

Bushwick, Brooklyn



BUSHWICK

□ Bushwick Study Area

□ Newtown Creek

■ Cemeteries

— MTA L Subway

— MTA M Subway

— MTA J, Z Subways

— MTA A, C Subways

■ NEW YORK CITY HOUSING
AUTHORITY DEVELOPMENTS

■ NEIGHBORHOOD PARKS
(1 to 20 acres in size)

1 Bushwick Playground

2 Fermi Playground

3 Green Central Knoll

4 Heckscher Playground

5 Hope Ballfield

6 Irving Square Park

7 Maria Hernandez Park

8 Thomas Boyland Park

■ POCKET PARKS
(Less than 1 acre)

9 Arboleda de Niños/Children's Grove

10 Beaver Noll Park

11 Evergreen Playground

12 Freedom Triangle

13 Garden Playground

14 Heisser Triangle

15 Know Waste Lands

16 Rudd Playground

17 Tiger Playground

■ COMMUNITY GARDENS

18 Aberdeen Street Community Garden

19 Concerned Citizens of Grove Street
Community Garden

20 Contented Heart Garden

21 Cooper Street Block Buster
Block Association

22 Cooper Street Community Garden

23 Decatur Street Community Garden

24 El Garden

25 Eldert Street Garden

26 Good Life Garden (Goodwin Gardens)

27 Granite Street Block Association

28 Infant Jesus Community Garden

29 La Finca Community Garden

30 Madison Square Garden Association

31 Madison Street Community Garden

32 Moffat Garden

33 People's Garden

34 Woodbine Street Block Association Garden



Bushwick

Bushwick is a neighborhood in north Brooklyn on the Queens border. From its roots as a European residential neighborhood, to an industrial working-class Latinx and Black community, and now a booming real estate market for developers, this neighborhood is home to many community gardens. Its small open spaces are in need of investment to handle an increase in users as the neighborhood density grows.

Forty years ago, Bushwick was caught in the worst of New York City's fiscal crisis. Owners burned buildings for insurance payouts, which displaced community members and left empty lots behind. The neighborhood has slowly recovered due to community resilience and considerable public investment. Starting in 2000, many empty lots were bought by developers, and new buildings were developed in the west, closer to Manhattan and transit connections. These developments quickly grew out of scale with the neighborhood character.

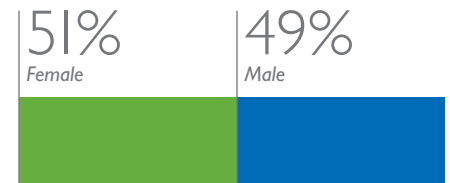
In 2014, community representatives started collaborating with local Council Members Espinal and Reynoso to design a local plan to preserve the community's

character, reduce the out-of-scale development, bring back industrial jobs, and create affordable housing. This process culminated in the 2018 *Bushwick Community Plan*, a comprehensive set of recommendations including housing, transportation, and open space, which was sent to the Department of City Planning (DCP) for consideration.

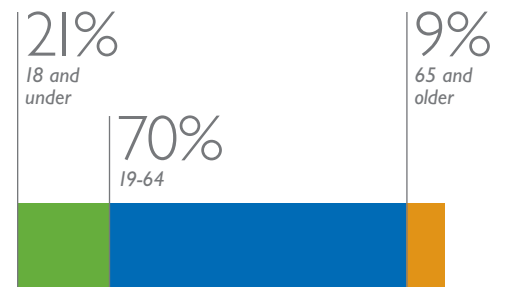
In April 2019, the City released its official rezoning plan for Bushwick: some parts align with the recommendations of the *Bushwick Community Plan*, but many local priorities were not included. The rezoning's public process provides critical opportunities for Bushwick residents to advocate for the priorities articulated in the Plan, including for open space.

