CENTER FOR CITIES+SCHOOLS
UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA BERKELEY

Y-PLAN Policy Brief 2014

Healthy Planning, Healthy Communities:
Creating Access to Healthy Foods + Active Living in Mott Haven
Bronx, New York City, Academy of Language and Technology

Public Space

Schools, Services, Amenities

ISSUE

In 2012, HUD awarded the New York City Housing Authority (NYCHA) a $300,000 Choice Neighborhoods Initiative Planning Grant to revitalize the Mott Haven neighborhood in the South Bronx. Focus areas include: rehabilitation of affordable housing, improving education and health, increasing public safety and economic development, and developing healthier environments and parks. This year, students at The Academy of Language and Technology (ALT), a National Academy Foundation (NAF) School, partnered with LISC NYC to provide youth insight and evidence-based recommendations to inform the community-driven planning process. LISC provided students with considerable autonomy to investigate a specific issue within these focus areas. Through community research and mapping, students focused their efforts on increasing access to fresh, healthy foods, and revitalizing an underutilized community center. Through their research, students identified public safety as a major community challenge and are in the process of developing strategies and recommendations to Improve safety, increase public awareness, and target park and recreational programming to better meet the needs of young people and families within the Mott Haven Choice Neighborhood.

The students helps us better understand how people make choices – they and their families are the consumers in the neighborhood, so understanding what they need or want will be very helpful… sometimes in our position, we are so focused on getting the plan, we forget to check that we're going down the right path. It's awesome how Y-PLAN gives students the tools that they need in the long-run to be a part of community planning, and invites them to take the conversation in their own direction. They're asking questions and talking about stuff we haven't even thought about."
– Y-PLAN Client, LISC NYC

QUESTION

What makes a healthy community? How can we create access to healthy foods + safe recreation spaces for students at ALT and families living in the Mott Haven Choice Neighborhood footprint?

COMMUNITY OF PRACTICE: Y-PLAN TEAM

Y-PLAN Instructors: Michael Seltzer + Kate Roberts
Students: 10th and 11th Grade
Clients: LISC NYC, New York City Department of Parks and Recreation, Mott Haven Choice

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YOUTH DRIVEN DATA AND INSIGHTS

- Issues and perceptions of public safety are a primary challenge for the community

EMERGING RECOMMENDATIONS

- The Department of Parks and Recreation should increase awareness of services targeted to youth and families to meet the needs of the community and the City must address issues of community safety in order to increase utilization of recreation centers, parks, and community space
- Students took a creative approach to addressing the problem of the underutilized parks and recreation center through a marketing lens. Students acted as marketing consultants, conducting surveys, designing brochures and posters to increase public awareness around the service and opportunities offered by the Parks and Recreation Center in the Bronx

NEXT STEPS

Students will present recommendations to clients LISC and New York City Department of Parks and Recreation in June, 2014.

"I joined Y-PLAN because I want my voice to be heard to make a positive change in my community before I graduate. I think I can make my community better by giving presentations about how healthy communities are not just about feeling safe, it includes mental health, physical health, and social health so people can live in a better place."
– Y-PLAN Student, ALT

For more information on Y-PLAN, contact Jessie Stewart, Y-PLAN National Coordinator: jessie.stewart@berkeley.edu

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