

Building Trust and Connection for a Safer Tomorrow

Enhancing youth development and relationships with law enforcement at Bushwick Houses

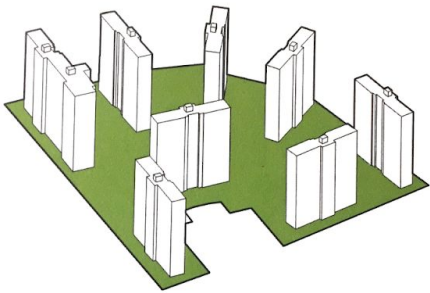


Bushwick Houses

A. Background

Located in Brooklyn Community District (CD) 1, which includes Williamsburg and Greenpoint, the 16-acre Bushwick Houses is bordered by Bushwick Avenue to the east, Flushing Avenue to the south, Humboldt Street to the west, and Moore Street to the north. Bushwick Houses is comprised of eight buildings, each ranging from 13 to 20 stories in height. There are a total of 2,836 residents living in 1,209 units. 28% of residents are under the age of 18 and approximately 33% of residents are above the age of 62. The Bushwick Houses are easily accessible by public transportation and are surrounded by a substantial number of schools and services. However, despite this access to education, 1 in 6 adults in Brooklyn CD 1 are not high school graduates and 1 in 7 between the ages of 16 and 24 are neither in school nor working.

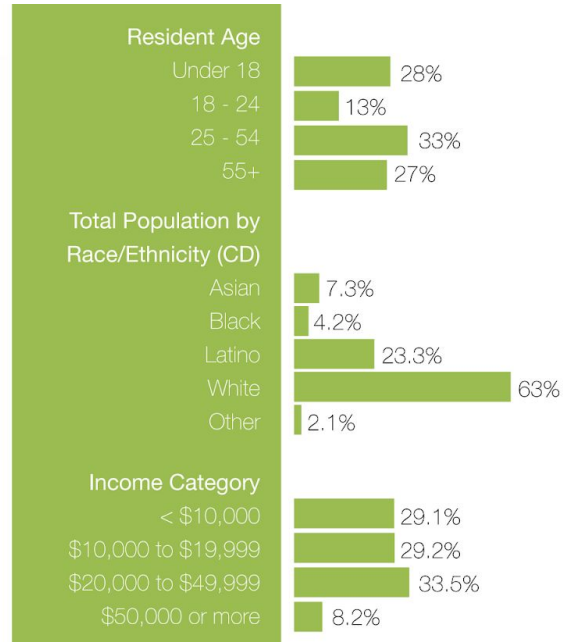
Bushwick Houses



Year Built: 1960
of Buildings: 8
of Floors: 13-20
Total Units: 1,220
Population: 2,907

