



Looking to the Future: Community Resources in the LES and Brownsville

A Tale of Two Neighborhoods

1/17/2017
Grand Street Settlement

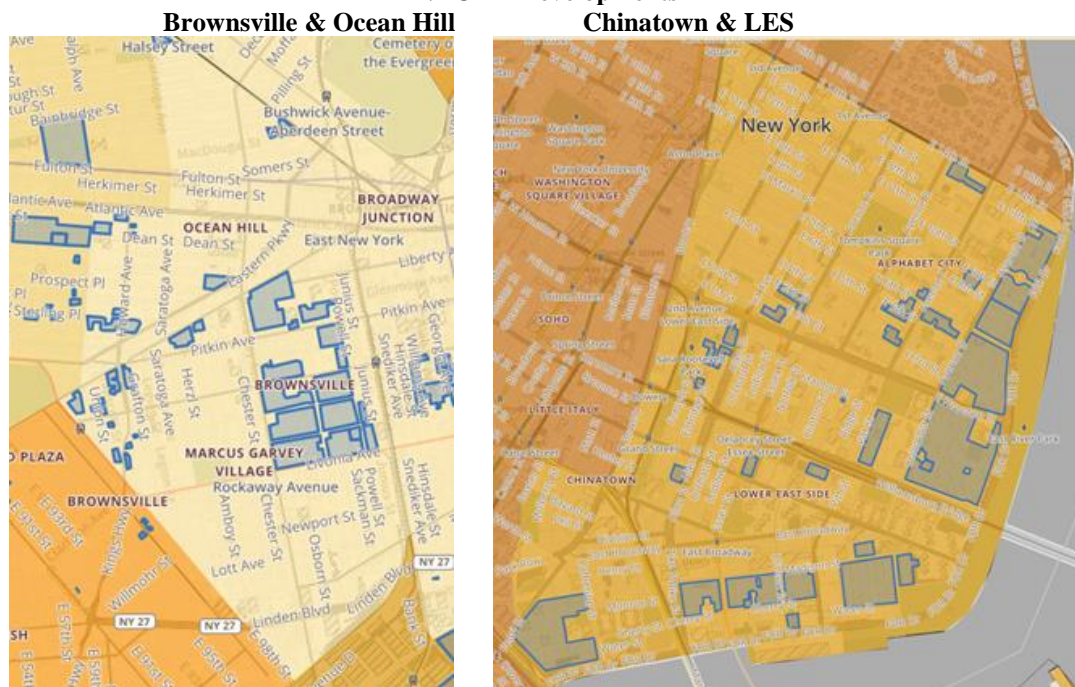
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Introduction

Grand Street Settlement (GSS) is at a unique moment in our history as a neighborhood institution. We were founded in 1916 in the middle of NYC’s settlement house boom, in response to the emergent needs of immigrant populations in lower Manhattan. GSS is part of a rich and historic net of resources in the Lower East Side (LES), which remains one of the densest areas of public housing in the city, despite the gentrification of the last few decades. GSS expanded to serve Brooklyn communities over forty years ago, where human service systems have struggled to keep up with growing populations and systemic poverty. We see the LES and Brownsville as starkly different but crucially linked. Throughout GSS’s century on the LES, the agency has witnessed enormous gentrification with a rich history of settlement house services, while Brownsville thus far remains largely removed from the gentrification boom and services in the neighborhood are ad hoc. Both, however, have some of the highest density of public housing in NYC, and persisting high rates of poverty. In the era of Mayor de Blasio’s “tale of two cities”, GSS aims to understand where service gaps exist in both communities and how GSS might fortify community resilience with a settlement house model.

NYCHA Developments



Source: <http://data2go.nyc/>

With this report, GSS seeks to identify actionable plans to better support each neighborhood with a focus on Brownsville. This report will examine how the settlement house model has built a system of supports in the LES, and whether the piecemeal services in Brownsville are meeting all categories of residents' needs. In looking at the data, we ask: Where has the lack of human service systems in Brownsville created opportunity gaps for residents? How could a settlement house model address these gaps? What are the persisting needs for services in the LES, despite existing systems?

GSS is currently exploring real estate partnerships to establish a hub in Brownsville, which would allow us to fully bring the settlement house model to that neighborhood. (GSS currently operates two youth programs in Brownsville.) This report will contribute supplemental data and analysis to the research completed under the strategic planning initiative which began assessing Brownsville for service area gaps in 2016.

GSS, and the settlement house model more broadly, offers a community-embedded, comprehensive strategy for service provision in high-need New York City neighborhoods. It is designed to act, not as an external force, but as the glue that holds a community together. Families can access a wealth of programs that provide the resources and strategies for success: high-quality early education and child care, safety net support and access to benefits, hands-on afterschool and summer learning, and a vibrant and supportive community for local seniors. The settlement house model is an effective response to the need to address multiple, overlapping issues.

Historical Context of Brownsville and the LES

In the 1940s Brownsville and the LES were predominantly Jewish working class communities, “crowded with tenements, synagogues and pushcarts” (Bleyer). Post World War II, Brownsville was reshaped with the demolition of tenements, dislocating white families and building hundreds of public housing apartments for African Americans and Latinos who were impacted by urban renewal programs pushing minorities to the concentrated outskirts of the city. Brownsville, which had historically progressive politics, lobbied for public housing unlike other New York areas. Two decades later, the community demographics had changed from being 80% Jewish to being 95% African American and Latino, most of whom were poor.

Under the 1933 Housing Act, New York City was a leader with respect to the development of public housing during and after the depression. One of the earliest developments, The First Houses, were built in the LES in 1935. The early developments were made to blend into the neighborhoods in which they were built and were not made for low income individuals. They were built for people who had an income that put them at or close to the median. This was very different from later developments. Developments such as the Williamsburg Houses provided amenities such as social rooms, nursery school and art rooms. For many white working class families, this was a major improvement from their previous living conditions. This housing was restricted to the white working class. The New York City Housing Authority (NYCHA), backed by federal policy, restricted public housing to current (white) residents of neighborhoods erecting new developments. Civil rights organizations protested these discriminatory practices and after the March 1935 Harlem riots, poor black residents received greater attention. The Harlem River Houses were then built in 1937 and although not as comfortable as the Williamsburg Houses, they were an improvement for many.

