

Brooklyn Black History + Heritage

# CORRIDOR ACTIVATION PLAN



This work was completed through The Local Center, a community design network in partnership with the Association for Neighborhood & Housing development facilitated by the Urban Design Forum



with the following organizations:



**GROWHOUSE DESIGN + DEVELOPMENT GROUP**



**CREATIVE URBAN ALCHEMY**

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## **LAND ACKNOWLEDGMENT FOR THE FLATBUSH AFRICAN BURIAL GROUND**

We humbly acknowledge that the Flatbush African Burial Ground resides on the ancestral homeland of the Lenape people, who cared for this land long before colonial settlement and continue to have enduring ties to it. We honor their profound relationship with the land, their resilience in the face of displacement, and their ongoing contributions to the history and culture of this region.

We also recognize the sacred significance of this site as a resting place for African ancestors, many of whom were enslaved and whose labor and lives profoundly shaped the development of Brooklyn. This burial ground is a place of deep cultural and historical importance, representing the pain of systemic oppression and the strength of those who resisted and persevered.

The Flatbush African Burial Ground is more than a memorial; it is a space for healing, education, and reflection. It is a testament to the resilience of Black communities and a call to honor their legacy through justice and preservation.

With gratitude, we acknowledge our responsibility to steward this sacred ground, to amplify its stories, and to work in solidarity with the communities it represents. May we honor the past as we strive for a more just and equitable future.

With humility and gratitude,

GrowHouse Design + Development Group and Creative Urban Alchemy

Flatbush African Burial Ground Parks Department Signage  
Image Credit: GrowHouse



# COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT PARTICIPANTS AND STAKEHOLDERS

Dear FABG Community Members

We express our deepest gratitude for your tireless dedication to the Flatbush African Burial Ground. Your advocacy and stewardship of this sacred site have ensured its history and significance remain at the forefront of our collective consciousness.

This burial ground is more than a physical space; it is a place of reverence, holding the memories of African ancestors who endured unimaginable hardship and contributed immeasurably to the fabric of this community. Through your efforts, this site has become a symbol of resilience, cultural pride, and the enduring spirit of justice.

Your commitment to preserving the Flatbush African Burial Ground as a place of healing, remembrance, and education is a testament to the power of collective action. By centering community voices and honoring the stories of those laid to rest here, you have paved the way for future generations to connect with their heritage and envision a just future.

We honor the work you have done, the challenges you have faced, and the hope you continue to inspire. Thank you for your leadership, passion, and dedication to this sacred site and the community it represents.

With profound respect and gratitude,

GrowHouse Design + Development Group and Creative Urban Alchemy





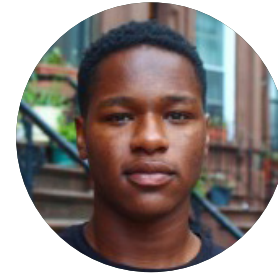


Team members from Creative Urban Alchemy, GrowHouse NYC, Urban Design Forum and ANHD. Image Credit: GrowHouse

## PROJECT TEAM



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## PART 1

# COLLECTIVELY BUILDING A FUTURE VISION FOR THE FLATBUSH AFRICAN BURIAL GROUND



## INTRODUCTION

At the time of this chapbook's publishing, the United States stands at the threshold of the 2024 election, a moment that starkly underscores the unresolved and deepening fault lines of race in this country. While some cling to the notion that racism will eventually dissipate with time, history teaches us otherwise. Racism has been deliberately and systematically built into the foundations of our society, and dismantling it will require equally deliberate, transformative efforts. This is not a matter of reclaiming a just past—we have yet to experience a true democracy where every voice is equitably heard. For sites of Black cultural memory, including the Flatbush African Burial Ground, the work of preservation and activation must be inherently decolonizing and anti-racist if it is to be truly transformative. This is not easy work; it demands time, patience, and a willingness to navigate tensions. However, these tensions can become opportunities for growth. When approached with care, sites like the Flatbush African Burial Ground can evolve into dynamic spaces for public dialogue, reflection, and collective healing. They can also serve as engines of economic and cultural empowerment, driving meaningful change in their surrounding communities.

This chapbook is more than a reflection on the challenges and successes at the Flatbush African Burial Ground; it is a resource for stewards of historic Black spaces nationwide.

By revisiting key milestones, offering lessons learned, and incorporating frameworks such as *Interpreting Slavery: Engaging Descendant Communities*, the chapbook provides practical tools for creating spaces of justice, empowerment, and transformation.



