

## Sowing Seeds

### Open-Air Drug Use, Green Space and Community Disfranchisement in the Patterson Houses



*Patterson Houses*

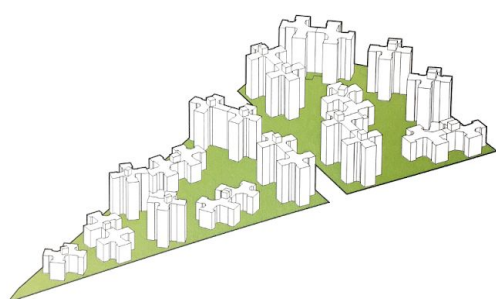
#### **A. Background**

Patterson Houses is a public housing development in the Mott Haven neighborhood of the South Bronx. One of New York City's largest public housing campuses, Patterson Houses consists of 15 buildings containing 1,790 apartments and 4,460 residents. Patterson's demographic make up is 68% Latino, 28% Black/African American, and 9% Asian. Almost a third (30%) of the population is under the age of 18, and 13% of residents are between the ages of 18-24. The median household income is \$22,779. Over forty percent of household members live with a disability. And the unemployment rate is exceptionally high at 14%. Almost 30% of youth between the ages of 16 and 24 are disconnected in Bronx Community District (CD) 1, where Patterson is located. Over 46% of Patterson residents live below the poverty line and the

surrounding community has the City’s highest high school dropout rate.<sup>2</sup>

In addition, even though evidence demonstrates that crime is decreasing at Patterson Houses, resident’s concerns are increasingly focused on the visible opioid use in and around campus. The 2015 DOHMH Community Health Profile for Bronx CD 1 indicates drug hospitalization rates that are more than double the rates in New York City. Bronx CD1 contains the fifth-highest rate of adult drug-related hospitalizations.<sup>1</sup> Overdose deaths increased in the Bronx in 2017 and rates of overdose death in the South Bronx were more than double the New York City rate.

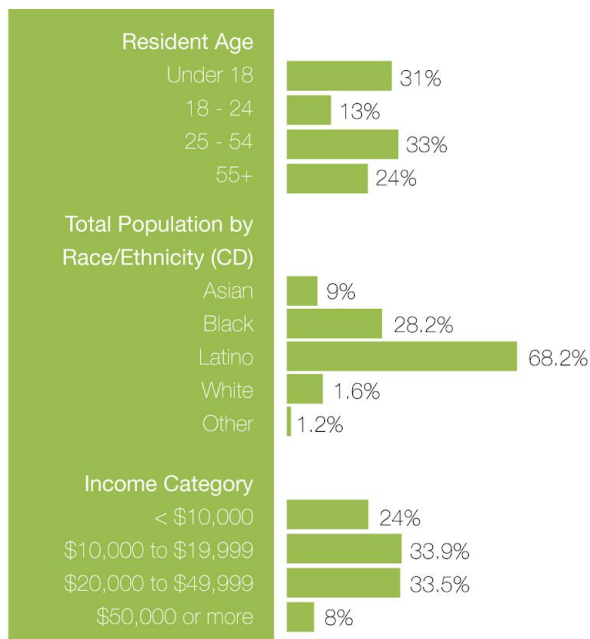
### Patterson Houses



Year Built: 1950  
 # of Buildings: 15  
 # of Floors: 6-13  
 Total Units: 1,791  
 Population: 4,373