By 1940 both Williamsburg and Red Hook had planned projects in the pipeline. Brownsville was not included even though Brownsville had secured developments at the start of the New York housing program in 1934. Leaders in Brownsville put pressure on the state and were told they would have to wait as Brooklyn already had two developments and many other neighborhoods in the city were worse off. The community of Brownsville believed that the new development/s would result in the same neighborhood transformation as seen in Williamsburg and First Houses. The Brownsville community with its leaders, put further pressure on the state

and carried out many lobbying efforts. After a six year delay, the Brownville Houses were completed in 1948. This development did not blend in with the rest of the neighborhood. While the community had requested that it be no more than three stories high, NYCHA had determined that to be economically viable, the development had to be denser. The majority of tenants cleared for this development were white. Before this development was completed in 1945, Robert Moses, the era's foremost city planner, began to include Brownsville in his post-war development program.

With his appointment as City Construction Coordinator, Moses possessed complete control over the city's post-war development. Moses intended to expand existing public housing by clearing up the slums surrounding these areas and freeing the space for private development. These plans included the LES, Harlem and Brooklyn with a substantial amount of money and planning going into these expansions. East New York and Brownsville were viewed by Moses and his planners as the worst neighborhoods whose only hope would be the expansion of public housing as it was believed that no form of private enterprise would ever be established there. While the community was consulted for the development of the Brownville Houses, they had little or no say in terms of later developments. NYCHA and the City Planning Commission never met with any residents regarding later developments. Moses and his counterparts, continuously rejected requests and pleas to integrate public housing.

While it is not exactly clear why, Moses decided that even though Brownsville was predominantly white, he would build a "colored" project in Brownsville. It has been suggested that planners of the era strongly believed the neighborhood was going to transition to a black neighborhood, regardless of public housing expansion plans. Some black organizations such as the NAACP and the Urban League believed that as Bedford Stuyvesant became more crowded, more people of color would move to Brownsville. This decision may have also been based on the fact that the Jewish community in Brownsville was less likely to protest the arrival of blacks as compared to Italians and Irish in other Brooklyn neighborhoods. New York's post war plan had from the start decided that Brownville would be part of the expansion of the Brooklyn black ghetto. NYCHA officials always maintained that color was not a factor in planning (Pritchett, 114- 131).

As a result of the changing demographics, in the 1950s various community organizations such as the Brownsville Neighborhood Council (BNC) and the Brownsville Boys Club (BBC), were formed, partly with the hopes of integrating the community. The BNC later merged with the Brownsville Health Council (BHC) to become the Brownsville Neighborhood Health and Welfare Council (BNH&WC). The BNC served Brownsville for 25 years, fighting to have more resources allocated to the neighborhood and attempting to better relations between the growing diverse community members. Local government soon abandoned this area, harming the progress that had been made. The BNC never got to solve the race relation question in Brownsville with the support of the local government (Pritchett, 56). In a flyer circulated in Brownsville in 1950, the council listed its achievements and also highlighted intangible achievements, “better understanding between Negro and white by working together, preventing tensions through discussion of common problems, and taking appropriate action” (Pritchett,59). The council lobbied for the increase of recreational facilities for African American residents. By 1958, the council was no longer very active with most members and volunteers having resigned and/or left.

The BBC, like other Brownsville organizations at the time, was created from a grass roots level by members of the community to serve the needs of the community. It was formed by teenagers from the community with an initial focus on youth and recreational activities but as Brownsville changed, it was forced to deal with issues such as juvenile delinquency, racial tension and economic decline. The bylaws of the organization did not permit anyone over 21 years to be part of the organization in any official capacity. The organization faced obstacles from both within and outside of the community. The BBC served an important role the community during the 1940s. It served as an important resource for many youth, helped deal with juvenile delinquency by assisting to reintegrate youth from prison and also served as a mediator amongst the youth and the community. By 1947, the organization’s membership had a considerable amount of black members and the headquarters served as an important place for interracial cooperation amongst the youth. The organization sought integration and in 1947 appointed a black program director and had its first black board director. However, many, if not most, of the groups that formed the organization (sport teams, clubs) were still divided along racial lines. By the late 1940s as the organization grew and expanded its activities, it began to rely more and more on adult and professional help, which the youth members did not approve of.

In the end the internal politics, major changes within the organization, funding issues and the larger problem facing Brownville in the 1950s led to the organizations demise (Pritchett, 88,91,94).

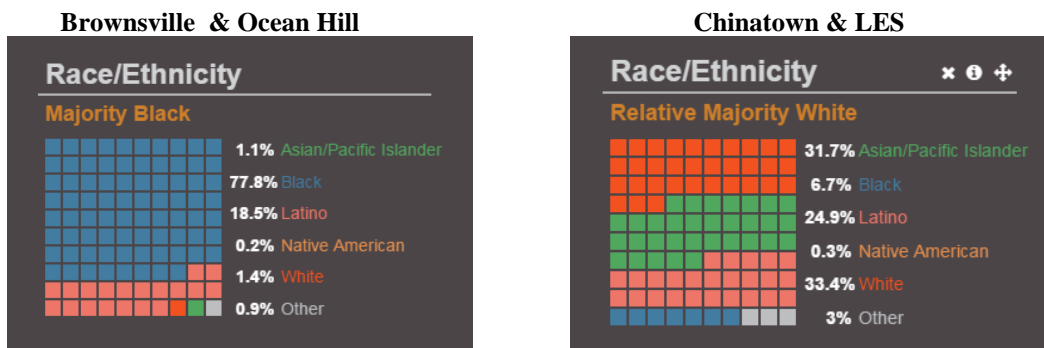
During 1957 and 1963, the formative years of the new changing Brownsville, government services declined and few organizations provided support to the community. The National Association for the Advancement of Colored People and the Urban League provided services but these were only accessible through the Bedford Stuyvesant offices, not in Brownsville (Pritchett, 6). By this time organizations such as the Brownsville Neighborhood Council and Brownsville Boys Club no longer existed. The 1960s and 1970s saw the rapid change of Brownville, with increasing crime rates, white flight and many issues related to racial tension. During this time, particularly the late 1970s, the LES was undergoing its own transformation.

