

# Mapping the connection between stronger and safer neighborhoods

A report on the **Mayor's Action Plan for Neighborhood Safety**

This case study explores the origins, evolution and initial impact of MAP.



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*The Mayor's Office of Criminal Justice (MOCJ) commissioned Jennifer Trone, an independent consultant, to prepare this case study. Opinions expressed herein do not necessarily reflect the views or official positions of MOCJ. The consultant drew primarily on informal interviews and conversations with 25 people involved in MAP from a variety of positions and perspectives, with a focus on three of the 15 developments: Red Hook, Butler and St. Nicholas Houses. Unless attributed to another source, the Mayor's Office of Criminal Justice provided all data in this article.*

# Prologue: A tale of two cities

**MAP reflects the City's commitment to take a different approach to crime prevention, one rooted in the idea that safety should be a co-production between people and their government.**

On January 27, 2013, in front of his Brooklyn home and accompanied by his wife and son, Bill de Blasio officially launched his campaign to become New York City's 109th mayor. On that day and many subsequent occasions, he borrowed from Charles Dickens to capture the stark inequality that had come to represent something rotten at the core of the Big Apple:

***"Like so many New Yorkers, my heart belongs to my neighborhood. And we deserve a city government that actually believes in our neighborhoods and sees things the way we do. ... let's be honest about where we are today. This is a place that in too many ways has become a tale of two cities, a place where City Hall has too often catered to the interests of the elite rather than the needs of everyday New Yorkers."***

If elected, de Blasio promised to lead a city government infused with the spirit of ordinary New Yorkers and informed by their experiences and perspectives, a government in which "all boroughs [are] created equal" and "all our residents matter."

Among the specific issues on which he campaigned, the use of stop-and-frisk featured prominently. Neighborhoods where for years police had repeatedly stopped young men of color were also places bereft of opportunity, where the social, economic and physical infrastructure was weak at best. Stop-and-frisk didn't cause those problems, but it exacerbated them; it had become the tip of the spear in an enforcement apparatus driven in the wrong direction.

In the years since de Blasio was first elected, the official number of stops has shrunk to 11,000 annually, down from a high of nearly 700,000 in 2011 toward the end of Mayor Bloomberg's tenure in office. Instead of relying on the spear, the Mayor's Office of Criminal Justice has been exploring an approach to crime prevention rooted in the idea that safety should be a co-production between people and their government, especially in neighborhoods with elevated levels of crime and a history of aggressive policing.



#### **Meet Ms. Frances Brown, Castle Hill**

"I have been living in Castle Hill for 30+ years and can say MAP has been a saver for me. I was just months away from moving until Luis Rosa (MEC) came in my life and gave me hope on staying and fighting for my community. I am a firm believer that same way Luis can provide us hope, we as a stakeholder team can do the same for our fellow residents. I am excited to see our CPTED Project in the works and that is the first of many to show residents that Castle Hill is Stronger Together!"



**While violent crime continued to decline citywide in 2014, it spiked in public housing. 1 out of 5 of those crimes took place in just 15 of NYCHA's 328 developments. These communities became the focus of the Mayor's Action Plan for Neighborhood Safety (MAP).**

Through a set of signature initiatives, the City is engaging local leaders, community-based organizations (CBOs) and residents themselves in efforts to build durable and lasting peace. One of the earliest of these initiatives to take shape—and perhaps the most complex and ambitious to date—is the Mayor's Action Plan for Neighborhood Safety, more commonly known as MAP.

This case study explores MAP's beginnings, evolution and initial impact. Launched in July 2014, MAP channels resources into developments that comprise less than five percent of the City's public housing stock but at the time accounted for almost 20 percent of violent crime. Most important, MAP has created a method of joint problem-solving between residents and government that cuts a clear path directly to City Hall for people working to make their communities better places to live.

#### CHANGE IN VIOLENT CRIME; 2014 VS. 2018



**From  
Stronger  
to Safer**

**MAP expands access to vital services and opportunities, taps the potential of design to improve quality of life and promote safety and seeks to build engagement with and trust in government.**

MAP aims to marshal and deliver much of what local government has to offer distressed communities: from cleaner and greener spaces and more secure buildings, to services and benefits that many residents are entitled to but often find difficult to access; from genuine neighborhood policing to real opportunities for youth. As a project of the Mayor's Office of Criminal Justice, MAP works to strengthen communities under the theory that greater public safety will be one of the payoffs. The notion that a healthy, vibrant community will police itself by suppressing crime—a dynamic social scientists refer to as informal social control or collective efficacy—isn't new, but it has taken on new weight in America today given the widespread mistrust of law enforcement and lack of faith in government generally.

In effect, MAP represents a move by the safest big city in America to begin to address the legacy of abandoning poor neighborhoods that sociologist Patrick Sharkey explains went hand in hand with the rise of over-policing and mass incarceration. Sharkey is author of the 2018 book *Uneasy Peace: The Great Crime Decline, the Renewal of City Life, and the Next War on Violence*. He believes that while cities and states have made considerable progress in dialing back enforcement and punishment, commensurate investment in the hardest-hit communities is still lagging.

#### MAP Developments

##### THE BRONX

- Butler
- Castle Hill
- Patterson

##### BROOKLYN

- Boulevard
- Brownsville
- Bushwick
- Ingersoll
- Red Hook
- Tompkins
- Van Dyke

##### MANHATTAN

- Polo Grounds
- St. Nicholas
- Wagner

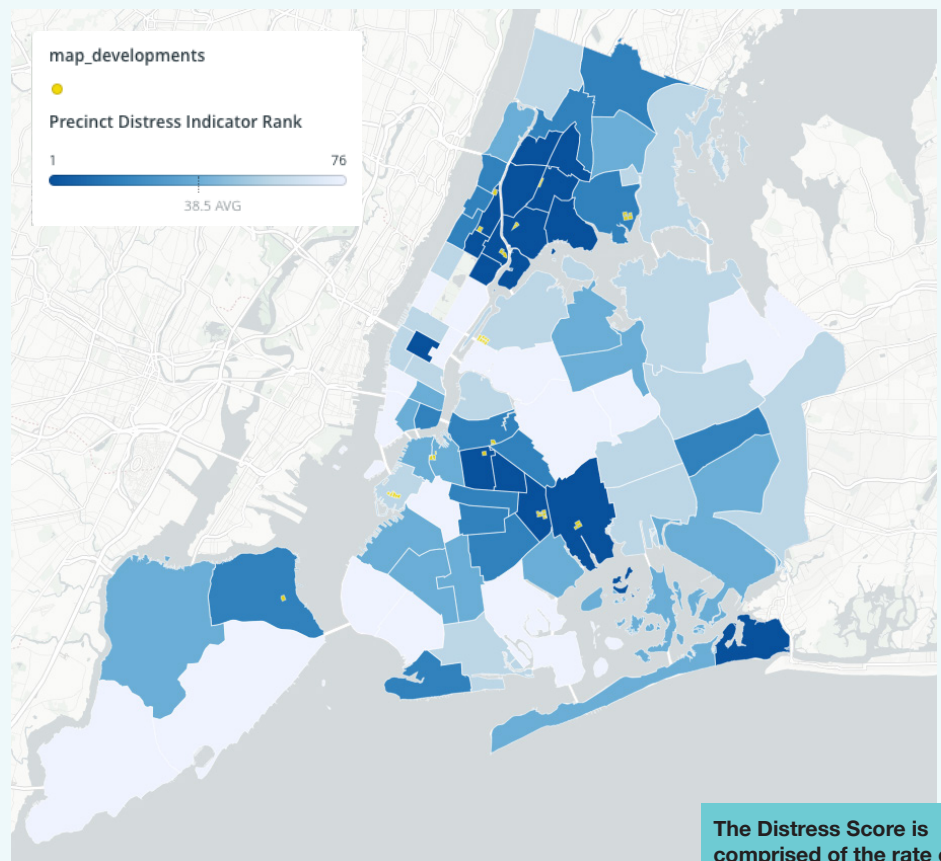
##### QUEENS

- Queensbridge

##### STATEN ISLAND

- Stapleton

#### MAP DEVELOPMENT PLACEMENT BY PRECINCT AND DISTRESS SCORE



[Click HERE to view an interactive version of this map.](#)

The Distress Score is comprised of the rate of poverty, violent felonies and Department of Corrections admissions.

