

Building Strength Through Interconnectedness

Improving public safety and supporting youth development by enhancing resident leadership



Red Hook Houses

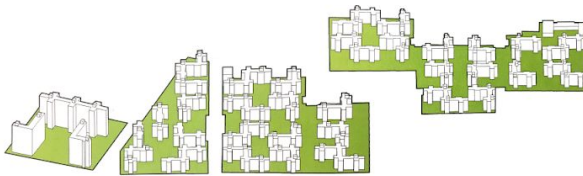
A. Background

Red Hook Houses is the second largest public housing development in New York City with 30 buildings between two and 14 storeys high. Located in the heart of Red Hook, it is home to approximately 6,141 residents living in 2,843 apartments. The majority of the residents at Red Hook Houses identify as Black/African American (45%) or Latino (47%). Women head 41 percent of the households at Red Hook Houses. Almost one-third (29%) of residents are under 18 and nearly half (41%) are under the age of 24. According to NYCHA, the median individual income is \$11,215 and the median household income is \$16,797. Fifty-eight percent of

households have a household income below \$20,000, and the average monthly rent is \$509.

Red Hook Houses

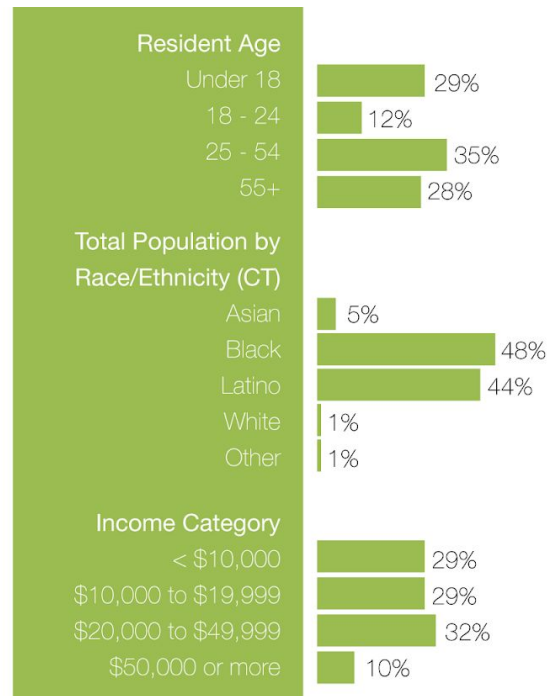
County: Kings
 Census Tract: 85
 Community District: 1
 Neighborhood: Astoria



Red Hook East
 Year Built: 1939
 # of Buildings: 18
 # of Floors: 2-6
 Total Units: 1,411
 Population: 2,958

Red Hook West
 Year Built: 1955
 # of Buildings: 14
 # of Floors: 3-6-14
 Total Units: 1,480
 Population: 3,216