During the 60s and 70s, the LES of New York was considered an undesirable neighborhood, plagued with drugs, gangs and decaying infrastructure. It was a place that housed thousands of new Hispanic and Chinese immigrants. Decades before this, urban planners, real estate developers and city officials began plans for the redevelopment of the LES, in the hopes of attracting the middle class. The 70s saw the rise in popularity of the LES amongst young students and singles who were attracted by the cheap rents. The increasing prominence of the East Village as a place for the young and hip saw the LES changing to a neighborhood for the young, hip, middle class white professionals from the service sector. Whereas the tenement apartments had been neglected before, city programs encouraged improvements. New boutiques and shops sprang up with increasing rents. Since 1990, 8000 units of low income housing have been lost along with the low income families that occupied them. The displacement is not atypical of areas that experience gentrification.

Demographics

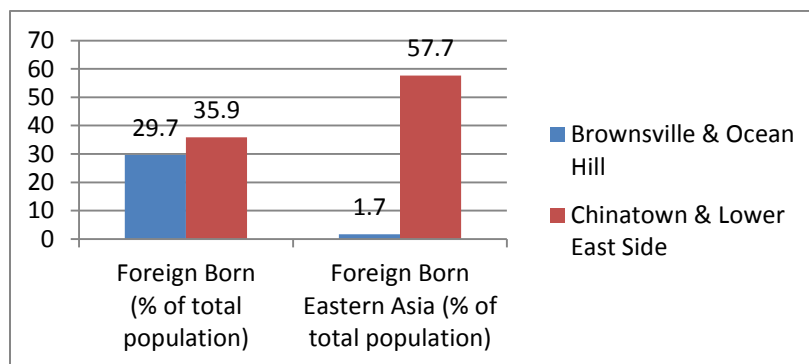
In the current configuration of Brownsville and the LES, the effect of city planning changes is apparent. Brownsville, which was a predominantly Jewish neighborhood in the 40s and 50s, now has a black population that is over 75% and 18% Latino. The LES, once considered an undesirable neighborhood by white middle class or affluent New Yorkers, now has a relative majority white population. While Brownsville experienced white flight, resulting in a current white population of less than 1.5%, the LES saw the opposite happen with an increase of its white population amounting to over 30%. The vast majority of foreign born residents in Brownsville are from South and Central America while the LES has a majority of immigrants from East Asia (57.7%) and a diverse mix from other countries of origin; the next highest concentration of people are from the Caribbean at 11.2%.

Race & Ethnicity



Source: <http://data2go.nyc/>

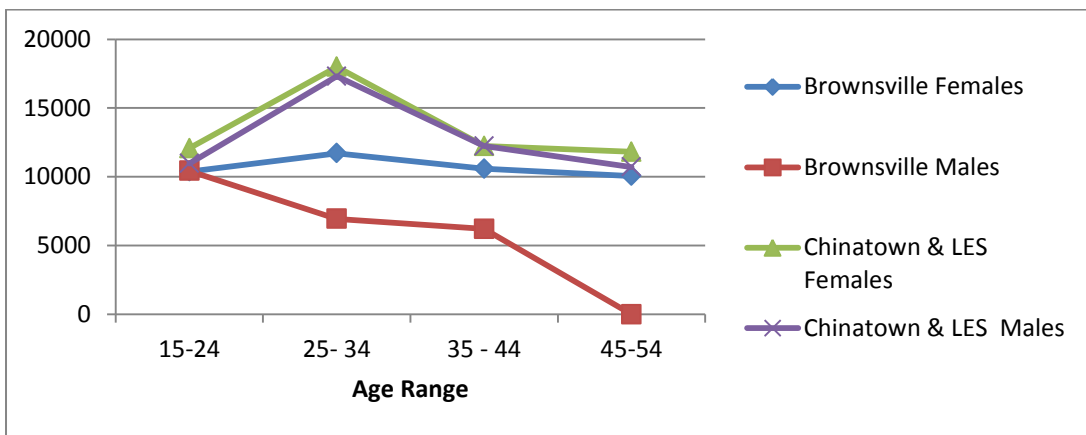
Foreign Born Population



Source: <http://data2go.nyc/>

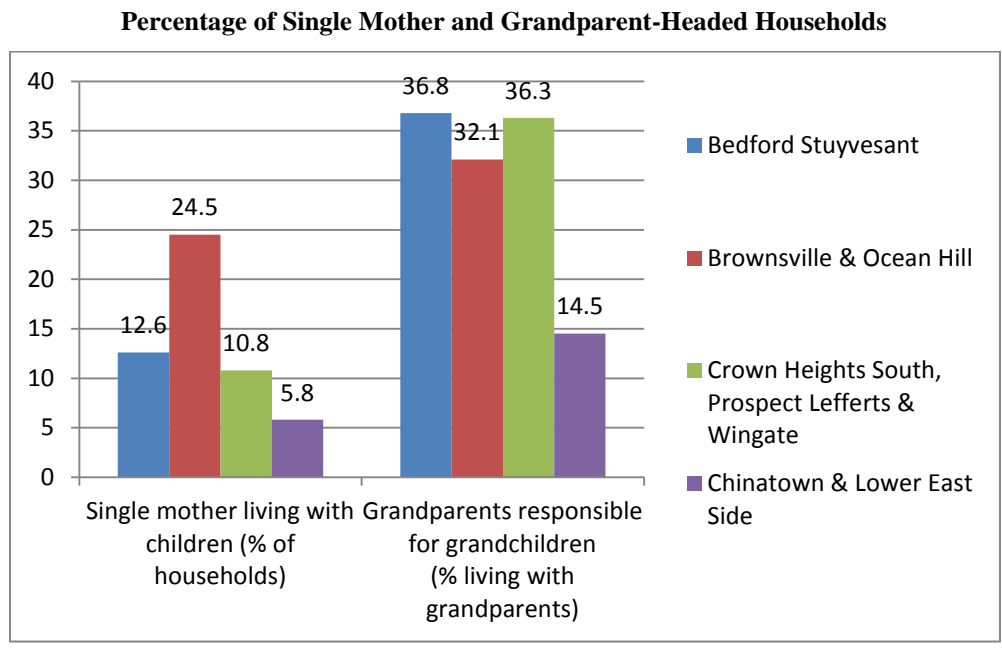
Some of the most telling data giving insight into issues facing Brownsville residents is the difference in population by gender for residents aged 25-54 years old. In the figure below, we see that there are almost half the number of men as there are women in these age groups. This is a significant decline from preceding years when the numbers by gender are almost equal. A comparison between the LES and Brownsville shows that this trend of “missing men” is not necessarily a reflection of New York communities but of Brownsville specifically. The results and consequences of these “missing men” are clearly visible through various other indicators that will be illustrated throughout this report.

