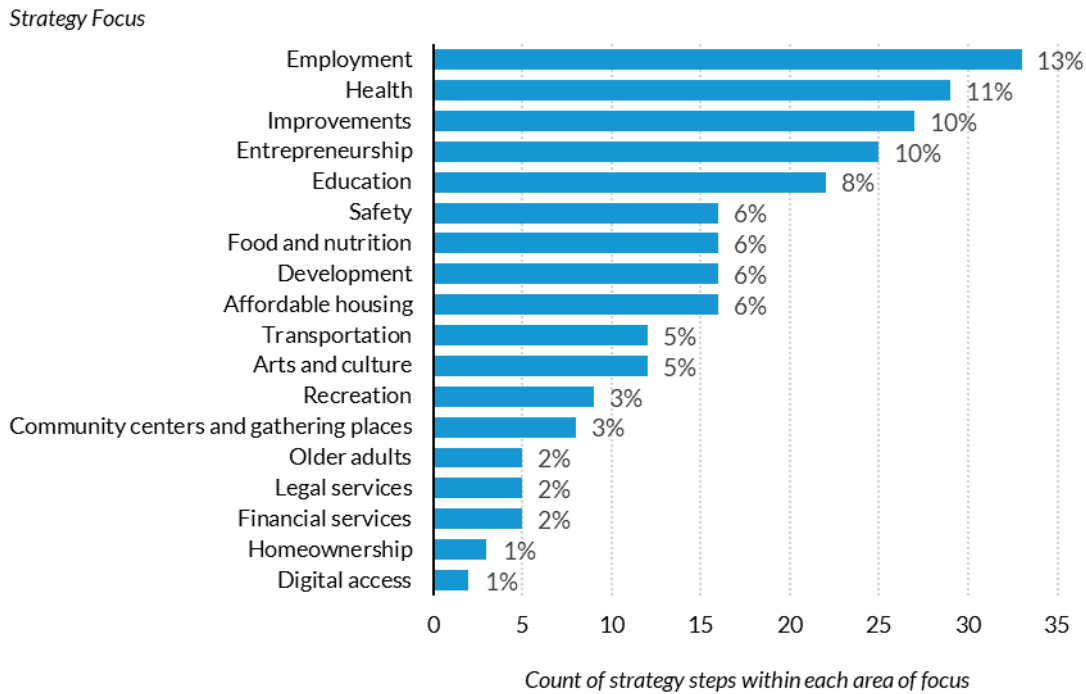
Programs and services are linked to all other areas except climate change, with strong ties to housing and physical spaces.

### AREAS OF FOCUS OF PROPOSED AND ENACTED PLANS

The interventions covered a range of focus areas, the most common being employment, health, physical improvement, entrepreneurship, and education (figure 8).

FIGURE 8

#### Strategy Focus of Proposed and Enacted Plans



URBAN INSTITUTE

Source: Urban Institute analysis of proposed and enacted plans.

### AREAS OF INTEREST OF PROPOSED PLANS

Although we cannot cover the full range of proposals in this report, we identify proposal types across the following key themes:

- Community-centered economy (including employment):** Much of the Brownsville Plan centers on increasing entrepreneurship, supporting small businesses, and creating jobs for residents, including jobs as part of these development projects. Some of the planned and in-progress work in Brownsville is explicitly centered on increasing power and autonomy in the community. An

example of this is programming through the Sadie Nash Leadership Project, which engages young people of color in discussions about race, identity, power, and privilege with the goal of building community and critical consciousness and preparing students for college and careers. Ifetayo Cultural Arts Academy also has programming with youth in Brownsville to deepen cultural identity, build community assets, and develop leadership skills.

- **Education:** There are several initiatives in Brownsville to improve access to and quality of early childhood education, including the creation of and support for the Brownsville Early Learning Center at the YWCA, which serves 30 children ages 2 to 5 using an evidence-based curriculum; SCO Family of Services early childhood education centers, which offer full-day, year-round programming, including FirstStepNYC (co-located with PS/IS 41); the work of the Brooklyn Kindergarten Society; and an effort through the Brownsville Plan to create 3-K for everyone in School District 23 (CCC 2017; NYC HPD 2017). The Brownsville Plan includes efforts to bring computer science education to schools in the neighborhood. The Brownsville Hub Cooperative framework has identified workforce pathways, such as an effort to develop HPD-owned lots by engaging residents in construction opportunities and trades training programs. There are several innovative initiatives to support primary education and college readiness in Brownsville, including the Educational Enrichment and Opportunity initiative of the Ocean Hill Brownsville Neighborhood Improvement Association (OHBNIA), the Single Shepherd program, Neighborhood Innovation Lab for Smart City Technologies,<sup>10</sup> and development of spaces for afterschool programming as part of community solutions work in Brownsville that involves repurposing vacant spaces (CCC 2017).<sup>11</sup>
- **Health:** Many initiatives in Brownsville focus on various components of health, including maternal and neonatal health, access to health services, nutrition, and recreation and exercise. The Brownsville Neighborhood Health Action Center provides a space for a variety of physical and mental health services. There are also specialized health services, such as the Brownsville Child Development Center and the Institute for Community Living. Healthy Start Brooklyn supports the health of infants and families through education, training, and services, and Power of Two supports parents through child care programming (CCC 2017). The Caribbean Women's Health Association provides financial assistance for vulnerable pregnant and postpartum clients. One component of the Brownsville Plan includes training 40 local Shape Up NYC instructors to teach classes in Brownsville. The Melting Pot Community Culinary Center provides culinary education and healthy food to community members. There are also several urban farms and community gardens in Brownsville, including the Isabahlia Ladies of Elegance



Foundation community gardens that are run and managed by Brownsville community members (Cho and Waxman 2015).