In a twist of poetic justice, money to strengthen some of the poorest NYC neighborhoods comes in part from some of the wealthiest institutions in the world. Financial penalties levied on international banks caught breaking the law have channeled a small fortune into the Manhattan District Attorney's

Asset Forfeiture Fund and a smaller number of millions directly into the City budget, accounts that fund some of the enhancements provided under MAP.

Residents and partners celebrate at Castle Hill Unity Day.



Despite the apparent simplicity of the ideas underlying MAP, putting them into practice is anything but simple. In addition to the three lead agencies—the Mayor's Office of Criminal Justice, NYCHA (New York City Housing Authority) and the NYPD—nine other City agencies and offices are also deeply involved in MAP. The nonprofit Center for Court Innovation functions as an important facilitator, and most important,

there are a growing number of CBOs and residents themselves involved in what the City refers to as an “all-in effort.”

MAP is complex in yet another way. Investing in communities that have been neglected by government for decades is good work for sure. But those investments will only lead to significant and lasting change if they create opportunities for more residents to play an active role in making their communities better places to live—the very definition of collective efficacy. That's why MAP aims to encourage and support local organizing, to share authority and resources with communities and to be responsive to the needs communities define. The process asks a lot of residents and stretches government well beyond its comfort zone.

Mural and garden at St. Nicholas Houses. Photo: Center for Court Innovation.



Meet the MAP Engagement Coordinator  
**Gwendolyn Wilson of Queensbridge Houses**

“MAP has allowed me to help people have a voice in their neighborhood and bring changes that they want to see. I am very proud of a couple of young people who joined the team and started to look at their community differently and wanted to make a change. Residents want to see a change in their community and they want to be a part of that change. MAP helps them be a part of the change.”

# Putting a Human Face on Government





When staff in the Mayor's Office of Criminal Justice initially developed MAP, they defined its scope as encompassing people, places and networks. By "people," they obviously meant residents of the 15 MAP developments and surrounding neighborhoods. But they also had in mind city employees and others in professional roles who work in neighborhoods and could be of service in these developments. One of the interim goals of MAP—a step along the path to building trust—is to put a human face on government by offering public housing residents someone with whom they can connect and who can ensure prompt responses to their concerns.

Perhaps surprisingly, one of the more powerful points of connection created is a new kind of neighborhood police officer. Around the time MAP was taking shape, the NYPD was developing a role for officers aimed at improving community relationships. Within NYCHA, these Neighborhood Coordination Officers (NCOs) are assigned to a particular development and spend the entirety of their shift, much of it on foot, engaging with and assisting residents. Because of the way their job is structured, they have considerable opportunity to actually get to know people. It's community policing up close and personal.

Wilbert Louis had patrolled Red Hook for 13 years before becoming an NCO, a transition he describes as "a big change." It's not only that his work is different; people respond differently to him, especially young people. "Kids come up to us, say hi, give us hugs... Before they wouldn't even acknowledge an officer walking by, especially in front of their friends," Louis says.

Others see the change as well. Up until recently, Trequan Bekka ran the community center in the Red Hook Houses. He grew up in the neighborhood and has been working with youth since he was old enough to mentor someone younger: "I've been out here since I was 14 working with kids." Bekka, who describes the NCOs as "my favorite part of MAP," believes that kids today have a different and more positive experience of law enforcement through interacting with the NCOs: "They don't look at police the way my generation does."



Viviana Gordon, Deputy Director of the Red Hook Community Justice Center, an anchor CBO in the neighborhood (and a project of MAP's lead nonprofit partner, the Center for Court Innovation), described the NCOs as the "first win" of MAP: "That alone has changed Red Hook... The NCOs have built trust and virtually everyone has a positive relationship with them." According to Gordon, it's not unusual for residents to seek help from NCOs, recalling a single mother who reached out to an officer she knew well when her son started skipping school. "They really try to use every tool they have," Gordon says, to solve problems without resorting to arresting or ticketing people.



With funding provided under MAP, the Community Justice Center trained the Red Hook NCOs in peacemaking, a traditional Native American approach to justice that emphasizes repairing relationships as opposed to merely reaching an amicable solution. And the training was not just for officers. NCOs were trained side by side with community members under the guidance of Center staff and Native Peacemakers from the Navajo Nation and other tribes.

Because the Red Hook NCOs understand and value the peacemaking process, they often refer residents to the Justice Center’s peacemaking program, extending the reach and impact of this already valuable local resource. Last May, for example, NCO Krunal Patel responded to a domestic call involving a 12-year-old boy and his mother—the first time he’d met either of them. She had been asleep when her son got home from school and didn’t hear him knocking on the door, something the boy said happens all the time. When he finally got inside, he started yelling at his mother and throwing things. She didn’t want her son to be arrested; she just wanted help, so Officer Patel explained what the peacemaking process had to offer and made a formal referral to the Justice Center.

The NYPD would like more of its uniformed officers to become a familiar and helpful presence in neighborhoods. To that end, the Department has created “steady sectors” within each precinct, hoping officers will get to know the people who live within their sector. The NYPD also runs a program called Bridging the Gap, a relaxed forum in which kids get to ask cops questions, turning the familiar dynamic on its head. “There are a lot of people within the NYPD trying to do the right thing,” Trequan Bekka says. It’s a work in progress. A small-scale study undertaken by the Red Hook Initiative and released in June 2018 suggests that residents between the ages of 18 and 24 continue to experience police in Red Hook as an aggressive presence that makes them feel stigmatized, unwelcome and in some cases afraid in their own neighborhood.

Cops aren’t the only city employees moving closer to neighborhoods in an effort to provide better service. MAP also funds representatives from the Human Resources Administration, Department for the Aging, and Mayor’s Office to End Domestic and Gender-Based Violence to work in the 15 developments, typically one or two days a week.

Meet the MAP  
Engagement  
Coordinator  
**Leticia Lucero  
of Stapleton**



“MAP is a great collective of knowledge and partnerships.

Being a part of MAP allows me to connect my residents to these resources in efforts to increase safety within their developments. Stapleton residents want to be a part of MAP because MAP plays a role in giving our residents the platform to realize their collective hopes for the Stapleton Community.”

Meet the MAP  
Engagement  
Coordinator  
**Alicia Arrington  
of Red Hook**



“I enjoy being a part of the MAP program because it empowers

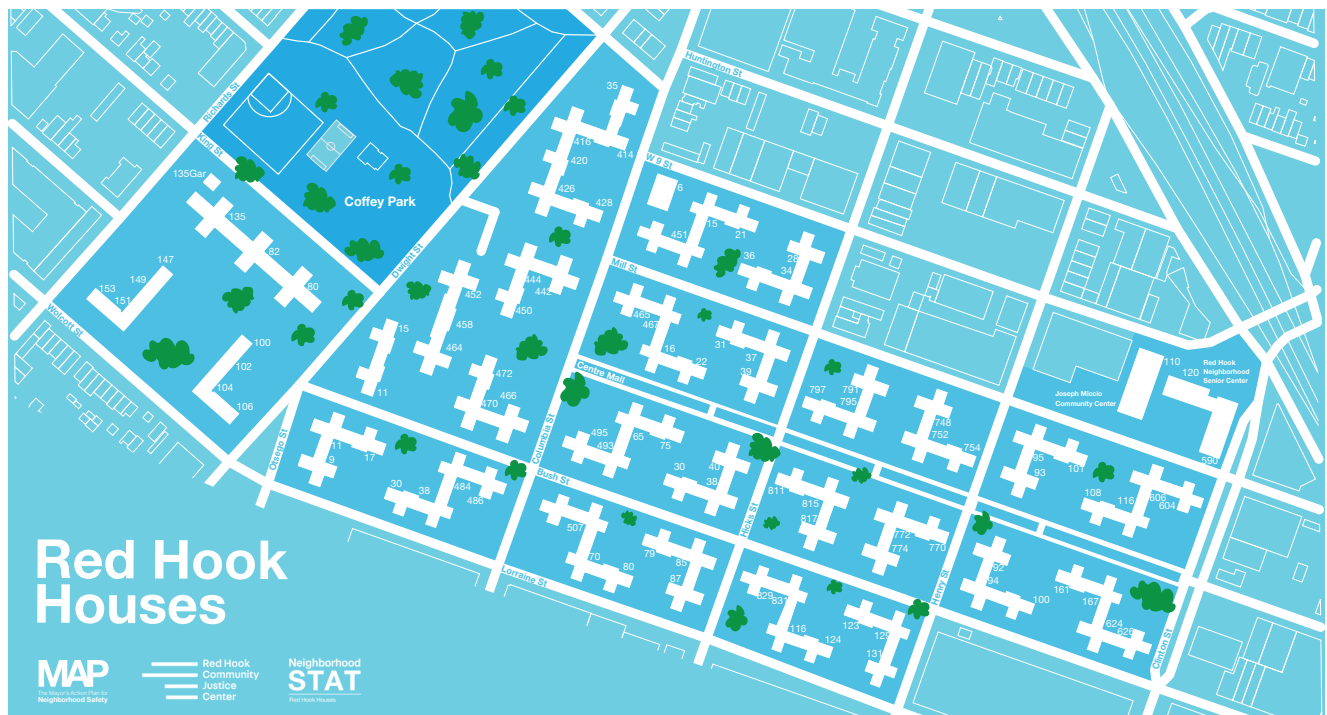
residents to become decision makers and change agents in their community. It’s one of the first programs I’ve seen making a fiscal commitment toward residents creating the change they want to see on their terms.”