Population of Males & Females by Age Range



Source: <http://data2go.nyc/>

The figure below shows a comparison of the number of single parent and grandparent headed households for Brownsville and the LES. Brownsville has over four times the number of single parent-headed households as compared to LES. It is highly probable that many of the single parent households in Brownsville, are due in part to the “missing men” phenomena. Brownsville has over two times as many grandparent-led households than the LES. This could also be partly due to the “missing men” phenomena. According to NYCHA, almost 38% of all NYCHA developments in New York are headed by those who are 62 years or older.

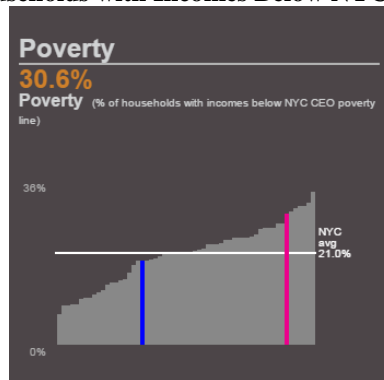


Source: <http://data2go.nyc/>

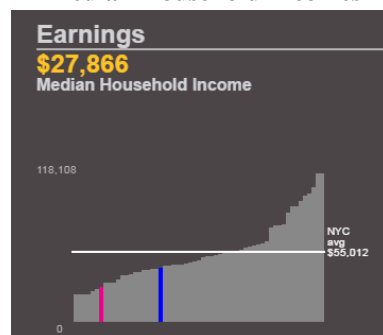
Opportunity Gaps

With a high percentage of elderly residents in Brownsville having to look after grandchildren, the labor force participation rate of only 56.3% along with the high poverty levels comes as no surprise. The Center for Economic Opportunity (CEO) Poverty measure incorporates a more inclusive definition of income and poverty to better capture and understand poverty in New York City. The CEO measure reflects cost of living as well as tax credits and other in-kind benefits not traditionally reflected in poverty data based on income. While the LES has a median household income that is higher than Brownsville's, it is important to note here the intense gentrification that has taken place on the LES. Young service professionals who now reside there may slightly skew the overall income levels. Noting this, both the LES and Brownsville have childhood poverty rates that are high as are the unemployment rates. The figures below illustrate how Brownsville (pink) and the LES & Chinatown (blue) fare compared to other community districts throughout the city. In Brownsville, 50.5% of children under the age of 18 live in households with incomes below the poverty line. On the LES and Chinatown the child poverty rate is 39.3%.

Percentage of Households with Incomes Below NYC CEO Poverty Line

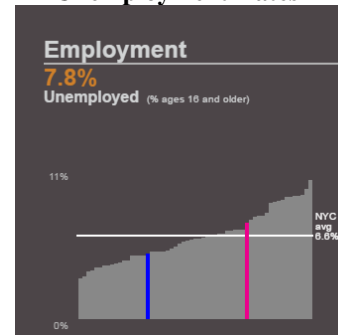


Median Household Incomes



Source: <http://data2go.nyc/>

Unemployment Rates



The high unemployment and poverty rates in Brownsville translate to high housing burden and foreclosures. While both Brownsville and the LES have high percentages in terms of renters facing high housing burdens (which is defined by spending at least 30% of income on housing-related costs), Brownsville has a significantly higher amount of foreclosures, families entering homeless shelters as well as homeless children as illustrated in the table below.

Housing & Homelessness

	Foreclosures (per 1,000 1-4 family properties)	High Housing Burden (% of renters)	Families Entering Homeless Shelters (per 1,000 households)	Homeless Children (total # ages 0-17)
Brownsville & Ocean Hill	44.4	56.1	8.8	878
Chinatown & LES	1.8	48.6	1.8	250

Source: <http://data2go.nyc/>

One of the most consequential effects of homelessness, in not only Brownsville but New York City as a whole, is the negative impact that it has on academic attainment and achievement for students. According to the Institute for Children, Poverty & Homelessness during the school year 2014 – 2015, 82 000 students in New York Public schools were homeless. One in eight students had experienced homelessness at some point during the academic years 2010- 2011 and 2014 -2015. Forty percent of homeless elementary school students, transferred schools during the school year as opposed to 9% of their peers. Brownsville was amongst the top eight districts in New York in terms of homeless students with rates reaching 13-18%.. Homeless students living in shelters school are concentrated in the South and West Bronx as well as Brooklyn. This is not surprising as this is where a significant amount of homeless shelters in New York City are located. From this we can deduce that many homeless students are unable to remain in their original, zoned schools which are based on a permanent address. The figure below highlights the educational outcomes of homelessness.