County: Bronx  
 Community District (CD): 1  
 Neighborhood: Mott Haven

Illustration: NYCHAPEDIA

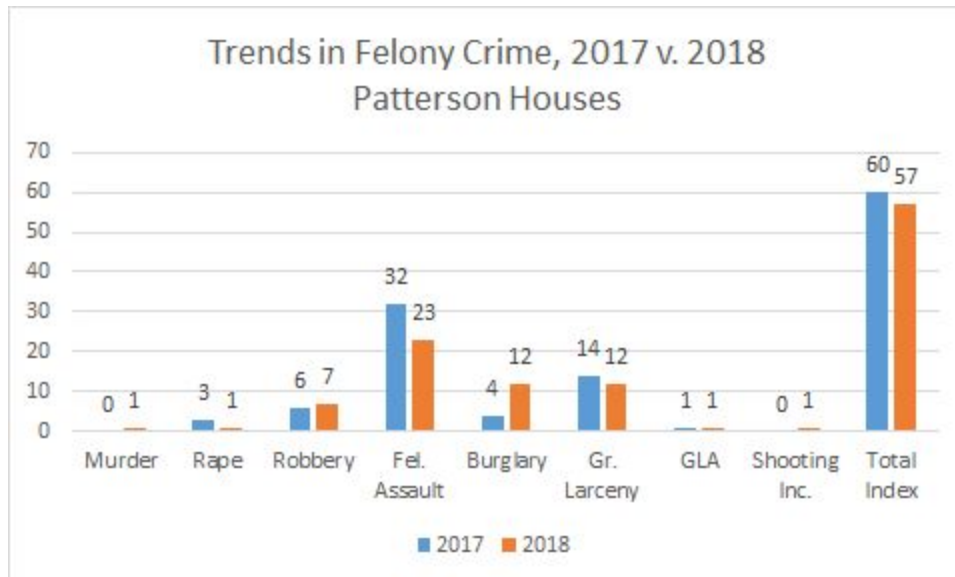


## B. Crime Overview | Trust | Justice

Patterson Houses experienced a decrease in index crime in Calendar Year (CY) 2018 compared to CY 2017.<sup>2</sup> Crime declines in CY 2018 were driven by fewer rapes (-2), fewer felony assaults (-9), and fewer grand larcenies (-2). Crime increased in two major crime category in CY 2018: robbery (+1) and burglary (+8). Patterson Houses had the most recorded robberies across all 15 MAP sites. Patterson Houses also experienced an increase in the number of recorded shootings (+1) in CY 2018. Index crime has increased (+7) from 2014 when MAP began.

<sup>1</sup> <https://www1.nyc.gov/assets/doh/downloads/pdf/data/2015chp-bx1.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> 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 | Opportunity | Health and Wellbeing

Mott Haven’s high drug-related hospitalization rates reflect acute and chronic consequences of substance abuse. The intravenous use of opioids in the South Bronx significantly impacts the health and well-being of residents in the Patterson Houses.

Patterson residents observe drug use in building stairways and on building rooftops. Some parts of the campus, specifically along 145th Street between Third and Morris Avenues (buildings 338, 328, 308, 424, and 414), experience high rates of drug use in and around the buildings. Residents in building 414 have expressed concern that drug users (who may not be residents) are using drugs and sleeping on the buildings’ upper floors and rooftops. Residents also noted finding human excrement in these spaces and reported that syringes were thrown from the building rooftops into the green spaces below. The abuse of intravenous drugs in public spaces and the improper disposal of used syringes poses a threat to community health and safety.

The City is taking action to reduce the improper disposal of syringes in Patterson. During the summer of 2018, the Department of Health and Mental Hygiene installed two needle receptacle boxes at Patterson Park and collected 3,300 syringes from June to mid-October. The Parks Department, who is responsible for emptying these receptacles and counting discarded syringes on a weekly basis, collected an additional 4,800 syringes from the grounds of Patterson Playground in May 2018.<sup>3</sup> Separately, the Bronx Opioid Collective, a non-profit harm reduction organization, collected 3,175 syringes from May through October 2018 at 145th Street and College Avenue.

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.motthavenherald.com/2018/11/09/19082/>

## **How we can work together to reduce open air drug use and encourage proper needle disposal:**

The Patterson Houses NeighborhoodStat team is taking the first steps towards identifying a potential strategy to reduce open air drug use and encourage proper needle disposal. City agency partners are also encouraged to develop their own recommendations in order to resolve this issue surfaced by the community. Resident suggestions include:

### **1. Reduce substance misuse**

**Challenge:** City data suggests a need for harm reduction that is available for opioid users in the South Bronx. The number of unintentional overdose deaths in the Bronx is now double what it was in 2014.<sup>4</sup> In 2017, the Bronx was the site of 342 of the City's 1,441 drug overdose deaths. The Bronx also contains the largest portion of overdose deaths across the five boroughs. Out of the five neighborhoods with the highest opioid-related overdose rates in 2015 and 2016, four were in the Bronx, including Mott Haven (where Patterson Houses is located). Unintentional overdose deaths -- fueled by a history of high drug use in the area, a growing supply of cheap heroin on the streets, and the proliferation of fentanyl<sup>5</sup> -- are now at their highest levels since the city began collecting the data in 2000. Also, in Bronx CD 1, almost 1 in 4 adults holds no health insurance and 1 in 6 functions without needed medical care. A lack of quality health care, coupled with an increase in drug use, can create negative health outcomes.<sup>6</sup>