**More than half of all Red Hook residents live in public housing. With 30 buildings and more than 6,000 official residents, the Red Hook Houses East and West is the second largest NYCHA development and also one of the oldest, with some buildings dating back to 1938.**

Up until her recent promotion, Maritza Cortaza was a roving representative of the City's Human Resources Administration/Department of Social Services (HRA), working in Red Hook on Wednesdays. HRA oversees the allocation of SNAP/EBT\*, Medicaid and other benefits to poor and low-income New Yorkers. One Wednesday last May, Cortaza helped a resident of the Red Hook Houses whose wife had recently moved out and, as a result, his household income had dropped considerably. Given the change in his financial situation, she encouraged him to apply for food stamps and Medicaid, explaining what documents he needed to support his applications. Over the first four years of MAP's operations, 4,476 residents of MAP's 15 public housing developments have received assistance with benefits applications.

When Cortaza was promoted, Shakeena Culler took over as HRA Outreach Specialist in Red Hook, and like her predecessor makes use of office space in the Red Hook Community Justice Center. The Center has been bringing government closer to local residents for years—mainly in the form of a novel municipal court that operates within the walls of the Justice Center. "All public housing is isolated. It's hard for people to get answers, to feel listened to and respected, to feel human," Viviana Gordon explains. "One of the great benefits of having a justice center rooted in a particular neighborhood is the accountability that happens as a result of proximity." MAP is trying to apply this lesson more broadly, in the Red Hook Houses and in the other 14 focal developments.

**It's a community with deep roots, a place where some families have lived for generations. It's also a place of concentrated disadvantage.**



**The median household income is less than \$20,000, and roughly three-quarters of residents between the ages of 18 and 24 are unemployed.**

Grant Cruz is another roving representative of City government deployed under MAP. Cruz works as a Community Advocate for the Grandparent Resource Center, a project of the New York City Department for the Aging (DFTA). The Center was established nearly 25 years ago in response to the crack and AIDS epidemics when many children lost their parents and ended up living with grandparents, but the number of staff working in communities has increased under MAP. Cruz assumed his position in 2015 and spreads his time across four different MAP sites, working out of senior centers within these developments.

“I’ve met 90-year-olds caring for infants,” Cruz says, but reaching them isn’t easy. According to him, the senior centers attract the more active residents who typically aren’t caring for children at home, so “I do a lot of outreach, anything to increase traffic to the center.” Farmers Market coupons are a big draw: “I’ve never seen so many electric scooters...people were lining up.” These encounters based around a tangible and immediate benefit are opportunities for Cruz to talk with older residents and identify those who might benefit from services and support available through DFTA.

The Mayor’s Office to End Domestic and Gender-Based Violence operates five Family Justice Centers, one in each borough. Under MAP, these FJCs are reaching deep into communities. Intra-familial violence, in a number of forms, is an issue for many residents of public housing, as it is for residents citywide. With growing recognition of family violence and increased resources for victims, more people are reporting these crimes to police and seeking help in other ways. Yet residents of public housing can be unable or reluctant to travel to an FJC for help, and unaware of what other resources in the community are available to assist them, so the City is bringing information and assistance directly to them.

Prior to MAP, outreach was something that FJC staff did on the side, in addition to their many other duties; now there are dedicated community liaisons assigned to the 15 MAP developments. Flore Baptiste has worked as a community liaison for roughly four years. According to her, becoming a familiar face in a neighborhood makes a huge difference in terms of building trust with residents and forming alliances with local organizations and, ultimately, being of real service. But even after several years, it still takes constant work to reach and engage new people.

Staff of the City’s Department of Homeless Services (DHS) are also reaching out. Homeless individuals sometimes take refuge in building lobbies and hallways, and even the best locks can’t solve this problem. One older resident who has encountered homeless men sleeping outside her apartment said she’s sometimes afraid to open her front door. Through enhanced outreach, DHS is working to make the agency known as a helpful resource so that concerned residents will call their 24-hour helpline instead of dialing 911. DHS can connect the homeless person with shelter, which is a better resolution for everyone involved.



Meet the MAP Engagement Coordinator **Ramon Caba of Polo Grounds & Wagner**

“The Wagner Houses resident stakeholder team motto is: A connected community is a safer community. MAP gives residents an opportunity to have a voice in seeing the change they want in their community. MAP allows residents to develop efficacy and cohesion with city agencies and community partners, and to promote safety and improve quality of life.”

# Paying Attention to Place

**People who live in a place they view as beautiful are more likely to interact with their neighbors.**

Like many reform efforts, MAP is linked in part with a tragedy. On Sunday, June 1, 2014, when the warmth of the afternoon stretched into evening, six-year-old Prince Joshua Avitto and seven-year-old Mikayla Capers were playing outside near their home in the Boulevard Houses, a NYCHA development in East New York. Thirsty, the kids went back into the building where they entered an elevator that should have lifted them home. But in the span of less than 20 seconds a man who had followed the children stabbed Prince Joshua to death and seriously wounded Mikayla. The attacker was eventually apprehended and later convicted, but arresting him was made more difficult by the lack of surveillance cameras in the lobby of the building. For residents, that particular failing came to symbolize their broader concerns about lax security.

One of the core elements of MAP is a discipline known as Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design, or CPTED. It's based on the idea that crime is in part fueled by environmental circumstances. Viewing the MAP sites through this lens led the City to invest in brighter, environmentally sensitive exterior lighting, higher security door locks, and digital security cameras in all of the developments

The same thinking also underlies the rehabilitation of some playgrounds within the developments and nearby parks, as well as the creation of community art projects and gardens that both beautify and activate underutilized public spaces within the developments. These more welcoming environments attract residents who connect with one another, and their active presence can help deter crime. As the areas become known as safe places, they become even more populated and crime declines further. It's a positive feedback loop.

**6**

**NeighborhoodStat cycles completed**

**314**

**Young adults placed in permanent employment or education by Green City Force**

**248,108**

**Visits to Kids in Motion summer playground program sites**

**10,762**

**Youth enrolled in summer youth employment program. Steady increase since summer 2014 (992 enrolled) through last summer (3033 enrolled)**

**3,132**

**Kinship caregivers participated in workshops and support groups**

**954**

**Young adults enrolled in Next Steps transformative mentoring program**

**140,625**

**Visits during summer extended hours across 105 community centers**

CPTED has been proven through empirical research. In his book *Palaces for the People*, Sociologist Eric Klinenberg offers several compelling examples.

In Philadelphia,

securing unoccupied buildings and clearing vacant lots to create rudimentary pocket parks was associated with a sizable drop in firearm violence, especially around the secured buildings. Moreover, there was no sign the violence had been displaced to nearby blocks.



