

Mayor's Office of Criminal Justice

Neighborhood Activation Study

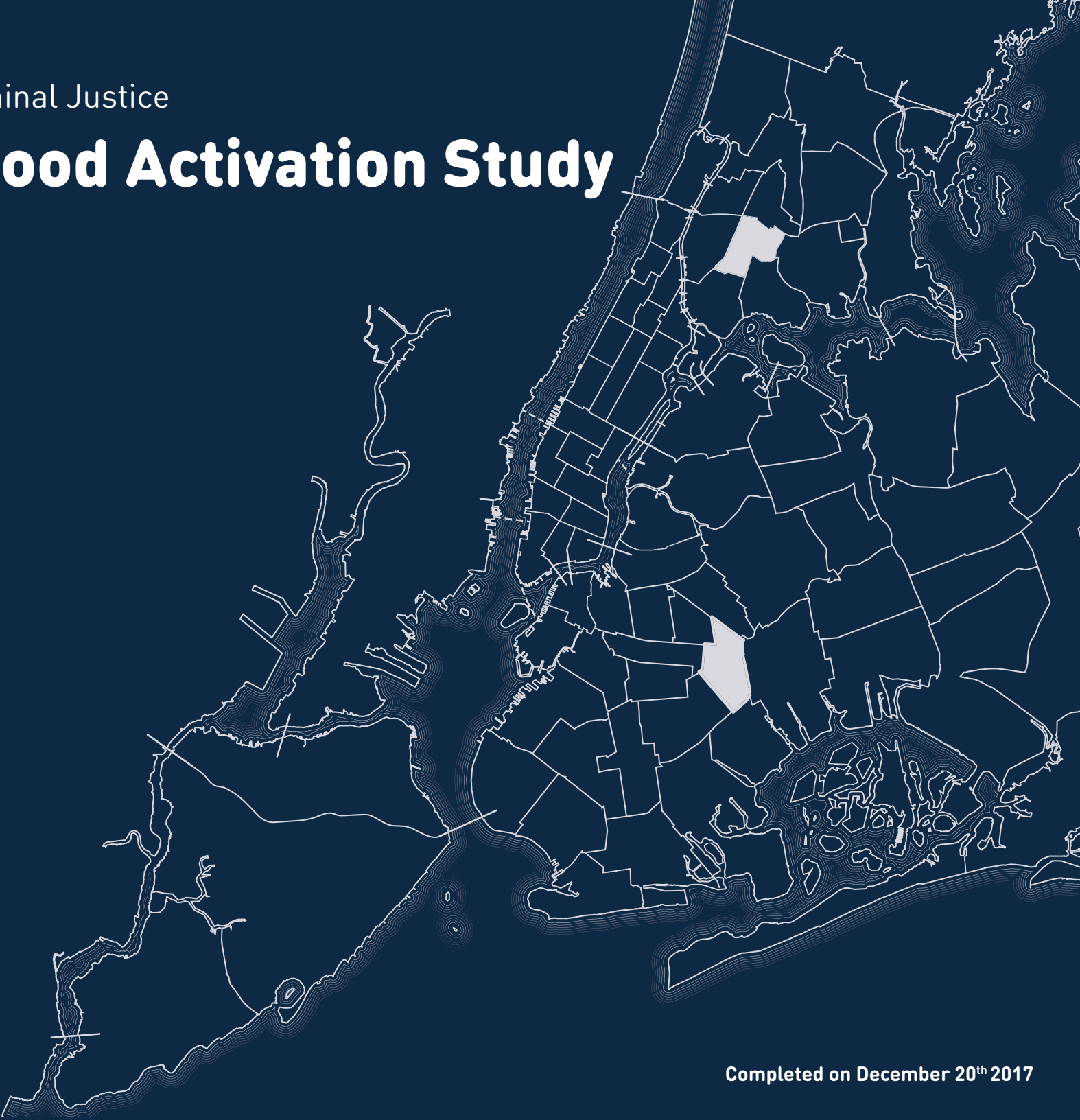


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Executive Summary

As part of the Mayor's Action Plan for Neighborhood Safety, in May 2017 the Mayor's Office of Criminal Justice (MOCJ), Police Department (NYPD), and Department of Design and Construction (DDC) engaged architecture and urbanism practice Studio Gang to study how design can be a tool to help reduce crime and build positive relationships between police and the people who reside in the neighborhoods where they serve. The result is a Neighborhood Activation Study that offers methods and specific urban design and architecture recommendations for two New York neighborhoods. These recommendations touch police stations, parks, libraries, streets, and other parts of a neighborhood's built environment. They are grounded in months of research, site investigations, and discussions with people who live, work, visit, and care about these communities.

The Study identifies and illustrates design and construction projects in Brownsville (Brooklyn) and Morrisania (the Bronx) that could be incorporated into the City's capital improvement plans. These ideas and the principles they are founded on are also meant to be instructive for projects in other neighborhoods. Toward that end, the Study shares its methodology for determining

what kinds of projects should be undertaken and how to make decisions about where those investments should occur. Finally, the Study suggests policies, programs, and partnerships that may serve as vehicles for the implementation and stewardship of these projects.

Like many low-income neighborhoods in New York City, a large proportion of the built environment of Brownsville and Morrisania is publicly owned and receives significant city investment from many offices, agencies, and authorities. Additionally, these neighborhoods are highly fragmented, and the pieces can be antagonistic to each other. **This Study illustrates how a coordinated effort from public entities in partnership with communities can connect and reestablish flow between the disparate parts to make it possible to rebuild relationships and rejoin the pieces.**

A critical insight gained from extensive engagement with experts, agencies, and residents, as well as a broad review of related literature and studies, is that **shifts in neighborhood safety and well-being require coordinated changes in the built environment, programming, policy, and practice.** These include activities

associated with policing strategies but extend to conditions of local employment, youth engagement, access to education, and economic activity, as well as the quality of streets, open spaces, and public buildings. **Because the forces that influence neighborhood safety are diverse, complex, and unevenly distributed across communities, the design response must be equally diverse, meet complexity with clarity, and seek equity in its distribution.**

Guiding Principles

Engage the real experts. Community residents and stakeholders are the real experts on their neighborhoods and should be engaged at every stage of design and development to ensure community ownership and long-term success.

Prioritize youth. In many high-crime neighborhoods, the combination of youth crew activity and police enforcement restrict access for youth to outdoor public space. Consider how youth are engaged in the design process, given opportunities during installation or construction, and welcomed into public space.

Enable social connections. Places to gather, socialize, and access cultural resources reduce crime and inequality, promote stewardship and collaboration, and build collective efficacy.

Address the complex roots of crime. Safety is not just a law enforcement issue. Design strategies must address the complex roots of crime: social, economic, environmental, and educational. Safe spaces are hubs for opportunity that bring partners together to address many issues at once.

Start with what's there. Every neighborhood has assets that strengthen and support residents. Build off extant assets, existing plans, and future investments to maximize available resources.

Co-locate activities, community organizations, and service providers. If programmed and maintained, community rooms and public spaces can bring different groups of people together to generate social cohesion and civic engagement.

Reduce territoriality. The safe movement of young people is often limited to specific developments. Moreover, control and maintenance of public spaces are divided by agency. Break down traditional and often invisible boundaries to create more neutral spaces for young people and facilitate new opportunities for unusual intermingling of programs and agencies.

Expand activity on public property. Cultivate civic buildings and adjacent property to host activities and services and engage new participants. Use these existing assets to improve neighborhood safety and create neutral ground in the plazas and sidewalks immediately surrounding them.

Light the night. Dark empty streets, locked parks, and vacant lots make neighborhoods feel unsafe at night. This is exacerbated by the many public spaces and programs that close by 6 pm. It is also correlated with the majority of crime, which takes place between 6 pm and 1 am. Do more to brighten up neighborhoods with creative lighting and provide safe evening activities.

Reduce barriers to local commerce. Community stakeholders frequently raised the need for more local business opportunities, especially street vending. Well-managed street vending can be an important path for local entrepreneurs, while also bringing spaces to life. Less red tape could result in more creative partnerships like Green Cart NYC, which expanded permits for pushcarts in low-income neighborhoods, helped create jobs for entrepreneurs, and increased access to healthy foods where it's needed most.

Invest in dignity. Data shows that plazas, parks, and streetscape greenery build trust in police and among neighbors, foster positive relationships, and improve social cohesion. Every community deserves spaces that are clean, beautiful, and welcoming.

Provide equity in maintenance. Clean, well-maintained spaces make a difference in perceptions of safety and trust in government. Many low-income neighborhoods lack maintenance partners with the capacity to sponsor public space programs or the staffing to keep spaces open for extended hours. Equitable investment is needed for staffing and capacity building to ensure the success of neighborhood activation strategies.

Where to focus?

Find Opportunity in Places with Need

Overview

Where do we focus? To drive lasting positive change, wisely invest precious resources, and accomplish the greatest good, we must find opportunities where public action can strengthen ongoing community initiatives, agency efforts, and planned capital expenditures. This Study suggests a **two-tiered approach** that starts at the scale of the city to identify neighborhoods facing acute hardship and then focuses in on the scale of the neighborhood to locate zones of a few blocks where targeted action will reverberate out to the broader community. This process of researching and mapping must be inclusive and transparent, done in collaboration with communities and agencies.

Neighborhood Selection Criteria

Looking at the city as a whole, identify focus neighborhoods with the **greatest need**. To develop a more complete understanding of need, find the overlap within the following two data sets.

- **Mayor's Action Plan for Neighborhood Safety**
- **Hardship Index**

Focus Area Selection Criteria

Once the neighborhoods with the greatest need have been identified, locate the areas with the **greatest opportunity**. Opportunity is defined here as the points of convergence within the following seven data sets.

