

Making Space: Youth- Centered Spatial Futures In NYCHA Communities

Urban Design Forum
Forefront Fellowship
Free To Grow
June 2024



Mission

A thriving NYCHA for young people is a thriving NYCHA for everyone.

We believe youth living in New York City public housing deserve to rest, move, gather, grow, and connect in open space in their communities.

Our team researched what's impeding this vision today, and how youth-centered spatial futures at the New York City Housing Authority (NYCHA) could become a reality. As such, this project proposes new pathways for NYCHA communities to collaborate and advocate for improved quality, communication, and accountability in the design, construction, and operations of public housing open spaces.

By adopting these recommendations, our hope is that the ecosystem of NYCHA residents, advocates and partners can shape spaces, policies, and processes that elevate youth. We firmly believe that promoting a youth-centered approach to open space activation will not only be good for youth, but good for communities as a whole.¹



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Introduction

Who We Are

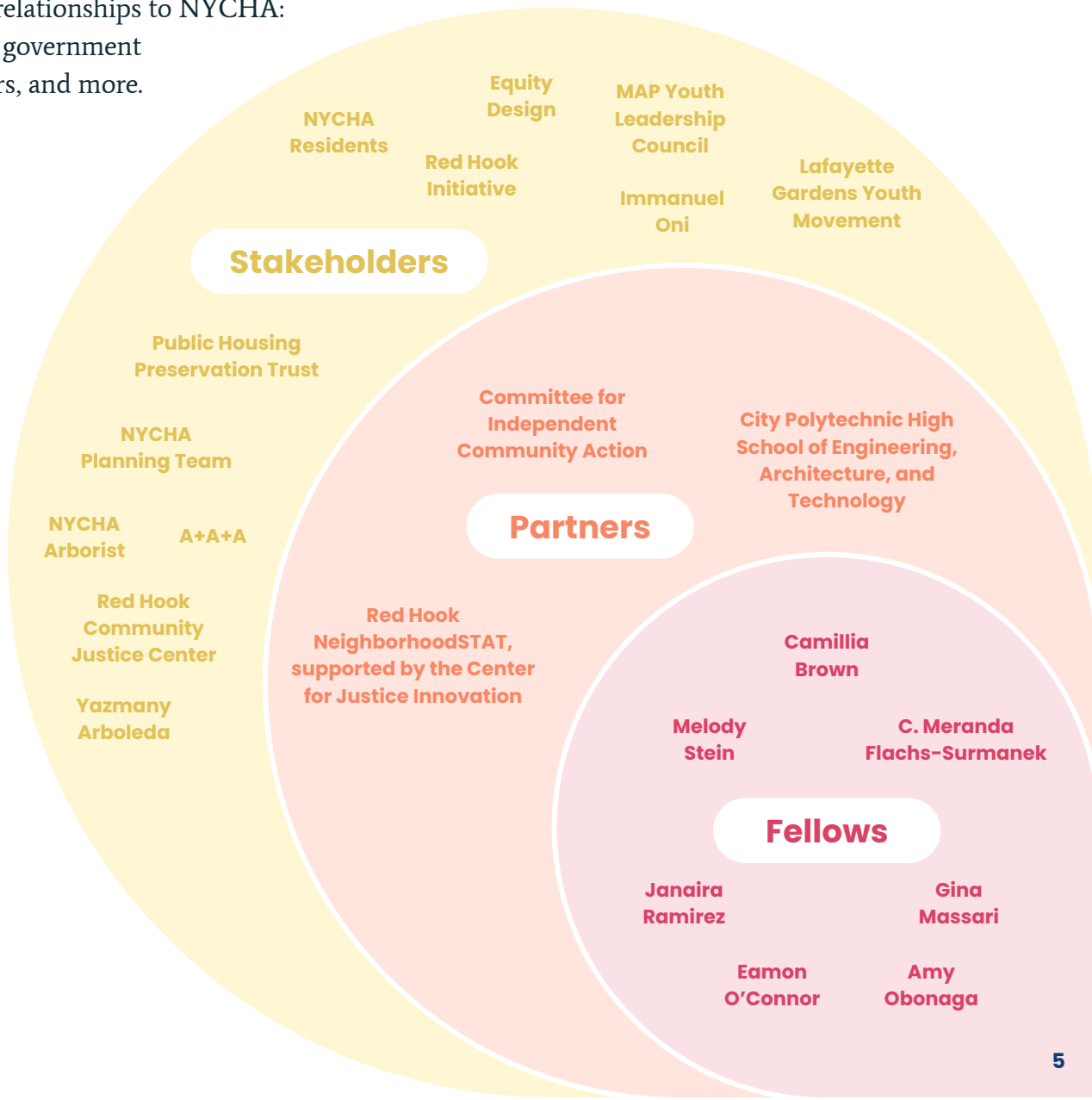


Our North Star

We believe in the power and potential of youth-centered spaces in NYCHA communities.

Some of us have lived in New York City our entire lives. Some of us have friends and family that live in NYCHA and other affordable housing programs in the city. All of us have a deep commitment to this city's future.

With experience in a range of fields — from design to youth programming, from theater to the justice system — we collaborated with and learned from people with a wide span of relationships to NYCHA: residents, advocates, government employees, educators, and more.



Core Partners

Our core partners designed and led a pilot youth workshop series with us focused on Red Hook, and the public housing community at the center of this neighborhood, Red Hook Houses.

Youth Design Talent



City Polytechnic High School of Engineering, Architecture, and Technology is a small, thriving Pathways in Technology school that prepares students for both college and careers.² Our team collaborated with Polytechnic's Work-Based Learning Department, which brings opportunities to the school's scholars through mentorships, job shadowing, internships, post-secondary readiness workshops and professional development.

