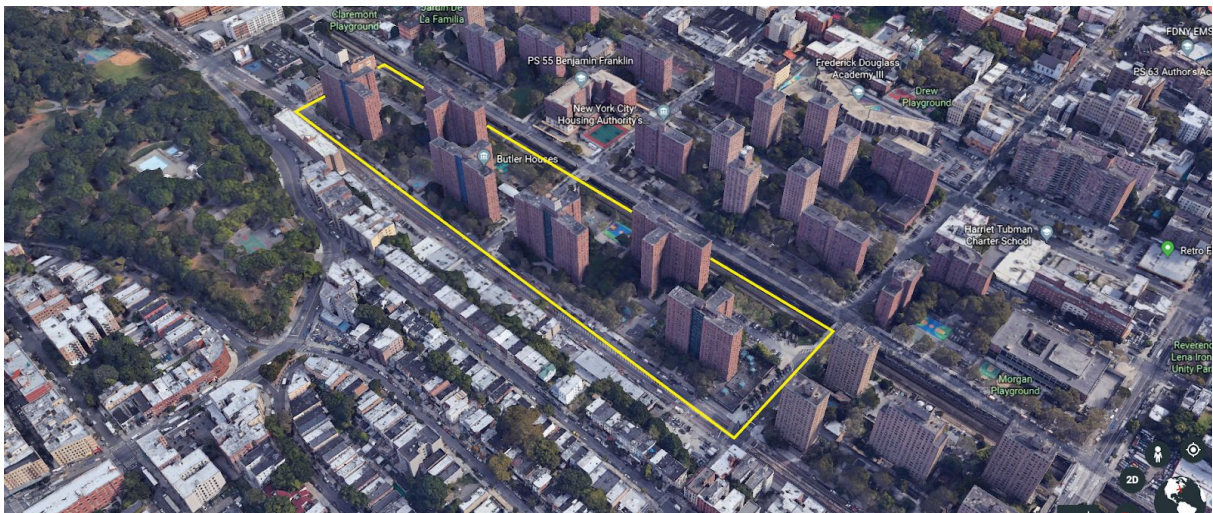


It Takes a Village

Improving quality of life and employment opportunities in the Butler Houses

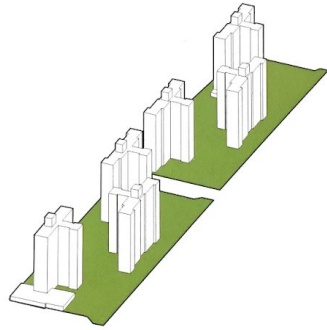


Butler Houses

A. Background

NYCHA's Butler Houses are located in the heart of Claremont Village in the South Bronx, a neighborhood rich with generational, cultural, religious, ethnic and linguistic diversity. At Butler Houses, there are 1,492 apartments and 4,281 residents. Butler's demographic makeup is mostly Latino (64%) and Black/African American (30%). There is a sizable African population who are largely Gambian, of the Muslim faith, and speak various regional dialects. A third of Butler's residents are under the age of 18 (35%) and 16% of residents are between 18 - 24. The household median income is \$22,360. About a quarter of residents make an income of less than \$10,000. The development is home to the oldest senior center in the country. Community District 3 where Butler is located has a 15% unemployment rate, one of the highest unemployment rates in the city.

Butler Houses



Year Built: 1964
of Buildings: 6
of Floors: 21
Total Units: 1,492
Population: 4,281

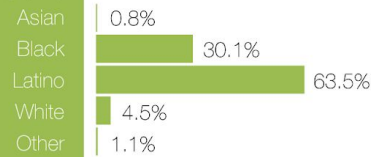
County: Bronx
Community District (CD): 3
Neighborhood: Morrisania

Illustration: NYCHAPEDIA

Resident Age



Total Population by Race/Ethnicity (CD)