- **Density of Youth**
- **Credible Community-Based Organizations**
- **Critical Mass of Civic Assets**
- **Underutilized Public Space**
- **Mix of Street Types**
- **Planned Capital Investment**
- **Economic Opportunity**



No Longer Empty's family arts event, Old Bronx Borough Courthouse (Photo: No Longer Empty)



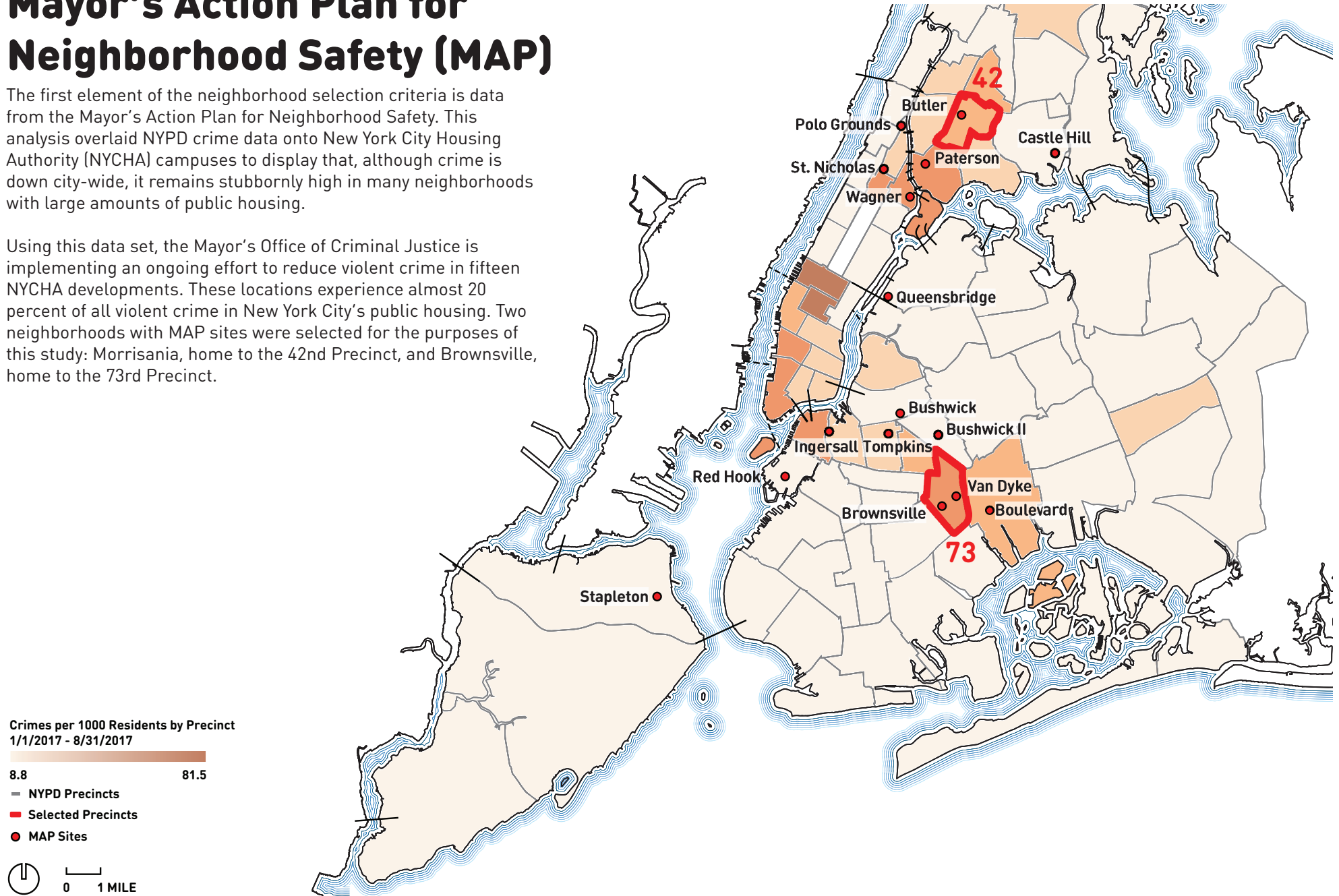
Howard Houses Farm (Photo: Green City Force)

Where to focus? – Neighborhood Selection Criteria

Mayor's Action Plan for Neighborhood Safety (MAP)

The first element of the neighborhood selection criteria is data from the Mayor's Action Plan for Neighborhood Safety. This analysis overlaid NYPD crime data onto New York City Housing Authority (NYCHA) campuses to display that, although crime is down city-wide, it remains stubbornly high in many neighborhoods with large amounts of public housing.

Using this data set, the Mayor's Office of Criminal Justice is implementing an ongoing effort to reduce violent crime in fifteen NYCHA developments. These locations experience almost 20 percent of all violent crime in New York City's public housing. Two neighborhoods with MAP sites were selected for the purposes of this study: Morrisania, home to the 42nd Precinct, and Brownsville, home to the 73rd Precinct.



Hardship Index

The second element of the neighborhood selection criteria, the Hardship Index, was developed by Studio Gang’s data analytics consultant, Will Synder, in collaboration with Presence Health. The index evaluates economic hardship faced by a community by analyzing six topics from the American Community Survey to produce a single score that enables comparison between geographies. The Hardship Index is highly correlated with other measures of economic hardship, such as labor force statistics, and with poor health outcomes.

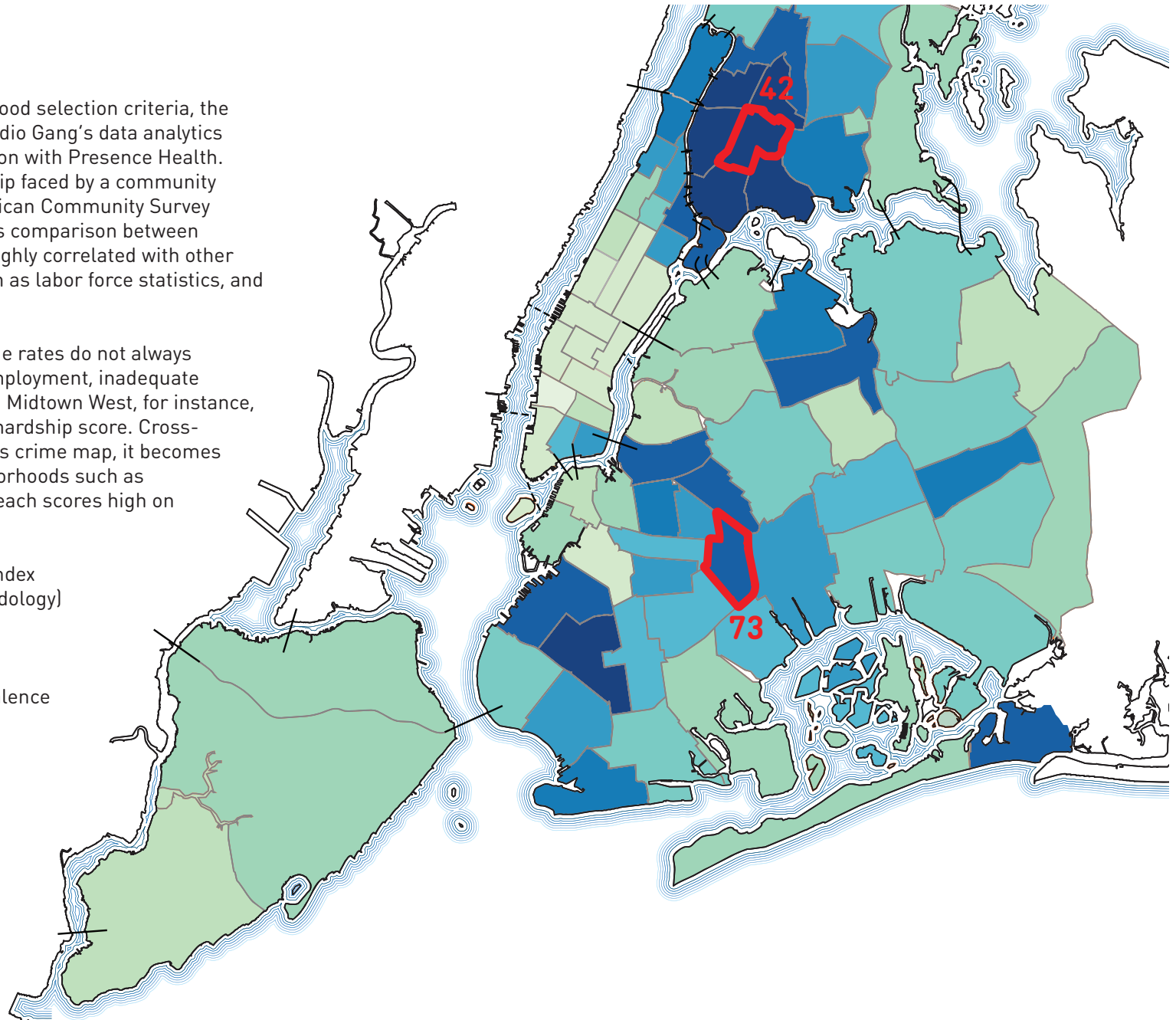
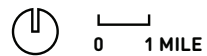
The Hardship Index clarifies that crime rates do not always correlate with issues of poverty, unemployment, inadequate education, and social disorganization. Midtown West, for instance, has a high crime rate, but a very low hardship score. Cross-comparing this index with the previous crime map, it becomes possible to prioritize action in neighborhoods such as Brownsville and Morrisania because each scores high on both metrics.

Attributes analyzed by the Hardship index
(see Technical Background for methodology)

- Crowded housing
- Poverty rate
- Unemployment
- Adults without high school equivalence
- Age dependency ratio
- Per capita income