NYCHA Resident Leadership



Red Hook NeighborhoodSTAT, supported by the Center for Justice Innovation, is a group that involves residents in working to prioritize the community safety issues most important to their development. This Red Hook chapter is part of the wider NeighborhoodSTAT initiative developed by the Mayor's Action Plan for Neighborhood Safety, bringing together neighbors, community organizations, and city agency representatives to support safer, more vibrant communities across 30 NYCHA campuses.³

Organizers & Advocates for NYCHA's Future



The Committee for Independent Community Action (CICA) is a group of public housing residents and advocates.⁴ Amidst the ongoing privatization plans being implemented in NYC, CICA builds capacity for collective organizing so residents have a say in NYCHA's future. CICA emerged out of the All Stars Project, a youth-centered grassroots nonprofit organization.

How We Worked

We balanced our eagerness to begin the work and our understanding that the work can not begin without meaningful relationships.

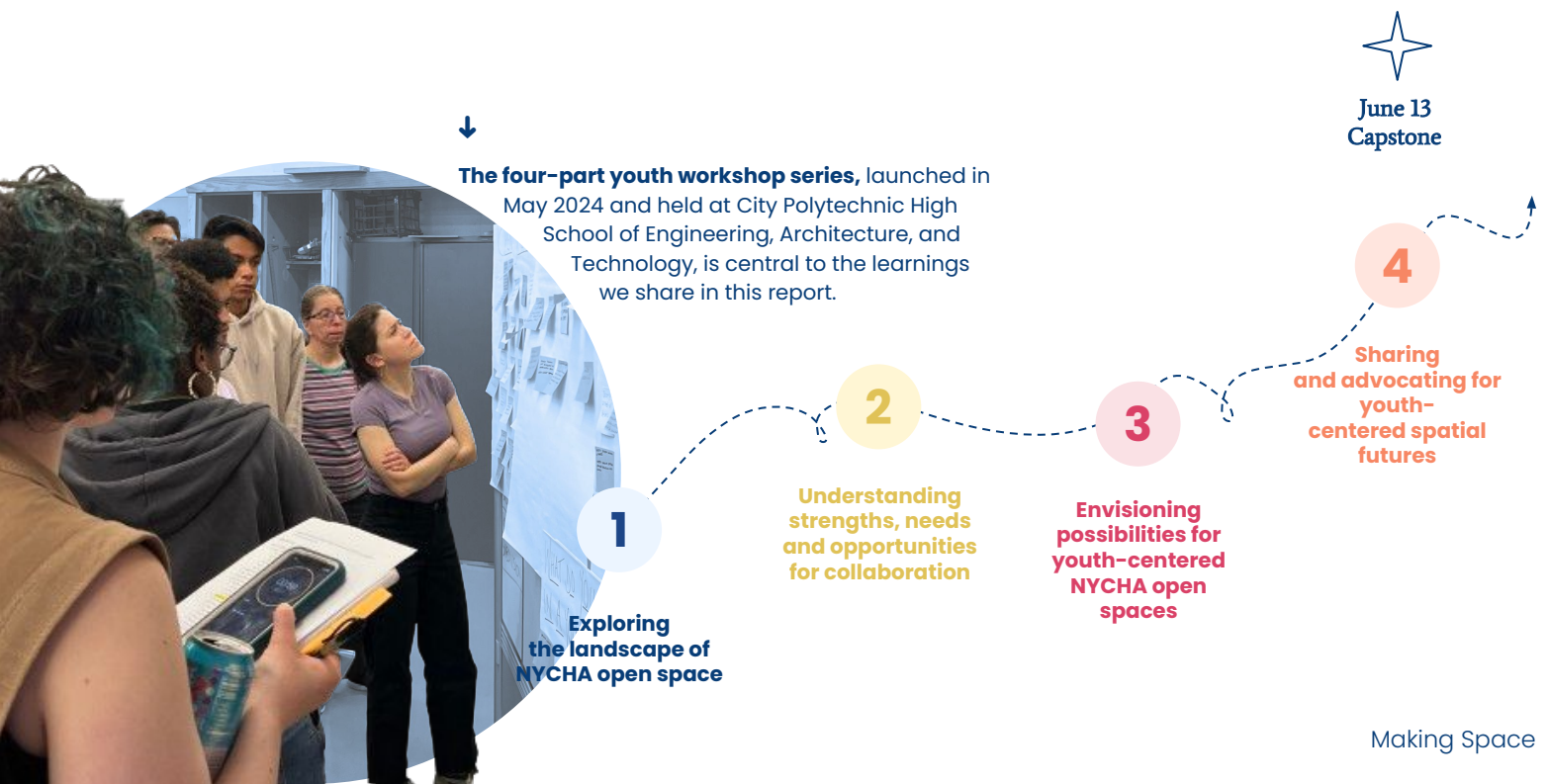
Our team’s approach was to focus on “critical connections”.⁵ From January through March 2024, we learned alongside a range of organizers and figures central to NYCHA organizing, advocacy, and management.

Youth health, safety, and longevity in public housing is an urgent issue. This was palpable in nearly every conversation we had and people overwhelmingly wanted to support our team’s work. Our core partnerships rose to the top because of our shared *passions*, *commitments*, and *capacity*.

Responding to the enthusiasm of organizers and nonprofit leaders, we committed to diving deeply into one Brooklyn neighborhood, Red Hook, developing anchoring relationships from which our work could grow.

We worked iteratively, ultimately landing on the development of a youth workshop series based on an initial discovery tour in Red Hook and conversations with stakeholders.

Along the way, we asked and answered difficult questions of ourselves, rooted in a practice of metacognition, or thinking about what we are learning. Questions like: How are we moved and changed by what we are learning? Being in a professional development fellowship focused on youth access to freedom and joy in New York City is one reason for this working approach.



NYCHA In Context

Imagine New York without NYCHA

We wouldn't
want to.

The economic, racial, and cultural diversity that makes New York City our home is, in part, a result of NYCHA's historic and continuing role in New York City's housing ecosystem.