*"One hopes that given this clear road map, sites and the professions who run them, will proceed to the locations of shared power and voice with descendants. These are the locations of the democratization of knowledge, broad public interest, empathy, and growing markets."*

*~ Dr. Michael Blakey*

## ENGAGING DESCENDANT COMMUNITIES

The Rubric titled "Interpreting Slavery: Engaging Descendant Communities" is the result of a 2018 convening by the National Trust for Historic Preservation's African American Cultural Action Fund. Artists, activists, historians, educators and curators came together at James Madison's Montpelier to create a road map for organizations and individuals working to share the complex history of enslavement at historic sites around the world.

Central to the aim of the convening was ensuring the story of enslaved Africans be told by their descendants. A key participant in this conversation and subsequent drafting of the rubric was Dr. Michael Blakey, who served as Scientific Director for the Lower Manhattan African Burial Ground Project from 1992 to 2009.

At the onset of organizing at the Flatbush African Burial Ground, we were led to this guide and the accompanying rubric by Dr. Blakey himself as we began organizing in earnest at the Flatbush African Burial Ground. The guide's rubric breaks down into three pillars of excellence in engaging descendant communities: multi-disciplinary research, relationship building with descendant communities, and interpretation. There are detailed subsections of each pillar along with guidelines for scoring, with 4 representing exemplary and 0 representing unsatisfactory performance.

The rubric allowed us to set aspirational goals as we set out on the journey - goals that centered on reparative justice as well as illuminating and grappling with the nuance and complexity of our shared history. Throughout this booklet we highlighted excerpts from the Rubric to demonstrate how we used it in our collective practice of engaging community.

Image Credit: Tenneh Sandimanie

# FLATBUSH BURIAL GROUND ACTIVATION TIMELINE



2020  
Request for Proposal  
Issued by HPD



2021 - Present  
Walking Tours



2021  
Fence Weaving



2022  
Partnership with  
Kinfolk Tech



2023  
Nine Nights



# THE BEGINNINGS

In October 2020, NYC Mayor Bill de Blasio and Council member Mathieu Eugene unveiled plans to build affordable housing on a long-neglected lot at Bedford and Church Avenues in Flatbush, Brooklyn. The City team, including the NYC Department of Housing Preservation and Development (HPD), NYC Economic Development Corporation (NYCEDC), NYC Landmarks Commission (LPC), and Historical Perspectives Inc. (HPI), brought together 17 local stakeholders to form the Flatbush African Burial Ground Remembrance and Redevelopment (FABGRR) Task Force.

TYTHEdesign, a social impact firm, was hired to lead community engagement, but from the outset, tensions simmered. Residents were frustrated—why were housing plans moving forward without their input? How were task force members selected? What were the benchmarks for effective community engagement decided? This lack of transparency ignited a movement, one centered on raising awareness about the Flatbush African Burial Ground.

The key takeaway? Descendant communities must be consulted before research starts and definitely before plans are made. Without transparency, trust fractures, and conflict arises. As the engagement process unfolded, two groups emerged: The Flatbush African Burial Ground Coalition and African Graves Matter.

Note: We define “descendant” as both lineal and non lineal people of African descent, based on advice shared by Dr. Michael Blakey, archaeologist who worked on the Lower Manhattan African Burial Ground.

Flatbush African Burial Ground Coalition Protest at City Hall, with GrowHouse, Flatbush Tenants Coalition, African Graves Matter, and Q Gardens  
Image Credit: Growhouse



Members of Flatbush Mixtape, GrowHouse, BKLVLUP, and Q Gardens at HPD Community Engagement  
Image Credit: Growhouse





# Coalition Building

CM Rita Joseph, Ann Hudson, Rev. Norma Williams,  
and members of Lenox Road Baptist Church  
Image Credit: GrowHouse





## THE FLATBUSH AFRICAN BURIAL GROUND COALITION (FABG-C)

The Flatbush African Burial Ground Coalition (FABG-C) grew out of the Bedford-Church Lot group, a multi-racial collective of community gardeners and local residents. This group had already circulated a Change.org petition to transform the lot into a community farm. But for some Black community members, the idea of placing a farm on a burial ground—where their ancestors lay—was deeply offensive. Additionally, the group’s leadership didn’t reflect the descendant community, further driving a wedge. In response, African Graves Matter was born. Led by the late Harriet Hines, then a candidate for city council in District 40, they hosted weekly drum sessions at the burial ground and marched down Church Avenue.