- **Housing:** The Brownsville Plan addresses housing in several ways, including helping people secure affordable housing, supporting renters in applying for affordable housing programs, supporting homeowners facing foreclosure and first-time homeowners, and providing services to people experiencing homelessness. NYCHA has a long-term project to preserve and expand affordable housing in Brownsville. There are also several other efforts to provide affordable and supportive housing. For example, the Genesis Neighborhood Plaza provides apartments for low-income and formerly homeless families, and Genesis Neighborhood Plaza II is a complex offering affordable and supportive housing that includes a full-service medical clinic, a domestic violence program and case management services, and mental health and substance abuse counseling (CCC 2017).
- **Criminal justice and public safety:** There are several citywide initiatives to promote safety, including the Mayor's Action Plan for Neighborhood Safety<sup>12</sup> and the Crisis Management System.<sup>13</sup> There are also smaller efforts to disrupt gun violence through hospital-based violence interventions, youth programming, and crisis intervention by credible messengers from organizations like the Kings Against Violence Initiative and CAMBA<sup>14</sup> that serve Brownsville. BCJC's youth programs also play a role in this space. Specific to Brownsville, there are several projects that attempt to promote public safety by improving the built environment in the neighborhood, such as the effort to revitalize Livonia Avenue through an urban arts initiative (Pratt PSPD Fundamentals of Planning Studio 2015). There are also a few efforts specific to traffic safety, such as the Brownsville Slow Zone (NYC Vision Zero 2015). In addition to efforts to improve public safety targeting violence and traffic incidents, there are also initiatives to improve responses to crime and violence, such as a program through Teachers Unite, where members work with students and teachers in New York City public schools to shift from punitive to transformative justice responses.<sup>15</sup>
- **Community spaces and design:** Many of the plans and programs in Brownsville center on community spaces and design. The Brownsville Plan includes several activities to create active mixed-use corridors by working with private owners of vacant land to support redevelopment and integration of parks into surrounding areas. The plan also includes activities to improve connections across the neighborhood by improving NYCHA campus designs, improving walkability and bikeability across the neighborhood, and creating free connections between key subway stations. There are initiatives to bring art and culture into public spaces, such as

work through the Made in Brownsville Incubation Lab (Cho and Waxman 2015). There are also several initiatives targeting community spaces. The Brownsville Plan includes plans to renovate the Brownsville Recreation Center and create a new Teen Center at Brownsville Houses. Plans from other organizations include efforts to increase the use of open spaces and vacant lots as community gathering spaces and to create a youth-led community cultural center (Pratt PSPD Fundamentals of Planning Studio 2015; Pratt Institute n.d.).

- **Transportation:** Some plans and initiatives prioritize the need for improved transportation and physical connectedness in the neighborhood. These plans include increasing bikeability development, promoting bike lanes, and improving pedestrian safety and accessibility with traffic signals, pedestrian walkways, improved sidewalk conditions, and increased street lighting. One plan suggests offering free subway transfer between key stations, and another suggests increasing bus route frequency. There are also plans to increase the accessibility of transportation options.

## Building a 10-Year Equitable Development Plan

Place-based initiatives have been implemented in numerous contexts across the country. Some, such as the Harlem Children’s Zone or Promise Neighborhoods, have education as a key enabling factor. Others, such as Choice Neighborhoods (Urban Institute 2013), take housing as their starting point. Another feature all these initiatives share is their centralized structure: either from above, in the case of federally supported initiatives (Choice and Promise), or overseen by a central organizing group (Harlem Children’s Zone).

To understand their pathways, these programs have developed generalized theories of change and more detailed logic models that lay out elements, including:

- the enabling context and mitigating factors,
- inputs,
- strategies and strategy areas,
- interim outcomes, and
- overarching outcomes.

One key challenge for all these initiatives is that, by being inclusive and place based, they are intended in some ways to affect *everything* in a given neighborhood. This means it is especially important

to clarify what local stakeholders should focus on: nobody can do everything, so the goal in Brownsville is to identify a catalyst for change. Based on our review of reports and analysis of conditions, we believe that there are a few key features that any efforts should consider.