**6,201**

Upgraded exterior  
lights installed

**338**

New door  
locks installed

**4,476**

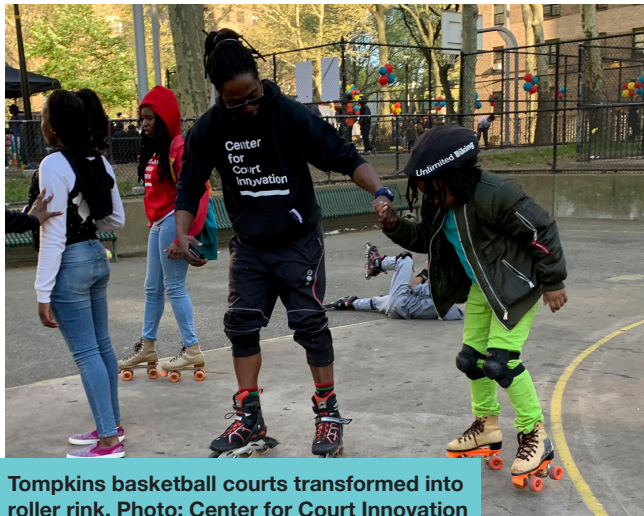
Residents were  
connected to HRA  
services

**21+**

Murals completed

The creation of green spaces also had positive effects on the physical and mental health of people living nearby. Perhaps most interesting, the latest findings from the Philadelphia experiment show that reductions in anxiety,

hopelessness and other feelings associated with depression were greater for residents of poorer neighborhoods. Public health professionals refer to this kind of effect as equigenic—an equalizer of socioeconomic disparities in health. Nature is an element of the solution but so is the fact that when people spend time outdoors they're more likely to interact with others and feel part of a community—a quality of life known to boost feelings of wellbeing.



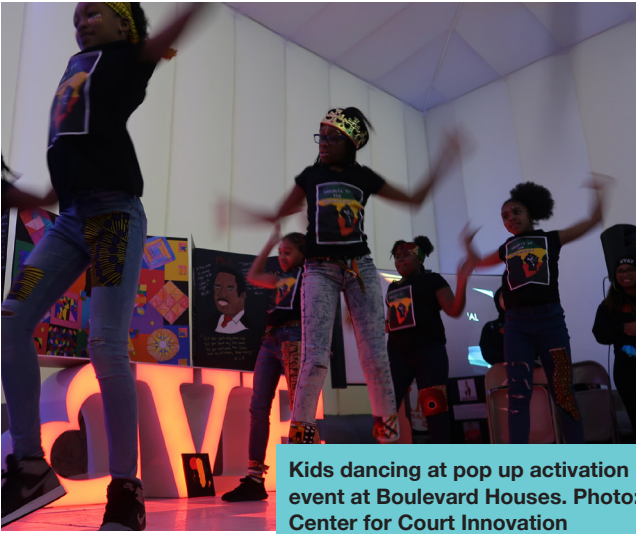
Tompkins basketball courts transformed into roller rink. Photo: Center for Court Innovation

The physical environment around many of the MAP developments is ripe for this kind of intervention. Butler Houses is one of three MAP developments in the Bronx. The six buildings, each of which is 21 stories high, occupy two long blocks from 169th to 171st Streets along Webster Avenue. The Houses are largely cut off from neighborhoods to the east by the Metro North rail lines, and a long-running feud with Webster Houses, another NYCHA development, has created a virtual barrier along 169th Street.

The nearest bank is a quarter of a mile away; there are no large retail stores in the vicinity; and while there are handful of small delis and grocers on Webster Avenue, to describe the area as a food desert is not an exaggeration. It's a micro neighborhood virtually untouched by the economic growth of the city as a whole—one of several across the five boroughs.

While Butler Houses occupy just two city blocks, they are home to 4,370 people by official NYCHA counts in June 2018, some of whom have been residents for years or decades. Forty-two-year-old Rue Nathan Smith has lived there on and off since 1978. If offered an affordable apartment in better condition, Smith says he would take it but adds, "I would be back at Butler every day." For Smith and untold others, this public housing development is their home and community. One of the ambitions of MAP is to tap and help direct the connection to place felt by residents like Smith.





Kids dancing at pop up activation event at Boulevard Houses. Photo: Center for Court Innovation

At all 15 MAP developments, the City is working on different scales to improve the built environment in ways that enhance livability and safety, and hopefully lead to economic growth. At the smallest scale, residents themselves are conducting CPTED audits to identify unsafe and/or neglected public spaces and propose specific improvements. Through MAP, each development has access to up to \$50,000 to fund resident-driven projects, and by working through their Resident Association, can potentially access thousands of additional dollars directly from NYCHA.

A group of resident stakeholders from Butler Houses has identified a near-empty plaza they believe would be perfect for outdoor grilling and picnics, as well as events to promote healthy eating. An appealing BBQ area would be a place where residents of all ages could gather, something the development currently lacks.

On a larger scale, the City has invested in envisioning what this neighborhood could become with more significant upgrades in the built environment. Nationally known design firm Studio Gang, headed by architect Jeanne Gang, led a community design process to re-imagine areas abutting or nearby Butler Houses, as well as areas around Brownsville and Van Dyke Houses in Brooklyn. The areas were chosen because they ranked high on a hardship index but also have parks, pedestrian streets, libraries and other local assets that are receiving major investments from the City.

To take full advantage of a proposed new bus stop on Webster Avenue between 169th and 170th Streets, for example, Studio Gang designed an adjacent and appealing public commons. Infused with public art, food carts, a LinkNYC Terminal (Wi-Fi), game tables, a fountain and outdoor movie screen, it could become a virtual magnet for residents. Parasols with enhanced lighting would provide shade during the day and safe illumination at night.

Studio Gang also envisioned a much livelier 169th Step Street—the block of 169th that begins at Webster Avenue and runs east up a sharp incline. The Morrisania Branch of the Public Library, the Claremont Community Center and proposed Webster Avenue Workshop all run along 169th Street going east, and the Step Street should be both a gathering place and a gateway to these local resources. Much like the bus stop on Webster Avenue, Studio Gang incorporated elements that would attract residents and also those that would make the Step Street a comfortable and safe space to linger and commune with neighbors day and night.