Some people view NYCHA only as a stepping stone because of its federally instigated budget deficit. NYCHA can be a bridge but it can also be a final stop. There are different pathways. We urge readers to value every relationship New York City residents have to NYCHA: long and short-term.



Many people coming from overseas begin their housing journey in NYCHA. Some of our team's family and friends have gone on to purchase homes because NYCHA provided the economic stability they needed to thrive.

We know that NYCHA has brought culture and vibrancy to NYC. We need to protect it because of all the ways New Yorkers choose to live and relate to the organization: as a stop along their journey, and as an enduring place to live and pass onto their children.

NYCHA Is New York

NYCHA communities are an integral part of all five boroughs and are home to thousands of young people.

Established in 1935 to address the abject conditions of tenement housing,⁶ NYCHA is the largest public housing authority in the North America, with over 528,000 residents.⁷ By the late 1950s, large numbers of Black and Puerto Rican New Yorkers had moved into public housing and white flight to the suburbs accelerated, leading to significant and perpetual disinvestment in NYCHA.⁸ Despite decades of neglect, those residing in NYCHA buildings continue to fight for the dignity and well-being of their communities, proving time and again that they are here to stay and will not be ignored.

Today 25% of NYCHA's population is under 18, an estimated 81,240 children and youth.⁹ Additionally, 95% of residents are people of color.¹⁰ In a transient city, the average tenure for residents is 25 years,¹¹ making NYCHA one of the most enduring communities in New York City. The thousands of young people who live in NYCHA are essential to the future of our city and they deserve scenic places to play and rest that are on and within the campuses in which they reside. We believe in a future where the young people on NYCHA campuses are at the forefront of shaping their immediate environment and the future of the entire city.

NYCHA By the Numbers¹²



1 in 17

New Yorkers
call NYCHA
home

30%

Of NYCHA
residents are
under 21

11%

Of NYCHA
residents are
under 14

95%

Of NYCHA
residents are
people of color

\$25K

Average
NYCHA family
income

\$557

Average
monthly rent of
NYCHA housing

Where Spaces Bring People Together

Open space was at the heart of NYCHA’s origin story — but open space quality has suffered from ongoing disinvestment.

When NYCHA communities were first designed, they were part of a “towers in the park” design scheme that was intended to maximize residents’ access to light and ventilation in their units, and green spaces on the ground floors.¹³

Over time, declining maintenance and increasingly inaccessible infrastructure has hindered open space quality and appeal. The 2021 NYCHA Open Space Masterplan noted that 75% of NYCHA’s land is open space (or ~1,854 acres), but 88% of this open space is inaccessible due to fencing or other barriers to access.¹⁴

Despite these deterrents, open space activations led and supported by NYCHA residents show how transformative and important scenic and engaging spaces are for community building — for activities ranging from drumming lessons to sports to gardening and farming. In Pelham Parkway Houses’ community garden in The Bronx, for example, the space has become an intergenerational meeting place connecting elders with the children attending Bronx House Day Care, who partake in a garden-based learning program.¹⁵



High-Level Vision
Light, air, and green space were design priorities in the initial design of many NYCHA communities.



Defensive fencing often blocks access to NYCHA green space.



Eye-Level Reality
Today, 88% of open space is largely inaccessible due to disrepair or access issues. Despite this, many residents claim these spaces for a range of activations that foster youth and intergenerational connection.

Sports-centric spaces and activations are successful, yet many young people call for a greater diversity of offerings.



8 farms and over 700 garden spaces exist across NYCHA.^{16,17,18}



Where Systems Shape Young People

NYCHA faces systemic challenges that hinder youth residents from accessing and enjoying the open space around them.

As we engaged young people, partners, and advisors to understand the needs of and priorities for youth-centered NYCHA open spaces, three systemic challenges continued rising to the top.

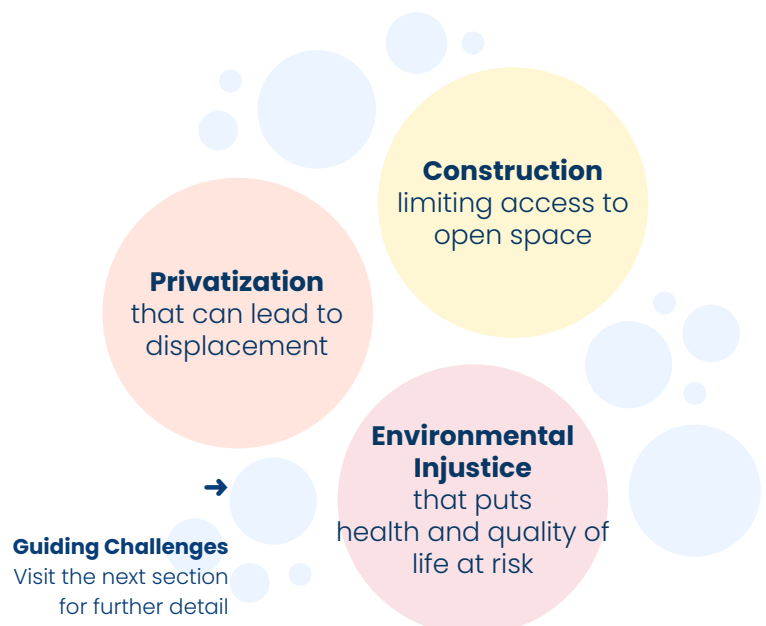
Environmental Injustice: Many NYCHA communities face challenges inherent to their geographic context and the level of investment therein. For example, 35 NYCHA developments are at risk of flooding from storm surge, 85 are susceptible to heightened levels of air pollution, and 95 are in neighborhoods with a highest-risk Heat Vulnerability Index score.¹⁹ These environmental stressors have material impacts on young people's health and well-being.