- NYPD Precincts
- Selected Precincts
- MAP Sites

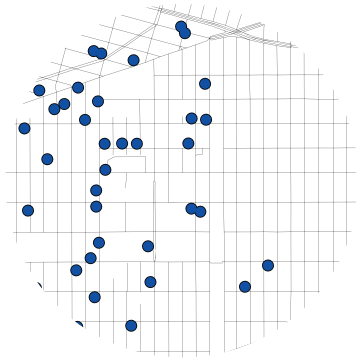


Mapping Opportunity



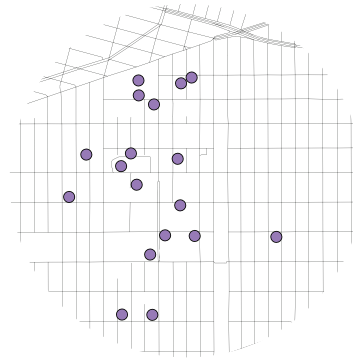
Density of Youth

Number of residents <18 years old



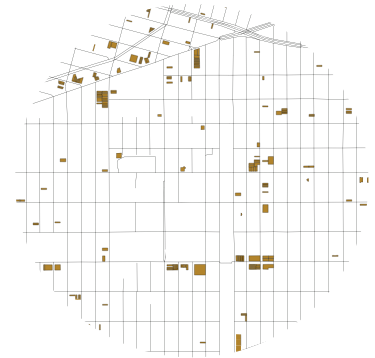
Community-Based Organizations

CBOs funded by Dept. of Youth & Community Dvlpmnt. or city agencies



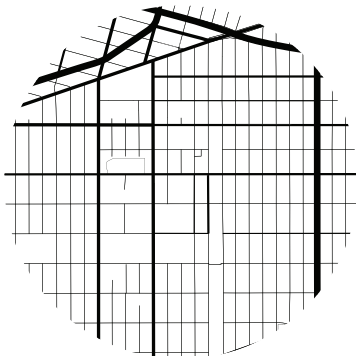
Critical Mass of Civic Assets

City services and community-based organizations



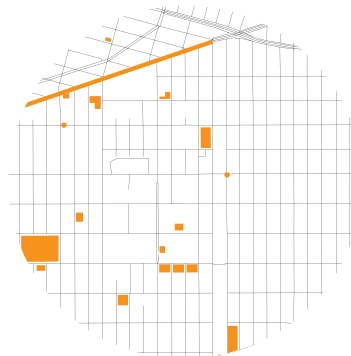
Underutilized Public Space

Publicly owned vacant land



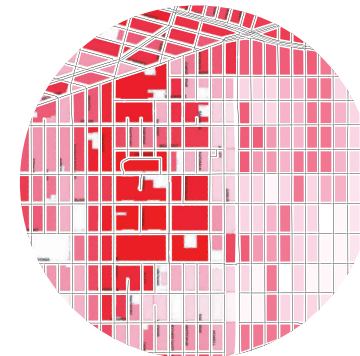
Mix of Street Types

Types of streets distinguished by average daily traffic



Planned Public Investment

Planned investments from all agencies



Economic Opportunity

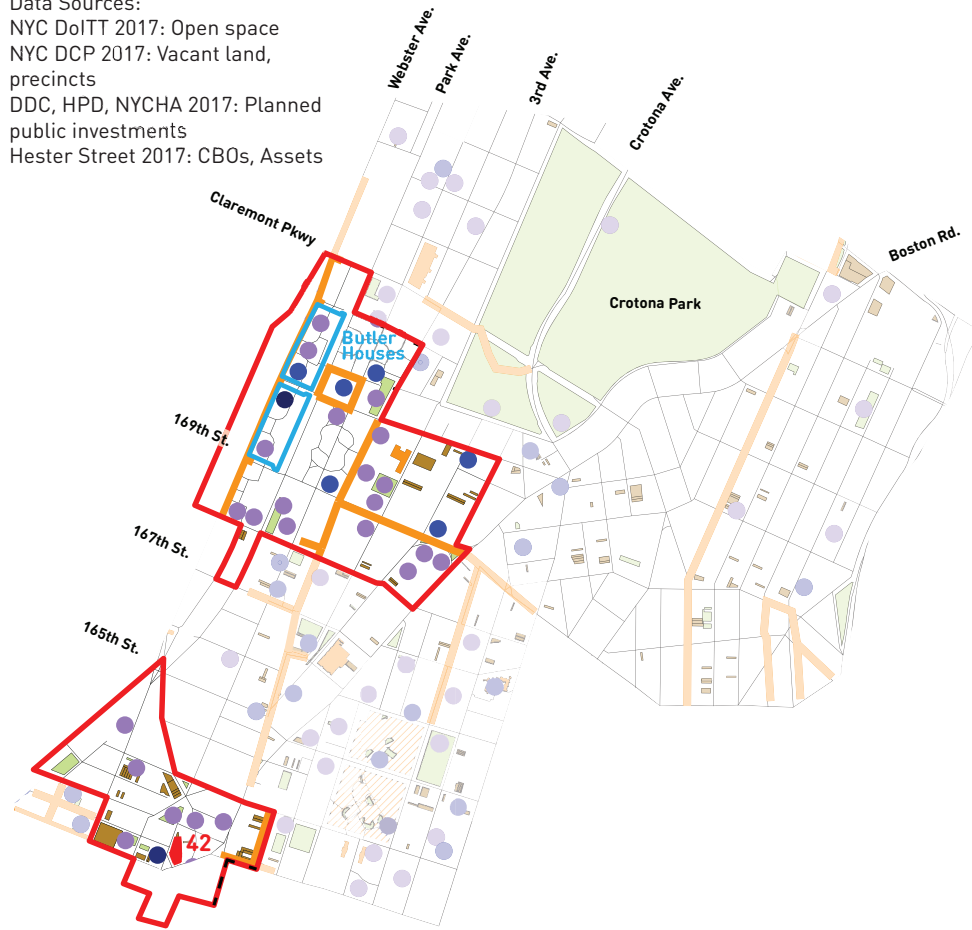
Index of economic indicators: transit, investment, and density of office space

Where to focus? – Focus Area Selection

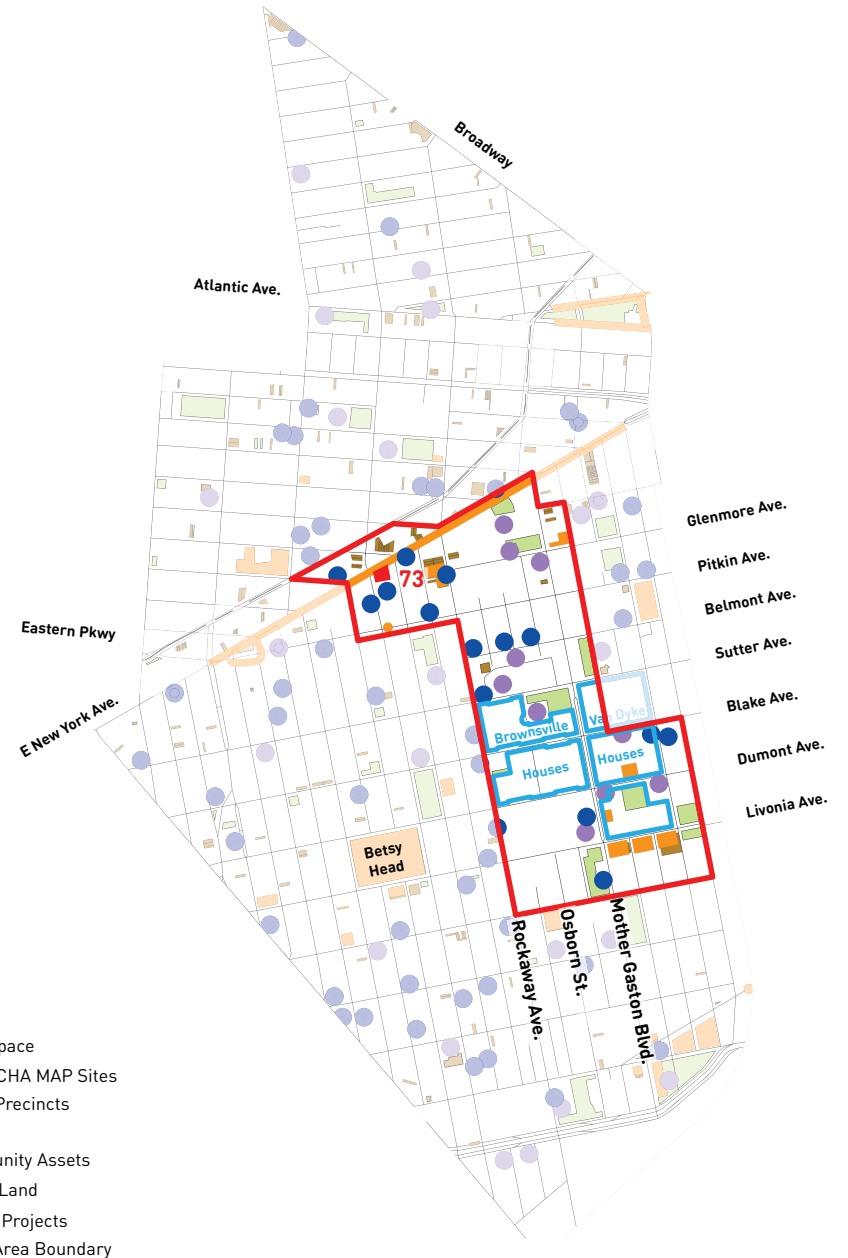
Selected Focus Areas

With residents, specialists, and agencies, Studio Gang uncovered areas of density and overlap between the focus site selection criteria and located focus area zones where targeted action will reverberate throughout the neighborhood.

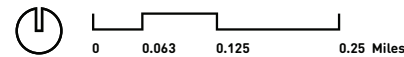
Data Sources:
 NYC DoITT 2017: Open space
 NYC DCP 2017: Vacant land, precincts
 DDC, HPD, NYCHA 2017: Planned public investments
 Hester Street 2017: CBOs, Assets



Morrisania (42)



- Open Space
- Key NYCHA MAP Sites
- Police Precincts
- CBOs
- Community Assets
- Vacant Land
- Capital Projects
- Focus Area Boundary



Brownsville (73)

How to gain understanding?

See, Listen, and Learn

Overview

For neighborhood activation to succeed, its proposals must be grounded in agency initiatives and tool kits, the aspirations of local community members, expert opinion, relevant precedents, and the physical, social, and political realities of each neighborhood. This section outlines how to facilitate this process by illustrating Studio Gang's methodology for gathering information during the study. Our six steps are outlined below.

Interview Agencies

Deep but often siloed knowledge of current initiatives, planned capital investments, and policy exists among agency employees. As a first step, interview agency stakeholders to centralize their knowledge base.

Engage Communities

Community residents and stakeholders are the real experts on their neighborhoods. Gaining their knowledge of what works, what doesn't, what's underway, and what needs support to get started is paramount.

Review Literature

Search out information and data points that portend effective strategies for improving social cohesion and economic opportunity.

Explore Precedents

Excellent strategies for leveraging public action with community efforts to improve neighborhoods have been pioneered in Los Angeles, Tokyo, and Boston. Learn from these examples and search out others.

Investigate Sites

Walk the sites, meet the actors, and experience the programs to know how to reinforce what already works.



Morrisania community workshop (Photo: Hester Street)

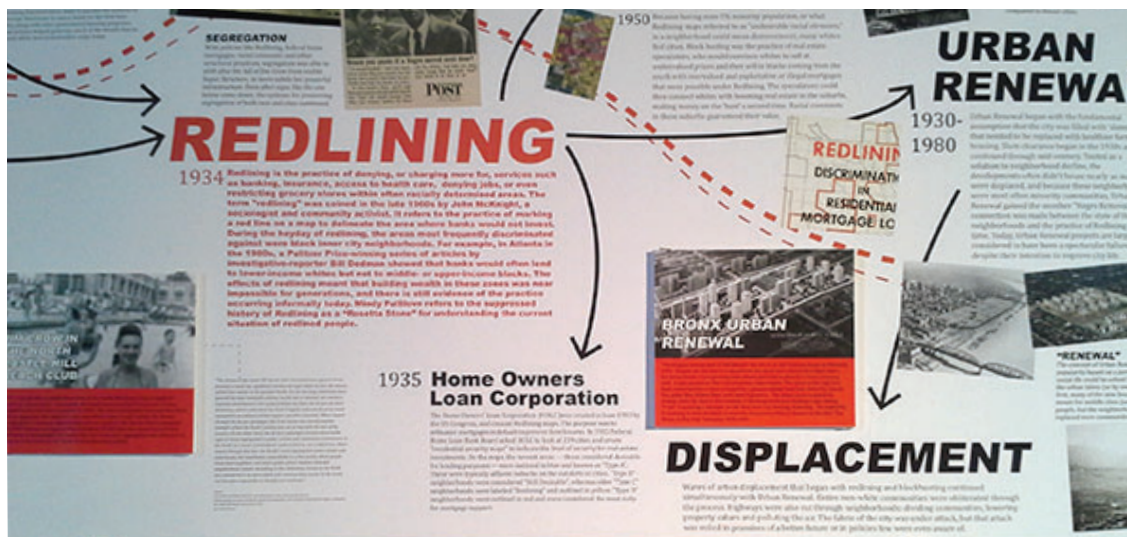


Exhibit on the history of redlining (Photo: No Longer Empty)

How to gain understanding?