BUSHWICK DEMOGRAPHICS

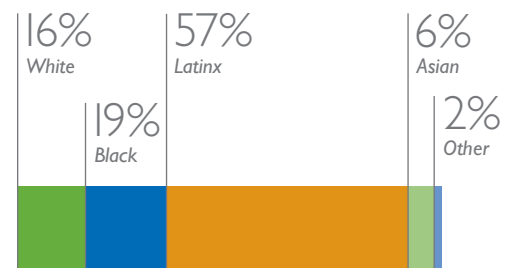
SEX



AGE



RACE AND ETHNICITY



Rosemary's Playground

Open Space Goals and Local Results

For each Open Space Goal in the Index, NY4P staff gathered data from publicly available sources to answer the question, “Does Bushwick meet this goal?” Information on population comes from the US Census’ American Community Survey, and most open space amenity and acreage information comes from the New York City open data platform. Visit www.ny4p.org/data-and-research for methodology.

AMOUNT OF OPEN SPACE

Total Open Space



All acres of open space in the neighborhood that provide space for play, relaxation, and contact with nature

CITYWIDE GOAL
2.5
acres per
1,000 people

BUSHWICK RESULT
0.2
acres per
1,000 people



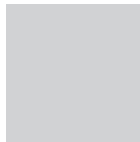
Active Open Space



All acres of playgrounds, fields, courts, rec centers, and other active open spaces

CITYWIDE GOAL
1
acre per
1,000 people

BUSHWICK RESULT
0.1
acres per
1,000 people



Playgrounds



Places for play with things like swings, climbing frames, water features, sand boxes, or other play areas

CITYWIDE GOAL
1
per 1,250 kids

BUSHWICK RESULT
2.3
per 1,250 kids



Athletic Fields



Fields for sports like soccer, football, cricket, baseball, rugby, and field hockey, as well as outdoor ice rinks

CITYWIDE GOAL
1.5
per 10,000
people

BUSHWICK RESULT
1
per 10,000
people



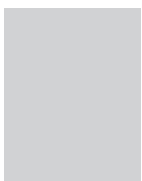
Courts



Courts for playing sports like basketball, handball, volleyball, tennis, and bocce

CITYWIDE GOAL
5
per 10,000
people

BUSHWICK RESULT
2.7
per 10,000
people



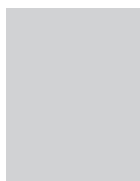
Recreation Centers



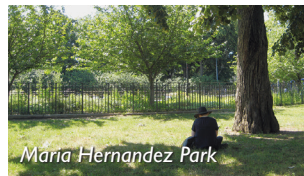
Indoor recreation centers operated by NYC Parks, and other indoor facilities with similar fees and public access

CITYWIDE GOAL
1
per 10,000
people

BUSHWICK RESULT
0
per 10,000
people



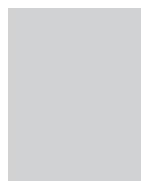
Passive Open Space



All acres of lawns, esplanades, plazas, beaches, natural areas, planted areas, and community gardens

CITYWIDE GOAL
1.5
per 10,000
residents

BUSHWICK RESULT
0.2
per 10,000
residents



Community Gardens



All GreenThumb gardens and other community gardens with public access

CITYWIDE GOAL
1
per 20,000
residents

BUSHWICK RESULT
1.6
per 20,000
residents



NY4P studied the area of Brooklyn within the Community Board 4 boundaries, which includes Bushwick.