Illustration: NYCHAPEDIA

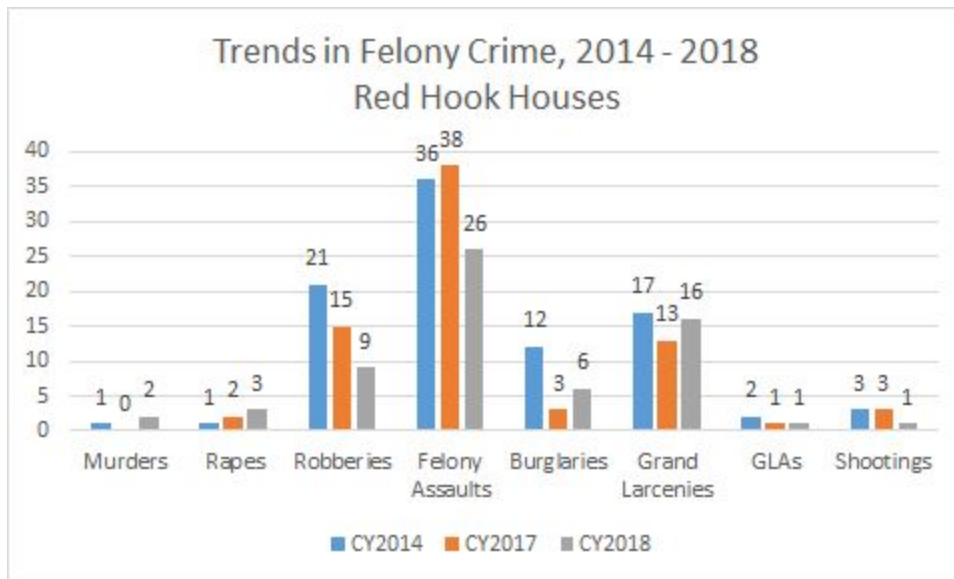
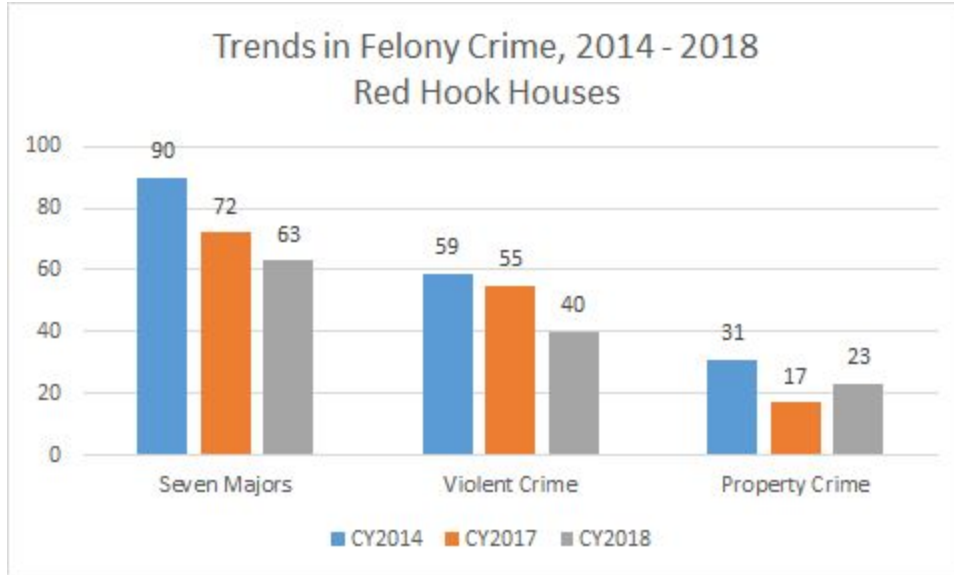


B. Crime Overview | Trust | Justice

Major felony and violent felony crimes declined substantially at Red Hook Houses. Compared to Calendar Year (CY) 2014, the year MAP began, index crime declined by 30 percent (-27) and violent felony crime declined by 32 percent (-19) in CY 2018.¹ Property crime in CY 2018 was also lower than it was in CY 2014, though it had increased slightly from CY 2017.

Historically, the most common major felony crimes occurring in Red Hook Houses were felony assaults, robberies and grand larcenies. In CY 2018, felony assaults remained the largest category of major crime, though the occurrence of these crimes declined substantially (-14) from CY 2017. Robberies also fell substantially (-6) from CY 2017 levels in CY 2018. The crime categories that increased from CY 2017 to CY 2018 were rape (+1), burglary (+3), and grand larceny (+3).

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. Problem Identification | Opportunity | Youth Development

One-third (34%) of residents from Red Hook Houses are under 18 and nearly half (45%) are under the age of 24. Within the community district (CD 6), one out of every eight youth (aged 16 to 24) is not in school and not working. Residents of Red Hook Houses expressed a strong desire for high-quality education, social programming, and employment opportunities for disconnected youth, young adults and citizens returning from any period of incarceration. Given

the above-average youth incarceration rates at Red Hook Houses, reentry programming for justice-involved youth and formerly incarcerated individuals is desired within the community.

How we can work together to engage youth and returning citizens:

The NeighborhoodStat team is looking to develop sustainable community-led initiatives to strengthen local resources and improve coordination between city agencies and community-based organizations. The NeighborhoodStat team is taking the first steps toward identifying ways for residents to partner with the City and community-based organizations to engage youth and young adults at Red Hook Houses.