**Suggested Next Steps:** Residents want to tackle the issue of substance misuse at Patterson, without criminalizing those suffering from addiction. Suggestions to reduce substance abuse and encourage proper needle disposal include:

- Expand community partnerships, triage vans, and support groups who provide harm reduction resources on the ground.
- Expand drop box locations and ongoing syringe and needle clean up in and around Patterson Houses to minimize the risk of contact with drug paraphernalia.
- Expand awareness campaigns about the dangers of Fentanyl.
- Expand the distribution of naloxone and provide overdose response training in and around Patterson Houses as well as at community centers, religious institutions, local businesses, and schools.

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<sup>4</sup> <http://www.motthavenherald.com/2018/11/09/19082/>

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/10/12/nyregion/bronx-heroin-fentanyl-opioid-overdoses.html>

<sup>6</sup> <https://www1.nyc.gov/assets/doh/downloads/pdf/data/2015chp-bx1.pdf>

- Connect eligible users with healthcare programs such as Medicaid to ensure access to addiction treatment.
- Connect ex-users to a network of recovery support groups including Narcotics Anonymous and peer mentors.

## 2. Support community stewardship

**Challenge:** Some opioid users inject drugs intravenously and then improperly dispose of used syringes. The dangers of improper disposal of hypodermic needles includes the risks of injury due to accidental needlesticks and of transmission of bloodborne infections, including hepatitis B and C, and human immunodeficiency virus (HIV). According to the Municipal Drug Strategy Council, NYCHA staff, the Bronx Opioid Collective, the Patterson Houses NeighborhoodStat team and residents, green spaces on campus are consistently littered with discarded syringes. Rooftops, stairways, and green spaces around Patterson Houses are sites where improperly discarded syringes have been found at Patterson Houses. Residents also report seeing syringes thrown from building rooftops. When needles are found on campus, NYCHA groundskeepers lack the training or expertise to support their safe disposal.

**Suggested Next Steps:** Supporting community stewardship efforts can reduce the proliferation of discarded needles in these spaces. Evidence shows that activation of vacant lots and blighted green spaces can produce a reduction in criminal activity.<sup>7</sup> Examples of ways to support community stewardship efforts include but are not limited to:

- Providing NYCHA groundskeepers with the equipment to effectively dispose of syringes.
- Providing community members, including NYCHA groundskeepers, with harm reduction training.
- Supporting community partnerships and harm reduction groups to connect with people who struggle with substance misuse.
- Developing ongoing funding mechanisms to ensure the sustainability of the Patterson NeighborhoodStat community stewardship group.

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<sup>7</sup> <http://www.pnas.org/content/pnas/115/12/2946.full.pdf>

## **D. Priority Identification | Opportunity | Youth Development + Employment/Work**

At Patterson Houses, residents identified a need for additional services for youth and young adults once they transition out of childhood programs. Almost a third of the population (~1,382 residents) are under the age of 18 and 13% of residents (~580) are between the ages of 18 and 24. In Bronx Community District 1, of which Patterson Houses is a part, 30% of youth between the ages of 16 and 24 are disconnected, out of school, and/or out of work (OSOW). Bronx CD1 also contains the City's highest high school dropout rate. Yet, despite the youthfulness of the population and the need for supplemental non-pedagogical learning experiences, youth development programs at Patterson Houses are limited.

There are only two organizations currently serving Patterson youth on the campus: the East Side Settlement Houses and Next STEPS. The East Side Settlement Houses, operating out of the Patterson Houses Community Center, provide youth-based programming during after school hours, which are Monday through Friday from 3:00 pm - 6:00 PM during the school year. In the summer, the East Side Settlement Houses provides an educational summer camp program, open to children entering grades 1 - 7.

Next STEPS, a MAP-funded program managed by the Department of Probation and operated by the Osborne Association, provides cognitive behavioral therapy and group mentoring to young people between the ages of 16 and 24 who face high risk factors. Next STEPS helps participants make the behavioral changes necessary to avoid contact with the criminal justice system and also exposes youth to opportunities including the OSHA 10-hour construction training, training to obtain other New York State permits and licenses, preparation for high school equivalency exams, internships, and employment opportunities. Next STEPS meets twice weekly from 6:00-8:00 PM. Given the targeted nature of the program, each cohort is limited to a total of 15 participants and the program is frequently at its operating capacity.