Interview Agencies

Overview

Learn about ongoing initiatives, how to leverage existing tool kits, and uncover opportunities for collaboration and coordination. Meet with agency leadership who are defining strategic goals and local operators who work on the ground in focus areas. Interview complementary agencies together and communicate all findings to all agencies in order to foster information sharing and explore possibilities for collaboration.

Approaches

- Learn about existing initiatives.
- Research existing tool kits.
- Identify opportunities for coordination and collaboration between agencies and with CBOs.



How to gain understanding?

Engage Communities

Community residents and stakeholders are the real experts on their neighborhoods and have the most at stake. Engagement should happen at every stage of the design process to ensure long-term success and community ownership. Studio Gang and Hester Street created a multi-phased community engagement process that was community-driven, iterative, and collaborative.

Approaches

- Partner with local groups
- Encourage collaboration
- Support community leadership
- Create resident-driven policies
- Involve youth
- Build on previous work
- Support ongoing work
- Make information accessible
- Create clear expectations
- Meet people where they are
- Conduct one-on-one interviews
- Meet with focus groups
- Attend informal events
- Map assets



Site investigation, June 15, 2017



Project kick-off meeting, June 27, 2017



Theater of War performance, July 15, 2017



Economic development meeting, July 24, 2017

How to gain understanding?

Engage Specialists

Including different kinds of specialists on the project team allows the work to incorporate cutting-edge research, leverage new tools, and gain a broader perspective on the opportunities and challenges of a neighborhood. Work with specialists at every stage of project development so that they can respond to the conditions of sites, spark ideas, influence principles, and critique design proposals.

Approach

- Engage early and often.
- Facilitate collaboration, not just consultation.
- Engage individually and as a collective.



Mindy Fullilove, MD, Hon AIA
Mental Health Specialist



Stacey L. Barrenger, AM, PhD
Criminal Justice Specialist



James Lima
Economics of Placemaking Specialist



Will Snyder
Data Analytics Specialist

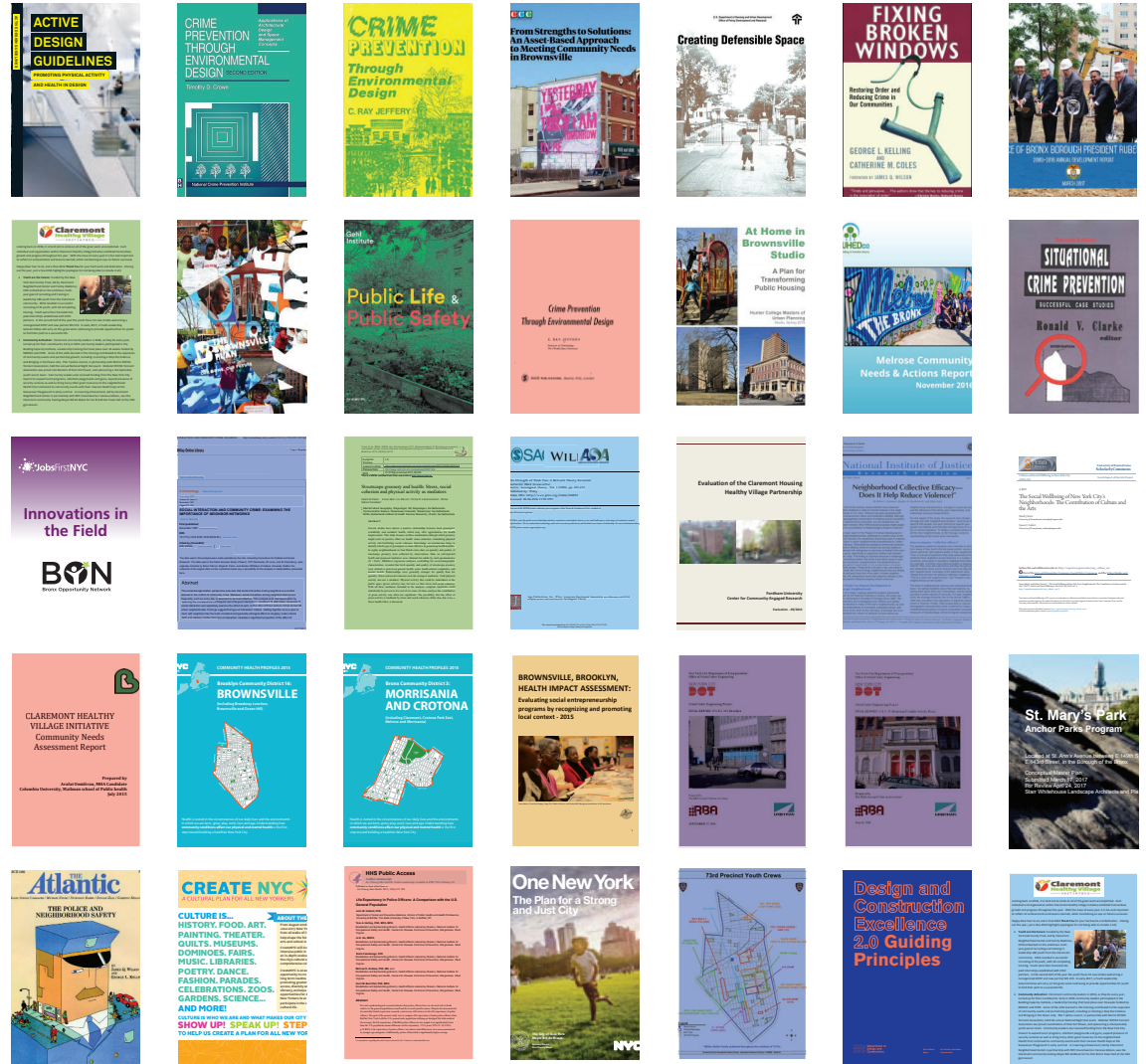
How to gain understanding?

Review Literature

Every place has a unique past and present. Review recent and historic planning developments and learn about an area's cultural history. It is also important to survey literature on the relationship between the built environment and crime prevention, mental and physical health, and access to opportunity.

Approach

- Review previous studies to learn from existing work and find points of convergence.
- Study the cultural history of the neighborhood and community to design from a more informed perspective.
- Survey historic and contemporary literature on neighborhood safety to learn from others' work.



How to gain understanding?

Explore Precedents

Studying precedent buildings can lead to discoveries about the relationship between the built environment, police–community relations, and neighborhood safety. Go beyond the image: research the response to the built work and, if possible, speak to people who encounter it on a daily basis to uncover its impact on those who use and experience it.

Approach

- Study existing buildings and spaces that incorporate features to address neighborhood safety.
- Search for regionally diverse examples but be mindful of their relevance to a specific climate and culture.
- Analyze the physical interventions and the patterns of programmatic use to further understand their potential benefits.



Rampart Station, Los Angeles, 2008
Perkins + Will Architects



Dudley Square Station, Boston, 2011
Leers Weinzapfel Associates



Skiyabashi Koban (Police Box), Tokyo, 1982
Yamashita



121st Precinct, New York City, 2013
Rafael Viñoly Architects

How to gain understanding?

Investigate Sites

Visiting a neighborhood is not enough; it takes exploring a space with residents and specialists to build relationships and develop a deeper understanding of a place.

Approach

- Explore the neighborhood with resident leaders, service providers, and specialists.
- Talk to people of all ages to hear different perspectives.
- Walk the neighborhood at different times of day.



NYPD ride-along w/ Officers Hossain and Jamil



Specialist site investigation w/ Mindy Fullilove



Community-led night tours



Studio Gang site investigation w/ Jeanne Gang

How to gain understanding?

Findings

From Agencies

Initiatives

- Vision Zero
NYC Dept. of Transportation (NYC DOT)
- Parks Without Borders
NYC Parks Dept. (NYC Parks)
- NextGeneration NYCHA
NYC Housing Authority (NYCHA)
- Green Infrastructure Program
NYC Dept. of Environmental Protection (NYC DEP)
- Mayor's Action Plan for Neighborhood Safety
Mayor's Office for Criminal Justice (MOCJ)
- Mayor's Office of Tech + Innovation (MOTI)
- Building Healthy Communities
Mayors' Office of Strategic Partnership (MOSP)
and the Fund for Public Health in New York

Tool Kits & Public Resources

- Neighborhood Coordination Officers (NYPD)
- LinkNYC (MOTI)
- Rain Gardens (DEP)
- Green Carts (NYC Health)
- Movies Under the Stars (DPR)
- Street Seats, Plaza Program, Under the El (DOT)

Opportunities for Coordination/Collaborations

- Lighting
- Art in public space
- Library programming
- Edges of NYCHA campuses
- Streets and sidewalks next to civic property
- Intersection of civic spaces and transportation

From Communities

Partner with local groups.

Community-based organizations and stakeholders are experts in their communities. Lead with local knowledge, skills, and services.

Encourage collaboration.

Build coalitions to strengthen community partnerships and leverage skills, knowledge, and joint funding opportunities.

Support community leadership.

Properly recognize and compensate participants for their time.

Create resident-driven policies.

Engage residents in the design and implementation of policies that pertain to neighborhood safety.

Involve youth.

Involve youth in design and development processes in meaningful ways. Engagement is key to project viability.

Build on previous work and support ongoing work.

Build on existing plans and future capital projects. Connect to existing programs, initiatives, and design proposals. Much work has already been done; use it!

Make information accessible.

Share collected data and information back with the community to help leaders make informed future decisions.

Create clear expectations.

Communicate project goals, deliverables, and timeline. Don't over promise and under deliver.

From Specialists

Mental Health Insights, Mindy Fullilove

Neighborhoods suffer because they are cut off from social and economic systems, which in turn inflames crime and drives negative public health outcomes. Decades of slanderous statements directed against public housing must be reversed; though imperfect it is a valuable asset that backstops the economic well-being of disadvantaged New Yorkers. Multi-system, multi-scale interventions—sensitive to local culture and local voices—are required to address the social inequalities and injustices that drive crime.

Criminal Justice Insights, Stacey L. Barrenger

To successfully combat social disorganization leading to increased delinquency, crime, and perceptions of dangerousness, it is imperative to increase opportunities for social interaction between community members and to foster increased informal social control and collective efficacy.

Economic Insights, James Lima

Residents perceive the streets and public places in the study areas to be dangerous, thus limiting the viability of a commercial environment. Place-based economic development approaches, formulated and driven by the community, are best suited to reverse this trend because the problems and solutions are more accurately and contextually defined.

Data Analytics, Will Snyder

The Hardship Index offers a more complete picture of an individual's economic challenges than any one data set. The usual link between neighborhood average income and social engagement is negatively affected by local levels of economic inequality.

How to gain understanding?

Findings

From Literature

The Value of Parks and Plazas

People with abundant access to parks and plazas are 28 percent more likely to trust police (Center for Active Design and the Knight Foundation, “Assembly Research Brief No. 1”).