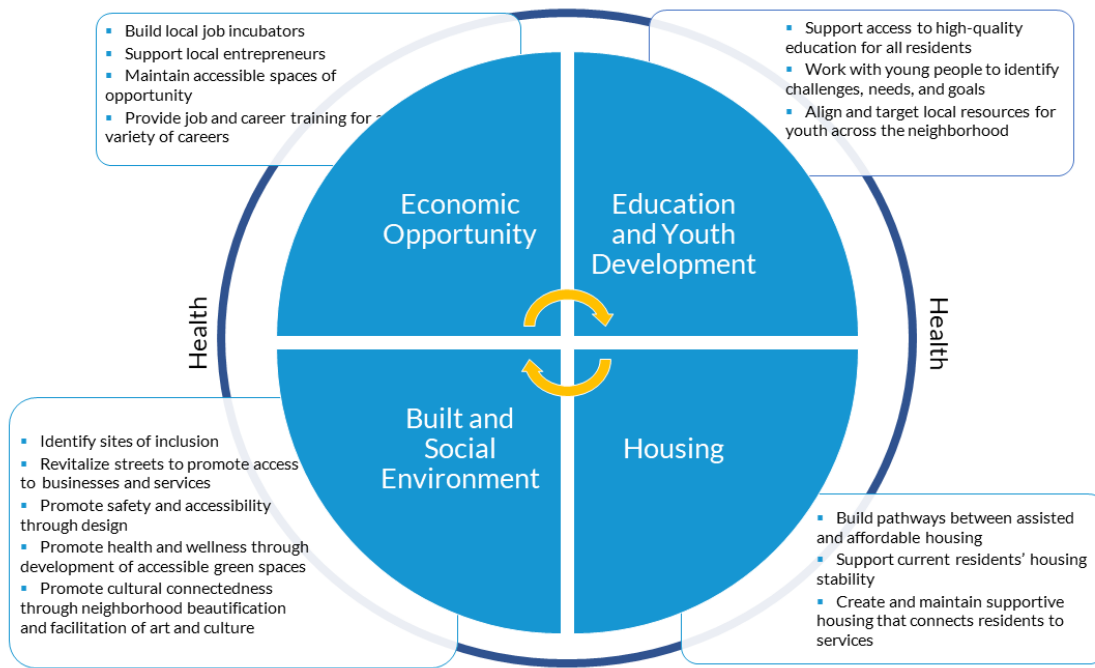
- **Building links across assets through distributed coordination:** This seems like a contradiction in terms, but any successful and coordinated effort will need to account for the reality that there are already a range of stakeholders active in the neighborhood. So this will be a matter of finding a way to coordinate efforts when necessary; sharing information and responding to new developments, challenges, and opportunities; and giving primacy to the needs and asks of residents and other stakeholders in the community who may be less plugged in to day-to-day efforts.
- **Acknowledging institutional inertia:** The Department of Education and NYCHA play important roles in Brownsville but are not of the neighborhood, institutionally speaking. This means they are limited in what they can actually do to respond to local requests and needs.
- **Building a neighborhood of choice, equitably:** This framing, from Choice Neighborhoods, is based on the goal of creating a neighborhood that attracts households, businesses, and investments. Also crucial, however, is making sure current residents are a part of this process and are not threatened with displacement.
- **Providing opportunities for and engaging with young people:** Building out a 10-year plan for Brownsville means thinking about how to craft opportunities for young people and prepare them for adulthood. This means thinking about education, recreation, skills training, opportunity, and safety, and how all these elements play out differently depending on where a young person lives.
- **Tracking process:** Tracking progress is not just about measuring outcomes but also about identifying developing patterns and responding to challenges when they arise. Some of this is already happening: the Department of Housing Preservation and Development's Brownsville Plan landing page has links to ongoing progress reports, a project tracker, and semi-regular update presentations.<sup>16</sup>

Overall, we believe that building out a theory of change for a 10-year equitable implementation plan for the neighborhood will involve creating several feedback loops in individual sectors that have positive spillover effects into the community at large.

- **Economic opportunity:** Make sure opportunities exist within the neighborhood and for people in the neighborhood. Ensure that economic development does not displace valuable uses for the community.
- **Education and youth development:** Engage young people as they grow, providing enrichment, opportunities, a sense of safety, and resources to succeed.
- **Housing:** Provide safe, stable, secure, and affordable housing for the community. Build relationships between NYCHA and other local housing opportunities to promote stability and options for people leaving public housing.
- **Built and social environment:** Identify sites in the neighborhood to facilitate inclusion and equity for all, and understand how interventions can promote access, safety, and opportunity.

The theory of change diagram (figure 9) illustrates how these four feedback loops support one another and cannot be accomplished in isolation. The central nexus of this approach will be some sort of collaborative structure that keeps residents and local stakeholders updated and informed while being mindful of the “input fatigue” that often develops in the face of multiple public input sessions over time—as has been the case in Brownsville.

**FIGURE 9**  
**Theory of Change**



URBAN INSTITUTE

Source: Authors' analysis.

## Innovative Solutions

As demonstrated by the range of plans and ideas for the neighborhood, there is no shortage of active efforts and innovative proposed solutions for Brownsville. Here, we lay out those that would align especially closely with a 10-year inclusive planning process and highlight other innovative solutions from around New York City and elsewhere.

### ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY AND A COMMUNITY-CENTERED ECONOMY

There are already ongoing efforts to build more equitable and inclusive business incubation efforts in New York, such as the Brooklyn Navy Yard's Equity Incubator,<sup>17</sup> designed to build a structure for more equitable business ownership in the city. We also recommend exploring the worker cooperative model (Theodos, Scally, and Edmonds 2018), defined as member-owned, democratically controlled businesses. Because of their place-based nature, they are particularly well positioned to play a role in supporting local communities and the needs and interests of their residents. Although still relatively uncommon,

local support for worker cooperatives in New York has been building in recent years. Examples include the New York City Network of Worker Cooperatives,<sup>18</sup> a trade association of cooperatives; the city's Worker Cooperative Business Development Initiative,<sup>19</sup> which provides training, technical assistance, and legal support for starting up cooperatives; and the Owners to Owners Initiative,<sup>20</sup> which provides support to business owners looking to transition to a cooperative model.

We also recommend continuing to engage with the city-led Brownsville Plan effort and its follow-up and link it to locally based efforts to provide local training and professional opportunities for community members. The Brownsville Hub Cooperative is one such entity that could play this role, given its makeup of a range of local stakeholders already engaged with other local planning efforts. The Hub website's platform is already set up to identify community resources, workforce opportunities, business resources, and provide updates on campaigns and events.<sup>21</sup> Another example of ongoing work is the Brownsville Community Culinary Center,<sup>22</sup> which runs a free, 40-week culinary training program that teaches life, entrepreneurial, and career skills and provides participants with job placement assistance and mentorship programs. This and other similar programs may help serve as models for other opportunities to link community members' interests and needs with opportunities for inclusive growth.