Construction: Sites undergoing essential construction processes for long-deferred capital improvements often lack a clear phasing approach, transparent timeline, and care for resident quality of life. When construction processes on campuses are not phased out with the input of residents and extend beyond their timeline, they disrupt the routines of young people. Instead of having accessible outdoor areas to gather and play, young people are faced with noise, dust, and gated spaces.

Privatization: Over the past several years, an increasing number of NYCHA campuses have undergone the process of privatization. Private entities managing NYCHA campuses can lead

to short- and long-term displacement and instability for young people due to rent increases. The push for new management comes as a result of decades of disinvestment in NYCHA infrastructure. The end goal of privatization is to have a better funded private entity take on the management of the buildings. Although this begins a process of rehabilitation, the construction phase does not prioritize the well-being of residents.

These systemic challenges are not isolated from one another, and their negative effects compound. For example, construction projects can often lead to tree loss — exacerbating heat in residents' once-shaded units and open spaces, and creating another environmental injustice in heat-vulnerable areas.



Where Residents Organize For Greater Power

NYCHA residents were at the center of public housing policy and practice in the 1960s. What happened?²⁰

Challenge

In the 1960s, the New York City Housing Authority was facing budget shortfalls and disinvestment. Resident organizers brought demands for jobs, political power, and self-determination to NYCHA.

Resident Response

NYCHA residents developed community programming and responses to the needs they saw. NYCHA built alliances with these activists, contributing funding to partnership programs developed by residents including the Tenant Patrol and the Resident Advisory Council—two programs that have made a lasting impact on housing developments across the city. The programs engaged thousands of residents, improved working-class neighborhoods, helped preserve public housing, and connected residents to broader struggles for social and economic justice.

Youth Focus

Tenant-run programs provided recreation, education, and empowerment to young people growing up in and around NYCHA developments. The Resident Advisory Council sponsored a NYCHA Olympics that attracted city-wide talent and a NYCHA Orchestra that organized free outdoor concerts for residents.

Legacy

Tenant-run programs created joy, a felt sense of belonging, and opportunity that a generation of New Yorkers were impacted by.

Tenant-run programs are a major reason that public housing still stands in New York City. Historian Fritz Umbach wrote, “The survival of New York’s public housing system... is arguably one of the more enduring legacies of Black and Latino activism in New York City.” Residents continue to organize today through both city-sponsored initiatives and independent, grassroots efforts.²¹

What would it look like to re-envision the resident-led initiatives of the 1960s guided by their life-affirming health and economic successes, today’s organizing, and the coordinated efforts of The Mayor’s Action Plan for Neighborhood Safety (MAP)?

“Largely **missing from most accounts of NYCHA’s survival are the people who call its developments home.** [They] were, and remain, key players in the preservation and evolution of public housing in New York City over the last half century.”

— Nick Juravich, “*We the Residents*”: Resident Organizing in New York City’s Public Housing, 1964–1978

Red Hook In Focus

Red Hook Houses is Brooklyn's largest public housing development, home to nearly 6,000 residents.²² It is the second largest NYCHA complex in New York City and the third largest in the U.S.²³ Like all NYCHA developments, it was built with the hope and promise of providing affordable and well designed housing for low-income residents. Today, Red Hook is a rapidly changing neighborhood facing many challenges. Gentrification has seen Black and Latinx populations in the district decline by 8 and 6 percent, respectively. The entirety of the neighborhood is a high risk flood zone and in 2012 Hurricane Sandy flooded the area with as much as six feet of water from sewer overflow and high tide.

Red Hook is largely zoned for manufacturing and attracts last-mile delivery facilities that bring many trucks to the region. The massive Amazon warehouse and IKEA store, further compound the negative environmental impacts the neighborhood has suffered. A constant flow of trucks to and from the facilities clog the streets and create air pollution, which can cause chronic health conditions for both vulnerable young and old residents in the neighborhood. Neither facility has been diligent about recording air quality and being transparent with residents about the impact of the facilities in the neighborhood.



As such, these corporate entities continue to operate in the neighborhood with little accountability to the residents who call it home, the majority of whom reside in public housing.

Five years after Hurricane Sandy, NYCHA began restorative work on Red Hook Houses that included new roofs and the relocation of building services to above the design flood elevation, all of which was part of an awarding-winning passive design strategy from a top design firm. The project was slated for completion in 2021, nearly a decade after the hurricane. However, nearly two years later many residents are still without the most basic of needs such as gas, garbage disposal, or even unobstructed access to their homes.

Despite the challenges facing the area, Red Hook Houses' residents remain a deeply embedded and proud community.

Learning From An Outlier

Red Hook Houses residents' most urgent needs remain unaddressed. How the City responds to and manages a climate catastrophe helps us understand what the City must never repeat in as climate emergencies increase in frequency.



Red Hook Houses has yet to vote on privatization, but has a strong group of resident organizers weighing the pros and cons of each route.

Privatization

Construction

Environmental Injustice



Access to open space at Red Hook Houses has been severely limited since Hurricane Sandy in 2012.²⁴ Repair and construction efforts have been slow and lacked timeline transparency.

Red Hook Houses is one of the most vulnerable properties in the NYCHA network, and was particularly hard hit by Hurricane Sandy.



Envisioning Youth-Centered Futures

From
Environmental
Injustice
**To Ecological
Stewardship**



I see myself
gardening, not only
building spaces for
gardening — but
**encouraging others
to garden and take
care of nature.**

— Margarida, Youth Workshop
Participant, High School Junior

Environmental Injustice

Historic and ongoing environmental marginalization, compounded by the impacts of climate change, threatens the health and well-being of youth living at NYCHA.

Air pollution, urban heat, flood risk, and lack of access to safe space to exercise and relax are some of the threats that imperil NYCHA developments and have a disproportionate impact on the health and development of growing minds and bodies.

