

Building Healthy Communities



Brownsville is a neighborhood in Brooklyn that can be described as both urban and rural—urban in its density, but rural in its disconnectedness from the rest of New York City. In April 2015, a New York Times article highlighted Brownsville as the community with the lowest life expectancy in New York City. Although Brownsville has suffered from decades of disinvestment, much is being done to improve social cohesion and the overall health and wellbeing of Brownsville residents.

COMMUNITY FAST FACTS

In this neighborhood of 90,000:

- 78% of residents are black.
- 36% of residents live below the federal poverty line.
- 23.8% of public school children (K–8) are obese.
- 30% of adults are obese.
- 44% of working-age residents are unemployed.
- Brownsville has the largest concentration of public housing in the country.

PROJECT GOALS

- Increase access to healthy and affordable foods by engaging with and building the capacity of local businesses interested in selling healthy produce; and
- Plan and implement resident-driven improvements to the physical environment, especially in public spaces and housing and community facilities.

WHAT WE'VE ACHIEVED TO DATE

HEALTHY FOODS:

- Sold 35,000 pounds of local produce through two GrowNYC Youthmarkets;
- Updated a health assets map, a guide to healthy food options, fitness-friendly areas, and medical services;
- Planted a new community garden at New York City Housing Authority's Brownsville Houses; and
- Connected the Riverdale School with GrowNYC to pilot a produce stand.

BUILT ENVIRONMENT & PHYSICAL ACTIVITY:

- Collaborated with community partners in East New York to complete 18 miles of bike lanes;
- Hosted a ShapeUp Instructor training for more than 50 Brownsville residents; and
- Organized the Brownsville Youth Sports Zone Initiative in summer 2017 for 100 participants aged 6-14 years.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT:

- Hosted Live! on Livonia, engaging 1,200 residents in fun activities and discussion on the development of vacant lots;
- Hosted four annual HOPE Summits, which bring residents together to provide feedback on the priorities for Brownsville; and
- Opened MGB Pops Public Market, a pedestrian marketplace that supports local vendors and entrepreneurs.

WHAT WE'RE INVESTING IN

- Using film to empower residents
- Developing a community health fellowship program