To inform this work, we believe conducting an economic development community needs assessment would be very valuable. Such an assessment could include:

- **Analysis of capital flows and business lending:** The analysis in this report provides an initial and partial examination of capital flows, focused on government-supported small-business lending and home lending. A more general examination of all investment in the neighborhood would require more work (for instance, overall small-business lending analysis requires access to proprietary data, such as through CoreLogic). Additional analysis and ongoing tracking would provide a fuller accounting of local trends, lenders, and other key stakeholders. Local stakeholders should also meet with local lenders to identify programs, challenges, and opportunities from their perspective.
- **Business needs assessment:** This would involve outreach to local businesses to fill out a survey examining business type, status, health, needs, and plans (see an example survey from the Pratt Area Community Council, also known as IMPACCT Brooklyn<sup>23</sup>). Such a survey could identify common needs, challenges, and opportunities and provide guidance on interventions that would be particularly useful locally.

Key steps going forward will include identifying particularly promising pathways for local development and ensuring that existing (and new) programming leads to growing opportunities for the community.

## EDUCATION AND YOUTH DEVELOPMENT

A long-term development plan highlights the importance of youth development. As noted above, linking young people to educational, training, and employment opportunities is a crucial, multiyear process. There are already locally based efforts in progress, including BCJC's work<sup>24</sup> around workforce training and educational support, programming for alternatives to incarceration, and efforts to rethink local public space utilizing strategies such as crime prevention through environmental design and place-keeping. The in-development Girls' Empowerment Center<sup>25</sup> is designed to offer science, technology, and cultural programming and training for girls across Brooklyn. Its current planning phase presents an opportunity to think of innovative ways to integrate programming with local community resources and interests.

Another growing initiative in the city is NYC Kids RISE,<sup>26</sup> a community-based college scholarship and savings platform that has recently expanded citywide from a pilot in Queens. While providing resources to children, families, and schools, it is also designed with a community-based component in mind. This structure allows community members and organizations to engage in supporting children's development. As such, it provides a potential opportunity to link students, families, schools, and community members and stakeholders into conversations and innovations locally.

## HOUSING

As discussed above, any discussion about housing needs and opportunities in Brownsville needs to account for the prevalence of public and publicly assisted housing in the neighborhood and the reality that institutional structures within NYCHA and the US Department of Housing and Urban Development can complicate efforts to respond nimbly to local needs. But if Brownsville is to be a neighborhood supportive of all, a key element must be retaining and building housing that meets local needs. Developments already underway include the Ebenezer Plaza affordable housing development, which currently has 315 affordable housing units (with another 200 in development).<sup>27</sup>

Outside of ongoing developments, we recommend pursuing shared equity models<sup>28</sup> that can provide long-term stability for residents. We also recommend working with local tenant organizations to identify rental housing that could be converted into limited equity (or Housing Development Fund

Corporation) cooperatives,<sup>29</sup> as has already taken place in some cases around the city,<sup>30</sup> and for which the city offers financing support and tax exemption for construction, rehabilitation, and stabilization.<sup>31</sup>

Housing efforts should also consider and implement supportive services for residents. These may include services for the elderly or residents with other special needs but can also involve broader programming linking housing to improved financial stability and personal well-being.

Finally, zoning plays a supporting role in guiding residential (and nonresidential) development patterns throughout the city. In recent decades, rezonings have been an imperfect tool used to spur and channel additional housing construction in certain corridors, though their impact on housing costs and displacement has been controversial. But zoning has also been one of the few ways local communities have been able to have a say in community development. If a neighborhood is considering a broader rezoning, local stakeholders will want to organize and provide community education to identify equitable proposals and potential unintended consequences. A few rezonings over the years have included real protections for existing residents; perhaps the best example is the 1970s-era rezoning of Clinton Hill, which included anti-displacement and anti-demolition provisions that anecdotally have promoted residential stability for community members over decades.

## BUILT ENVIRONMENT

Groups such as BCJC, the Pitkin Avenue Business Improvement District, the Brownsville Partnership, and the Youth Design Center have been at the forefront of efforts to think through ways to make Brownsville's built environment more inclusive and welcoming. While some features—such as the neighborhood's superblocks of NYCHA properties—would require significant capital expenditures on top of basic capital needs (estimated at \$40 billion<sup>32</sup>) to rethink, smaller-scale projects already underway to repurpose vacant properties—such as the creation of the Marcus Garvey Youth Clubhouse (Treskon and Esthappan 2018) and multiple community gardens in the neighborhood—have engaged community members and youth in creative and inclusive ways. Research from the Asphalt Art Initiative,<sup>33</sup> which uses art to improve street safety, has also shown that low-cost road redesigns can improve safety and incorporate young people and community residents into the process.

Another advantage of this creative placemaking work is that it can be done in a targeted manner, and even the site selection process can encourage participants to think about their relationships to spaces in the neighborhood. BCJC, for example, is using the youth mapping initiative (Treskon 2021) to continue and inform their programming efforts and staff development. However, the outcomes of this work must be sustainable and build toward a coherent set of outcomes: if a vacant lot repurposed into a garden is developed into housing in a couple of years, that is neither good nor bad but may lead to



disaffection for people involved in the placemaking process. This underscores the importance of understanding and following development trends, engaging in long-term thinking, and identifying parcels to preserve for future public use.