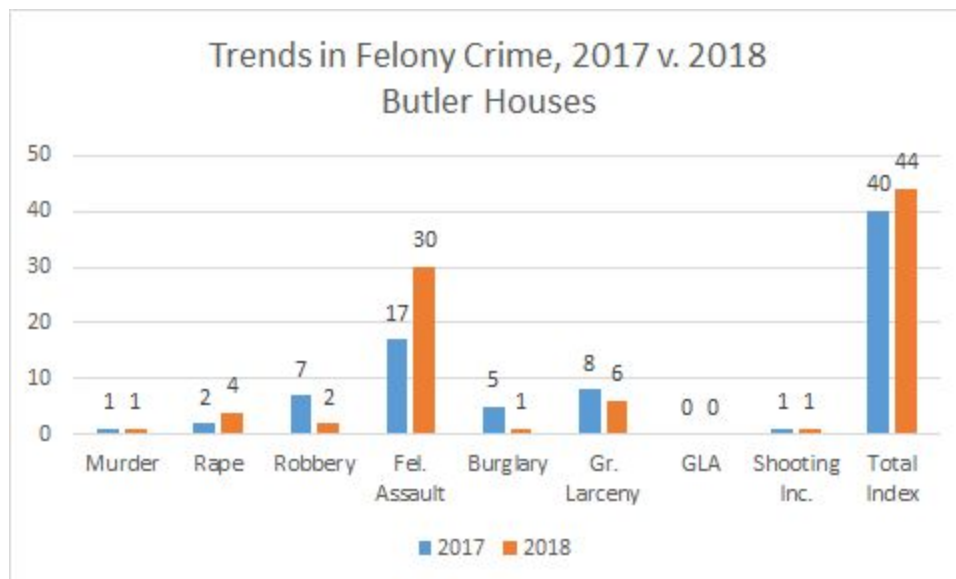


Income Category



B. Crime Overview | Trust | Justice

Butler Houses experienced an increase in index crime in Calendar Year (CY) 2018 compared to CY 2017.¹ Crime increases in CY 2018 were driven by more rapes (+2) and more felony assaults (+13). Crime declined in several categories included robbery (-5), burglary (-4), and grand larceny (-2). Index crime has decreased (-3) from 2014 when MAP began.



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.

C. Priority Identification | Design | Maintenance

Butler Houses residents often indicate that quality of life, not crime, is a major concern for them. Residents describe trash and rodents as persistent problems that make them feel neglected and disrespected. Poorly maintained public spaces and the general lack of campus cleanliness were identified as important issues because these conditions diminish resident pride in the development and community.

With recreational and green spaces in disrepair, residents avoid spending time outside and individuals become isolated. Investment in infrastructure, continued maintenance, and resident stewardship models are key to improving perceptions of safety and well-being. The most notable issues related to environmental neglect and quality of life were:

- Litter
- Rats
- Untidy green spaces
- Timeliness of repairs
- Incomplete repairs
- Urine in elevators
- Improper garbage disposal
- Untimely garbage pick up

The NeighborhoodStat team's resident members sought to identify when, where, and how residents enjoyed spending time outside, and how local stakeholders, including city agencies and CBOs, use and experience communal space when providing services on campus. The survey responses provided the NeighborhoodStat team with information about where people like to spend time outdoors, assisted with the identification of underutilized communal spaces, and assessed resident perceptions of safety and quality of life. The team obtained feedback from 133 residents (across 3 languages), 3 city agencies and 4 CBO partners. These surveys were supplemented with site audits, which are inspections conducted by NYCHA residents that capture information about environmental factors that contribute to negative perceptions of safety and unsafe living conditions.



Butler Houses campus map indicating places where residents like to spend time (in yellow) and places that residents feel are unsafe (in red) .

Through these surveys and site audits, members of the NeighborhoodStat team noted the following issues:

- Litter and dog feces are commonly observed along sidewalks and pathways.
- Pavement cracks and tripping hazards.
- Lack of equipment in Butler's park, playground, and basketball courts.
- Playground equipment that has been removed and not replaced.
- Parks and recreational spaces need to be improved (i.e., basketball rims, benches, and fences)
- Green spaces need upkeep.
- Signage is not vibrant and welcoming.
- Community spaces are in need of repairs and therefore are underutilized.
- Not enough trash receptacles.
- Littering from windows.
- Urine found in building staircases and elevators.

How we can work together to improve maintenance:

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

1. Renew and revitalize existing public spaces.

Challenge: Common spaces and recreational areas in need of repair and continued maintenance include parks, playgrounds, pathways, and green spaces. Poorly maintained public spaces deter

resident usage and inhibit social connection. There is a great need for Capital improvements in public housing and resources are scarce. As a result, this infrastructure is falling apart due to underinvestment in necessary repairs and maintenance. In one instance, a jungle gym was removed for repairs but residents point to a playground devoid of play equipment for years.

Suggested Next Steps

- Leverage current city investments to attract multi-sector public and private investments as a means to improve public space, community connection, and public health.
- Support local arts and culture that improves and increases the utility of the built environment and encourages connection between a diversity of resident groups.
- Increase public space stewardship by: (1) establishing a cross-collaborative stewardship model between NYCHA residents, NYCHA staff, and community-based partners; (2) creating incentives-based stewardship model for youth; (3) lowering barriers for residents who want to utilize and maintain green spaces.