### **How we can work together to connect youth and young adults with developmental programs and resources:**

The Patterson Houses NeighborhoodStat team has taken the first steps towards identifying a potential strategy to provide engaging programs for youth and young adults. City agency partners are encouraged to develop their recommendations to resolve the issues that have been surfaced by the community. Resident suggestions include:

1. **Connect disconnected youth with education and workforce development programs that address their unique challenges**

**Challenge:** Out of school out of work (OSOW) youth may require more intensive support to help them re-engage in school or work. While an improving economy makes jobs easier to find for young adults, most available work for this population is low-wage, part-time work, adversely impacting future outcomes for this population.<sup>8</sup> According to a 2018 Community Service Society report, many program providers have identified a higher concentration of young people with low literacy levels, mental health issues including trauma, criminal justice involvement, and severe housing instability in their programs today than compared to five years ago.<sup>9</sup> In sum, more support is needed to overcome these aforementioned barriers, while also addressing some challenges associated with skills deficiencies, mental health challenges, and histories of trauma, housing instability, and poverty.

### **Suggested Next Steps:**

- Connect Patterson disconnected youth to education and workforce development programs with wraparound services that addresses behavioral and mental health challenges.
- Strengthen opportunities for young adults to access good-paying, quality jobs that offer career advancement possibilities
- Connect residents with upskilling opportunities so that part-time, low-wage workers can connect to career pathways.
- Prepare young adults on how best to navigate a labor market in which job offerings are increasingly in part time work.
- Expand local existing education and career development programs (at locations such as East Side House Settlement\*) to service young adults .
- Connect residents with education opportunities focused on entrepreneurship, starting small businesses, and financial management.

## **2. Address the challenges presented by high school non-completion on economic mobility**

**Challenge:** The higher the child poverty rate in a community district, the less likely a young person living in that district will graduate high school on time.<sup>10</sup> Mott Haven, the third-poorest neighborhood in NYC has the City's highest high school dropout rate. In addition to poverty,

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<sup>8</sup>[http://lghhttp.58547.nexcesscdn.net/803F44A/images/nycss/images/uploads/pubs/2018\\_Jobs\\_First\\_-\\_V10\\_WEB.pdf](http://lghhttp.58547.nexcesscdn.net/803F44A/images/nycss/images/uploads/pubs/2018_Jobs_First_-_V10_WEB.pdf)

<sup>9</sup>[http://lghhttp.58547.nexcesscdn.net/803F44A/images/nycss/images/uploads/pubs/2018\\_Jobs\\_First\\_-\\_V10\\_WEB.pdf](http://lghhttp.58547.nexcesscdn.net/803F44A/images/nycss/images/uploads/pubs/2018_Jobs_First_-_V10_WEB.pdf)

<sup>10</sup> <http://www.measureofamerica.org/d2gny/high-school-graduation-in-new-york-city/>

low-quality schools, high rates of involvement in the juvenile justice system, and violence in schools create barriers to high school completion. High school noncompletion creates barriers for economic mobility and success later in life.<sup>11</sup>

### **Suggested Next Steps**

- Provide opportunities for young people to access dropout prevention programs that addresses academic support, college and career readiness, financial literacy training, drug control, violence prevention, and character development, among other things.
- Connect eligible students to the City's Young Adult Borough Centers (YABC) help overage and under-credited high school students get a high school diploma.
- Make connections to high school vocational programs that focus around a specific career, integrating academic content with career and skills-based themes through career academies or multiple pathways models.
- Utilize organizations with a variety of programs such as sports and recreation, education, career develop and the arts as a means to attract higher participation from young people.
- Promote credible messenger programs where neighborhood leaders, experienced youth advocates and individuals with relevant life experiences help youth transform attitudes and behaviors around violence.
- Existing community centers that service this age group need physical improvements and program expansion to support conditions conducive to learning and high attendance. For instance Patterson Community Center floods when it rains.

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<sup>11</sup> <https://www.heritage.org/education/report/barriers-high-school-completion-create-barriers-economic-mobility>