Evidence for Green Streets

Streetscape greenery improves neighborhood social cohesion, trust, and positive relationships (de Vries et al. [2013]. “Streetscape greenery and health: Stress, social cohesion and physical activity as mediators”).

Support for Program Activation

People with access to community events are 13 percent more likely to trust police (Center for Active Design and the Knight Foundation, “Soul of the Community”).

Rationale for Community Events

Getting together once a year or more with neighbors reduces crime (Bellair, Paul. [1997]. “Social interaction and community crime: examining the importance of neighbor networks”).

The Case for Culture

Access to cultural resources is linked to a 14 percent decrease in child abuse and an 18 percent drop in crime (Stern, Mark and Susan Seifert. [2017]. “The Social Wellbeing of New York City’s Neighborhoods: The Contribution of Culture and the Arts”).

From Precedents

Transparent and Welcoming Entry, Rampart Station

Rampart uses two transferable strategies to create a sense of welcoming. A gracious lobby oriented toward an adjacent community garden, combined with extensive glazing, creates a sense of arrival and welcoming for visitors to the station. This community-oriented design is reinforced by the clear visual connection from the waiting area to the community multipurpose room and the community relations office, and other publicly oriented services.

Prominent Community Room, Dudley Square Station

Dudley Square demonstrates how to raise awareness of police outreach efforts by making the community room a literal beacon for the neighborhood. The double-height space is prominently located at the front corner of the building in a glass volume, announcing its presence by glowing at night. The room and other community-related offices are directly accessible from a corner entry.

Entry Greeters, Skiyabashi Koban (Police Box)

Skiyabashi exhibits a transferable strategy for strengthening ties between residents and officers: move the point of contact outside. Officers positioned in public space greet visitors, answer questions, and make the police building more approachable and connected to the street.

Greenery and Stormwater Retention, 121st Precinct

The 121st’s community green space and rain garden visually manifest a commitment to public stewardship, shared values, and community outreach by placing a well cared for neighborhood amenity in public view. This strategy of using small gestures to demonstrate broader values can be deployed at other precincts throughout the city.

From Sites

NYPD Ride-Along

Officers Hossain and Jamil of the 44th Precinct took Studio Gang on a night patrol. It was important to see the consistent dispersal of groups in public spaces, hear why it was important, and learn how officers on foot versus in a car respond differently to incident reports.

Specialist Site Investigation

Studio Gang walked the sites with Mindy Fullilove, James Lima, and Hester Street to gain their unique perspectives of each neighborhood and to talk to people, like Chino (page 18, top right), about the challenges and opportunities they see.

Community-Led Night Tours

To complement the NYPD ride-along, Studio Gang walked Morrisania at night with Five Mualimm-ak to learn what activities happen at night and where.

Studio Gang Site Investigations

By walking the streets, interacting with local businesses and CBOs, and speaking to residents, Studio Gang gained an understanding of the context in which the physical and social networks of each neighborhood exist. Studio Gang used this grounding to develop strategies and interventions that will effectively bridge gaps and connect disparate places and people.

What's important?

Identify Points of Convergence

Experts determined, and community members confirmed, that neighborhood safety involves a wide variety of issues, all of which need to be addressed simultaneously to make lasting change. Identified through multiple workshops and meetings, these issues were categorized into six families of related challenges and opportunities.

Youth Engagement

Violence Prevention

Culture & Community

Built Environment

Jobs & Small Businesses

Health & Wellness

- High proportion of “disconnected” youth (ages 16–19, out of school and work)
- Lack of programs that appeal to youth
- Negative relationship between police and community and between police and young men of color
- High levels of incarceration and recidivism
- High levels of returning citizens
- High crime in and around NYCHA
- Youth crew territories negatively affect area
- Territories are barriers to services
- Need better lighting throughout neighborhood
- Crime around transit hubs
- Need neutral space
- Lack of awareness of available services
- Need intergenerational space
- Need diversity of recreation options
- Lack of spaces for visitors
- Informal barriers to use of assets
- Underutilized land
- Underutilized assets
- Broken commercial corridors
- Outstanding NYCHA maintenance issues
- Businesses are closed in evenings and at night
- Lack of workforce training for women, youth, incarcerated, and formerly incarcerated
- Landlords holding property hostage
- High obesity rates (32–35 percent)
- Poor overall health of residents
- Need access to healthy food and food education
- Limited places to spend discretionary time

What's important?

Organize the Issues

The "policy wheel" is a graphic expression of the broad range of issue types under consideration in this study. Organized as a circle, it is immediately clear when one category or another is absent. Throughout this document, the wheel appears as a quick graphic summarizing the effects of a given place or program, whether proposed or existing. Studio Gang's ambition is that such a graphic leitmotif serves as a check ensuring that designs reflect the needs and aspirations of the people with the most at stake, which in turn greatly increases the potential that they make lasting impacts. This framework of toggling between design and evaluation can be used to address any complex policy issue.



Where to start?

Start With What's There

Studio Gang worked with community members, specialists, and agencies to identify **people, programs, and places** that are assets in each community. Additionally, there are elements that are held in common on every block and planned public investments that can be leveraged to contribute to neighborhood safety.

Mapping these discoveries spatially and temporally can reveal key opportunities for design to support, fill in the gaps, and connect the existing assets in each neighborhood.



Be on Belmont at Osborn Plaza, September 1, 2017 (Photo: Made in Brownsville)



169th Step Streets (Photo: Studio Gang)

Where to start?

People

Work with communities to identify people who are neighborhood assets. Engage them to learn how and where design can support their projects and initiatives. Some examples in Brownsville include:



1
Local Business Owners
Ionna, Diana, and
Melissa Jimenez



2
Resident Leaders
At the Langston Hughes
Senior Center



3
Neighbors
Brownsville residents



4
**Community Based
Organizations**
Made in Brownsville



5
**National Agencies with
Local Presence**
Center for Court
Innovation



6
City Agencies
NYPD



Case Study, Belmont Avenue, Brownsville

Where to start?

Programs and Places

Work with communities to map programs and places that are neighborhood assets to reveal patterns of programmatic use. By revealing what's there, you can identify what and where to introduce new or additional programs. Program providers include residents, agencies, schools, community based organizations, not for profits, businesses, and others.

Local Program Providers

- Brownsville Community Justice Center
- Community Solutions
- Langston Hughes Senior Center
- 3 Black Cats Cafe
- Mayor's Office of Technology and Innovation
- Made in Brownsville
- Department of Transportation
- Pitkin Avenue BID
- Belmont Medical
- Family Services Network of NY



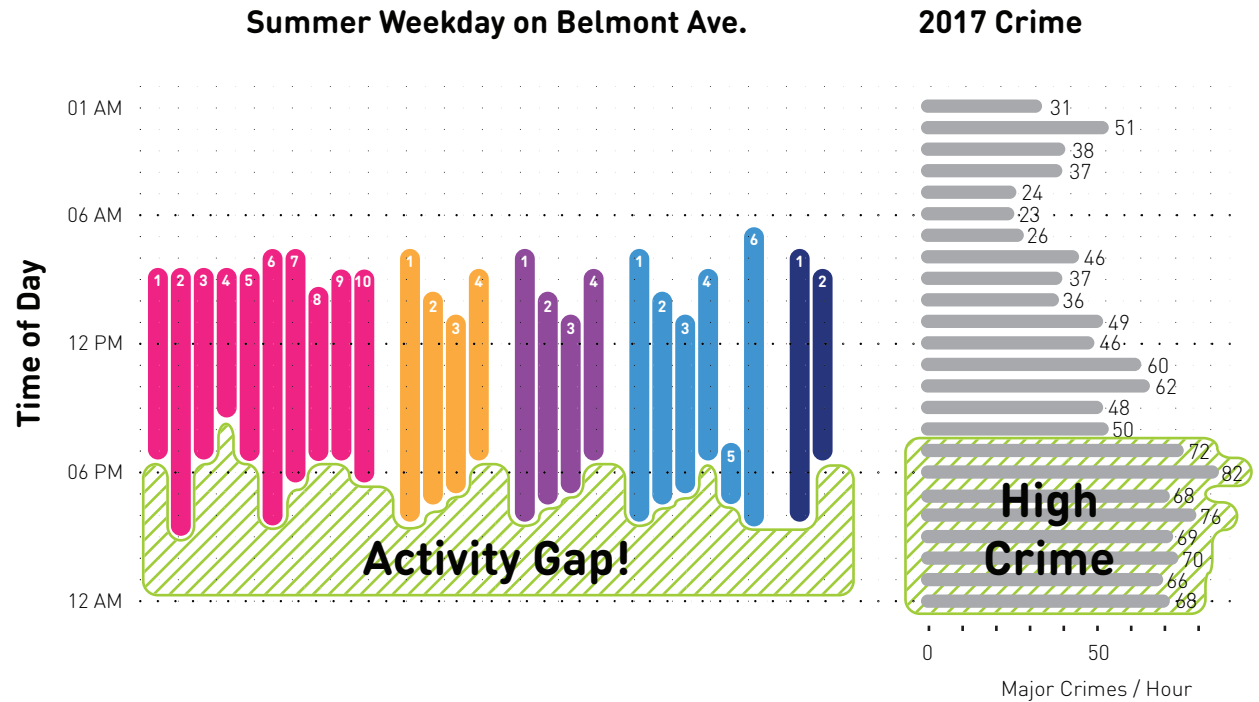
Case Study, Belmont Avenue, Brownsville

- Health + Wellness
- Jobs and Small Businesses
- Youth
- Culture + Community
- Violence Prevention

Where to start?

Analyze Hours of Operation

Chart hours of operation and the times of formal and informal programming, looking for gaps in types and at specific times of day. For a full analysis of both study areas, see Appendix 3 Hester Street Community Engagement Report.