County: Kings
Community District (CD): 1
Neighborhood: Williamsburg

Illustration: NYCHAPEDIA

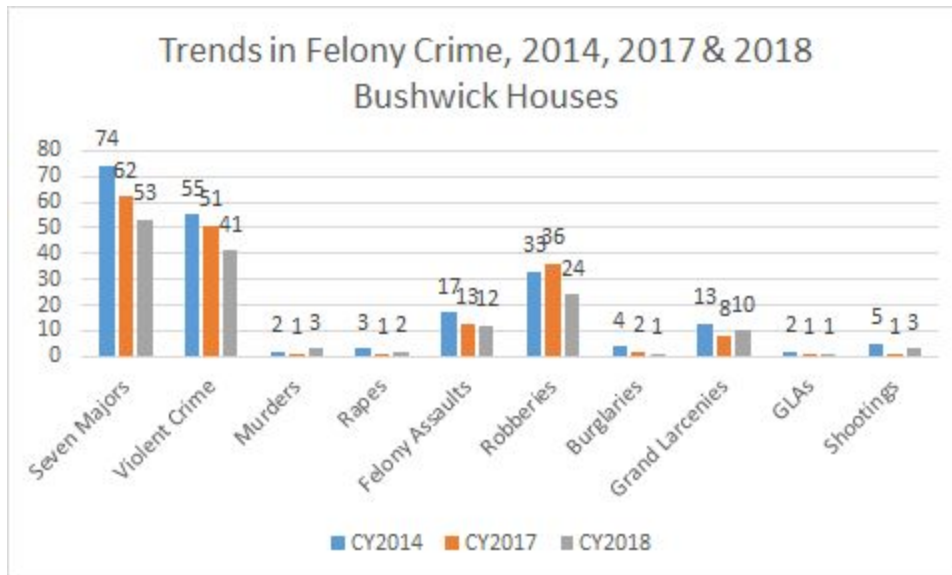


The Bushwick Houses are located within a gentrifying neighborhood. According to the Furman Center at New York University, the average rent in Bushwick has increased 44% from 1990 to 2014. Yet, despite substantial economic investments in the surrounding community, the residents of Bushwick Houses continue to experience challenging social and economic conditions. 56 percent of Bushwick Houses residents report no income from wages, and a substantial proportion of those that do are employed in low-wage work. Additionally, while the surrounding community benefits from reductions in violent crime, residents of the Bushwick Houses have continued to experience periods of crime and violence. From 2017 to 2018, there was a 200% increase in shooting incidents (1 vs. 3) at the development. Additionally, in 2018, the New York City Police Department reported at least six individuals were victims of gun violence in or around the development.

B. Crime Overview | [Trust](#) | Justice

In Calendar Year (CY) 2018, index crime and violent crime decreased (-9 and -10, respectively) at Bushwick Houses compared to CY 2017.¹ However, in CY 2018 there were more murders (+2), more rapes (+1), and more shooting incidents (+2) than in CY 2017. The number of robberies declined significantly (-12) in CY 2018 from CY 2017.

¹ Index crime, also known as “major crime” consists of the following crime categories: burglary, felony assault, grand larceny auto, grand larceny, murder, rape, and robbery.



Compared to 2014, when MAP started, crime has declined at Bushwick Houses across all major crime categories except murder (+1). There were also fewer shootings in CY 2018, compared to CY 2014 (-2).

C. Priority Identification | Trust | Justice

Residents in high-crime, heavily disadvantaged communities like Bushwick Houses experience intensive police presence, high rates of incarceration and community supervision, and concentrated violence. Many residents question the intent, effectiveness, and equity of the criminal justice system, which is partially the result of being witness to police tactics that are perceived as aggressive. Areas like Bushwick Houses, which are more heavily policed, are also areas that tend to have the highest levels of mistrust of police. Reported incidents of pretextual stops, which are circumstances where individuals are stopped for a seemingly minor incident for the purpose of investigating otherwise suspicious activity unrelated to the initial reason for the stop, also undermine confidence in the police.

The NYPD’s Neighborhood Policing initiative is designed to improve public confidence by “increas[ing] connectivity and engagement with the community” and encouraging “communication and collaboration between local police officers and community residents.”² As part of this initiative, the NYPD hosts regular community meetings like “Build the Block.”³ During these meetings, residents are encouraged to verbally raise concerns or, if they are not comfortable sharing these views out loud, to submit concerns through written forms. The

² <https://www1.nyc.gov/site/nypd/bureaus/patrol/neighborhood-coordination-officers.page>

³ [NYPD Build The Block](#)

NeighborhoodStat team reports that these meetings are sparsely attended because residents fear that they may be putting themselves in danger by communicating directly and in public with the police.

Fear of crime influences the behavior of Bushwick Houses residents in other ways as well. For example, several residents are reportedly hesitant to walk through formerly safe spaces because they have become especially conflict prone during specific times of day. After six months without a shooting, an occurrence on January 26, 2019 prompted an extensive shooting response from the NeighborhoodStat team. This collaborative effort with law enforcement and residents showcased the potential for future synergy and sustainable change. However, due to the increased police presence put in place, residents report that the heightened level of scrutiny and monitoring is also disconcerting and provokes a pervasive sense of anxiety within the community.



How can we work together to promote trust between police and community:

The Bushwick Houses NeighborhoodStat team is taking the first steps towards identifying a potential strategy to promote trust between police and community. City agency partners are encouraged to develop their recommendations to resolve the issues that are surfaced by the community. Resident suggestions for promoting trust include:

1. Improving Police-Community Relationships

Challenge: There are currently no consistent opportunities for open dialogue between police and community residents. While NCOs are regularly accessible to community residents, these interactions are typically individual in nature and such interactions do not penetrate the pervasive

sentiment within the community that the police are not available for a dialogue, but are there only to collect information from residents. Residents are concerned that the police do not share information that is helpful or work with them to develop collaborative strategies to address public safety issues within the development. Formal structured meetings, like “Build the Block” and community council meetings, do not include mechanisms for an interchange of information between police and residents.