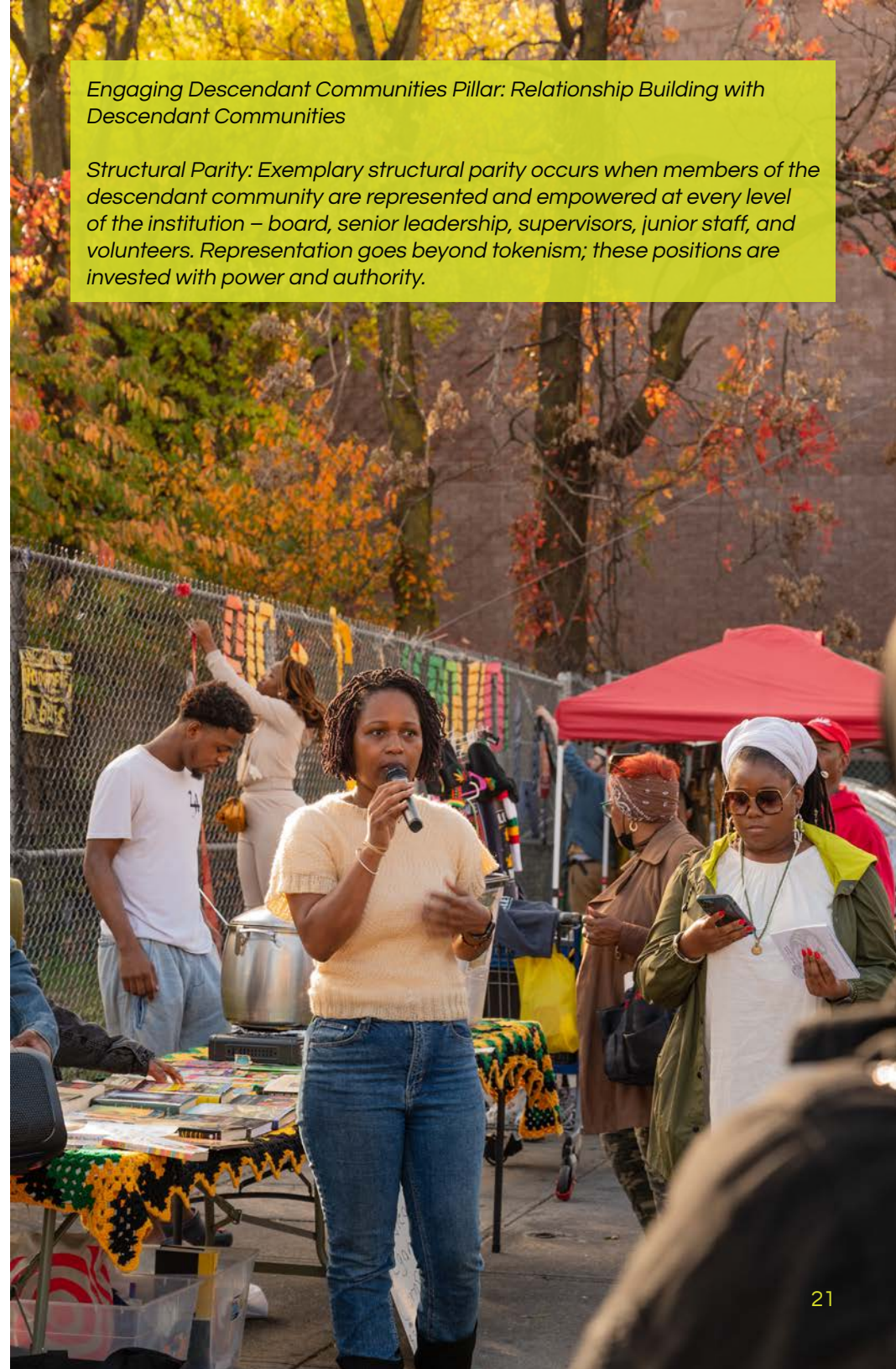
GrowHouse attended both groups’ meetings, attempting to bridge the divide, but ultimately, the tension proved too deep. After evaluating the two coalitions, we decided to join the Bedford Church Lot Group and advocate for a change in leadership to ensure descendant community representation. It was at this point that the name was changed to the Bedford-Church Burial Ground Coalition and eventually to the Flatbush African Burial Ground Coalition.



Left Image, Bedford Church Lot Group, Credit: GrowHouse

*Engaging Descendant Communities Pillar: Relationship Building with Descendant Communities*

*Structural Parity: Exemplary structural parity occurs when members of the descendant community are represented and empowered at every level of the institution – board, senior leadership, supervisors, junior staff, and volunteers. Representation goes beyond tokenism; these positions are invested with power and authority.*



Right Image Credit: Tenneh Sandimanie





## THE CASE FOR DESCENDANT LEADERSHIP IN COALITIONS

With African burial grounds and African American cemeteries, policy gaps, lack of resources and structural inequity combine to create a uniquely challenging environment. These spaces hold community memory and also trauma, and must be treated carefully to avoid retraumatizing Black community members.