Youth are particularly susceptible to respiratory concerns caused by polluted air. Likewise, rising temperatures and flooding encourage mold growth, a known trigger of asthma and allergies. Extreme heat greatly impacts children as their developing bodies have more difficulty regulating temperature²⁵ and many NYCHA campuses lack sufficient shade for reprieve. If youth cannot play outside comfortably due to heat and poor air quality, they can become further isolated, which affects both physical and mental health.

When low-income communities are struck by extreme weather events, expensive recovery and rebuilding efforts often remain out of reach or tied up in bureaucracy, leading to permanent displacement. This “climate gentrification” poses a threat for youth to remain in the communities they call home.²⁶

Persistent exposure to harmful environmental conditions is not coincidental but rather the result of systematic environmental injustice that must now be addressed with proportional, restorative investment and persistence.



Where are environmental risks?

Urban heat (orange), high air pollution (yellow), and flood risk (blue) are key environmental risks impacting NYCHA developments that will only increase with climate change.



Flooding from storm surge causes long term damage to critical infrastructure and harmful mold growth.



Exhaust from traffic is linked to heightened asthma and respiratory issues.



A lack of shade and green space make hotter summers even more dangerous.

Ecological Stewardship

75% of NYCHA’s land is open space. This land has the potential to nourish, protect, and provide space for youth to grow.

Hire and train a young green workforce — For City + State Government

Through training and hiring residents, especially youth, New York City has the opportunity to invest in the community while securing climate resilience and landscape improvements. New York City can draw inspiration from other climate resilience and workforce programs.



Inspiration
Portland Clean Energy Community Benefits Fund

A first-of-its-kind climate justice program, the fund supports a range of climate-ready projects — from removing and greening asphalt surfaces to cooling public school classrooms — while creating economic and wealth-building opportunities for local communities.²⁷



Diversify funding streams and partners to power climate resilience — For Government and Nonprofits

Look beyond NYCHA for funding. For example, public sector and philanthropic funds for health, environment, and education may be eligible for youth-led environmental mitigation efforts in NYCHA. Nonprofits like the Trust for Public Land and Nature Conservancy can be fundraising and implementation partners.

Require responses to environmental assessments in open space design proposals— For Government and Designers

Each NYCHA campus contains ecological challenges and assets (e.g., mature tree canopy). These should be documented in a pre-design feasibility study that must be addressed during the implementation of open space improvements.

Engage youth and residents in the development of climate strategies — For Government and Designers

NYCHA residents are on the frontlines of the climate crisis and should be meaningfully involved in crafting solutions. Resident-led coalitions that convene from multiple developments facing similar issues such as urban heat or flooding are opportunities to build solidarity and develop strategies that center resident needs.²⁸

What if underutilized land could become a youth-centered space for learning and growth?



Red Hook Houses Farm Brooklyn, New York

Challenge

The residents of Red Hook Houses faced limited access to fresh and affordable produce. As such, there was growing need for healthy food options that were accessible to the community. Additionally, there were few community gathering and green spaces for residents as well as a need for skill building and education programs for young people in the neighborhood.

Approach

Established in 2013, Red Hook Houses Farm was created through collaboration with Green City Force, the Mayor's Office, and NYCHA.²⁹ The farm is one of the first urban farms built on public housing land and is run by Red Hook Initiative, a local non-profit that focuses on community building and youth development.

Impact

- **Job Training and Education:** Youth ages 14-19 are able to apply for paid apprenticeships where they learn agricultural skills such as seed planting, composting, and harvesting crops. Apprentices also gain valuable experience in outreach, leadership, and team building.
- **Access to Fresh Produce:** Apprentices and residents who tend to the farm or drop of food waste for composting, are able to take home freshly grown fruits and vegetables for free. A total of 5,000 pounds of crops are harvested each year.³⁰
- **Green Space:** The farm provides an additional space for residents to gather and hold events—making it a vibrant community hub for all generations.

From
Construction
Impacts
To Creative
Activation



**When I think of
freedom, I think of
open space —
somewhere you
can think, breathe,
and be in.**

— Natalia, Youth Workshop
Participant, High School Junior

Construction Impacts

Lengthy construction projects reduce access to open space on NYCHA campuses, forcing youth to gather in other places where they face disproportionate surveillance.

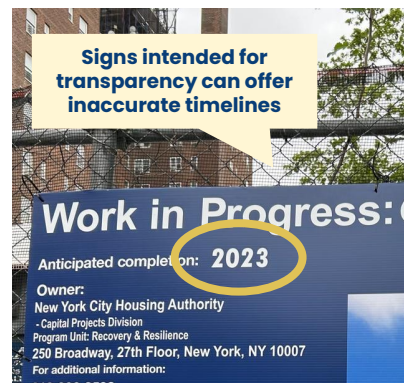
Extensive repairs, renovations, and upgrades to buildings, infrastructure, and open space are desperately needed at virtually every NYCHA development. However, the construction process itself generates significant externalities, from dangerous environmental hazards to severely limiting residents' access to their own developments due to fencing.

During construction, playgrounds and open space serve as staging grounds for construction equipment and are generally fenced off. This prevents children and youth from accessing areas for playing, gathering and making important intergenerational connections, often for years on end. Teenagers, in particular, have limited options for hanging out with friends in public, especially if they do not live within walking distance to a park. Even when youth are located near public green space, they increasingly find themselves being watched and over-policed, especially in neighborhoods that are rapidly gentrifying.

Furthermore, construction sites often increase the rodents and pests in an area, due to the addition of dumpsters, as well as the displacement of dirt, plants and trees which disturbs the homes of these critters. Exposure to rats, cockroaches, possums, raccoons, and pigeons can trigger allergies and asthma in children and youth, as can the dust and debris inherent on construction sites.³¹

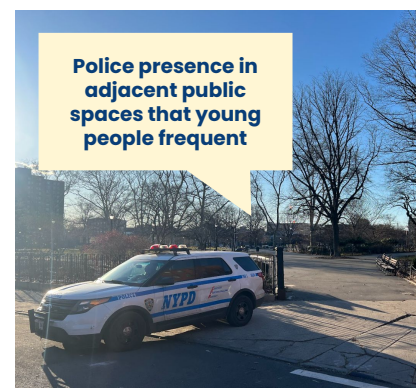
A lack of strategic construction mitigation,

project phasing, and site preparation protocols erodes trust between residents and NYCHA. Many residents described living within active construction sites for years, making this issue one of urgency, requiring tactical, creative solutions that can bring about effective change.