Belmont Avenue, Brownsville

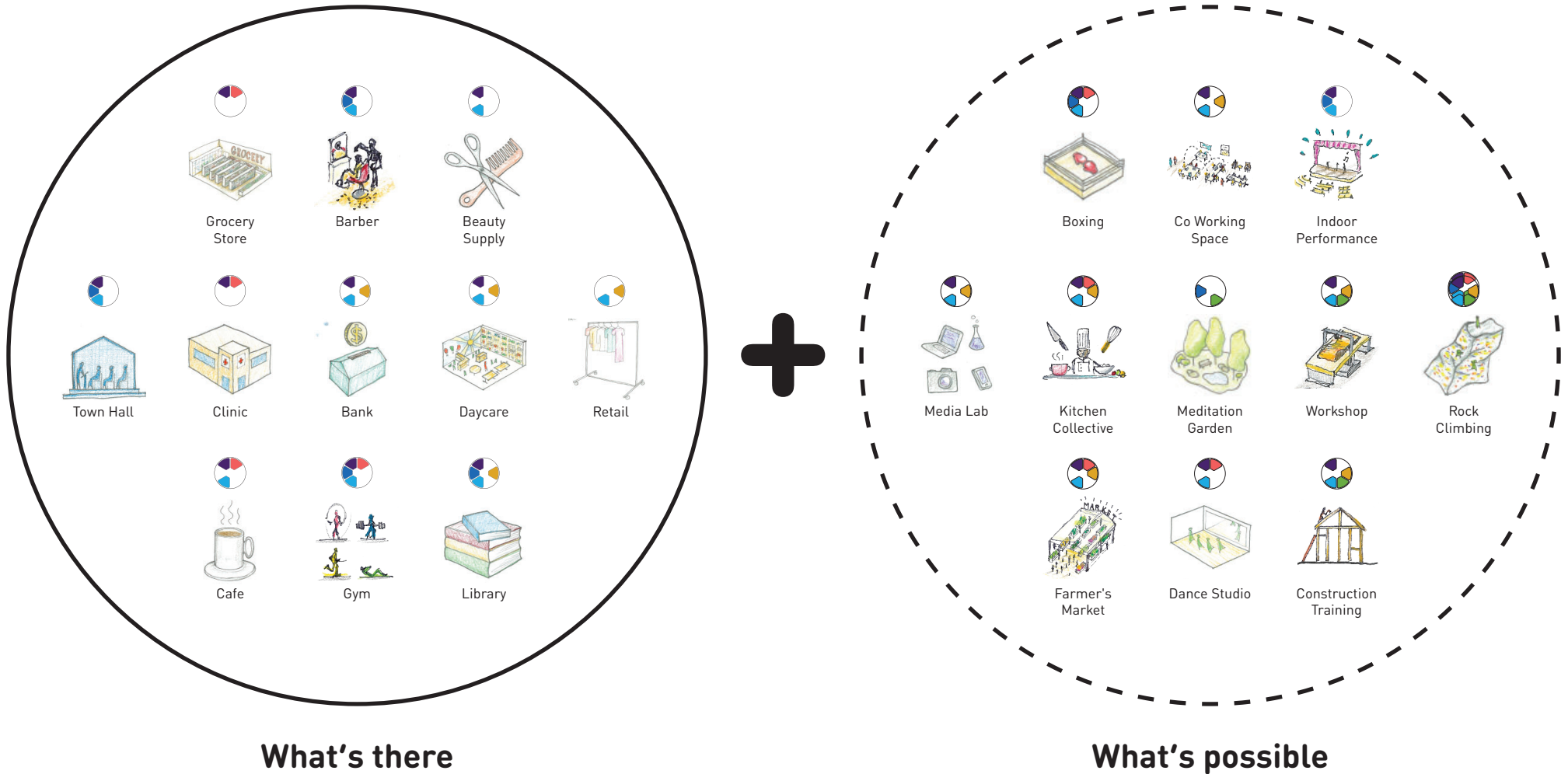
The chart above illustrates when services are available on Belmont Avenue, a historic commercial corridor between two public housing developments that has been adopted by CBOs but still feels unsafe at night due to a lack of lighting and inactivity. The programs are charted relative to crime to investigate correlation between program-deficient times of day and crime.

- Health + Wellness
- Jobs and Small Businesses
- Youth
- Culture + Community
- Violence Prevention

Where to start?

Assess Programs

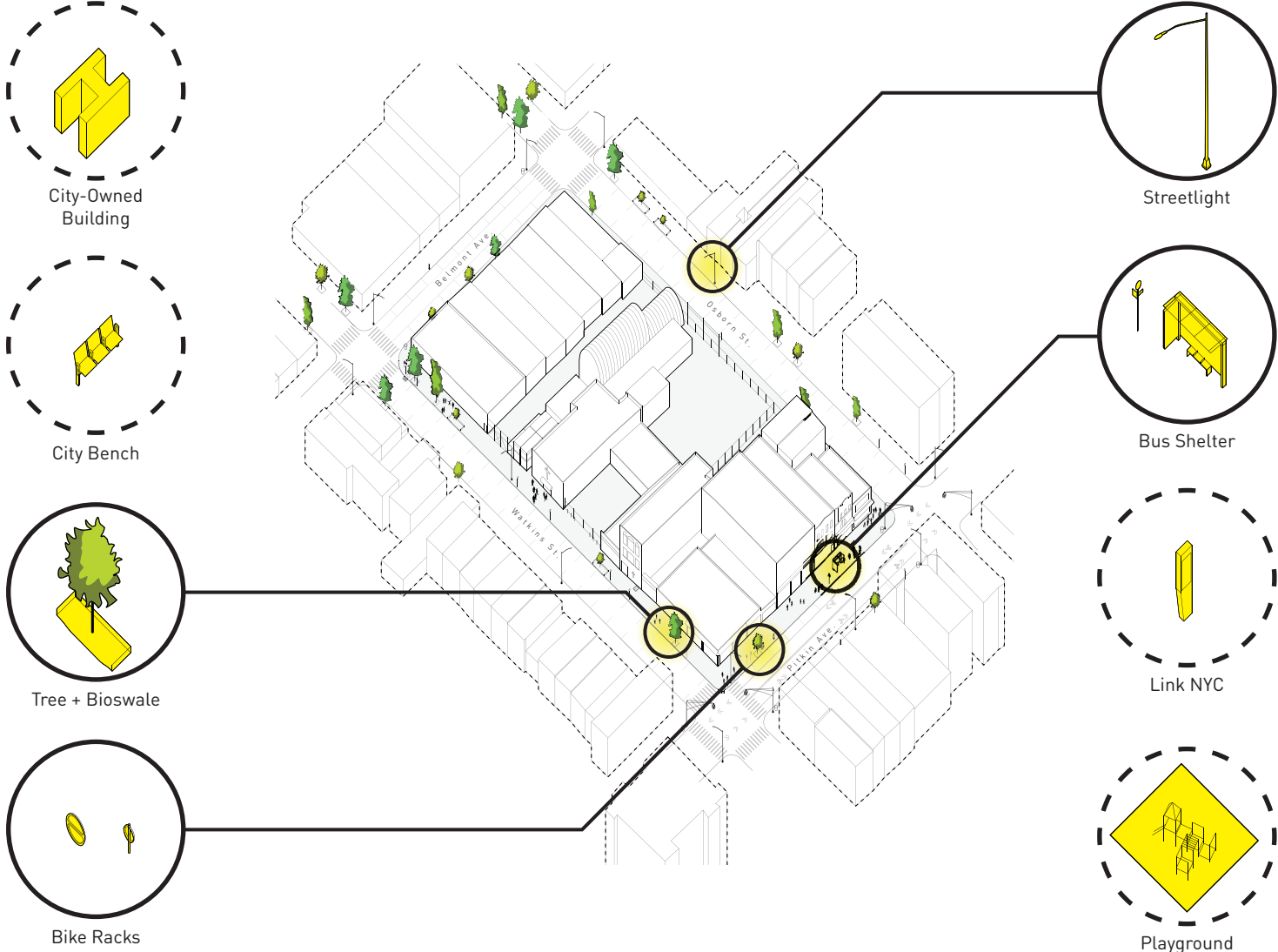
Review types of programs that exist and those that are absent but desired to assess their potential to support neighborhood safety.



Where to start?

Identify the Anatomy of the Block

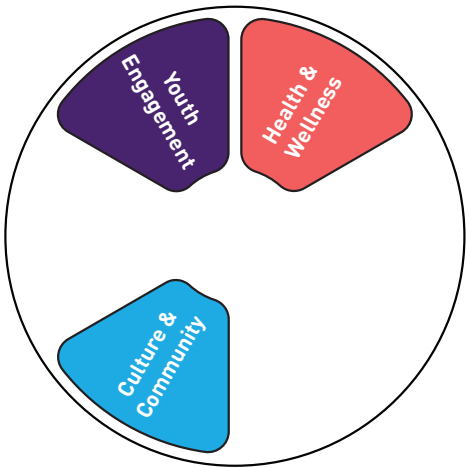
There are many elements of the city that are owned in common. Highlight those that are contributing or have the potential to contribute to neighborhood safety.



What can design do?

Match What's There with What's Possible

Match what's there with what's possible to maximize the impact of interventions and address all of the core issue types on every site.



What's There



What's Possible



Safe Space!

What can design do?

Convene



People

The Jimenez sisters, 3 Black Cats



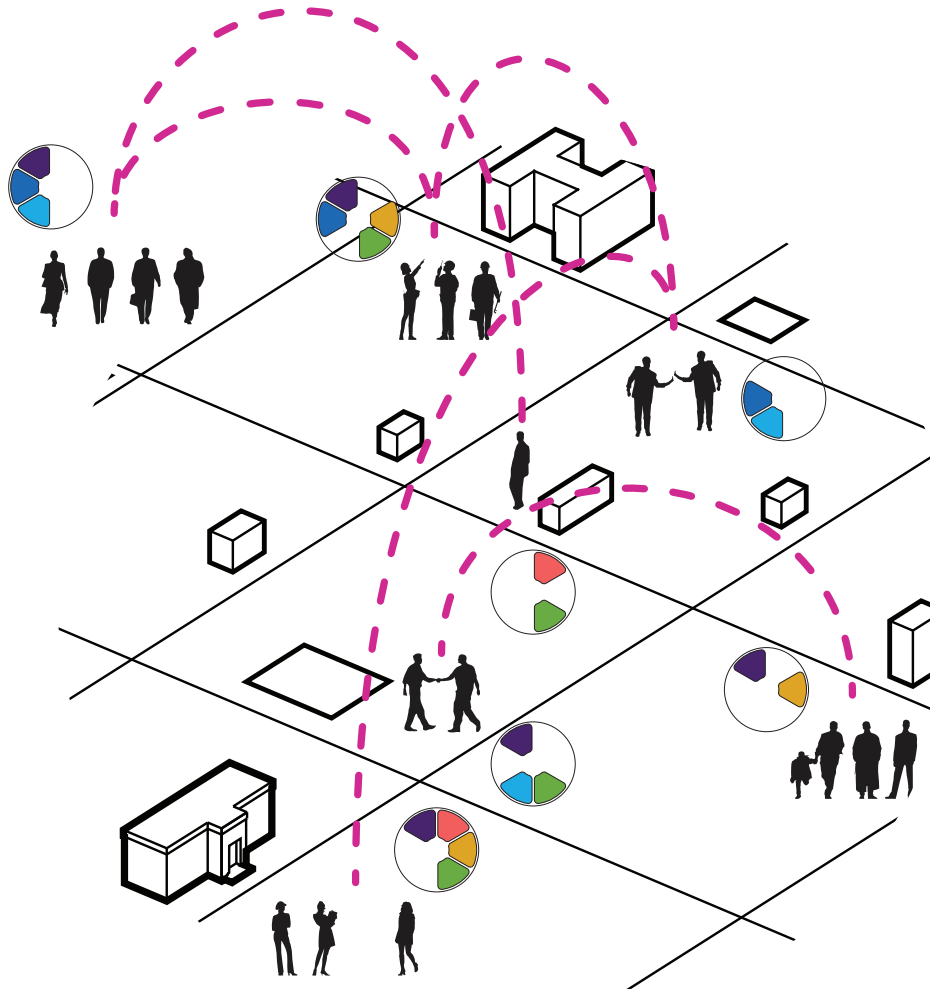
People

NYPD patrolmen and chiefs



Programs

Made in Brownsville Creative Mentorship



Programs

NYC DOH MH Green Carts



Partnerships

Brownsville Community Justice Center



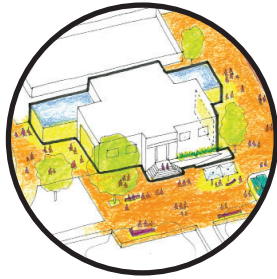
Partnerships

Brownsville Community Culinary Center

Provide physical and programmatic means through which individuals and organizations can share ownership of spaces that connect them to create an activated network of safe space and access to opportunity.