Suggested Next Steps

- **Community conversations about police-community relations.** Having conversations about community-police relations can sometimes be uncomfortable. Encourage a professional, facilitated dialogue.
- **Develop a law enforcement-citizen coalition** at MAP sites. These coalitions could include trust building workshops, meetings, and community wide forums; develop mechanisms for community members to support police activities; and train coalition members in conflict resolution.
- **Establish a phone-tree.** In the wake of any controversial police incident, encourage police officers to establish a first-tier list of community members to contact immediately after any controversial event, day or night. A second-tier of contacts would be contacted early the next day.
- **Facilitate data sharing with community members.** Develop mechanisms to foster ongoing and continuous data-sharing with key community members to support joint problem solving, innovation, enhanced understanding, and accountability between communities and the New York Police Department.
- **Encourage participation of Bushwick residents and stakeholders in the Citizens Police Academy.** The Citizens Police Academy provides members of the community with a background and understanding of NYPD activities and policies, as well as the structure and limit of police power.
- **Establish success indicators** to measure the progress of strategies to increase trust between law enforcement and the community.
- **Improve communication between residents and police officers** by ensuring that all police officers working at Bushwick Houses have received implicit bias training, de-escalation of force trainings, cultural competency training. Include both 88th Precinct and PSA3 NCOs at NeighborhoodStat stakeholder team meetings, so residents can become familiar with the officers.

- **Support neighborhood youth** by ensuring that Bushwick youth are involved in NYPD mentoring programs, tutoring opportunities (if applicable), and that NYPD officers continue to participate in league play and on-campus recreational activities. Include a youth update at the build-a-block meetings.
- **Increase the visibility of police-community activities**, particularly when it applies to youth. Have the Explorers, PAL and other youth-groups connected to NYPD more visible in the neighborhood and involved in various sports tournaments or events if possible/related.

D. Priority Identification | Opportunity | Youth Development

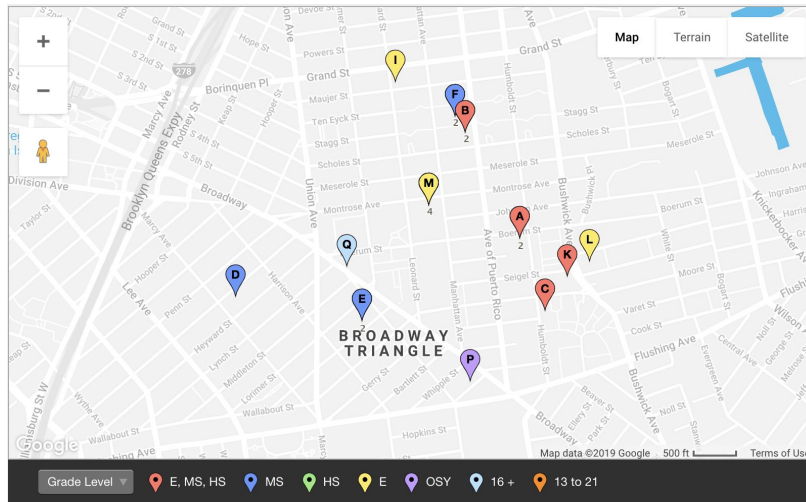
According to a Community Needs Assessment produced by the Department for Youth and Community Development (DYCD) in 2017 reported service gaps in Bushwick around the areas of afterschool programs, job skills/employment training, English classes, housing assistance, transportation, and adult education and literacy.⁴ In particular, youth respondents described a significant lack of access to programs that offered internships, career exploration, and life skill development. Without opportunities to develop skills in leadership, critical thinking, problem solving, and communication, youth in Bushwick houses remain at a disadvantage when seeking future employment. Engagement in productive activities such as stable employment, mentorship, and professional development may also discourage criminal activity. Community violence, paired with the continued barrier of low employment, has distorted perceptions of future opportunity for youth and young adults in Bushwick Houses.