1. Youth and Young Adult Programming and Civic Participation

Challenge: Only 35 percent of residents from Red Hook Houses report any income from employment. While this does not necessarily imply that the remaining 65 percent are unemployed, it may suggest that these individuals are relying on income sources that are less sustainable over the long term. Incomes of individuals living in Red Hook, on average, fall far below the citywide average. The median household income in Red Hook Houses in 2017 was approximately \$17,000, which is three-and-a-half times less than the median household income for New York City, as a whole. These distressed economic outcomes may be partially associated with the low educational attainment that is prevalent in Red Hook. Approximately 14 percent - roughly one out of seven - 18 to 24 year olds living in the zip code that contains Red Hook Houses have not completed high school. 50 percent of this 18 to 24 year old population have not completed a post-secondary school degree.

Red Hook Houses also has exceptionally high incarceration rates, particularly amongst black residents. According to the US Census, approximately one out of every 12 black residents from the census tract that contains Red Hook Houses was incarcerated on April 1, 2010, the date of the last census. The residual effects of high rates of incarceration are profound, with a particularly deep and lasting impact on children of incarcerated parents and their remaining caregivers. Children of incarcerated parents are significantly more likely to become justice-involved themselves at some point in their lives, and are also more likely to develop trauma-related symptoms that may be partially associated with their parent's incarceration. The remaining caregivers experience substantial stress, associated with increased financial responsibility and the heightened intensity of raising a child as a single caregiving parent.

These concerning statistics about poverty, educational attainment, and employment are exacerbated by the prevalence of violent crime in Red Hook Houses, which particularly affects youth and young adults. Without youth relevant programs that provide safe, engaging and

constructive environments, the young people at Red Hook Houses face a higher likelihood of disconnection.

Suggested Next Steps:

- **Provide safe, engaging and constructive environments for young people to develop interpersonal skills and improve self-esteem.** These spaces will foster community interaction in Red Hook and will provide opportunities for residents to showcase their work and talent. These spaces should also provide youth with access to community artists and resources that further the creative development of Red Hook artists and young people.
- **Develop young leaders through service-learning opportunities and leadership training.** Encourage youth community participation by providing access to existing opportunities that involve youth community planning and decision making. To create new opportunities for youth, consider ways to engage them in community planning activities. For example, explore implementing a youth council within Community Board 6 and other planning efforts. Youth can bring personal experience and expertise to issues that affect them as it relates to urban planning efforts and projects that activate underutilized spaces in parks and streets. Inviting young people in developing community events and programs from content to branding serves as a learning opportunity and ensures youth participation at these events. A program that provides leadership training and puts young people in fellowships at relevant city agencies can improve youth civic engagement and understanding of government processes, as well as work experience.
- **Connect resident youth and returning citizens to workforce development programs.** The NeighborhoodStat stakeholder team, in partnership with community-based organizations and stakeholders, should explore the availability of existing workforce development programs, and, where applicable, identify any limitations or obstacles that exist for enrollment and participation. The NeighborhoodStat team should consider working with or consulting resources provided by city agencies such as NYCHA's Office of Resident Economic Empowerment and Sustainability (REES), Small Business Services (SBS), the Mayor's Office of Workforce Development (WorkDev), Department of Cultural Affairs, the Mayor's Office of Media and Entertainment, and the Department of Youth and Community Development (DYCD). Also, consider raising awareness of existing opportunities by conducting hiring fairs with participation from City agencies and community based organizations that can do direct hiring. Additionally, working adults need access to trainings that can lead to certification and the possibility of hosting trainings on campus grounds should be looked into.

- **Expand partnerships with local businesses and create pipelines to employment.** There are several businesses and institutions operating near Red Hook Houses that we can potentially connect with in order to identify opportunities for residents and solicit recruitment support from businesses. New York City employment is also important to consider by connecting with the Department of Citywide Administrative Services (DCAS).
- **Expand work-based learning opportunities within schools or community-based programs.** Work-based learning experiences such as internships, apprenticeships, and mentoring enables adults to provide students with developmentally appropriate supports and incremental guidance that helps them develop the skills that employers seek in new hires.