“It’s been this way for years. There’s nowhere to sit outside anymore.”

– Red Hook Houses Resident



Creative Activation

Construction is a necessary step for the long-term — rather than a hindrance, it can be a catalyst for youth opportunity and joy.

Prioritize residents' needs and livelihood in capital management — For City Government

NYCHA's Asset and Capital Management Division is resource constrained and measures against how fast a project can be executed. Create an accountability measure that balances construction *speed*, *cost*, and *resident impact*. Phase work so the maximum amount of available open space is prioritized.

Integrate community engagement during construction — For Designers and City Government

Designers should include community engagement scope in construction as well as design phases of proposals for work on capital projects at NYCHA. Likewise, community feedback from feasibility and pre-design exercises should be required to be incorporated or addressed in selected design proposals.



Inspiration
Street Lab

Through partnerships with NYC Department of Transportation, Street Lab temporarily activates car-dominated streets with youth-friendly installations. While many pop-ups are temporary, others serve as pilot projects for more permanent plazas and public spaces.



Create alternative open spaces and art installations during construction — For City Government and Nonprofits

Through partnerships with city agencies, nonprofits (e.g., Open Plans, StreetLab), and artists, deploy improvements to enhance the experience and availability of open space during construction — from street closures/pop-up plazas on streets to art installations on fences and passageways.

Establish NYCHA-wide construction mitigation guidelines — For City Government

Define and enforce standardized protocol related to tree protection, site prep, and construction mitigation for the entire NYCHA system. Require regular construction site inspections.

What if NYCHA construction sites became a temporary canvas for art and public space?



Metro Tunnel Creative Program Melbourne, Australia

Challenge

Since 2019, a major expansion of Melbourne's public transit network has led to construction of multiple new tunnels and underground stations to serve residents across the metropolitan area. The disruptions, however, impact the experience of the people who live, work, and visit near build sites.

Approach

The Creative Program was established by the State Government of Victoria and the Cross-Yarra Partnership to mitigate the impact of construction on residents through art, lighting, public space creation, small business support, and transparent construction updates. From 2019 through 2025 — the expected completion of construction — the Creative Program team has partnered with transit officials, a diverse array of artists, small businesses, and community members to curate installations at construction sites.³²

Impact

Since the program was established, it has led to a range of impacts on artists, small businesses, and community members:

- **Resident Quality of Life:** 70% of survey respondents did not think the construction had significantly disrupted their daily lives.
- **Artist Opportunity:** 220 artist commissions (including 12% for First Nations artists) led to more than 5km of public art on construction hoardings — and 80% of artists surveyed said they have established new work connections through the Metro Tunnel Creative Program process.
- **Public Life:** 40 (and counting!) programmed events — from dog grooming to drag shows — at the edges of construction sites.

Inspiration



Construction Fence as Canvas



Pop-Up Public Spaces



Performance Art



Transparent Updates for Residents and Regular Site Tours

Melbourne Metro Tunnel Creative Program Interventions



Passageway Light Installations



Cultural Programming

From
Privatization
To Youth
Power



You can **organize
for what you want
to happen**, instead
of working around it.
I look to you all to
inspire us for the
future.

— Andy Moss, Committee for Independent
Community Action (CICA) in Final Youth Workshop

Privatization

The transfer of public housing to private developers presents a threat to long-term housing security, especially for youth under 18 who are not leaseholders and cannot participate in voting related to privatization options.

NYCHA is chronically underfunded. The agency has an estimated need of over \$78 billion to restore, repair, and renovate all its buildings, but continues to receive only a small fraction of essential funding.

New York City’s primary approaches to meeting NYCHA funding needs include infill development,³³ conversion to Section 8 through the Rental Assistance Demonstration (RAD) program, New York’s implementation of RAD known as the Permanent Affordability Commitment Together (PACT) program, and the Public Housing Preservation Trust (The Trust). The City has positioned the future of public housing at the crossroads between either embracing project-based conversion to Section 8 through RAD/PACT or the Trust, or maintaining an ever worsening status quo of substandard living conditions.³⁴

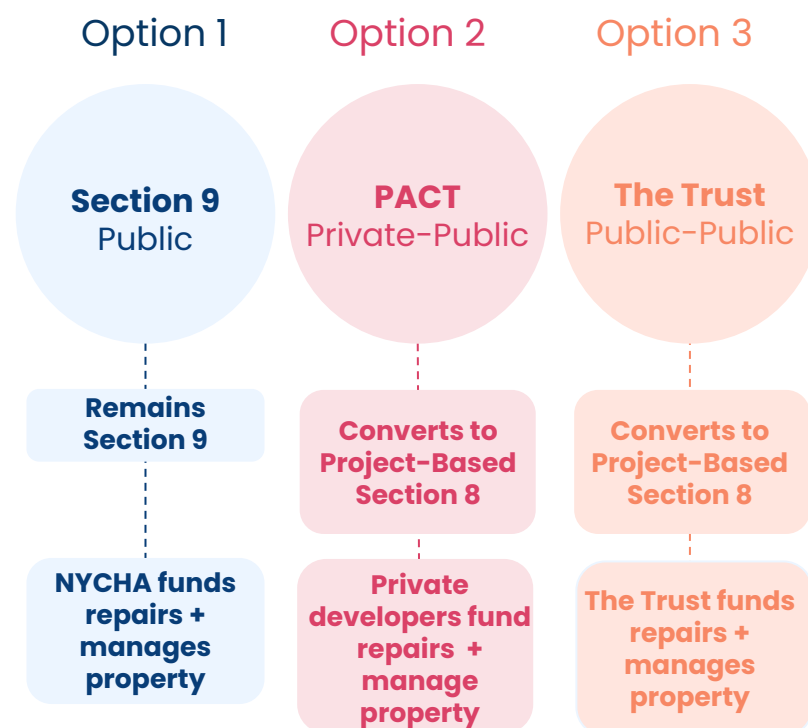
Decisions about privatization are held by vote, campus by campus, by tenants 18+. A turnout of 20% of households is required for the vote to stand. Section 8 conversion can result in eroded resident rights and increase the rate of eviction proceedings. The organizers we met with are eager to explore increased resident control, and alternative pathways to funding renovations.