Improvements to the built environment in communities serve several purposes, including promoting residents' safety and well-being. Other interventions communities can undertake to support safety for residents include the public health-oriented Cure Violence model, which is a part of the city's Crisis Management System. This model involves closely engaging with people at high risk of being perpetrators or victims of violence; intervening in, mediating, and/or de-escalating conflicts as they arise; and connecting these people with services. Other models include interventions at different points in a person's life, such as hospital-based violence interventions for survivors of gun violence following the trauma of being shot, and focused deterrence models, which identify people responsible for violence, surveil them, notify them of their options, and offer services to those who choose to stop engaging in violence. These are all interventions intended to effect immediate change and address specific incidences of violence. Longer-term changes to improve safety often center on investing in communities, increasing resources in communities, and fostering feelings of connectedness and autonomy of residents in those communities.

## Next Steps

There are almost unlimited possibilities when it comes to envisioning a more equitable neighborhood, and existing plans for Brownsville have highlighted just how much thinking has gone into this work. This makes collaboration, organization, and planning particularly important. To that end, building out a 10-year equitable development plan requires linking projects (some of which are discussed above) with planning. To lay the groundwork for long-term thinking, we believe the following three process elements are particularly important in Brownsville:

- **Research and community assessment:** We highlighted some examples above, as these efforts will both help build a knowledge base of community assets and needs and provide materials for further engagement.
  - » *Network analysis of local groups and community stakeholders:* There are several existing local groups and stakeholders interested in Brownsville's inclusiveness and development, many of which are working on their own projects in their own spheres. The Brownsville Hub Cooperative is already doing some identification, convening, and engagement work, but

formalizing the nature of local relationships is crucial. A relatively simple network analysis, where stakeholders are asked what people and organizations they are familiar with and collaborate with, would help identify existing ties and opportunities to make new connections.

- » *Community needs assessment*: As discussed above, a survey of small-business owners in particular would be useful to identify community needs from their perspectives and help identify particular areas of opportunity and collaboration.
  - » *Capital flows*: This would involve a deeper dive into lending trends than provided here and engagement with local financial institutions to identify their work in the neighborhood.
- **Identifying new projects and tracking existing ones**: This report has attempted to pull together the range of existing and planned projects in Brownsville, but this effort needs to be a living document to avoid becoming out of date. Building a public or semi-public open-source local clearinghouse would allow people to provide updates on projects and plans and ensure that people remain engaged and informed. Such an effort would require organizations to track and monitor their progress and funders that are willing to provide resources for ongoing maintenance and dissemination.
  - **Community and stakeholder engagement**: Engagement must be at the core of any future work. We discuss potential processes in more detail below, but setting up and continuing this sort of process is never easy: too much engagement may lead to “engagement fatigue,” while too little leads to disconnectedness. Further, too much centralization can engender division, while too little may engender little effort at all. In general, a tiered and open structure allowing people and groups to plug in easily to the extent of their own capacity and interests should be the goal. For Brownsville in particular, figuring out how to work with large institutional actors (such as the Department of Education and NYCHA) will also be important. It will also involve figuring out how to continue to engage with work on the city-led Brownsville Plan and identify potential disconnects between city-led goals and locally based community ones.

As the theory of change diagram (figure 9) indicates, we believe that the best approach to track the multifaceted range of initiatives envisioned, planned, and underway, and more broadly to ensure the feedback loops across areas are active and productive, is to have a convening entity. This would be a group that could provide accountability and coordination for people and organizations who are working to make Brownsville a more equitable neighborhood.

In terms of process, a first step would be to convene stakeholders to help determine an appropriate and inclusive structure. We acknowledge that this process can be complicated: different initiatives are going to have different key participants, priorities, and accountability structures. A coordinating entity will need to keep communication across groups open, inclusive, and productive and build a sense of shared accountability that a diverse set of stakeholders can work with while remaining focused on their core efforts.

This also means keeping the process open: there needs to be ongoing assessment of and outreach to existing and new neighborhood stakeholders and appropriate engagement of stakeholders who are not necessarily based in the community but have local interests. This outreach can also help determine the extent to which stakeholders would like to be involved in the shared efforts and the structure such an engagement could take. Another good starting point would be to identify a way to use already-underway efforts to build local organizational capacity, such as the Brownsville Hub Cooperative, to ensure that other local initiatives maintain inclusive and equitable structures.

The convening entity will need to manage discussions and processes for how best to

- set up a plan to share updates and coordinate;
- identify goals for new projects and opportunities for collaboration and assign point people or groups to implement and share back;
- set up processes for checking the status of proposals, plans, and projects; and
- monitor progress using local data and ongoing engagement with residents, businesses, and other community stakeholders.

It will be especially important to keep this work flexible and nimble. It is a truism that nothing remains static in New York, so while long-term thinking is crucial, no 10-year plan can account in year 1 for the circumstances in year 10. As noted above, balancing community feedback with community fatigue is one key element that needs to be consistently negotiated, as there is no single right or final answer. More concretely, implementing any plan will lead to intended and unintended consequences (both good and bad). Monitoring equity implications of local development, or ensuring that the plan is meeting its goals without excluding or displacing community members, is therefore crucial. This dynamic is often framed as a housing issue—for example, gentrification pushing out long-standing community members—but is something to assess for businesses and other uses as well.

Identifying and setting aside resources for this work is critical. Some of this involves actual projects and programs that vary significantly in size and complexity, even if, for many larger ones, funding

streams may already be available. But the process, engagement, and organization work requires resources, too, from staff time to platforms for analysis and information sharing. Mapping out costs associated with particular initiatives, even in general terms, will help local stakeholders make decisions about key local priorities.