D. Problem Identification | Trust | Justice

The NeighborhoodStat team believes that better community relationships and a safer neighborhood begin by improving police-community relations. Despite recent declines in violent crime at Red Hook Houses, recent shootings have heightened tensions between law enforcement and residents. As of June 30, 2018, misdemeanor complaints for *drugs other than marijuana* increased by 6.5 times since 2014. According to the US Census, approximately one out of every 12 black residents living in the census tract that contains Red Hook Houses was incarcerated on April 1, 2010, the date of the last census. Additionally, youth and young adults between the ages of 18 to 24 feel they are being unfairly targeted and constantly monitored by police.²

An essential element of the NeighborhoodStat process is the collaborative identification of public safety priorities and government service strategies to address top concerns. Citizen perceptions of crime and public safety matter. When police are open, respectful, and forthcoming about the reason for a particular interaction, and can explain the procedures they follow, community members are less likely to feel fear and distrust. They are more likely to perceive that their voice is heard and the process is fair. Community members can view police as legitimate when they see officer carry out their duties lawfully, fairly, and in accordance with the community's best interest. Some residents are eager to develop a trusting, mutually supportive relationship with police. Others residents are interested in community-led approaches to respond to public safety issues and lower the rate in which youth are interacting with police regarding law enforcement matters.

² "(Revised order of findings) Real Rites Report ... - Red Hook Initiative."
<http://rhicenter.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/02/RealRitesReportFinal.pdf>. Accessed 10 Mar. 2019.

How we can work together to improve police-community relations:

1. Building Trust in Law Enforcement

Challenge: Resident experiences with the NYPD vary. The Police Service Area 1, and the Neighborhood Coordination Officers (NCOs), in particular, have developed a reputation for courtesy and respect. However, some residents feel disrespected and treated with suspicion by other NYPD officers from 76th Precinct who are less familiar with the development and its residents. Multiple residents reported that they have been stopped by officers without explanation or that they are issued tickets as a first response to complaints. Additionally, some young adults are hesitant to utilize public spaces because they are concerned that they are being monitored by police or that they will be subjected to harassment.

Suggested Next Steps:

- **Create more opportunities for youth-led community-building activities focused on hot spots.** Resident youth expressed a desire to have leadership opportunities in community-building projects that focus on hot spots, which are areas perceived as unsafe due to prevalence of crime and antisocial behaviors. Serving as experts, resident youth will provide guidance, support project development and facilitate social activities as peer mentors. Young people are often the most highly impacted by public safety issues, and therefore should be included in all development and implementation efforts to improve areas that have a negative impacted youth space utilization. Potential projects to improve hot spots can include CPTED and or Cure Violence inspired placemaking projects.
- **Improve communication between residents and police officers** by ensuring that all police officers working at Red Hook Houses receive trainings for implicit bias, de-escalation of force, and cultural competency.
- **Promote transparency in police practices and procedures.** When police are open, respectful, and forthcoming about the reason for a particular interaction, and can explain what is happening and the procedures they follow, community members are less likely to feel fear and distrust.
- **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.
- **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.

- **Establish success indicators** to measure the progress of strategies to increase trust between law enforcement and the community.

E. Priority Identification | Design | Activation and Maintenance

The NeighborhoodStat team views adjacent green spaces as assets for the potential development of increased youth engagement, socialization, and community connectedness. Underutilized green spaces as well as “hot spots” (areas of concentrated problematic behavior) in Red Hook can be activated with engaging, prosocial youth programs and activities that focus on youth who are disconnected from work, school and the larger community.

The poor conditions of apartments and buildings at Red Hook Houses diminishes community pride and reduces resident trust in government. Building and apartment disrepair -- including inadequate stairwell and outdoor lighting, heat and hot water issues due to faulty pipelines, poor maintenance of trash collection sites, broken garbage chute doors, and malfunctioning, fire-prone trash compactors -- motivates many Red Hook residents to host social activities off-campus. Furthermore, past construction work has decimated green spaces, with leftover shipping containers impede sightlines and decrease the visibility in surrounding areas.