2. Improve Sanitation



Challenge: The excessive presence of garbage, litter, and soiled commons creates unsanitary conditions contributing to a massive rat infestation. Confusing signs, misplaced garbage containers, blocked garbage chutes, inconsistent guidelines and lack of enforcement create confusion over proper disposal. There is uncertainty over how to dispose of medium to bulk items. Research shows that residents take out the trash 1-2 times per day. NYCHA sites average 12,980 lbs of trash produced per day, per site!² Infrequent sanitation pick-up and or trash compactor issues exacerbate the presence of garbage on the grounds. Litter is also being thrown out of the windows. This high presence of garbage and litter creates misperceptions of social norms and encourages residents to throw out trash incorrectly. Most notably, trash is often left outside of Butler Houses building entrances for consecutive days. One potential reason for this is that garbage collection is sometimes slowed because NYCHA compactors break down or sanitation pick-up is inconsistent with resident disposal rates. Garbage cans are often placed in unsanctioned areas creating further confusion around disposal regulations. Undoubtedly, trash disposal issues contribute to rat infestations. Because it is one of the city's most rat-infested

² ideas 42, "NYCHA Quality of Life Project", 2 May 2019.

developments, Butler is one of ten developments included in the Mayor's Neighborhood Rat Reduction Plan.

Suggested Next Steps

- Update signage for dumping locations and enlarge ground floor trash chutes to make trash disposal clearer and easier for residents.
- Take into consideration non-English speaking residents when designing signage and disseminating literature detailing proper waste management practices.
- Improve coordination with DSNY to ensure that trash and bulk items are picked up efficiently and on time.
- Explore and deploy vermin control strategies in individual units and common areas; continue to provide pest control training to residents.
- Expanding the Environmental Ambassadors program to ensure proper recycling is practiced.
- Establish communication channels between groundskeepers and residents to discuss areas of concern.
- Schedule and carry out designating campus clean-up days.

D. Priority Identification | Opportunity | Employment/Work

Butler residents live with and face significant income inequality. The median income of a typical Butler household is \$22,360. Thirty percent (30%) of residents residing in CD3 live below the city measured poverty line.³ Over 30% of households are single parent/kinship with children under the age of 18. Over 50% of Butler households contain children under the age of 18. For Butler residents, income inequality has meant that many residents need additional financial support. Forty-six percent (46%) of campus residents receive either public assistance or Supplemental Security Income (SSI).⁴ Of the Butler residents who are employed, 24.4% earn less than \$10,000 per year.⁵

Educational attainment is also a problem within the community district. Only 13% of residents within CD3 have obtained bachelor's degrees, making it the third lowest community district in the city. Twenty-seven percent (27%) of residents have less than a high school diploma, and close to 60% of all CD3 residents have a high school diploma or less.⁶

³ Data retrieved from NYC Planning Community Districts Profile, the metric used for measuring poverty takes into account factors like higher than avg rental cost to give a more concrete picture of the drivers behind the indicators. The particular profile referenced is available at : <https://communityprofiles.planning.nyc.gov/bronx/3>

⁴ Development Specific Information available at: <https://my.nycha.info/DevPortal/Portal/DevelopmentData>

⁵ Information provided from yet to be published NYCHA demographic report

⁶ Ibid.,

Facing these disparities in employment, Butler residents must contend with an employment gap that is wider than it is for residents of adjacent community districts. Taken together, these conditions—above-average unemployment, below average educational attainment, lack of workforce development opportunities, and limited employment opportunities—directly impacts the resident quality of life by limiting opportunities for upward mobility and stability. Without lowering barriers to access educational and training opportunities, means to escape poverty are limited. Residents desire those opportunities and have affirmatively stated their need for those services during NeighborhoodStat resident engagement meetings.

How we can work together to increase employment:

The Butler Houses NeighborhoodStat team has taken the first steps towards identifying a potential strategy to increase employment. City agency partners are encouraged to develop their recommendations to resolve the issues that have been surfaced by the community. Resident suggestions to increase employment include:

1. Improve connection to workforce development programs and educational attainment for youth and adults

Challenge: Butler is an isolated development, removed from any commercial or resource centers that could provide residents with access to meaningful and life-changing opportunities for professional development. While there a host of programs designed to promote youth and senior caregiver employment, there are few programs designed to support working-age adults. Additionally, employment opportunities around Butler Houses are relatively sparse: CD3 has an unemployment rate of 8.9%, which is over 3% higher than the city average.⁷

Suggested Next Steps:

- Improve access to job development, training programs, youth, and after-school program services, educational attainment for youth and young adults
- Engage CUNY and SUNY to conduct on-campus recruiting and increase enrollment in ASAP and Excelsior programs.
- Connect residents with public (i.e., DCAS) and private partners, and local unions who provide training, apprenticeships programs, and certifications in skilled trades or occupations with future local and regional employment growth opportunities.
- Lower resident barriers to accessing workforce development, GED classes, OSHA certification, financial literacy trainings, and construction and trade classes.
- Connect residents with workforce development programs and reduce barriers to employment.

⁷ NYC Planning: <https://communityprofiles.planning.nyc.gov/bronx/3>

- Connect new immigrant groups with English Learning Language (ELL) programs