Brownsville is a neighborhood that has many resources as well as challenges and is already home to several organizations and initiatives committed to local engagement and creative thinking. Building a successful 10-year development plan is more about continuing to build on, link, and monitor these efforts than it is about identifying wholly new ones.

# Appendix A. Documents Reviewed for Report and Plan Scan

The authors examined the following reports and plans, which provided program and policy recommendations for Brownsville or other local context on demographic and economic conditions. The authors identified plan features for each document, including the needs and problems addressed, strategy type and focus, steps taken, lead and partner agencies, and timeline and project status. These elements informed the analyses found in the “Plan Themes” section of this report.

**TABLE A.1**  
**Reports and Plans Examined**

Title	Year	URL
Brooklyn Community Foundation: Bridge Street Development Corporation	2016	<a href="https://www.brooklyncommunityfoundation.org/grant-recipients/bridge-street-development-corporation-0">https://www.brooklyncommunityfoundation.org/grant-recipients/bridge-street-development-corporation-0</a>
Brooklyn Community Foundation: Brooklyn Community Services	2020	<a href="https://www.brooklyncommunityfoundation.org/grant-recipients/brooklyn-community-services-3">https://www.brooklyncommunityfoundation.org/grant-recipients/brooklyn-community-services-3</a>
Brooklyn Community Foundation: CAMBA	2020	<a href="https://www.brooklyncommunityfoundation.org/grant-recipients/camba-2">https://www.brooklyncommunityfoundation.org/grant-recipients/camba-2</a>
Brooklyn Community Foundation: Caribbean Women’s Health Association, Inc	2020	<a href="https://www.brooklyncommunityfoundation.org/grant-recipients/caribbean-womens-health-association-inc">https://www.brooklyncommunityfoundation.org/grant-recipients/caribbean-womens-health-association-inc</a>
Brooklyn Community Foundation: Center for Court Innovation	2015	<a href="https://www.brooklyncommunityfoundation.org/grant-recipients/center-court-innovation">https://www.brooklyncommunityfoundation.org/grant-recipients/center-court-innovation</a>
Brooklyn Community Foundation: Green City Force	2019	<a href="https://www.brooklyncommunityfoundation.org/grant-recipients/green-city-force-3">https://www.brooklyncommunityfoundation.org/grant-recipients/green-city-force-3</a>
Brooklyn Community Foundation: Green Guerillas	2021	<a href="https://www.brooklyncommunityfoundation.org/grant-recipients/green-guerillas">https://www.brooklyncommunityfoundation.org/grant-recipients/green-guerillas</a>
Brooklyn Community Foundation: GRIOT Circle	2020	<a href="https://www.brooklyncommunityfoundation.org/grant-recipients/griot-circle-0">https://www.brooklyncommunityfoundation.org/grant-recipients/griot-circle-0</a>
Brooklyn Community Foundation: Grow Brooklyn	2020	<a href="https://www.brooklyncommunityfoundation.org/grant-recipients/grow-brooklyn">https://www.brooklyncommunityfoundation.org/grant-recipients/grow-brooklyn</a>
Brooklyn Community Foundation: Ifetayo Cultural Arts Academy	2015	<a href="https://www.brooklyncommunityfoundation.org/grant-recipients/ifetayo-cultural-arts-academy">https://www.brooklyncommunityfoundation.org/grant-recipients/ifetayo-cultural-arts-academy</a>
Brooklyn Community Foundation: Kings Against Violence Initiative (KAVI)	2021	<a href="https://www.brooklyncommunityfoundation.org/grant-recipients/kings-against-violence-initiative-kavi-2">https://www.brooklyncommunityfoundation.org/grant-recipients/kings-against-violence-initiative-kavi-2</a>
Brooklyn Community Foundation: Reel Works	2016	<a href="https://www.brooklyncommunityfoundation.org/grant-recipients/reel-works">https://www.brooklyncommunityfoundation.org/grant-recipients/reel-works</a>
Brooklyn Community Foundation: Sadie Nash Leadership Project	2021	<a href="https://www.brooklyncommunityfoundation.org/grant-recipients/sadie-nash-leadership-project-5">https://www.brooklyncommunityfoundation.org/grant-recipients/sadie-nash-leadership-project-5</a>
Brooklyn Community Foundation: Teachers Unite	2018	<a href="https://www.brooklyncommunityfoundation.org/grant-recipients/teachers-unite-2">https://www.brooklyncommunityfoundation.org/grant-recipients/teachers-unite-2</a>