Homeless Students

Brownsville	All Homeless	In Shelters	Doubled Up**	Ever In Shelter	Never In Shelter
Number of Students	1617	1069	426		
% Mid – Year Transfer Rate	32	36	24.6		
% Chronic Absenteeism Rate	53	62	31		
% Dropout Rate	24	_____	_____	_____	25.6
% Graduation Rate	33	_____	_____	_____	27.9

LES	All Homeless	In Shelters	Doubled Up	Ever In Shelter	Never In Shelter
Number of Students	1401	558	769	_____	_____
% Mid – Year Transfer Rate	23.6	36	15	_____	_____
% Chronic Absenteeism Rate	36.5	47.4	28.3	_____	_____
% Dropout Rate	22.7	_____	_____	22.2	25
% Graduation Rate	49.1	_____	_____	60.3	30

Source: Institute for Children, Poverty & Homelessness

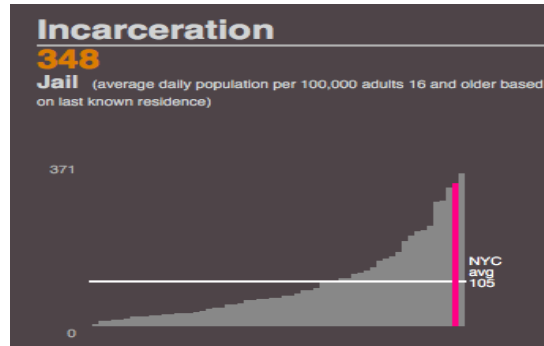
** Doubled Up: Families or children sharing a house with family or others due to a loss of housing.

At 24.9%, Brownsville has almost double the amount of disconnected youth (between the ages of 16-24 who are not in school and not working) compared to the LES's 14.9%. Homeless students are at high risk of becoming disconnected, especially when youth programs and afterschool programs are sparse. In terms of public funding, \$47693.75 was spent in the 2013 fiscal year for Brownsville youth workforce programs and \$488544.73 was spent for similar programs in LES.

Crime

Crime plagues Brownsville with violence, loss of life, and exacerbates many of the opportunity gaps exhibited throughout this report. The “missing men” phenomenon can be better understood through criminal justice system involvement data. In Brownsville the daily population in jail per 100,000 people is the second highest in all of NYC at 348 compared to the NYC average of 105 and the LES average of 117.

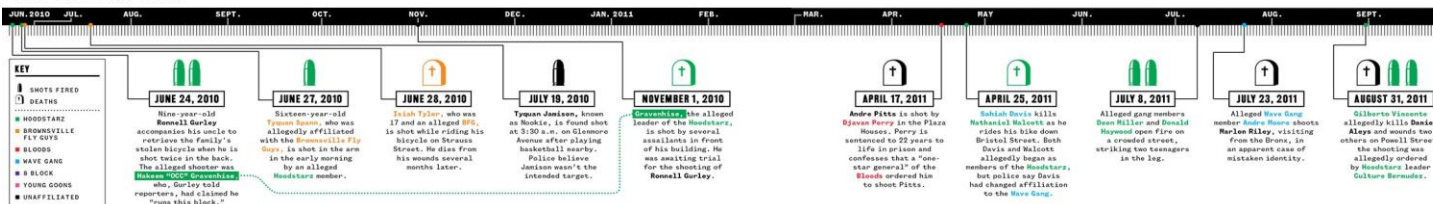
Brownsville Incarceration



Source: <http://data2go.nyc/>

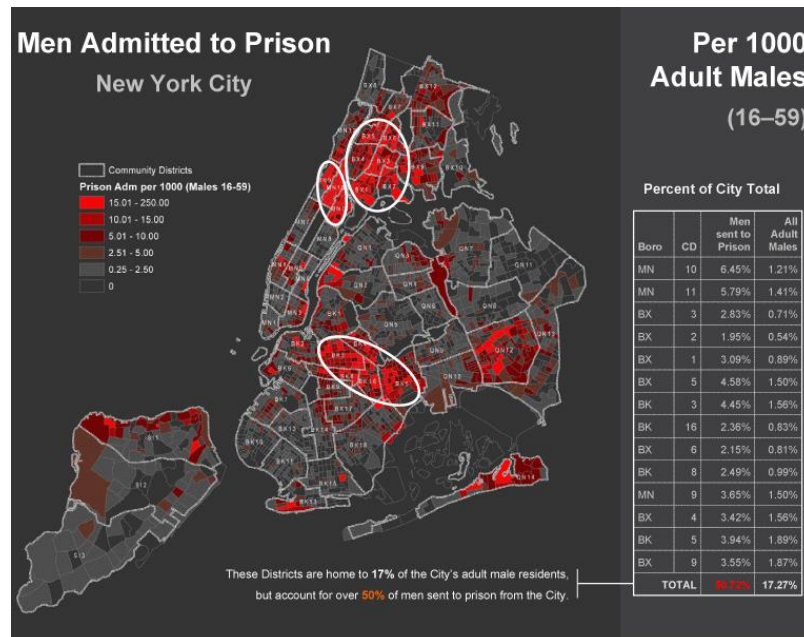
Gang violence is particularly prevalent in Brownsville. A 2014 New York Magazine feature described Brownsville as the “murder capital of New York City”. Lieutenant David Glassberg who ran the NYPD’s Juvenile Robbery Intervention Program in Brownsville from 2007-2014 observes gang members getting younger, with initiations beginning at the age of 12 or 13 (Konigsburg). Police report a shift in the nature of Brownsville’s gangs today to be more focused on maintaining territories than making money through drug dealing enterprises. Often police found that the gangs were cliques of middle and high schoolers living on different blocks and buildings with no illusions of their gang activities leading to better lives. The timeline below illustrates a snapshot of the types of gang violence happening in Brownsville.

500 DAYS OF WAR



Source: <http://nymag.com/news/features/brownsville-2014-6>

The map below, accessed through the Justice Mapping Center, demonstrates the concentration of men admitted to prison. The 17 community districts with the highest concentration of men admitted to prison accounts for 50% of all men admitted to prison throughout NYC. Furthermore, by observing this data mapped, it is clear that there are great geographical concentrations across community districts, and Brownsville and the surrounding appear in one of the drawn ovals below. This concentration mirrors the economic and social inequality seen throughout the data in this report and reflects the multi-dimensional needs of the community.