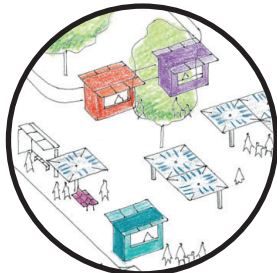
What can design do?

Connect



Public Buildings

Open to the street.
Activate sidewalks and open space.



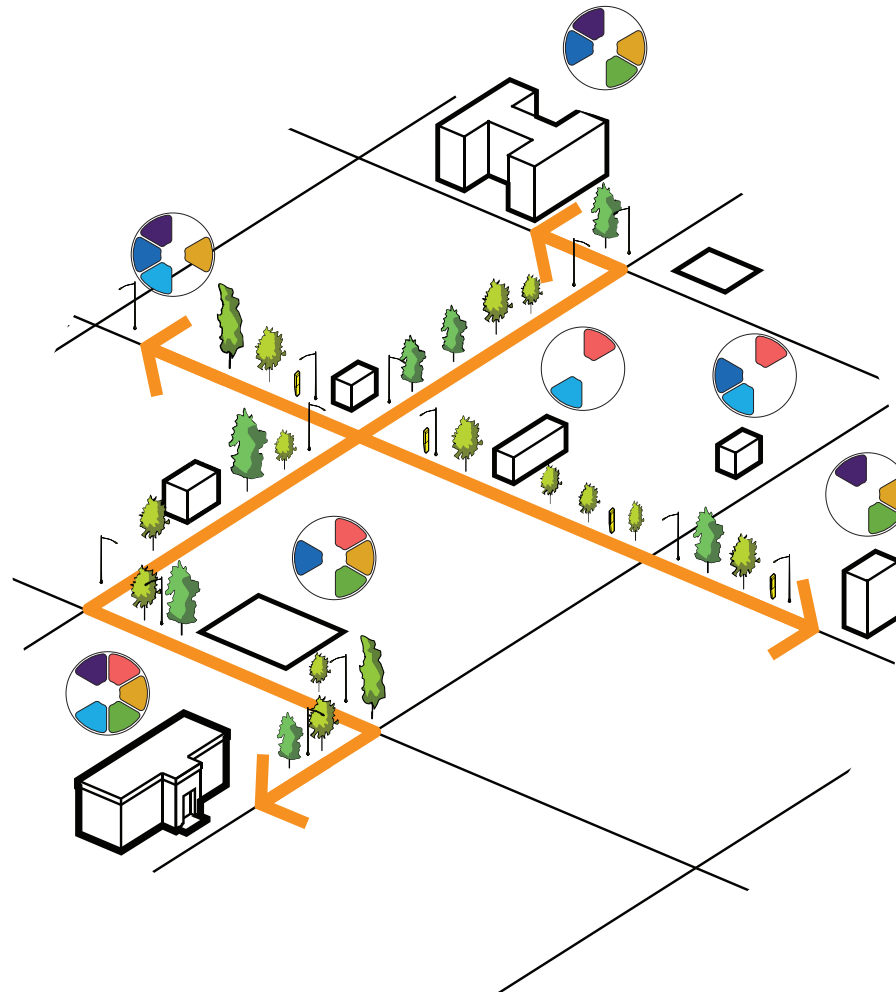
Street Elements

Make strategic pairings.
Create safe places to gather.

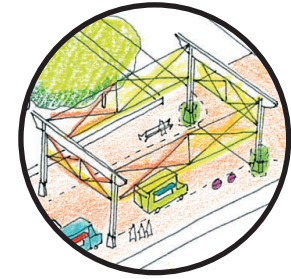


Trees & Plantings

Ensure consistent density and
distribution.

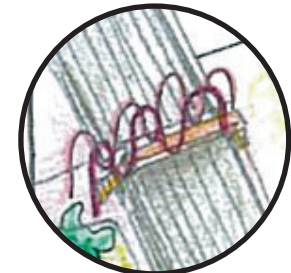


There are many components of the built environment that contribute to connectivity, which can strengthen neighborhoods and decrease territoriality. Also strategies like CitiBike and MTA busses can connect neighborhoods to the larger city.



Lighting

Continuously light corridors.
Provide human-scale lighting.



Arts & Culture

Express local identity.
Empower local stakeholders.

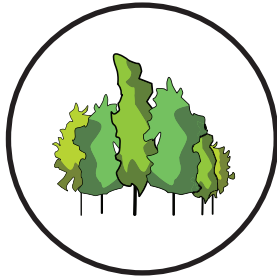


Private Property

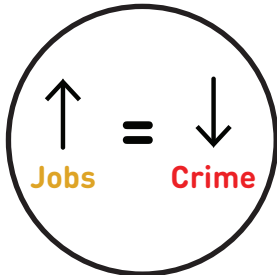
Extend hours of operation.
Light the public way.

What can design do?

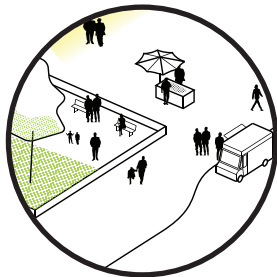
Research-driven Design



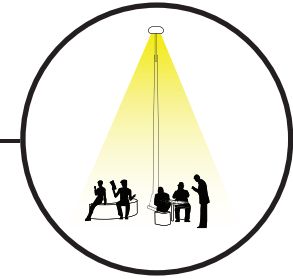
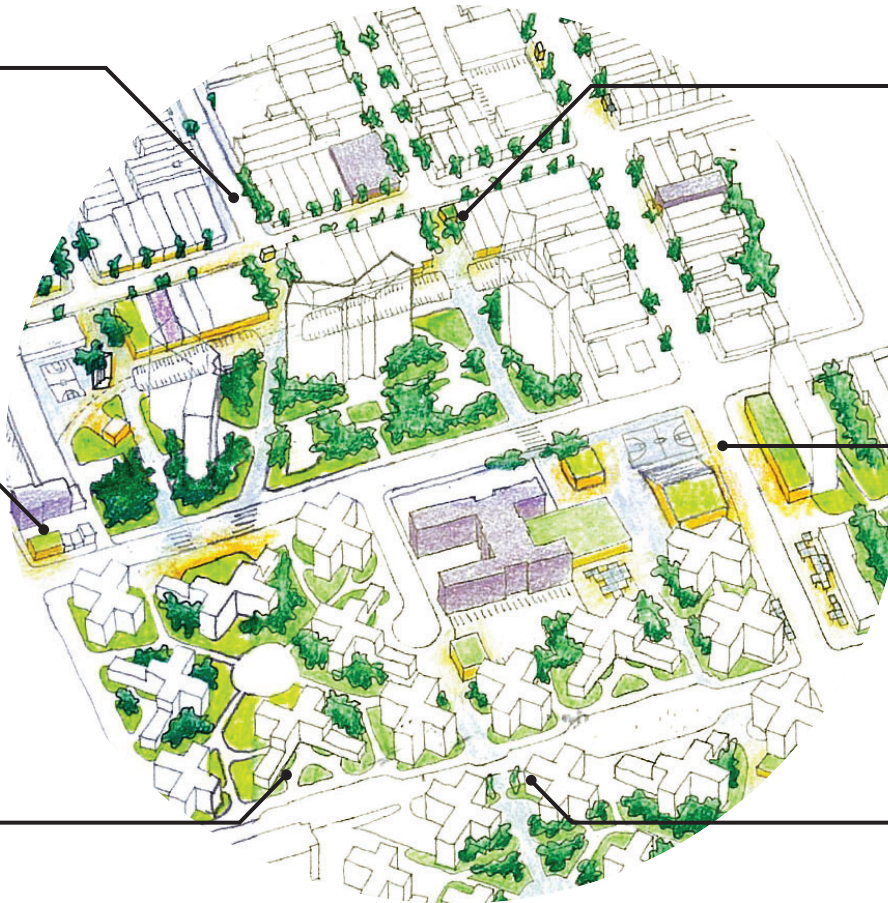
More green reduces crime.



When employment is up, crime goes down.



Places to meet build trust.



Night lights invite activity.



Parks grow healthy people and neighborhoods.



Great streets make prosperous streets

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.

What can design do?

Coordinate Planned Public Investments

Like many low-income neighborhoods in New York City, a large proportion of the built environment of Brownsville and Morrisania is publicly owned and receives significant city investment from many offices, agencies, and authorities. As a result, planned capital investments are common in these areas. By coordinating efforts between multiple city agencies and in partnership with communities, these public investments can be leveraged to improve neighborhood safety and community well-being.

For instance, DOT street lighting initiatives are primarily concerned with vehicular safety and focus on light levels in the roadbed, rather than on the sidewalk. However, if DOT consulted with NYCHA and NYPD before installing new lighting, crime data and public housing community needs could be factored into the decision-making process. As a result, issues of neighborhood safety could be addressed by increasing sidewalk light levels.

Similarly, public library facilities upgrades could be further informed by local education initiatives and needs. After-school programs often lack sufficient staff and funding, yet careful coordination between local groups, agencies, and institutions could allow for solutions that might not be possible for any one entity acting alone. For instance, a library might request funds to build a computer classroom for a local nonprofit, such as Girls Who Code, to operate an after-school coding club, thus meeting a need for youth-oriented skill-building activities.



The Brownsville Plan



FDNY Rescue Company 2, Brownsville Brooklyn



HPD Housing, Via Verde, Morrisania The Bronx



Vision Zero for pedestrian traffic safety

What can design do?

Design Strategies

Step 1: Start Here

Light touch, community-engaged projects

- **Work in phases** to identify where community-driven initiatives can grow into an agency-driven capital project.
- **Create public space** in front of civic buildings in partnership with the community to celebrate the identity of the neighborhood and adjacent institutions using simple low-cost surface treatments.
- **Relocate parking** away from main entrances of station houses and civic buildings to open access and welcome participation.
- **Leverage existing programs** from multiple city agencies (Dept. of Transportation, Dept. of Environmental Protection, Parks Dept., Mayor's Office for Tech + Innovation, etc.) that operate in the public realm to improve the open space adjacent to civic buildings.
- **Design a tracking process** for following the progress of multiple interagency initiatives. Include indicators and metrics for measuring effectiveness.
- **Investigate the public realm to identify what elements can contribute to neighborhood safety** including streets, sidewalks, transit stops, parks, plazas, building entrances, and vacant and underutilized land.
- **Leverage the knowledge** of experts, agencies, residents, and research found in relevant literature and studies.