Research indicates that lack of access to good places -- destinations for culture, creativity and community -- leads to widespread social isolation and depression, particularly among older populations.³ With recreational and green spaces in disrepair, residents avoid spending time outside and individuals become isolated.

How we can work together to activate and maintain spaces:

The Red Hook Houses NeighborhoodStat team is taking the first steps toward identifying ways for residents to partner with the City and community-based partners to activate and maintain spaces at the Red Hook Houses.



One of the green spaces within the Red Hook Houses' development left in ruins due to ongoing Hurricane Sandy construction efforts. Scaffolding limiting sight lines.

³ “Less Isolation, more socializing may help you live longer.” Reinberg, S. *Health Magazine*, March 2013.

1. Social Programs and Resident Engagement

Challenge: In 2008, a sizeable police raid resulted in the incarceration of many residents of Red Hook Houses. Afterwards, an increasingly large police presence was immediately noticeable. Police increased surveillance and scrutiny, even monitoring community events, like the Family Day and the Old Timers' Day, which made residents uncomfortable and more reluctant to socialize publicly. Resident participation at community events began to decline.

The continued police presence that still exists today around Red Hook Houses remains an obstacle to community engagement, with many residents feeling discouraged and less connected to each other. Additionally, with a limited number of existing green spaces, which are mostly now covered in sand and mud or filled with construction equipment, opportunities for resident engagement are even more challenging.

Suggested Next Steps:

- **Coordinate the efforts and resources of interested community-based organizations and City agencies to activate underutilized and/or neglected spaces with prosocial programs** in and around Red Hook Houses to effectively engage Red Hook residents. Space activation is reported to reduce the incidence of negative behavior and improve perceptions of public safety. Consider providing after school and evening activities that appeal to resident youth.
- **Develop strategic partnerships with NYCHA and Parks to encourage more frequent utilization of neglected spaces.** Provide cultural events and physical activations, sports and prosocial and recreational programs and opportunities, and family-friendly after school and evening events at the NYCHA Playgrounds, the Center Mall located in Red Hook East, the Park House and baseball field in Coffey Park.

2. Street Lighting

Challenge: Lighting improvement is a tool used by the Mayor's Action Plan for Neighborhood Safety to improve community public safety conditions; in several studies, improved street lighting has significantly reduced the number of nighttime outdoor felony crimes. All of the MAP sites with the exception of the Red Hook Houses have received substantial lighting improvements, but because of Sandy Recovery efforts, the installation of new lighting has been substantially stalled.

Residents commonly complain about inadequate or non-existing lighting on the campus. Even with temporary mobile lighting towers spread throughout the development, residents are

reluctant to walk through dimly lit corridors and pathways that feel especially unsafe. Some of the specific spaces that residents avoid include the cul-de-sac on Hicks and Bush Street and Henry and Bush Street. Residents also avoid intersections on Centre Mall and Hicks Street, Hicks and Mill Street, and Centre Mall and Henry Street. Residents similarly avoid the walkways on Bush Street between Columbia and Otsego Street and Lorraine and Bush Streets between Henry and Clinton Streets because they too feel unsafe.

Suggested Next Steps:

1. **Increase lighting along corridors and pathways.** Determine a realistic timeline for the completion of Sandy Recovery efforts and determine if capital infrastructure improvements that will be installed as a result of Sandy Recovery efforts will include lighting upgrades throughout the Red Hook Houses. Work with NYCHA and DOT to create a process for lighting improvement and maintenance in lieu of the Sandy Recovery efforts.
2. **Explore a community creative lighting program.** Such initiatives would provide training and resources to resident groups to design and implement temporary lighting solutions that increase visibility and encourage nighttime pedestrian traffic.