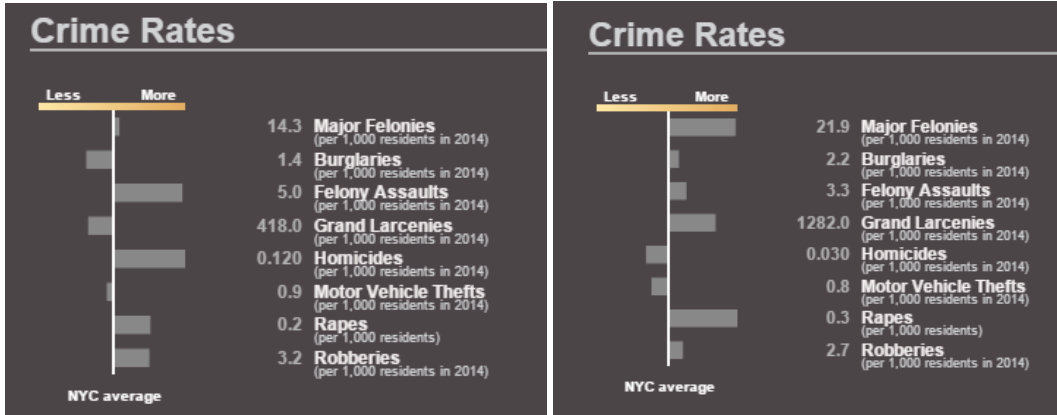
Source: <http://www.justicemapping.org/>

Crime rates in Brownsville support the observations by the police in the New York Magazine article, far outreaching the city-wide averages for homicides and felony assaults. The rate of major felonies on the LES and Chinatown far outreach the city-wide averages. Interestingly, other categories of crime such as burglaries and grand larcenies are actually below the city-wide averages in Brownsville.

Crime Rates

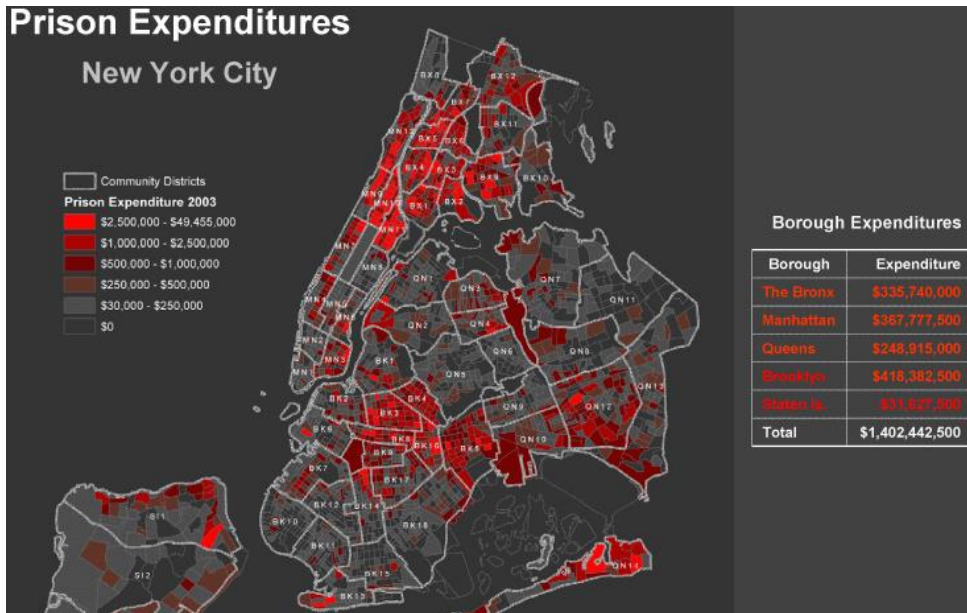
Brownsville & Ocean Hill

LES & Chinatown



Source: <http://data2go.nyc/>

The cost of keeping Brownsville’s men in prison aligns with the concentrations of communities with the highest rates of incarceration. Opportunity gaps like lack of employment and earning power likely contribute to incarceration rates and result in “million-dollar blocks”, neighborhoods where more than \$1 million is spent annually to incarcerate the residents of a single census block” (Orson). When visualizing prison expenditures in communities such as Brownsville, a strong case can be made for funding social, preventative programming rather than incarceration.

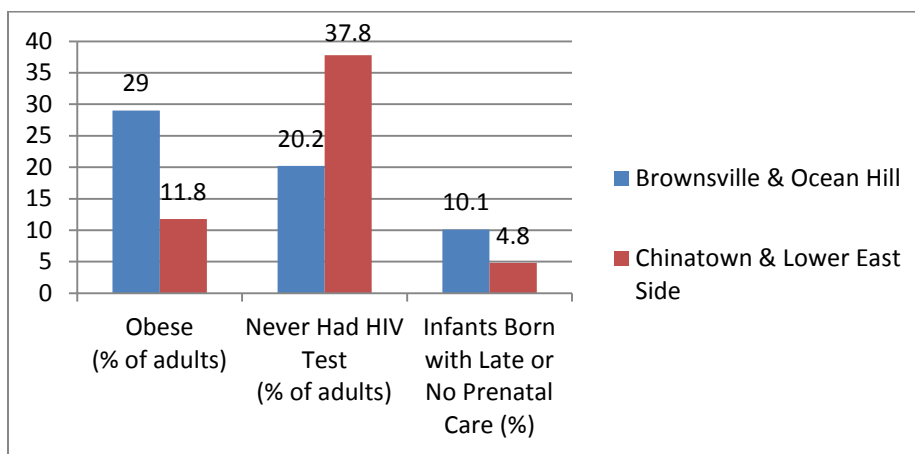


Source: <http://www.justicemapping.org/>

Health

The health indicators, shown in the tables below highlight the need for health and family services in Brownsville. The high rate of homelessness and poverty likely play a role in the 31% of residents facing food insecurity (a lack of access to healthy and affordable food) and the obesity rate of 29% amongst adults. Both the LES and Brownsville have a need for HIV testing and counseling services. The LES stands out with almost 40% of its population never having had a HIV test. The data for LGBTQ youth in New York City, suggests that many of these youth could benefit from such programs as they are at high risk of infection.