Title	Year	URL
Brooklyn Community Foundation: The Guardianship Project	2020	<a href="https://www.brooklyncommunityfoundation.org/grant-recipients/guardianship-project">https://www.brooklyncommunityfoundation.org/grant-recipients/guardianship-project</a>
Brooklyn Community Foundation: The Osborne Association	2020	<a href="https://www.brooklyncommunityfoundation.org/grant-recipients/osborne-association-3">https://www.brooklyncommunityfoundation.org/grant-recipients/osborne-association-3</a>
Brooklyn Community Foundation: The Precedential Group	2015	<a href="https://www.brooklyncommunityfoundation.org/grant-recipients/precedential-group">https://www.brooklyncommunityfoundation.org/grant-recipients/precedential-group</a>
Brooklyn Community Foundation: UHAB (Urban Homesteading Assistance, U-hab Inc.)	2021	<a href="https://www.brooklyncommunityfoundation.org/grant-recipients/uhab-urban-homesteading-assistance-u-hab-inc">https://www.brooklyncommunityfoundation.org/grant-recipients/uhab-urban-homesteading-assistance-u-hab-inc</a>
Brownsville Works! A Strategic Economic Development Plan	2012	<a href="https://www1.nyc.gov/assets/hpd/downloads/pdfs/services/uap-studio-brownsville-works.pdf">https://www1.nyc.gov/assets/hpd/downloads/pdfs/services/uap-studio-brownsville-works.pdf</a>
Brownsville, Brooklyn Health Impact Assessment: Evaluating Social Entrepreneurship Programs by Recognizing and Promoting Local Context (Cho and Waxman 2015)	2015	<a href="https://www.pewtrusts.org/-/media/assets/external-sites/health-impact-project/made-in-brownsville-2015-brownsville-report.pdf">https://www.pewtrusts.org/-/media/assets/external-sites/health-impact-project/made-in-brownsville-2015-brownsville-report.pdf</a>
Brownsville: Opportunity and Strength in the Heart of Brooklyn	2015	<a href="https://www1.nyc.gov/assets/hpd/downloads/pdfs/services/final-report-brownsville-pratt-spring-2015.pdf">https://www1.nyc.gov/assets/hpd/downloads/pdfs/services/final-report-brownsville-pratt-spring-2015.pdf</a>
Brownsville's Digital Access Needs: Finding from the Community Need Assessment for the BklynConnect Pilot Project	2017	<a href="https://www.bklynlibrary.org/sites/default/files/documents/general/Brownsville_DigitalAccessNeeds_web.pdf">https://www.bklynlibrary.org/sites/default/files/documents/general/Brownsville_DigitalAccessNeeds_web.pdf</a>
Building Healthy Communities   Brownsville, Brooklyn	2022	<a href="https://nyshealthfoundation.org/what-we-fund/building-healthy-communities-brownsville/">https://nyshealthfoundation.org/what-we-fund/building-healthy-communities-brownsville/</a>
Community Health Profiles 2015: Brooklyn Community District 16: Brownsville (King et al. 2015)	2015	<a href="https://www1.nyc.gov/assets/doh/downloads/pdf/data/2015chp-bk16.pdf">https://www1.nyc.gov/assets/doh/downloads/pdf/data/2015chp-bk16.pdf</a>
Community Health Profiles 2018: Brooklyn Community District 16: Brownsville (Hinterland et al. 2018)	2018	<a href="https://www1.nyc.gov/assets/doh/downloads/pdf/data/2018chp-bk16.pdf">https://www1.nyc.gov/assets/doh/downloads/pdf/data/2018chp-bk16.pdf</a>
From Strengths to Solutions: An Asset-Based Approach to Meeting Community Needs in Brownsville	2017	<a href="https://cccnewyork.org/data-publications/from-strengths-to-solutions-an-asset-based-approach-to-meeting-community-needs-in-brownsville/">https://cccnewyork.org/data-publications/from-strengths-to-solutions-an-asset-based-approach-to-meeting-community-needs-in-brownsville/</a>
Investing in Brownsville: Growing Healthy Communities	2021	<a href="https://thenyh.org/projects/investing-in-brownsville-growing-healthy-communities/">https://thenyh.org/projects/investing-in-brownsville-growing-healthy-communities/</a>
Mayor de Blasio Announces \$120 Million Investment in Girls' Empowerment Center in Brownsville	2021	<a href="https://www1.nyc.gov/office-of-the-mayor/news/684-21/mayor-de-blasio-120-million-investment-girls-empowerment-center-brownsville/#/0">https://www1.nyc.gov/office-of-the-mayor/news/684-21/mayor-de-blasio-120-million-investment-girls-empowerment-center-brownsville/#/0</a>
Mayor de Blasio Brings NYC's First Neighborhood Innovation Lab for Smart City Technologies to Brownsville	2017	<a href="https://www1.nyc.gov/office-of-the-mayor/news/159-17/mayor-de-blasio-brings-nyc-s-first-neighborhood-innovation-lab-smart-city-technologies-to">https://www1.nyc.gov/office-of-the-mayor/news/159-17/mayor-de-blasio-brings-nyc-s-first-neighborhood-innovation-lab-smart-city-technologies-to</a>
Mayor's Office of Criminal Justice: Neighborhood Activation Study	2017	<a href="http://criminaljustice.cityofnewyork.us/wp-content/uploads/2018/11/Neighborhood-Activation-Study_Studio-Gang_Public_Version.pdf">http://criminaljustice.cityofnewyork.us/wp-content/uploads/2018/11/Neighborhood-Activation-Study_Studio-Gang_Public_Version.pdf</a>
NextGeneration NYCHA (Glen 2015)	2015	<a href="https://www1.nyc.gov/assets/nycha/downloads/pdf/nextgen-nycha-web.pdf">https://www1.nyc.gov/assets/nycha/downloads/pdf/nextgen-nycha-web.pdf</a>