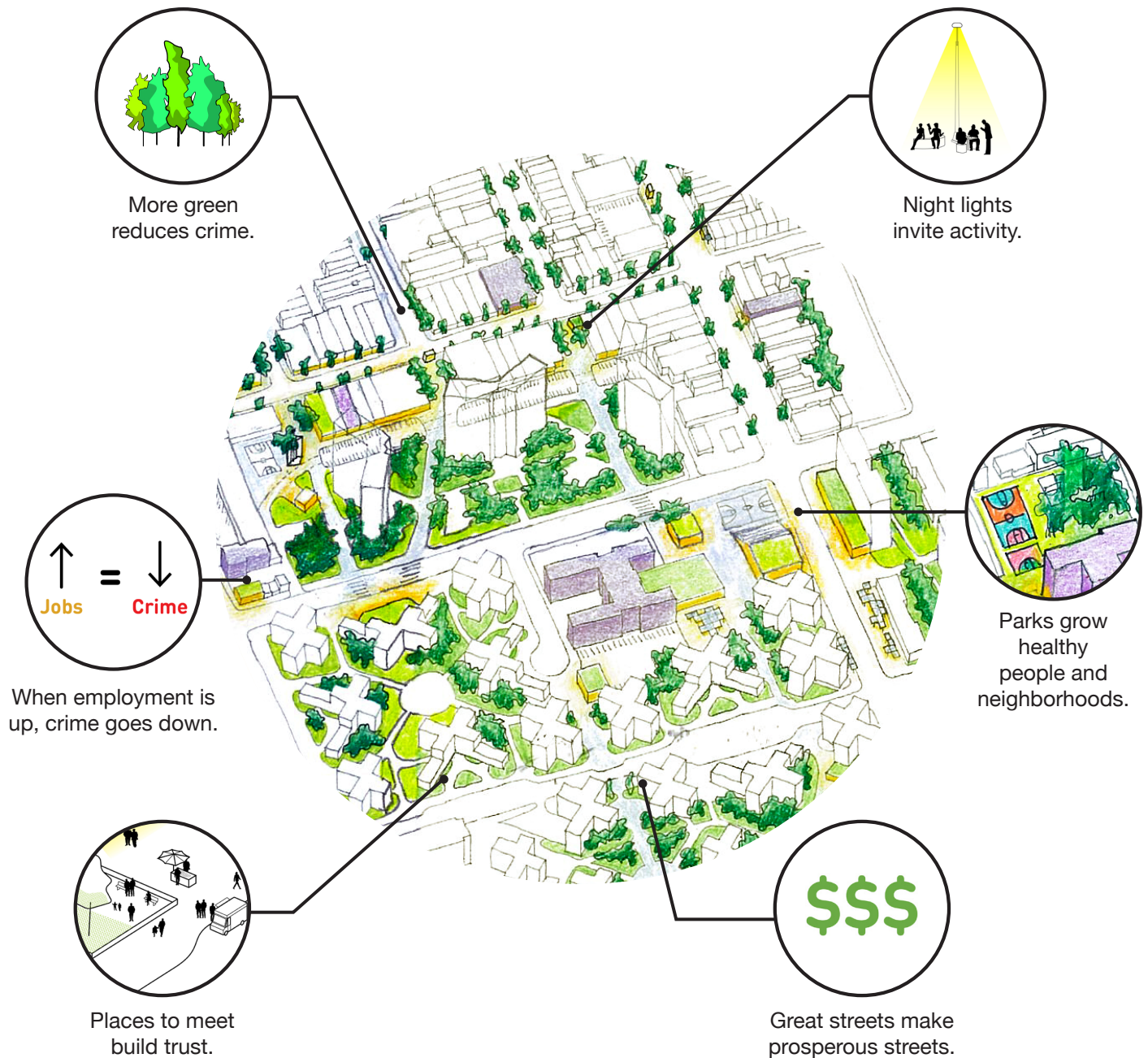
#### Meet the MAP Engagement Coordinator **Luis Rosa of Castle Hill**

“The MAP program has brought the community together and allowed residents to address issues they identified with community-based solutions they helped create. At Unity Day, we had over 500 residents come together in the spirit of peace and harmony. The Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design project is created from the residents and will have their voice demonstrated in bringing the community together. That’s what we are doing with MAP, being stronger together. That’s been our motto since the beginning: Castle Hill is Stronger Together.”

## What can design do?

## Research driven-Design

Identify design opportunities that are rooted in discoveries from the listen-and-learn process. These direct links between what's important and what's there are strong foundations for design proposals.



From Neighborhood Activation Study by Studio Gang, commissioned by Mayor's Office of Criminal Justice, NYC Department of Design & Construction and New York Police Department.





Source: Bronx Documentary Center/Ed Alvarez



Last summer, the City and community partners took a step toward realizing the vision of a bustling Step Street. Mayor's Office of Criminal Justice, launched Claremont Illuminated, a two-year partnership to present nighttime arts programming—a kind of arts-infused, hyper-local version of Take Back the Night. The inaugural events on June 22nd and 23rd took place on the 169th Step Street. From 7 p.m. to 11 p.m. each evening, affirming photographs by Bronx artists of their own neighborhoods were projected alongside the stairs. Live performances provided another draw and reason for celebration. Claremont Illuminated was recently awarded \$125,000 from the National Endowment for the Arts' Our Town grants program, which supports creative projects that aim to strengthen communities.









# Digging Deeper to Understand the Roots of Disorder

## Getting together once a year or more with neighbors reduces crime.

As part of MAP, the City is working with a behavioral science firm called ideas42 to understand the roots of disorder—why garbage and dog poop accumulate, for example, and why a door lock that’s repaired in the morning might be broken again by nightfall. It’s an effort to apply the rigors of science where otherwise finger pointing might prevail. Drawing on what they learn through site observations and structured interviews with residents, ideas42 proposes remedies designed to test specific hypotheses that move beyond blame toward concrete actions.

Here’s what ideas42 learned about garbage, according to Anthony Barrows, a Managing Director of the firm. These public housing developments are less littered than many people assume, but there is a clear problem with people dumping “middle-size trash,” the 13-gallon bags that most Americans use. Beyond appearing unsightly, the dumping is a legitimate concern given the City’s rodent problem.

Trash bags are often deposited in unauthorized locations—close by but “not in peoples’ faces,” Barrows says—because the trash chutes are too small to handle a 13-gallon bag. They’re made for smaller bags people relied on decades ago when these buildings were constructed and when Americans produced much less trash. Compounding the problem, the area in a development designated for large discarded items (mattresses, etc.), could be blocks away from where someone lives—a long walk to empty the trash.

ideas42 proposed creating one larger trash chute in the lobby of each building, or less costly, putting large trash bins with lids at or near where people are already dumping bags—potential solutions that NYCHA is testing and that ideas42 will evaluate this coming summer. The point, according to Barrows, is to develop remedies that make sense and are practical for people.

### WHY DO PEOPLE IMPROPERLY DISPOSE OF TRASH?

#### POLICY



- Small waste should be disposed via compactors on each floor
- Large, bulky items and furniture should be taken to the designated drop sites
- Medium-sized trash? No policy or infrastructure solution rather than drop sites

#### CONTEXT



- Drop sites for trash located 10-15 minutes away
- People produce more trash today than they did 50-80 years ago when most NYCHA developments were built.
- No practical way to dispose of medium sized trash

#### REALITY



- Residents take cues from social norms and place trash in front of building
- ‘Don’t put garbage here’ signs have backfired, have become signposts for dropping off garbage

From ideas42 NYCHA Quality of Life study, commissioned by NYC Mayor’s Office of Criminal Justice





**Proposed Infrastructure Improvements: Provides a convenient solution for middle sized trash, and directly addresses and mitigates trash left out on sidewalks, in front of and side of buildings**

ideas42 also researched what is by many accounts a widespread problem in NYCHA developments: front doors in which the locks or latches are broken, rendering these buildings vulnerable to intruders. Many people frame the problem as vandalism and believe the answer lies in identifying and punishing those responsible. Barrows rejects both the explanation and proposed solution.

Others note that when the City installed new electronic door locks activated by user-unique key fobs, the fobs didn't always work. Although those issues have been largely resolved, both the fobs and traditional keys for buildings that still have old-style locks are often in short supply. There's also the issue that some tenants have unauthorized family members or friends living with them who are not entitled to keys.

Compounding these problems, anecdotal information from residents suggests that intercoms often don't function reliably. If you're coming home at night and don't have a key, and your apartment is empty or the only person home is your elderly grandmother, waiting for another resident to let you in may not be convenient or safe. The end result: people break the locks or prop open doors, "fixes" that make buildings less secure and are also costly for NYCHA.

People want to be safe at home, Barrows says, but they also need unimpeded access to their building. To have both isn't unreasonable, but finding a practical, affordable solution that meets everyone's needs has proven to be difficult. Whatever course of action the City pursues, talking with residents in advance of implementing new policies and practices is crucial. As one person with on-the-ground knowledge explained, "There was no advance conversation with residents about changing the locks. ... The City felt the new style of door lock would make the developments safer. They thought because the locks looked sturdier they would last longer, but they were wrong." The process, more than the locks themselves, was flawed. As MAP grows and matures to involve residents more deeply in the work of improving the places they call home, there's more opportunity for joint problem solving.

# Investing in the Next Generation

**Nearly half (46%) of all residents of the 15 target NYCHA developments are 24 years old or younger. Supporting them and investing in their futures is a core element of MAP.**

Across all 15 MAP sites there's a preponderance of kids, teens and young adults. Nearly half of all 64,117 official residents of these developments are 24 years old or younger. Supporting youth and investing in their futures is a core element of MAP.

MAP funds extended summer hours at the community centers in these NYCHA developments and at Promise Academy in the Harlem Children's Zone, which serves as the de facto community center for St. Nicholas Houses. This gives young people ages five and up a safe and welcoming place to go seven days a week until 11pm—which may be more important in some developments than others. Other offerings range from nutrition and physical fitness programs to Healthy Relationship Workshops and art-based activities provided under the auspices of the Mayor's Office to End Domestic and Gender-Based Violence.