Obesity, HIV, and Infants with Late or No Prenatal Care

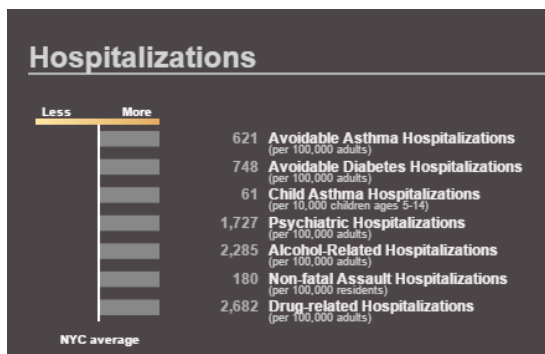


Source: <http://data2go.nyc/>

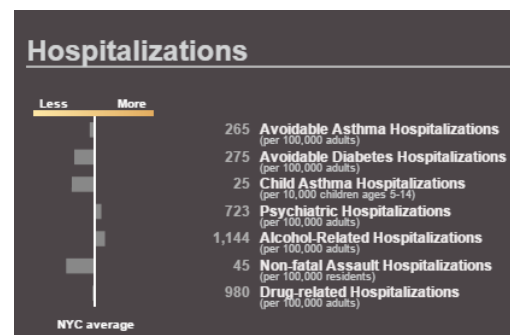
Across the board Brownsville has significantly higher hospitalization rates. The LES on the other hand falls below the city-wide average in almost every category.

Hospitalizations

Brownsville & Ocean Hill



LES & Chinatown



Source: <http://data2go.nyc/>

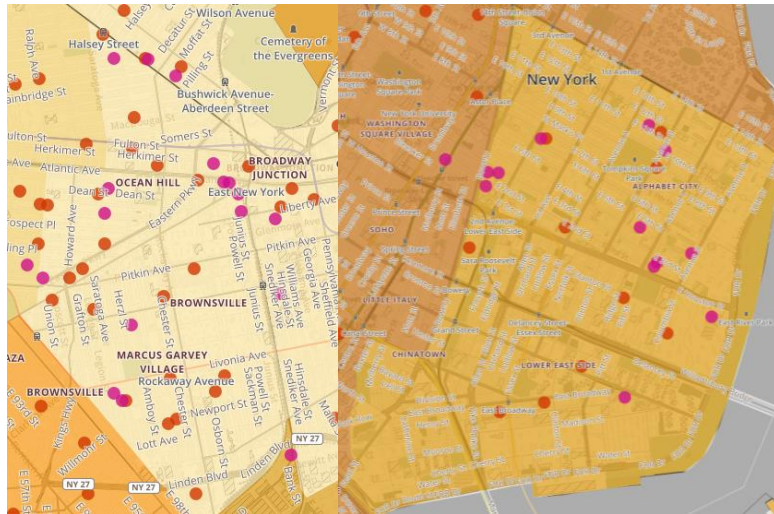
LGBTQ

One of the biggest challenges facing not only Brownsville but New York City as a whole, is the need for increased facilities and services for the LGBTQ community, particularly the youth. LGBTQAI+ low-income youth of color have few spaces where they are accepted, embraced, and affirmed. Traditional school settings are often unwelcoming to LGBTQ youth, which contributes to high rates of high school dropout among LGBTQ youth. According to the Ali Forney Center about 40% of all homeless youth in New York City are LGBTQ youth. The center reports that based on client feedback, LGBTQ youth are more likely to experience sexual assault, domestic violence, HIV infection and substance abuse. Some may turn to prostitution and drug dealing to survive. While it would cost the city \$80,000 to incarcerate one of these youths for a year, it would only cost \$30,000 per year to provide one such youth with a bed in a youth shelter. With an increase of services and facilities for LGBTQ youth, more data could possibly be collected as there is very little data on LGBTQ youth in Brownsville suggesting a dire need for services.

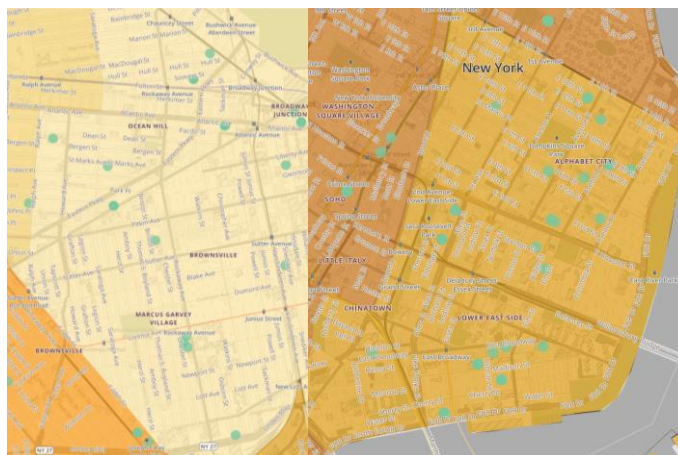
Available Services & Possible Service Gaps

GSS will use the following community asset maps in conjunction with the research completed by the GSS internal committee of staff for the purposes of determining where GSS services may fulfill service gaps in Brownsville. The committee, formed in 2015 as part of the GSS strategic planning process and specifically focused on GSS's intention to expand in Brooklyn, compiled a list of current services in Brownsville. The maps below are a helpful supplement in exhibiting not only the quantity of services available in the Brownsville & Ocean Hill community district but also demonstrating concentrations of services as well as service deserts.

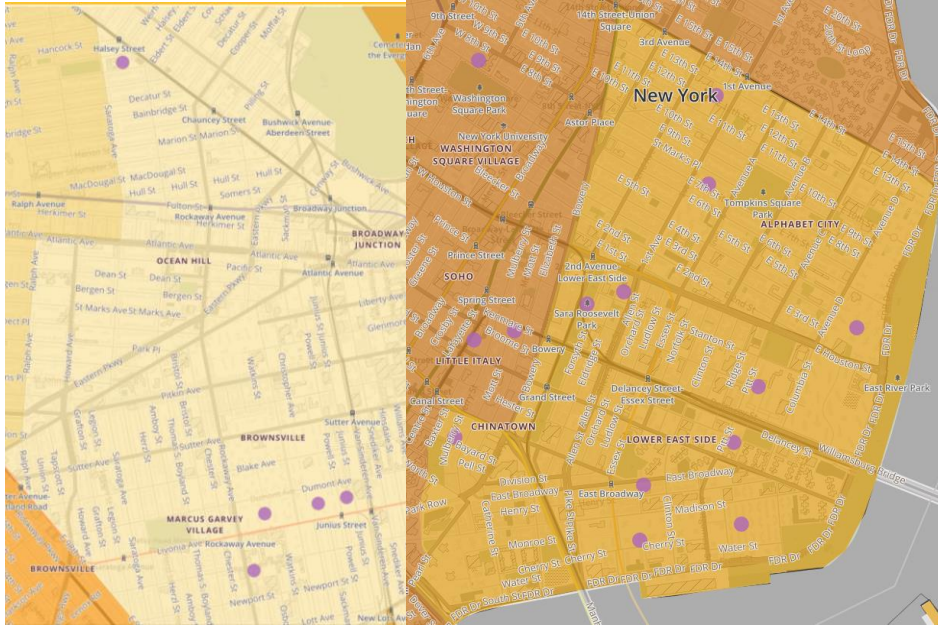
Homeless Shelters (pink) & Soup Kitchens (orange)