■ Meets goal ■ Approaches goal ■ Does not meet goal

ACCESS TO OPEN SPACES

Pocket Parks



Parks smaller than 1 acre in size

CITYWIDE GOAL

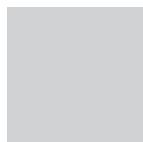
100%

of people live within a five-minute walk

BUSHWICK RESULT

59%

of people live within a five-minute walk



Neighborhood Parks



Parks larger than 1 acre but smaller than 20 acres in size

CITYWIDE GOAL

100%

of people live within a five-minute walk

BUSHWICK RESULT

54%

of people live within a five-minute walk



Large Parks



Parks larger than 20 acres in size

CITYWIDE GOAL

100%

of people live within a ten-minute walk

BUSHWICK RESULT

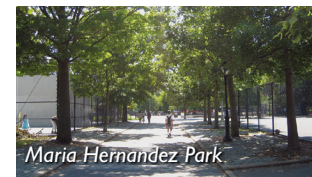
0%

of people live within a ten-minute walk



ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY

Urban Tree Canopy



The layer of tree leaves, branches, trunks, and stems, that cover the ground when viewed from above

CITYWIDE GOAL

40%

potential tree canopy

BUSHWICK RESULT

14%

actual tree canopy



PARK MAINTENANCE

Cleanliness



NYC Parks' Park Inspection Program rating based on the presence of litter, glass, graffiti, weeds, and ice

CITYWIDE GOAL

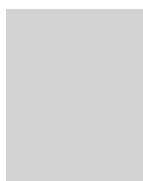
90%

of inspections rated "acceptable"

BUSHWICK RESULT

80%

of inspections rated "acceptable"



Overall Condition



NYC Parks' Park Inspection Program rating for overall park maintenance conditions

CITYWIDE GOAL

85%

of inspections rated "acceptable"

BUSHWICK RESULT

70%

of inspections rated "acceptable"



Findings and Recommendations

ACCESS

INFRASTRUCTURE

Findings

Bushwick is severely underserved in open space, with just 0.2 acres of open space for every 1,000 residents. No one in Bushwick lives within a ten-minute walk to a large park. There are many community gardens, but they are not well known. In the past, walking to and within local parks was considered dangerous: residents often avoided them. Open spaces are now safe, but as the neighborhood develops and residents are displaced from the western side of the neighborhood, they lose access to those improved open spaces. There is no wayfinding information to tell residents where open spaces are or the safest routes to get to them.

The maintenance of Bushwick's open spaces falls short of Index goals in NYC Parks' own inspections and based on neighbor testimony gathered as part of NY4P's research. Litter is rampant in open spaces and on the streets. While the 47 playgrounds in the neighborhood surpass the goal, residents report that there are not enough playgrounds to meet local demand. More people with pets now live in Bushwick, creating an unfilled need for more dog-runs. Longtime residents feel that open space improvements have been inequitable, catering to the developing and gentrifying western side of the neighborhood. There is also fear that an increased population will overwhelm existing park infrastructure.

Recommendations

1. To make existing open spaces more accessible and to create new open spaces, the Parks Without Borders treatment should be given to existing parks in Bushwick, such as Maria Hernandez Park, and public land adjacent to NYC Department of Education (DOE) and New York City Housing Authority (NYCHA) properties should be made accessible to the public where possible.
 2. New developments in the area should dedicate a portion of their floor area to public or private open space, to lessen the usership demand on existing open spaces.
 3. To make navigating to open spaces easier, multilingual English and Spanish wayfinding signage should be established around the neighborhood. It should highlight open space hours and history, and show how to get to the closest large park, Highland Park. This could be carried out by NYC Department of Transportation (DOT) in collaboration with NYC Parks, GreenThumb, and local community- and arts-based organizations.
1. To ensure equitable distribution of improvements and investments, projects to expand access and to create new open spaces should be extended to the eastern and northern portions of the neighborhood. Any plan should be informed by community members, reflecting their needs and culture. City agencies and developers should work together to create new public open spaces, new dog runs, and other amenities identified by the community.
 2. To create waterfront access in Bushwick, community-based organizations, NYC Parks, and NYC Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) should work together to enact Riverkeeper's Newtown Creek Vision Plan.
 3. To better maintain existing open spaces and green infrastructure, more consistent maintenance work should be a goal for the NYC Parks staff, the DEP bioswale staff, and community-based organizations that already steward parks and open spaces.