A highly focused initiative called Next STEPS (Striving Toward Engagement and Peaceful Solutions) works to reach and protect youth who are most at risk of becoming involved in gun violence as shooter or victim. The program pairs young people between the ages of 16 and 24 with adult mentors with whom they can relate, frequently referred to as credible messengers. What that means in practice, according to Dorin Hammond who coordinates Next STEPS at St. Nicholas Houses under the auspices of the Harlem Commonwealth Council, is "Cheering people on, making phone calls, creating safe passage, walking through it with them."

One Next STEPS graduate who had just completed his first year in college on a football scholarship called to thank Hammond. "He said if it wasn't for Next STEPS he wouldn't have made it. Gangs were trying to recruit him, get him involved in credit card scams and other trouble," Hammond said, adding, "These are the stories that are not getting out there, the success stories."

Created initially for youth on probation, Next STEPS was expanded under MAP to also include youth without criminal justice involvement and can enroll up to 16 youth at any one time in each of the 15 developments—still not enough to meet the need though, according to Hammond. "We have over 700 youth living here at St. Nicholas. And what about kids who are 13, 14, 15 and too young for the program but already involved in the criminal justice system?"

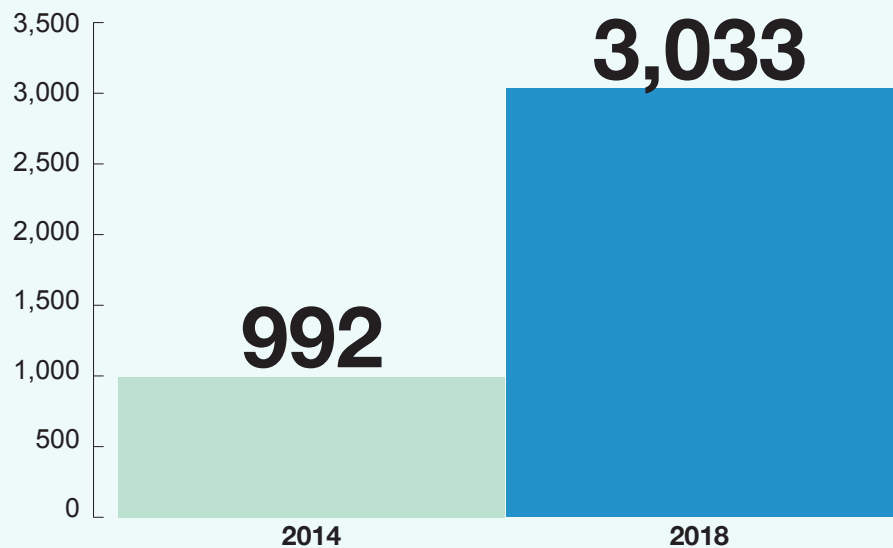
When Hammond meets a young person in need and there's no open slot in Next STEPS, he always finds a way to stay in touch with that youth until there is an opening—and he's not the only one filling gaps. To engage youth in positive activities, St. Nicholas resident stakeholders—people who have voluntarily stepped up to play a leadership role in their development under MAP—plan to give the development's under-utilized computer lab a makeover. New laptop computers, Wi-Fi and lessons in coding are the raw ingredients for building a digital platform created by and for young people. Reaching and connecting youth through a web site or an app is just the beginning of developing opportunities for them and connecting young people with programs outside the development they might not know about. The project is the result of a CPTED audit that revealed a clear lack of spaces, activities, and outreach geared toward the interests and needs of young people living in the St. Nicholas Houses (For more information about Crime Prevention through Environment Design/CPTED, see p. 15 of this case study.)

**From summer 2015 through summer 2018, MAP has provided jobs to 10,762 teens and young adults, in neighborhoods where there are few job opportunities for young people.**

The biggest scale-up under MAP in relation to youth is the City's expansion of the Summer Youth Employment Program (SYEP). Any young resident between the ages of 14 and 24 who wants to work and completes the application and enrollment process is guaranteed a summer job—turning a rare opportunity for young people in these public housing developments into a promise to all. Beginning in 2014, MAP has secured summer employment, a critical component of career development and financial security, for 10,762 teens and young adults.

Through employment, young people learn responsibility, gain a sense of accomplishment and have money of their own to spend, which is also a defense against involvement in illicit activity. And building a resume through summer employment can be a pathway to fulltime work, which is important in neighborhoods where young adults struggle to find jobs.

#### **GROWTH IN SUMMER YOUTH EMPLOYMENT PROGRAM IN MAP DEVELOPMENTS**



While every summer a greater number of teens get jobs MAP hasn't come close to reaching its potential in this area: There are nearly 13,000 14-to-24-year-olds living in these 15 developments who could be employed each summer. The City and its partners are working to better publicize SYEP, encourage more young people to apply and make the enrollment process easier to complete so that fewer youth fall between the cracks.

Last summer, 30% of applicants never completed the enrollment process so never got a job. Like many other aspects of MAP, making it easier for kids to enroll is complicated by the number of entities involved and, in some respects, by government regulation. Some people also would like to see a greater variety of jobs and job sites; more jobs that connect to a young person's interests and career ambitions and even year-round employment opportunities, especially for older youth.

Young people at work painting a mural at Castle Hill Houses. Photo: Groundswell.



Beyond the benefits to young people, SYEP has been a vehicle for forging or strengthening relationships among City agencies and CBOs as people work together to achieve a shared goal. The effort to enroll youth in summer jobs has involved professionals ranging from neighborhood police officers to local librarians. NCOs in particular have taken on a leadership role.

Are these combined investments enough in a severely under-resourced neighborhood? Ramik Williams doesn't think so. For more than two years, up until December 2018, Williams led Directions for Our Youth, Inc., a Bronx CBO headquartered on East 149th Street that runs the community center in Butler Houses under contract with NYCHA. When asked what's changed for the better under MAP, he said: "I see the City giving more resources to the community, more summer youth employment, more real partnerships." He also appreciated having

someone in the Mayor's Office of Criminal Justice that he could call whenever there was an issue. But Williams believes young people need more positive role models and many more opportunities to "change the game itself."

"We are seeing... slashings, beatings, jumpings, acts of violence that aren't being reported. The kids aren't reporting it, their parents sure aren't. If a group of seniors sees a group of kids fighting, they're not going to report it. We're only telling part of the story..." said Williams.

Although there's widespread and enthusiastic support for investing in youth, some residents point out that MAP supports the young and old while leaving out folks in the middle. Adults who should be in the prime of life are often unemployed, face significant barriers to finding and keeping a job and struggle in other ways. City agencies with mandates to serve youth and seniors provide natural vehicles for reaching and supporting young and old residents; channeling needed services and opportunities to other residents will require more creative use of City resources.



#### Meet Ms. Jolyn Rattigan, St. Nicholas CPTED Stakeholder

"Since joining [MAP] in February 2018, I consider my team as family. We have gone out together in our own community to identify issues of concern to all residents such as needs for youth. And by having block parties which bring residents out, we are able to ask them what more can be done in our community to keep it safe for all residents."

# Engaging Communities From the Ground Up



**If you're seeking ground truth, you need a variety of community voices and perspectives.**

**Today each MAP site has a diverse team of resident stakeholders who commit to attending sometimes weekly meetings and working in other ways to help their development take full advantage of the offerings available under MAP.**

The architects of MAP wanted to build it from the ground up; they knew you couldn't run a neighborhood-based initiative from City Hall. But for more than three years, bureaucratic hurdles stood in the way of hiring an engagement coordinator for each of the 15 developments. With MAP now fully staffed at the local level in partnership with the Center for Court Innovation, the work with residents has really taken off.

Karla Alonso grew up in Hammel Houses, a NYCHA development in Far Rockaway, Queens. Six years ago, she and her daughter moved to Polo Grounds, which abuts the famous Sugar Hill neighborhood in Upper Manhattan. Polo Grounds is one of the 15 MAP sites, but when it comes to MAP, her focus is a mile south in the heart of Harlem.