3. Physical Space Maintenance

Challenge: Red Hook Houses and its surrounding areas are neglected, in need of repair, and overrun by garbage. Infrequent sanitation pick-up and/or trash compactor issues exacerbate the presence of garbage on the grounds. The high presence of garbage and litter is unsanitary and promotes improper trash disposal practices. The trash site behind Bush Street is infested with rodents. Several green spaces within the Red Hook Houses development have been ruined by Hurricane Sandy construction efforts. Areas that were once covered with grass have become dreary areas of enclosed dirt. Animal waste in and around the buildings continues to be an issue.



The trash site behind Bush Street is a example of rodent infestations down a dark alleyway.

Red Hook residents also live in deteriorating buildings and apartment. Commonly reported conditions include peeling paint, mold, damaged plaster, rodents, and heat and hot water issues.

Broken, defective lobby and fire doors and poorly light stairwells seriously diminish public safety and the lack of entrance security makes buildings susceptible to non-residents who enter the buildings and utilize the non-secure spaces for problematic activities like drug use, burglary, or loitering. Residents suggest that broken intercoms and difficulties obtaining spare or replacement keys can lead to security breaches, like door breakages or doors that are propped open. Additionally, broken trash chute doors make trash disposal increasingly difficult for residents.

Starting in September 2018, the number of open work orders at Red Hook Houses increased substantially. Whereas August 2018 had 3,580 open work orders at Red Hook East and West, one month later there were 5,580 -- a 56 percent increase. In January 2019, the average number of service days required to complete a work order at Red Hook East was 92 days; at Red Hook West it was 83 days (the NYCHA target is 15 days). According to the *2017 Physical Needs Assessment*, Red Hook East is in immediate need of \$81.5M for interior apartment issues (i.e., tiling, kitchen and bathroom renovations); \$81.4M for architectural issues (i.e., roofing, window treatments); \$8.9M for electrical issues (i.e., lighting improvements); and \$18.7M for mechanical improvements (i.e., HVAC). Red Hook West faces a similar level of need: \$94.9M for apartment issues; \$72.6M for architectural issues; \$8.0M for electrical issues; and approximately \$4.0M for mechanical improvements.

Suggested Next Steps:

- **Resolve mounting work order delays.** One option to resolve work orders would be to conduct a “Saturday Blitz”, where NYCHA quickly performs repairs and engages and assists residents at the developments. In addition, NYCHA should communicate with residents the cause of these increasing delays in work order completion and should also be transparent about any efforts to develop a plan to resolve these delays more quickly. Residents should be informed promptly whenever there are changes in planned maintenance or scheduled repairs. NYCHA should also prioritize any work orders related to health and safety.
- **Identify and implement process changes that reduce the incidence of litter and trash pile-ups.** Install additional garbage cans in common spaces, increase the size of the trash chute doors, and improve coordination with DSNY to increase frequency of garbage pick ups. Signage that instructs residents on appropriate garbage disposal (including pet waste disposal) in common languages would also be beneficial. Such efforts should also consider the value of community stewardship activities, such as regularly scheduled
- **Provide training opportunities to encourage proper waste disposal and stewardship.** Training and support for residents to facilitate workshops would be beneficial to encourage proper waste management techniques. Consider developing an Environmental

Ambassadors program to ensure proper recycling is practiced. Consider creating or expanding partnerships between NYCHA, relevant city agencies, and other green sector organizations (i.e. Green City Force, New York Restoration Project, GreenThumb, GrowNYC) to restore and beautify existing green spaces throughout Red Hook's campus.

- **Expand best practices and interventions from the Rat Reduction Plan to Red Hook Houses.** Determine whether scalable solutions are viable and transferrable to other developments, including Red Hook Houses.
- **Improve and rejuvenate green spaces.** Such efforts should include the seeding of derelict spaces, as well as the removal of unused shipping containers from various green spaces.
- **Develop a process to improve entryway access for residents.** While the new intercom system allows for entry through residents' phones, this system needs to take into consideration that some residents do not have consistent phone line access.
- **Establish well-functioning communication protocols that connect residents to groundskeepers.** Develop a method to simply and regularly update residents on the progress of planned or in-progress repairs.