Additionally, in response to the shooting death of Kyon Jackson, a 15-year-old resident of the Bushwick houses, in July 2018, the NeighborhoodStat stakeholder team and Bushwick Houses youth completed informal interviews with community members to better understand the drivers of crime and youth violence. Many respondents identified a limited availability of programming for youth and young adults and highlighted the need for engaging, skill-building programs.

The NeighborhoodStat team surveyed available community programming and created an asset map (see figure below) to mark the distribution of youth programming within the community. Residents report that the existing programming appeals mostly to younger teenagers and not young adults (18 - 24) who are also in need of programming to support educational and employment needs. Additionally, informal interviews revealed that lack of awareness of existing

⁴ DYCD Community Needs Assessment Report:
https://www1.nyc.gov/assets/dycd/downloads/pdf/CNA/Brooklyn_4.pdf

programs, restrictive eligibility requirements, and uninteresting program activities all contributed to low levels of participation.



Note: Additional information related to the asset map above can be found [here](#).

Youth not currently enrolled in school have even fewer programming opportunities. Because of the heightened risk that out-of-school youth face, it is crucial that we fully support interventions that support their re-engagement. Currently, the only DYCD funded program in the area that offers programming for out of school youth is Opportunities for a Better Tomorrow (OBT), a program that offers young people between the ages of 16 and 24 with services such as career exploration, job training, and adult education.

How we can work together to increase access to youth development programs:

The Bushwick Houses NeighborhoodStat team has taken the first steps towards identifying a potential strategy to improve access to youth development programs. City agency partners are encouraged to develop their recommendations to resolve the issues that have been surfaced by the community. Resident suggestions for youth development include:

1. Youth Development and Safe Spaces

Challenge: There has been a notable effort to expand or enhance after-school programs for elementary school students in grades K-5. While this is certainly valuable, the gap in services available to older youth between ages 14-24 remains pressing, particularly in light of the community violence that has long lasting impacts on the population. The Bushwick Hylan Community Center is a great resource for many youth; however, disengaged young people between ages 14 and 24 do not consider it to be a safe space that addresses their specific needs.

Throughout the district, there are a limited number of afterschool programs and “delinquency prevention” programs that cater to young adults in Bushwick Houses.

Suggested Next Steps:

- **Provide conflict mediation services and training to youth between the ages of 14 and 24.** Effective conflict mediation should be carried out by organizations with significant community ties.
- **Develop empowerment and support groups for youth.** These support groups could focus on topics of interest to disconnected youth, such as the impacts of trauma resulting from exposure to community-based violence. Support groups should be designed to elicit additional community engagement, provide time for self-reflection and encourage the development of healthy internal coping strategies.
- **Explore service gaps in programming.** Work with community-based organizations and stakeholders, including the community center, to comprehensively understand the service gaps. The NYPD and other community organizations and stakeholders can make this assessment by engaging residents through community events and engagements targeted at other populations within the development, most importantly older youth and adults.

2. Engaging Disconnected Youth

Challenge: Disconnected youth can often benefit most from opportunities for personal development and essential life skills that are provided through most youth development programs. However, disenfranchised youth, including those at-risk for dropping out of school or being involved in the criminal justice system, may be resistant to traditional youth programming. The Bushwick Houses NeighborhoodStat team seeks to engage disconnected youth and change the attitudes and norms in the community.

Suggested Next Steps:

- **Identify barriers to program participation and conduct targeted outreach to disconnected youth.** As a collective, the NeighborhoodStat team, volunteers, and outreach specialists will conduct targeted outreach to this population. Once the barriers impacting the disengaged residents between 14-24 are identified, the team could seek partnership with organizations and stakeholders who are committed to including programming that is designed to engaged disconnected youth.

- **Establish a youth empowerment program.** The NeighborhoodStat team, through its Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) subcommittee is planning to establish a youth empowerment program in partnership with Grand Street Settlement, Bushwick Hylan Community Center and the local Public safety Coalition.
- **Increase access to opportunities for employment and professional development.** In order to improve youth perception at the development, the NeighborhoodStat team has proposed increasing access to professional development trainings and certifications to support young people in job seeking activities and ultimately make residents in the target age range of 14 -24 more employable. This step can be achieved with the buy-in of local community partners, who are willing to offer onsite programming.