**Stakeholder team at St. Nicholas Houses. Photo: Center for Court Innovation**

In November 2017, Alonso became the engagement coordinator for the St. Nicholas Houses. She had been working for NYCHA as part of a Resident Watch Program that covered developments in Harlem, so St. Nick, as it's called, was already familiar territory. Her background, irrepressible energy and optimism, and deft ability to bring people together, make her well suited for the inherent challenges of the job.

Alonso spends much of her time identifying and then working with residents who want to play a leadership role in improving their communities. When MAP launched, resident involvement was limited to each development's Resident Association President. These elected leaders, some of whom have served for many years, are essential partners but they cannot do this work alone. If what you seek is "ground truth," as MAP's first director Amy Sananman has said, you need a variety of community voices and perspectives.

Today, thanks to considerable footwork by Alonso and the other engagement coordinators, each MAP site has a diverse team of resident "stakeholders," typically 15 people, ideally across the age spectrum, who commit to attending sometimes weekly meetings facilitated by their engagement coordinator and working in other ways to help their development take full advantage of the offerings available under MAP.

Rebecca Torres joined the St. Nick stakeholder team because she viewed it as a new avenue to get things done. As an older woman, Torres falls into the demographic slice of public housing residents most likely to get involved in MAP. Diverse participation is the goal for obvious reasons, including by residents as young as 16. Pier Washpon, age 23, recently completed a Masters in Global Affairs at NYU, had some free time and wanted to get involved in what she, like Torres, sees as a productive avenue for change. She grew up in a household where her mother described the burden of calling about building repairs as a "second job."



St. Nicholas Houses stakeholder team in action. Photos: Center for Court Innovation.

Recruiting even younger residents to join the stakeholder team has proven to be a challenge across sites. It's hard to build trust with youth, and the work involved may not immediately appeal to them, but Karla Alonso is proving it can be done with a mix of persistence and patience. The St. Nick resident stakeholder team now has three members between the ages of 16 and 21—well worth the effort, according to Alonso, to be able to listen their concerns and problem solve with them.

Age is just one measure of diversity. A stakeholder team should reflect the ethnic backgrounds and languages spoken among residents. For example, the Butler Houses stakeholder team has worked hard to recruit representatives who reflect the diversity of their

community: the team makeup now reflects these efforts, including African Americans, Latino residents who speak fluent Spanish, and West African residents, many of whom are Muslim, as well as representatives from across Butler's six buildings. This team and others continue to be a work in progress.

#### Meet the MAP Engagement Coordinator Karla Alonso of St. Nicholas



"Let's change our community narrative by building trust, by taking the initiative and accepting our limitations, and going beyond people's expectations by creating our own mold of how our own communities should be perceived."

Turnover in membership is also to be expected, according to Alonso. Rebecca Torres seems committed to the team for the long-term, but Washpon could easily leave if she lands a demanding job. One St. Nick team member left after receiving a concerning medical diagnosis and needed to concentrate on her health. "I become really attached to these residents, and they do with one another," Alonso says. "But turnover is a good thing. It brings in new people...and gives the more experienced teammates a natural leadership role."

Alonso and her peers bear significant responsibility not only for engaging and supporting residents but also for promoting communication and teamwork among MAP's many formal partners and allied organizations. Something as simple-sounding as painting a mural or hosting a learning event is likely to require input from multiple entities, some of which are bound to follow government regulations or agency protocols. It could be easy to lose steam and enthusiasm, but when a project or an event comes to fruition there's often an outsized sense of accomplishment for everyone involved and the process, however difficult, opens up new lines of communication and builds relationships.





The City offers resources and expertise, and there's energy and wisdom to be mined locally as well. One former engagement coordinator, Estevan Nembhard, recalls a workshop organized by the Mayor's Office to End Domestic and Gender-Based Violence held in conjunction with international Denim Day. The focus was on informed consent and although the target audience was youth, there were a few older residents present. When the facilitator asked what constitutes abuse, one older woman said, "It's when someone hurts you and then says it's your fault."

***"It seemed so clear she was talking from personal experience," Nembhard recalled, "and I thought how much better this event would have been if she had been involved in organizing and leading it. She's someone who all the kids jump when she speaks. Our stakeholder groups and residents generally need to be more involved in crafting events and trainings like this. It can't just be outsiders coming in to teach."***

Programming driven by the interests and needs of residents, and designed along with them, is precisely what the Mayor's Office to End Domestic and Gender-Based Violence seeks to undertake as it plans events and activities with the stakeholder teams. Others in City government who work closest with communities also share this ambition: "We're guests there," DFTA's Grant Cruz emphasizes. "It's not about what my agency wants or even what the Mayor wants," Cruz emphasizes, "We need to come in asking, 'What do you want to change?'"

On the last Saturday in September the St Nick stakeholder team held a daylong outdoor celebration with music, food, games and other reasons for people to come out and commune with their neighbors. There was also a large-scale drawing on display that featured a plaza within the development that the stakeholder team plans to revitalize using funding available through MAP. With a supply of markers and stickers on hand, members of the stakeholder team were encouraging residents to add their ideas for how to beautify and activate this shared public space.



Residents prioritizing issues at Brownsville Houses Local NeighborhoodStat. Photo: Center for Court Innovation.

# Justice in the Process

**In semi-annual boroughwide Neighborhood-Stat meetings, residents and others with a stake in the well-being of the development and surrounding neighborhood gather to discuss issues of concern, identify common goals, and begin the progress of organizing people and resources to implement real change.**

MAP has opened up lines of communications among city agencies that used to work in silos and brought many CBOs into the mix—on that there’s widespread agreement. Even an organization like the Red Hook Community Justice Center—already well connected locally and with City government—has benefited from MAP, according to Deputy Director Viviana Gordon. “You know what resources are available, and there’s a person who knows you and will answer your questions,” Gordon says. It all amounts to local problem solving, which as she explains, doesn’t happen enough in city government. Next STEP’s Dorin Hammond said much the same: “We’re utilizing one another as in-roads. Sharing what’s working and not working.”

This process—still a work in progress—is expanding to involve more and more residents of these 15 public housing developments and the surrounding neighborhoods. “People would plan events and never even consult with the residents. Now residents are meeting with representatives of City agencies; they’re visible at the NStat meetings and speaking up. It’s different,” explains Karla Alonso, engagement coordinator for St. Nicholas Houses.

NStat, shorthand for NeighborhoodStat, is a semi-annual meeting in which residents and others with a stake in the well-being of the development and surrounding neighborhood gather to discuss issues of concern, identify common goals, and begin the progress of organizing people and resources to implement real change. A single NStat meeting usually covers three or four developments with roughly an hour devoted to each.

Both the name and the original meeting location—the Jack Maple Room in One Police Plaza—invite comparisons with COMPStat, which the NYPD pioneered in the mid-90s as a complex management tool with unprecedented use of digitized crime statistics. COMPStat and the philosophy underlying it have influenced police agencies around the world and made policing and its effects more transparent to the public. On the NYPD’s web site, New Yorkers can track crime trends where they live.

While NStat sounds a lot like COMPStat, there are considerable differences between the two. NStat involves an array of City agencies, community-based organizations and individuals who are not joined, let alone accountable, to a single leader. Even the Mayor lacks authority over many of organizations involved in MAP, and of course has no formal authority over individual residents. NStat meetings now take place at Baruch College, a deliberate change of venue to foster an egalitarian ethos during meetings. Furthermore, NStat aims to promote progress on a broad range of outcomes, declining crime being just one among many. More than a management tool, NeighborhoodStat might be described as a small-scale realization of de Blasio’s campaign promise to infuse City government with the voices and spirit of New Yorkers.

Several people interviewed for this case study talked about the value of having everyone together in one room, even if only for an hour. “That’s the beauty of NStat. Ask a question about garbage and a representative of Sanitation steps up to the microphone to answer it,” says Gerald Nelson. After a long and distinguished career in the NYPD, in August 2015 Nelson became NYCHA’s Vice President for Public Safety. He attends most NStat meetings.