Title	Year	URL
NYC Green Infrastructure: 2020 Annual Report (NYC DEP 2020)	2020	<a href="https://www1.nyc.gov/assets/dep/downloads/pdf/water/stormwater/green-infrastructure/gi-annual-report-2020.pdf">https://www1.nyc.gov/assets/dep/downloads/pdf/water/stormwater/green-infrastructure/gi-annual-report-2020.pdf</a>
Pedestrian Safety Action Plan: Vision Zero Brooklyn	2015	<a href="https://www1.nyc.gov/html/dot/downloads/pdf/ped-safety-action-plan-brooklyn.pdf">https://www1.nyc.gov/html/dot/downloads/pdf/ped-safety-action-plan-brooklyn.pdf</a>
Planning for Community Economic Development and Solidarity in Brownsville	n.d. (unpublished)	N/A
Race and Community in Postwar Brooklyn: The Brownsville Neighborhood Council and the Politics of Urban Renewal	2001	<a href="https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.1177/009614420102700404">https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.1177/009614420102700404</a>
Statements of Community District Needs and Community Board Budget Requests	2020	N/A
The Brownsville Plan	2021	<a href="https://www1.nyc.gov/assets/hpd/downloads/pdfs/services/the-brownsville-plan.pdf">https://www1.nyc.gov/assets/hpd/downloads/pdfs/services/the-brownsville-plan.pdf</a> ; <a href="https://www1.nyc.gov/site/hpd/services-and-information/brownsville.page">https://www1.nyc.gov/site/hpd/services-and-information/brownsville.page</a>
The Crisis Management System	N/A (website)	<a href="https://www1.nyc.gov/site/peacenyc/interventions/crisis-management.page">https://www1.nyc.gov/site/peacenyc/interventions/crisis-management.page</a>
The Mayor's Action Plan for Neighborhood Safety	2022	<a href="https://criminaljustice.cityofnewyork.us/programs/map/">https://criminaljustice.cityofnewyork.us/programs/map/</a>

Source: Compiled by the authors.

# Notes

- <sup>1</sup> Susan Nembhard and Natalie Lima, “To Improve Safety, Understanding and Addressing the Link between Childhood Trauma and Crime Is Key,” *Urban Wire* (blog), Urban Institute, August 9, 2022, <https://www.urban.org/urban-wire/improve-safety-understanding-and-addressing-link-between-childhood-trauma-and-crime-key>.
- <sup>2</sup> “73rd Precinct CompStat Report,” City of New York Police Department, last reviewed July 23, 2023, [https://www1.nyc.gov/assets/nypd/downloads/pdf/crime\\_statistics/cs-en-us-073pct.pdf](https://www1.nyc.gov/assets/nypd/downloads/pdf/crime_statistics/cs-en-us-073pct.pdf).
- <sup>3</sup> Yoav Gonen and Eileen Grench, “Five Days without Cops: Could Brooklyn Policing Experiment Be a ‘Model for the Future?’” *The City*, January 3, 2021, <https://www.thecity.nyc/2021/1/3/22211709/nypd-cops-brooklyn-brownsville-experiment-defund-police>.
- <sup>4</sup> “Brownsville In Violence Out,” CAMBA, accessed August 4, 2023, <https://www.camba.org/programs/brownsville-in-violence-out>.
- <sup>5</sup> Maria Cramer, “What Happened When a Brooklyn Neighborhood Policed Itself for Five Days,” *New York Times*, June 4, 2023, <https://www.nytimes.com/2023/06/04/nyregion/brooklyn-brownsville-no-police.html>.
- <sup>6</sup> For more information on 7(a) loans, see “7(a) loans,” US Small Business Administration, <https://www.sba.gov/funding-programs/loans/7a-loans>.
- <sup>7</sup> For more information on the 504 loan program, see “504 loans,” US Small Business Administration, <https://www.sba.gov/funding-programs/loans/504-loans>.
- <sup>8</sup> “Neighborhood Planning: Brownsville, Brooklyn,” New York City Housing Preservation and Development (NYC HPD), City of New York, accessed August 4, 2023, <https://www1.nyc.gov/site/hpd/services-and-information/brownsville.page>.
- <sup>9</sup> “Community Fund Grants,” Brooklyn Community Foundation, accessed August 6, 2023, <https://www.brooklyncommunityfoundation.org/grants>.
- <sup>10</sup> “Mayor de Blasio Brings NYC’s First Neighborhood Innovation Lab for Smart City Technologies to Brownsville,” Office of the Mayor, City of New York, news release, March 20, 2017, <https://www1.nyc.gov/office-of-the-mayor/news/159-17/mayor-de-blasio-brings-nyc-s-first-neighborhood-innovation-lab-smart-city-technologies-to>.
- <sup>11</sup> “Building Healthy Communities: Brownsville, Brooklyn,” NY Health Foundation, accessed August 6, 2023, <https://nyshealthfoundation.org/what-we-fund/building-healthy-communities-brownsville/>.
- <sup>12</sup> “The Mayor’s Action Plan for Neighborhood Safety,” Office of Criminal Justice, City of New York, 2018, <https://criminaljustice.cityofnewyork.us/programs/map/>.
- <sup>13</sup> NYC Mayor’s Office to Prevent Gun Violence, “Interventions,” City of New York, 2023, <https://www.nyc.gov/site/peacenyc/interventions/crisis-management.page>.
- <sup>14</sup> CAMBA home page, accessed August 4, 2023, <https://camba.org/>.
- <sup>15</sup> “Our Mission,” Teachers Unite, accessed October 12, 2023, <https://teachersunite.org/mission/>.
- <sup>16</sup> “Brownsville, Brooklyn,” City of New York, accessed August 4, 2023, <https://www1.nyc.gov/site/hpd/services-and-information/brownsville.page>.
- <sup>17</sup> “Brooklyn Navy Yard: Empowering New York to Become a More Equitable BIPOC Business Partner,” Canon Consciously, accessed August 6, 2023, <https://consciouslyinc.com/canon/brooklyn-navy-yard-helping-the-city->





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# About the Authors

**Mark Treskon** is a senior research associate in the Metropolitan Housing and Communities Policy Center at the Urban Institute.

**Lily Robin** is a research associate in the Justice Policy Center at the Urban Institute.

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