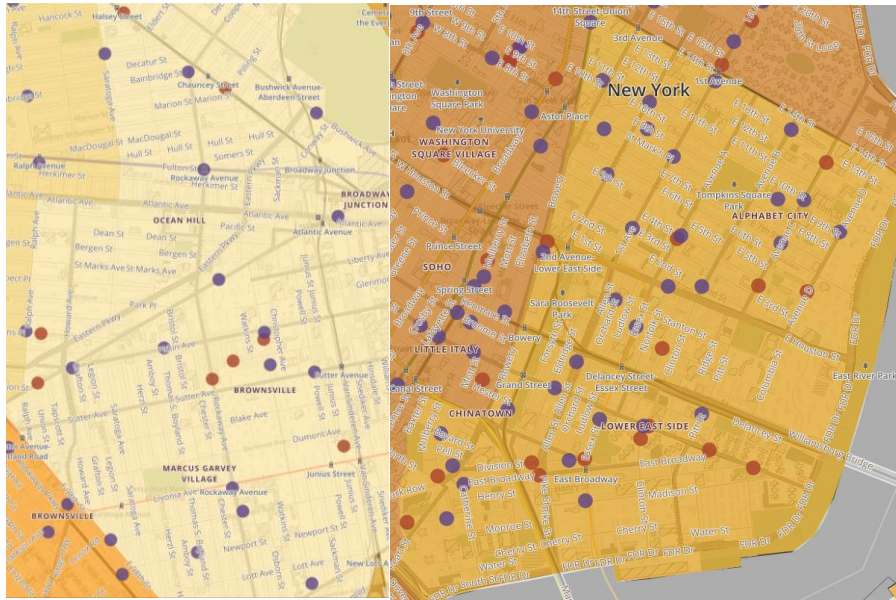
Mental Health Centers



Senior Centers



Supermarkets (red) & Liquor Stores (purple)

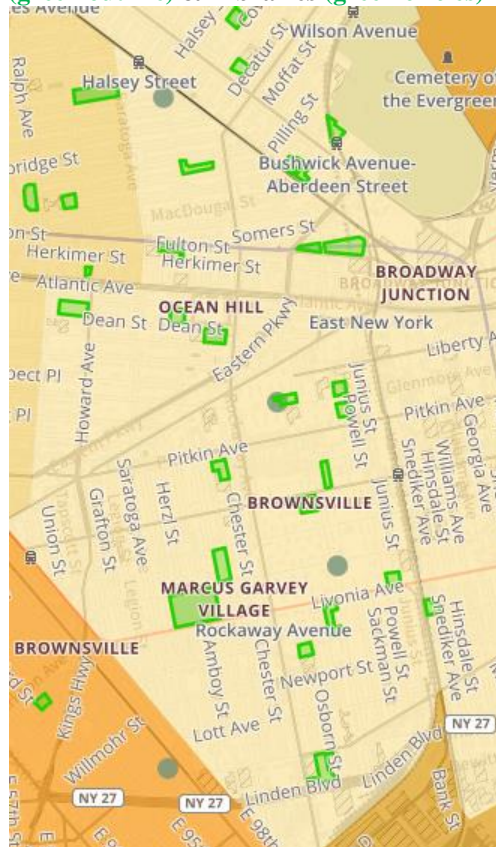


Source: <http://data2go.nyc/>

Conclusion & Next Steps

Community cohesion is at the core of GSS's model. Providing services and resources for all age groups and having a clear physical presence in the community will help GSS foster community cohesion. For example, GSS can provide space spaces for children, youth, and seniors to come together. The figure below highlights the need for recreational spaces in Brownsville. Safe spaces that the community can access to interact, hold community events and share ideas are integral to any community's cohesion.

Parks (green outline) & Libraries (green circles)



In addition, as advocacy is a strategic priority for the organization, GSS should help encourage voter turnout and community engagement in local politics in Brownsville. Empowering community members to have a voice in policy decisions and neighborhood leadership will increase community resilience. The table below exhibits voter turnout for both

the LES and Brownsville. Even though the LES has a higher voter turnout rate, both communities have room to improve their election participation rates. It is essential that a community participates in the political structures provided as these determine community funding and policies. Therefore, GSS should continue to tackle voter registration and turnout in the LES in addition to Brownsville.

Voter Turnout

	Voter Turnout in 2014 (% of all eligible voters)	Voted at Least Once in Past Three Years (% of all eligible voters)
Brownsville & Ocean Hill	12.3	34.9
Chinatown & LES	17.3	42.6

Source: <http://data2go.nyc/>

Addressing the problem of the “missing men” in Brownsville through additional services for disconnected youth would be a concrete step toward community cohesion. GSS’s youth services help prevent youth from entering the criminal justice system by providing them with a safe afterschool space and opportunities to continue learning. A program specifically geared toward youth with experience in the criminal justice system would be especially useful in Brownsville.

In conclusion, the LES has greatly benefited from the services provided to individuals and families, youth and seniors. With a solid presence in the LES and a growing presence in Brownsville and the Brooklyn area, GSS’s holistic approach to community development can help protect against the challenges faced by communities, avoiding service silos that may cause a duplication of efforts and failure to understand that all challenges faced by a community are inter-connected.

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