Eviction is one of the primary concerns surrounding privatization. On paper, RAD/PACT and The Trust guarantee residents many of the same procedural protections that they have under traditional public housing governed by Section 9 of the Housing ACT.³⁵

Key to protecting tenants’ right to housing is NYCHA’s exercise of its wide discretion over decisions affecting residents’ ability to stay in their homes. For example, NYCHA staff are empowered to develop payment plans to resolve rent arrears and consider mitigating factors when tenants face possible eviction for violent crimes as well as drug and property offenses.³⁶

To the extent RAD continues to be a major focus of housing policy in New York City, it is critical that policymakers significantly improve oversight and introduce effective mechanisms for holding private developers accountable.

Residents Vote to Select an Option to Fund Needed Renovations



Youth Power

Youth residents have an essential role to play in shaping the future of NYCHA communities.

Grant residents age 11+ the right to vote on Section 8 conversions — For City Government + Organizers

Youth decision-making on public housing's future is vital. Expand voting on Section 8 conversion to residents age 11+, regardless of immigration status, based on NYC's Participatory Budgeting (PB) eligibility requirements. Increase tenant outreach and engagement preceding a vote. Consider increasing the minimum household voter turnout from 20% to 52%.

Pass the Tenant Opportunity to Purchase Act (TOPA)

— For City Government + NYS Legislators + Organizers

TOPA would allow tenants to buy their buildings and convert them into affordable, social housing. If passed, TOPA would create precedent-setting case studies for resident management in NYC with the support of nonprofit housing providers and community land trusts.³⁷



Inspiration
Participatory Budgeting (PB)
 Community members decide how to spend public funds through this annual initiative...

Use alternative funding streams for resident-led space improvements

— For City Government + Nonprofits + Organizers

Create a publicly available resource documenting such funds.

Amplify Resident Management Corporations' (RMCs) right to contract with NYCHA under Section 9

— For City Government

RMCs have proven successful in cities across the U.S. Expand tenant voting options to include RMC formation as an alternative to Section 8 conversion. Increase public awareness of tenants' management rights.^{39,40}



Increase pathways for inter-development relationships — For City Government + Nonprofits + Organizers

Strengthen opportunities for NYCHA residents to brainstorm solutions to common struggles.³⁸ Fund youth-led committees to lead space improvements through inter-agency collaboration (e.g. DOT, SYEP, etc.) Prioritize living wages for youth over nominal stipends.

What if tenants managed public housing, increasing affordability and quality of life?



Guste Homes Resident Management Corporation New Orleans, LA

Challenge

In 1988, the residents of Guste Homes in New Orleans took the first steps towards accountability, responsibility and self control. Residents realized that in order to have a significant impact in their community and safeguard their future, they needed a say in its direction. For a decade, the residents of Guste Homes trained under a HUD initiative that prepared the resident council to manage their own development.

Approach

Residents formed the Guste Homes Resident Management Corporation (GHRMC) in 1998 and two years later signed a dual management contract with the Housing Authority of New Orleans. In 2001, GHRMC became the full time manager of the Guste Homes Housing complex.

Impact

Resident management at Guste Homes has brought about meaningful change, including decreasing crime, increasing rent collections, improving the delivery of maintenance, implementing social services, and supporting resident, minority and women owned businesses.

A congressionally commissioned study found that residents who manage developments outperform their housing agencies on most management indicators: vacancy rates, work order processing, unit inspections, and recertifications. The study also found that those living in resident-managed developments were 11% more satisfied with their housing overall and 17% more satisfied with building maintenance.^{41,42}

Amplifying Youth in the Design Process

Youth Workshop Series

A blueprint for amplifying youth voices in the design process.

Approach

Making Space for Youth is a four-part workshop that built skills in site analysis, asset mapping, design framing, creative process, and ideation. Students concluded the series with a clear vision to pursue accountable relationships with stakeholders necessary to shape community-led design projects.

Our curriculum can set students up for success in implementing the construction and engineering of community-accountable space activations.

Why involve youth in design?

Young people should be able to shape the places they call home. Rarely is youth input sought out regarding issues that can have a critical impact on their futures. Design processes hold a unique and powerful opportunity to engage the voices of young people, especially those living in public housing.

Where else could youth workshops be relevant?

We see curriculum development as a design tool and believe that in order to capture and represent youth voices, community engagement activities must go beyond the surface level. These workshops can be used by community based organizations, nonprofits, government programs, and designers as a blueprint for youth-centered engagement.

A Pilot Curriculum

With 8 Students from City Polytechnic High School of Engineering, Architecture, and Technology

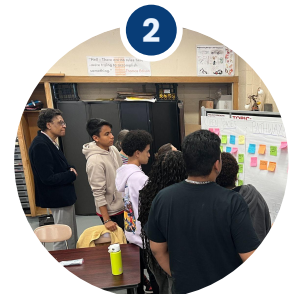


Session 1 — Red Hook Site Visit

We kicked off the first session with a site visit to Red Hook Houses led by MAP Engagement Coordinator Antoniqua Roberson-Darcy from the Red Hook Community Justice Center and longtime Red Hook Houses Resident, Lisa Gonzales.