**To prepare for these meetings, each MAP development holds a LocalStat meeting in which residents take the lead in setting the agenda and facilitating discussion.**

While there's much to admire about NStat, both conceptually and in action, there is a built-in tension. The discussion needs to be orderly enough to be constructive—an hour is not much time—yet also remain real and collaborative. If the discussion becomes overly controlled or mediated, people may feel their perspectives and ideas are not heard, understood or respected. That's a hard balance to strike.

Finally, humans are subject to confirmation bias. In other words, we're naturally drawn to familiar ways of seeing that confirm our own beliefs, rather than to new, unfamiliar perspectives and explanations. You can see this happening in an NStat meeting when the discussion gets stuck in a groove that doesn't advance solving real problems. Ultimately, the forum is only as robust as the relationships underlying MAP. Those relationships are expanding and deepening, but effective teamwork to coordinate joint action and foster shared accountability requires time.

The first NStat meetings were held in summer 2016. When funding to hire engagement coordinators for the developments was delayed, the City brought people to One Police Plaza. "We wanted to get started and do something," recalls MAP's Director Renita Francois. Two years later, with all 15 engagement coordinators on board, the first local version of NStat ("LocalStat") was held in May 2018, in the cafeteria at Promise Academy in Harlem. Diverse stakeholders involved in the implementation of MAP at St. Nicholas Houses were present.

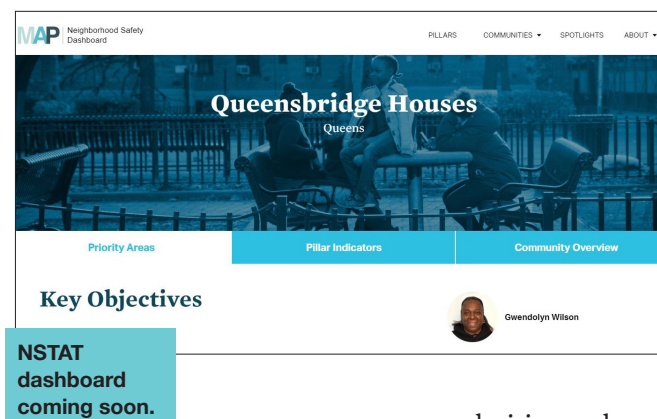
Today, residents play a significant role not only in their development's LocalStat meeting but at NStat as well. (Both meetings occur semi-annually.) The priorities that drive each NStat meeting's agenda are crafted through extensive consultation with the resident stakeholder teams, and the list of invited agencies and organizations reflects the issues and concerns the teams identify as priorities. And to make the conversation as productive as possible, all participants receive a policy brief crafted with input from residents in advance of each meeting.

One way to view MAP is through the lens of procedural justice, a field of study that emphasizes the importance of how justice is carried out. Tracey Meares, a professor at Yale Law School, is an expert in procedural justice. At a May 2018 panel discussion at NYU's Wagner School, Meares explained that in terms of justice, research shows that people care about four things: having a voice and input into the policies that affect them; being treated with dignity and respect and with concern for their rights; fair decision-making that is unbiased, transparent and based on facts that make sense; and finally, being able to assess the motives of

decision-makers. Through bringing government closer to people, through LocalStat and NeighborhoodStat meetings, and in many other ways, MAP is advancing all four.

Meares also emphasizes that one's experience of procedural justice is not passive. It's not something that happens to you; it's something in which you participate. And that too is a process, especially in communities where historically residents have been ignored, disrespected, or even maligned. It takes time for people to understand what it means to be a "principle and an agent" and how to take on that role, Meares explains.

Karla Alonso described precisely this dynamic at play: "I tell my stakeholder group, you can't just complain, you have to take initiative to make change happen. [But for decades] complaints have been their only avenue... This kind of shift, it's a process and a slow one.... The big hope is to create a new generation of community organizers. I want people to believe in themselves, to see that they are capable of doing what I do and even more."



# Beyond Safety Narrowly Defined

**People want to live in communities that promote an overall sense of wellbeing and are rich with opportunities for everyone.**

**Meet  
Pier Washpon,  
St. Nicholas Stakeholder**



“MAP allows me to be part of a resident team and get involved in the community. I enjoy learning from the other residents about what can be done to improve the neighborhood.”

Over roughly the first four years of MAP—from 2014 to 2018—crime declined in these 15 public housing developments. The rate of shootings in particular declined nearly 21%. Crime also declined in comparison to NYCHA developments and in public housing citywide, and the rate of decline in the MAP sites only marginally outpaced the others.

Should the MAP sites be vastly safer than other public housing developments? Maybe not. The process of nurturing collective efficacy as a way of suppressing crime is incremental, so it’s too soon to expect a sea change. Also, the City is engaged in multiple efforts to reduce crime in areas where it has long been elevated—the Mayor’s Office to Prevent Gun Violence being one example among many—so a wider-spread decline is not surprising.

More to the point, MAP was never only about reducing crime. And now that crime has reached historic lows even in these communities, it is no longer the overriding concern among residents it once was. As one engagement coordinator said, “People aren’t jumping out of bushes anymore, it’s not 1980. Maybe a rat will jump out. ... When you start to peel back the layers, you find that people have opinions about a lot of things. It’s not mainly about crime.”

People want to live in communities that promote an overall sense of wellbeing and are rich with opportunities for everyone. Safety, narrowly defined, is just one piece of that. NYCHA is of course a lynchpin in any effort to create healthy communities within and around public housing.

According to a recent study conducted by NYU Langone Health in partnership with community organizations in Red Hook, building conditions emerged as the number one health-related concern among residents surveyed. In small group conversations designed to illuminate and contextualize the survey results, community members shared their experiences with poor housing conditions and its impact on health, especially asthma and stress. Residents also described NYCHA’s system for undertaking repairs as slow and often requiring multiple steps, which adds to the stress.

While problems related to mold and lead paint have captured the spotlight, delaying even ordinary repairs can have wide ranging health repercussions. It’s hard to eat well and manage your diabetes, for example, if your oven hasn’t worked for weeks. It’s hard to age in place if the elevator in your building breaks repeatedly.

Last June, around the time resident stakeholders were attending their first NeighborhoodStat meeting, Mayor de Blasio committed significant additional City funding for capital improvements in NYCHA developments and called on New York State and the federal government to also invest in improving quality of life for residents in these aging buildings. Everyone acknowledges that significant capital is needed to move beyond repairs that are mere band-aids.

In January 2019, the City forged a new partnership with the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development to ensure real changes continue apace at NYCHA. MAP provides a vehicle for NYCHA to learn more about what residents want and value, and how to involve them in the process of revitalizing the largest stock of public housing in the country, in a city that desperately needs affordable housing.

# Coda: The Future





MAP has influenced for the better how a number of city agencies go about the daily work of providing vital services to poor and low-income New Yorkers. Equally important, it has created avenues for residents of public housing to work with local government and seems to be changing what they expect from government—and what they expect from themselves and their neighbors as engaged members of a community. This complex City initiative has evolved considerably and will continue to change, but already City officials are considering how to scale up its most important elements.



Both the process and promise of MAP could be expanded to more NYCHA developments. There are six NYCHA developments in Brownsville, for example—MAP encompasses just two of them. According to MAP's director Renita Francois, working in these two developments has been a great way to learn, and it makes sense to apply the lessons in additional developments. One idea under consideration is to work toward expanding the principles of MAP to serve whole neighborhoods as opposed to specific developments.

The Mayor's Office of Criminal Justice (MOCJ) has identified 35 neighborhoods across the city with elevated levels of crime and disadvantage. They encompass many of the MAP developments as well as neighborhoods in areas of the city without a MAP site.

After talking about the many benefits of MAP, long-time Red Hook resident Trequan Bekka paused to reflect on the initiative's limitations: "How much can we teach our kids here, how much job training can we provide so that they can even afford an apartment in the back of the Houses?" he asked, then answered the question himself: "We need to become more economically and politically savvy."

Extended summer hours at community centers, summer jobs for youth, support for seniors raising children, green spaces, a respected forum where residents sit down with City officials to discuss local concerns; these alone will not solve inequality in New York or any other city, but they can be essential resources and tools for those who rightfully seek a bigger piece of the pie.



Images of residents, staff, and partners.  
Photos: Green City Force, Center for Court Innovation