HEALTH

While the amount of playgrounds in Bushwick exceed the citywide goal, there is too little open space for active recreation, contributing to negative health outcomes in the neighborhood. Bushwick children suffer from increased levels of asthma and obesity, and a lack of programming and active recreation amenities are contributing factors. The fields and courts that do exist are well-loved and heavily used, booked to capacity with formal leagues, which leaves no room for informal pick-up games. The neighborhood has no recreation center to serve indoor recreation needs.

1. To empower Bushwick's residents to better their health outcomes and build long-term habits around healthy nutrition and recreation, more programming and education should take place in existing open spaces and community centers. Community-based organizations should partner with NYC Parks, GreenThumb, the NYC Department of Health, and Partnerships for Parks to bring multilingual programming and engagement to the existing open spaces, and to create more awareness and education around the importance of cleaning up after pets.
2. To increase the amount of active recreation space, more athletic courts and fields should be constructed on public and private land in Bushwick. Multilingual signage at every existing open space should explain in clear terms how to book space and organize activities. To align with goals related to community empowerment, NYC Parks should partner with public agencies and private developers to create indoor and outdoor public recreation centers.

ENVIRONMENT

Bushwick has a robust community garden presence; there are 19 gardens spread across the neighborhood. These contribute to the overall greenery, culture, character, and resilience, but they alone do not provide sufficient permeability and biodiversity. Community members want more pervious surface in local open spaces. There are too few trees in Bushwick's open spaces and along its streets, and tree canopy covers only 14% of the neighborhood despite the potential for 40% to be covered if trees were planted and stewarded in all available spaces. Furthermore, residents fear that new developments do not have plans to replace construction-damaged trees.

1. To increase tree canopy coverage, reduce flooding, and improve the aesthetics and quality of existing open spaces, more cover should be added to open spaces and the public realm in the form of trees and their beds, grass fields, and bioswales. Green infrastructure enhancements should be built into community gardens in coordination with their stewards and into existing parks and open spaces by NYC DEP in collaboration with NYC Parks.
2. As NYC Parks received over \$8 million in funding for gardens in FY 2020, Bushwick community gardens should receive proportionate funding for improvements.
3. Trees in the neighborhood should be protected and replaced if taken down for any private or public development, and new developments should plant additional trees with a long-term maintenance plan for them.

FUNDING

Bushwick was one of the neighborhoods most affected by New York City's fiscal crisis in the 1970s, meaning it has long borne the brunt of public and private disinvestment. This is reflected in the amount and quality of open space in the neighborhood. There has been a need for both maintenance and capital improvements, and residents feel that Bushwick is only receiving funding now that developers have begun to invest. Community organizations and volunteer groups have long been the main stewards of parks and community gardens. Most of their funding is self-raised.

1. NYC Parks must ensure that Bushwick parks, open spaces, and community gardens feel the results of the FY 2020 \$43 million increase in citywide funding for parks operations and maintenance.
2. More funding for parks and gardens will help them improve, stay clean, stay open, and engage more residents in healthy activity. The Mayor and City Council should work together to ensure more funding for NYC Parks and GreenThumb, as well as NYCHA, to ensure improvements to their public open spaces.
3. Existing volunteer groups should be given more support, resources, and opportunities to do bilingual programming and engage their neighbors. Groups should join the Brooklyn Parks & Open Space Coalition to be connected to each other and to other resources. Partnerships for Parks should also receive more support to boost grassroots groups in cleaning, maintaining, and advocating for Bushwick's open spaces.



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New Yorkers for Parks is the citywide independent organization championing quality parks and open spaces for all New Yorkers in all neighborhoods. Parks are essential to the health of residents, the livability of neighborhoods, and the economic development of the city. Through an integrated approach of research, advocacy, and strategic partnerships, we drive immediate actions and long-term policies that protect and enhance the city's vast network of parks, ensure equitable access to quality open spaces for all neighborhoods, and inform and empower communities throughout New York City.

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