Step 2: Expand the Investment

Public realm-focused capital investments

- **Make inviting entrances** for police officers and visitors that welcome community members into precincts and encourage resident involvement in law enforcement.
- **Create interagency spaces** for the delivery of services in station houses and other civic buildings to meet a broader spectrum of community need. Such overlaps could include mental health counseling for returning citizens, assistance navigating the criminal justice system, technology training, and youth engagement initiatives.
- **Define community spaces** in and around station houses, libraries, and other civic buildings that bring together police, community organizations, and CBOs to strengthen partnerships and address the complex roots of crime.
- **Activate the public realm** by enhancing streets and plazas with art, lighting, and plantings.
- **Support commercial activity** near station houses and other civic buildings so that residents, officers, and civil servants can interact on neutral ground.
- **Amplify local activity** that CBOs and associations already have underway. Alloying preexisting community initiatives with agency support increases both the odds of positive outcomes and the prudent allocation of city funds to programs with proven track records.

Step 3: Fulfill Vision

Existing asset-focused capital investments

- **Build station house additions** that are transparent, bright, sustainable, and welcoming. The additions can permanently alter the public face of police stations.
- **Expand existing assets**, such as libraries, to accommodate increased functionality, host more robust community events, and support greater levels of interagency programming.
- **Construct "lantern" buildings** that create space for the delivery of agency services and nonprofit programs. Such spaces could host youth and adult education courses, workforce training, cultural programming, and community group meetings, among others. Furthermore, these lanterns would illuminate streets and increase nighttime activity, thereby improving neighborhood safety.
- **Create flexible indoor and outdoor spaces** that can adapt to many uses.
- **Implement scenarios that meet budget and opportunity** of agency programs, capital plans, and operational capacity.
- **Measure success** by identifying issues and related metrics that will track the effectiveness of implemented solutions.

What can design do?

Programs, Policy, and Partnership Strategies

Step 1: Start Here

Light touch, community-engaged projects

- **Measure a range of indicators of community health and well-being** such as positive police–community interactions, levels of social engagement, and degree of hardship before, during, and after design interventions and activation of stewardship structures.
- **Measure positive interactions and collaborative efforts** between police and residents.
- **Develop a stewardship structure for inter-agency cooperation** to deliver and maintain neighborhood activation projects and programs.
- **Assign officers to nontraditional locations like parks, libraries, and health centers** to interact and build relationships with residents.
- **Place officers at entrances of station houses** to meet and greet neighborhood residents and visitors. Communities reliably rate this effective.
- **Connect neighborhoods to the city by extending the CitiBike network.** Many residents in MAP identified neighborhoods suffer from limited access to transit and in turn the economic opportunities present in the city at large. CitiBike offers a simple, easy to install, and low cost means of improving neighborhood connectivity and access to nearby transit options.

Step 2: Expand the Investment

Public realm–focused capital investments

- **Position inter-agency stewardship structure to collaborate** with and be accountable to community residents and leadership.
- **Design interventions in partnership with communities** to empower residents through collaboration and transparent decision-making.
- **Partner station houses with community-based organizations** to program public spaces inside and outside.
- **Assign responsibility for coordinated delivery of community and commercial services** in and around station houses.
- **Encourage and support youth activity in public places** day and night.
- **Prioritize pedestrian safety at entrances and along sidewalks** at station houses, NYCHA campuses, and other public places.
- **Connect neighborhoods to the city with transit.** Many residents in MAP identified neighborhoods suffer from limited access to transit and in turn the economic opportunities present in the city at large. By improving bus service, adding further SBS routes, improving subway headways to speed commutes, this structural disadvantage can be addressed.

Step 3: Fulfill Vision

Existing asset–focused capital investments

- **Employ community liaisons** who help identify community resources for officers and serve as a bridge between police and community members.
- **Support cultural, recreational, and community activities on nights and weekends** that align with community priorities.

What can design do?

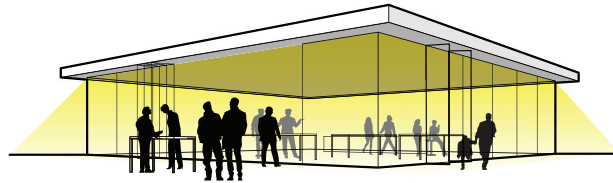
Expand Agency Tools

Many agencies have robust tool kits of elements that have the potential to increase neighborhood safety; however, through this project, Studio Gang identified three new tools that will improve safety, health, well-being, and access to opportunity.



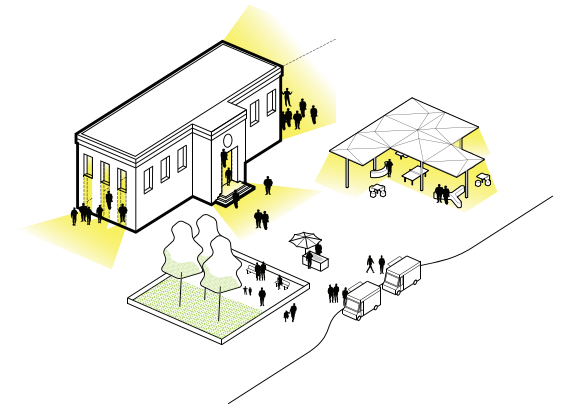
Parasol

A simple structure that provides shelter and light for gathering. Can be deployed as an array of to cover larger areas.



Lantern

A transparent building that hosts programs that activate spaces year-round. Transparency allows residents to see what's happening inside.



Civic Front Yard

A well lit, active public space adjacent to civic buildings that creates opportunities for interaction and engagement. Expands the use of the civic building while also making it more welcoming.

How to know it's working?

Measure Impact

Gather data on a range of factors that affect neighborhood safety to analyze the impact of design interventions. Set a baseline prior to implementation and take consistent qualitative and quantitative measurements to expose efficacy. Make this information widely available to inform more effective future investment.

Crime & Incarceration

Major Crimes

- Murder and non-negligible manslaughter
- Rape
- Robbery
- Felony assault
- Burglary
- Grand larceny
- Incarceration Rate

Public Crime

Public crime rate has a strong and statistically significant negative impact on social engagement.

- Violent crimes and weapons violations recorded as taking place in the public way

Hardship

- Crowded housing
- Poverty rate
- Unemployment
- Adults without high school equivalence
- Age dependency ratio
- Per capita income

Economic Opportunity

- Annual business survey
- Pedestrian count along commercial corridors
- Physical improvements to property

Social Engagement

Short-Term

Outputs: Programs and activities could begin changing output metrics in a span of months.

- 311 reports: noise complaints
- 311 reports: trash/litter
- Job training outputs
- Block party permits

Medium-Term

Individual or population outcomes: Programs targeted at individuals or small groups of people could effect change in these metrics in a 3-to-5-year time period.

- Disconnected youth (individuals ages 16–24, out of school and work)
- Proportion of seniors living alone
- Limited English proficiency
- Residents reporting poor mental health
- Building violations

Long-Term

Systemic change: Programs targeted at community social engagement could effect lasting change over the long term, such as 5 to 10 years.

- Change in rent prices
- How often residents move
- Housing vacancy
- Residents with cognitive/ambulatory disabilities

Youth Engagement

- After-school program participation rate
- High school graduation rate
- Youth summer and annual employment
- College matriculation and graduation

Community Relations

- In-person complaints and conversations with police
- Non-crime-related formal police and community engagement (e.g., presence at job fairs, sporting leagues, participation in parades)
- Informal officer interactions with residents that are positive versus correctional in nature
- Percentage of community feedback that is positive versus negative
- Neighborhood quality-of-life surveys
- Number of officers with Crisis Intervention Training (CIT) per shift

Health Indicators

- Self reported health
- Physical activity in the last 30 days
- Daily fruit & vegetable consumption
- Hospitalization for mental health, childhood asthma rates
- Obesity & diabetes rates
- Infant mortality rate & Premature mortality rate
- Childhood Lead poisoning
- *See Tech. Background for more info*

What's transferable?

Neighborhood Activation Approach

An integrated approach of engagement, quantitative and qualitative research, analysis, and design is required to develop plans for neighborhood activation. These six steps provide a framework for locating where to work, gathering information, uncovering what's important, finding what to start, designing for maximum impact, and analyzing influence.



①

**Find Opportunity
in Places with Need**



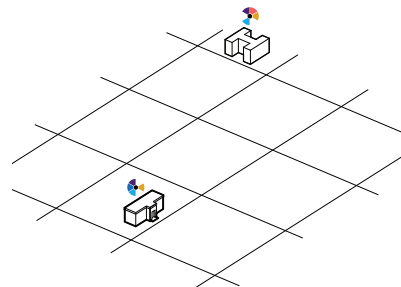
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Listen and Learn



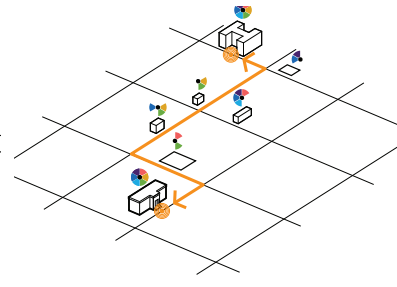
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**Discover Points
of Convergence**



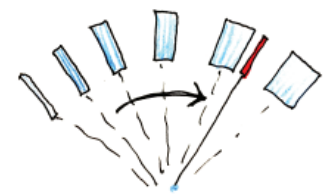
④

Start With What's There



⑤

**Strengthen, Combine,
and Connect**



⑥

Measure Impact

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Brownsville Community Based Organizations

+1 Health
3 Black Cats
Block Bully IT/CCC
BMS Family Health Center
Brooklyn Public Library
Brownsville Community Justice Center
Community Board 16
Community Solutions
DOHMH Action Center
Dream Big
DUECES
Engineering for Kids
FOBP/Kinnon Group
Friends of Brownsville Parks Kinnon Group
Green City Force
It's Our Time
Made in Brownsville
Office of Latrice Walker
Pitkin Avenue BID
Van Dyke Residents
Van Dyke Tenant Association

Morrisania Community Based Organizations

Action Center
Andrew Freedman Home
BC2/SUP/JHP/Drive Change
Bringing the Peace
Bronx Connect
Bronx Defenders
Bronx Health Reach
Bronx Neighborhood Health
Bronx Works
Cern-Inc
Children's Aid Society
CHVI
Claremont Board
Claremont Neighborhood Center
Claremont Healthy Village Initiative
Community Board 2
Directions for our Youth
Family Medicine Bronx
Hi-Tech Charities
Incarcerated Nation Corp
Incarcerated Nation Inc.
Morris House TA
Mother of Us All
Neighborhood Benches
Outreach Co
Parsons School of Design
Partners for Parks
Phipps Neighborhoods
So Bro
Street Soccer USA
Street Vendor Power
The Door- Bronx Youth Center
Webster Morrisania
Urban Health Plan Inc.

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