Session 2 — NYCHA in Context

The second session was framed around reflecting on the site visit and learning more about the history of public housing from our guests Dr. Jessie Fields and Maureen Albanese from the Committee for Independent Community Action.



Session 3 — Design Sprint

In the third session, students worked in three teams: Open Space, Pathways and Corridors, and Neighborhood Planning to develop their observations and impressions into design ideas for Red Hook.

Session 4 — Bringing It All Together

Finally, our last session balanced work time with a round table feedback discussion. Students presented their ideas and learned new ways of giving and receiving feedback that were generative and centered growth.



Youth Workshop Projects

Student participants worked in teams to develop design projects based on three focus areas.



Open Spaces

Protecting nature and celebrating culture

Garden Boxes made using recycled wood from felled trees. These boxes would be painted by residents to represent different cultures and used to cultivate culturally relevant vegetables.

A Pavillion for community gatherings, with a roof composed of different glass tiles to represent different cultures and identities.

A Youth-Led Committee to manage these projects and their programming.



Neighborhood Planning

Emphasizing freedom and ensuring safety

A Park where teens and people of all ages can come and go freely without over-policing.

A Weekend Event Series hosted in the park featuring local vendors.

A welcoming archway entrance built out of a twisted tree trunk surrounded by flowers and art welcome visitors to the park.



Pathways + Corridors

Making history fun, engaging, and inclusive

A Red Hook Story Walk to tell the history of Red Hook and connect residents of Red Hook Houses to the waterfront.

Educational sculptures as a playable library for residents of all ages to engage with.

A giant ship replica at the water's edge to anchor the walk.

Youth Workshop Takeaways

The workshop has the potential to be a platform for youth-led design processes led by public and community-based organizations alike.



Desire for skill-building in design and planning

Polytechnic students expressed a desire for more professional development and skills-building in urban design and planning despite being in a specialized, technical high school.

“ The reason I joined this workshop was to **learn more about how the city functions** and understand how such a large area works together.

— Youth Workshop Participant



Socially conscious, experiential learning resonates

Polytechnic historically partners with large firms to provide students work-based learning experiences. School leadership valued our partnership because of its potential for real-world involvement, and contribution to communities students resonate with or come from.

“ So many of the spaces I’ve lived in are **boxes or cubes** and I never liked that. I want people to live in houses or work in spaces that feel unique to them.

— Youth Workshop Participant



Seek shared commitments and capacity

The partnerships that made this workshop successful formed because of shared commitments to public housing’s future and capacity to take this on.⁴³ To shape lasting change, design projects cannot be transactional, but driven by shared community relationships, ownership, and investment.

“ Planning cities isn’t just about building cities but also **bringing people, cultures and communities all together to form a unity.**

— Youth Workshop Participant

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- Compost Power: <https://compostpowernyc.org/>
- Holmes-Isaacs Coalition: <https://www.facebook.com/HolmesTowersIsaacsHouses/>
- Inner City Green Team: <https://www.innercitygreenteam.org/about-us>
- Residents to Preserve Public Housing (RPPH): <https://www.facebook.com/RPPHNYC>
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43. Endnote: For example, Polytechnic High School has a Work-Based Learning program that our youth workshop series easily fit into. The Committee for Independent Community Action (CICA) leads bi-weekly, open meetings. Their grassroots approach made brainstorming with key members accessible. Red Hook NeighborhoodSTAT is facilitated by a full-time staff member at the Center for Justice Innovation.

Acknowledgements

Our team would like to thank the many people who shaped this process, and whose past, present, and future work will shape a more thriving NYCHA for young people.

Maureen Albanese
CICA

Quardean Allen-Lewis
Youth Design Center

Yazmany Arboleda
Artist, Activist, and Educator

Dylan Baker-Rice
NYCHA

Amarjot Banga
City Polytechnic High School

Betty Beranhart
Red Hook NeighborhoodSTAT

Aren Castro
Center for Justice Innovation

Amy Cerezo
MAP Youth Leadership Council

Rhonda Clarke
Red Hook NeighborhoodSTAT

Cynthia Colon
Red Hook NeighborhoodSTAT

Allen Cox
CICA

Dr. Jessie Fields
CICA

Carolyn Fortune
Red Hook NeighborhoodSTAT

Glenroy Foster
City Polytechnic High School

Leslie Gonzaga
Red Hook Community Justice Center

Lisa Gonzalez
Red Hook NeighborhoodSTAT

Arianna Hakiman
Lafayette Gardens Youth Movement

Harriet Hoffman
CICA

Joshua Jenkins
Lafayette Gardens Youth Movement

Marcus Johnson
MAP Youth Leadership Council

Ashley Kuo
A+A+A

Ivi Lewis
Youth Design Center

Bill Logan
Urban Arborists

Debora Lopes
Public Housing Preservation Trust

Catherine McBride
Red Hook Initiative

Nahisha McCoy
Red Hook NeighborhoodSTAT

Jason McIntosh
City Polytechnic High School

Laura Melendez
NYCHA

Vaidehi Mody
NYCHA

Andy Moss
CICA

Immanuel Oni
Artist and Space Doula

Laura Melendez
NYCHA

Maxine Patwardhan
Preservation of Affordable Housing

Richard Roark
Olin Landscape Architects

Antoniqua Roberson-Dancy
Center for Justice Innovation

Karen Ross
Red Hook Initiative

Shannon Samms-Lezama
City Polytechnic High School

Dylan Sandler
NYCHA

Cristian Santos
MAP Youth Leadership Council

Marcus Scurry
Red Hook Community Justice Center

Courtney Symone Stanton
Affiliation

Brenda Temple
CICA

Maurelhena Walles
Equity Design

Youth Workshop Participants!
City Polytechnic High School