It's essential for African burial grounds to have Black leadership because these sites are deeply connected to Black history, culture, and identity, often holding the remains of enslaved ancestors and community forebears. Black leadership brings a unique perspective that honors this heritage, ensuring decisions around preservation, access, and storytelling reflect the values, priorities, and lived experiences of the descendants and communities most connected to these grounds.

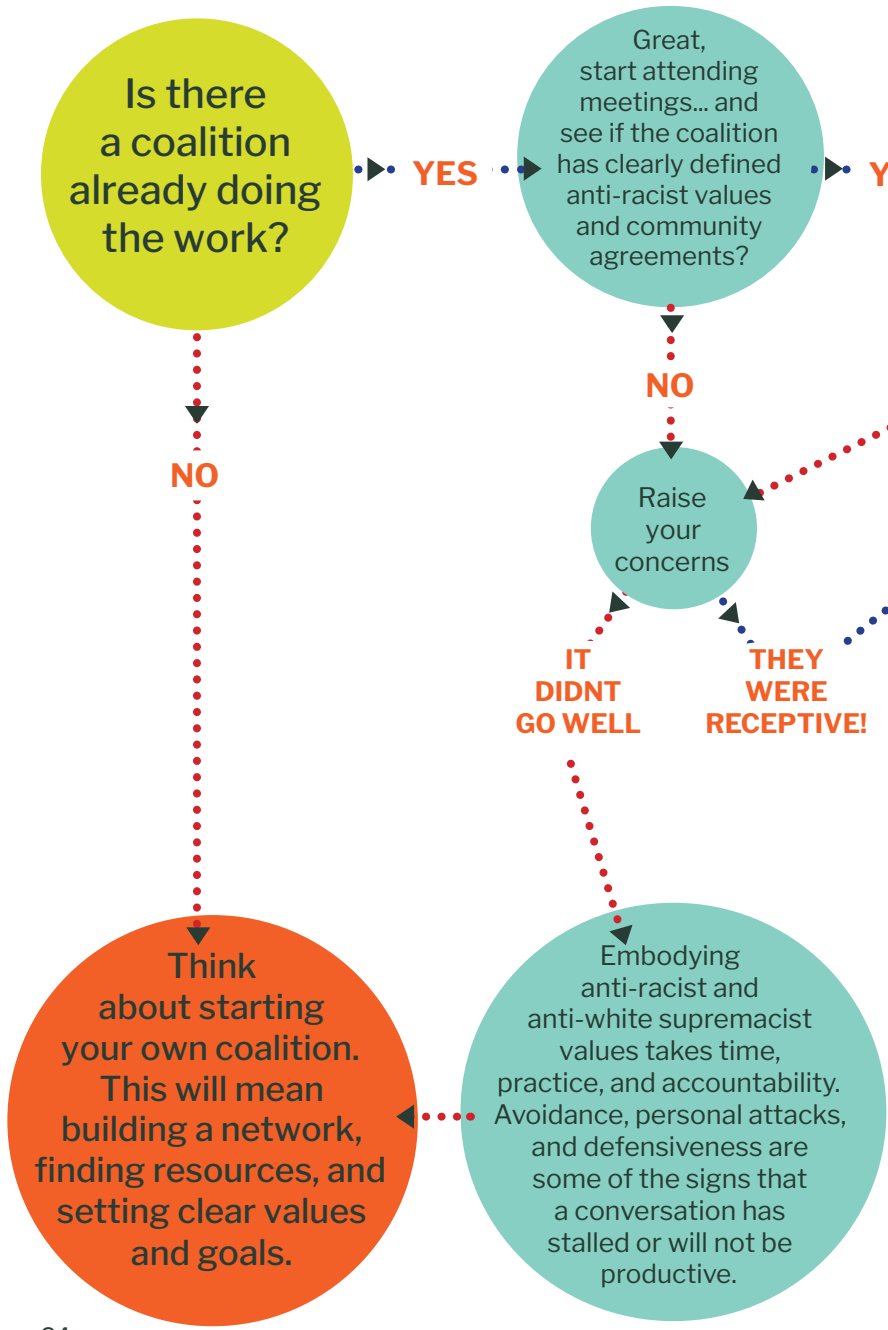
When Black leaders guide these initiatives, they can prioritize culturally respectful practices and prevent the exploitation or erasure of these sites, which has historically occurred under non-Black management. Additionally, Black leadership helps create spaces for authentic dialogue and healing within the community. Such stewardship ensures that African burial grounds are preserved as sacred sites, not just historical landmarks, and fosters broader understanding and respect for Black cultural heritage in society at large.

The expectation is not perfection but an ongoing commitment to examining and interrogating anti-Blackness and white supremacy. The fact of the matter is most of us, regardless of age, ethnicity, or race, have been raised in families, communities, and countries that have internalized anti-Blackness.

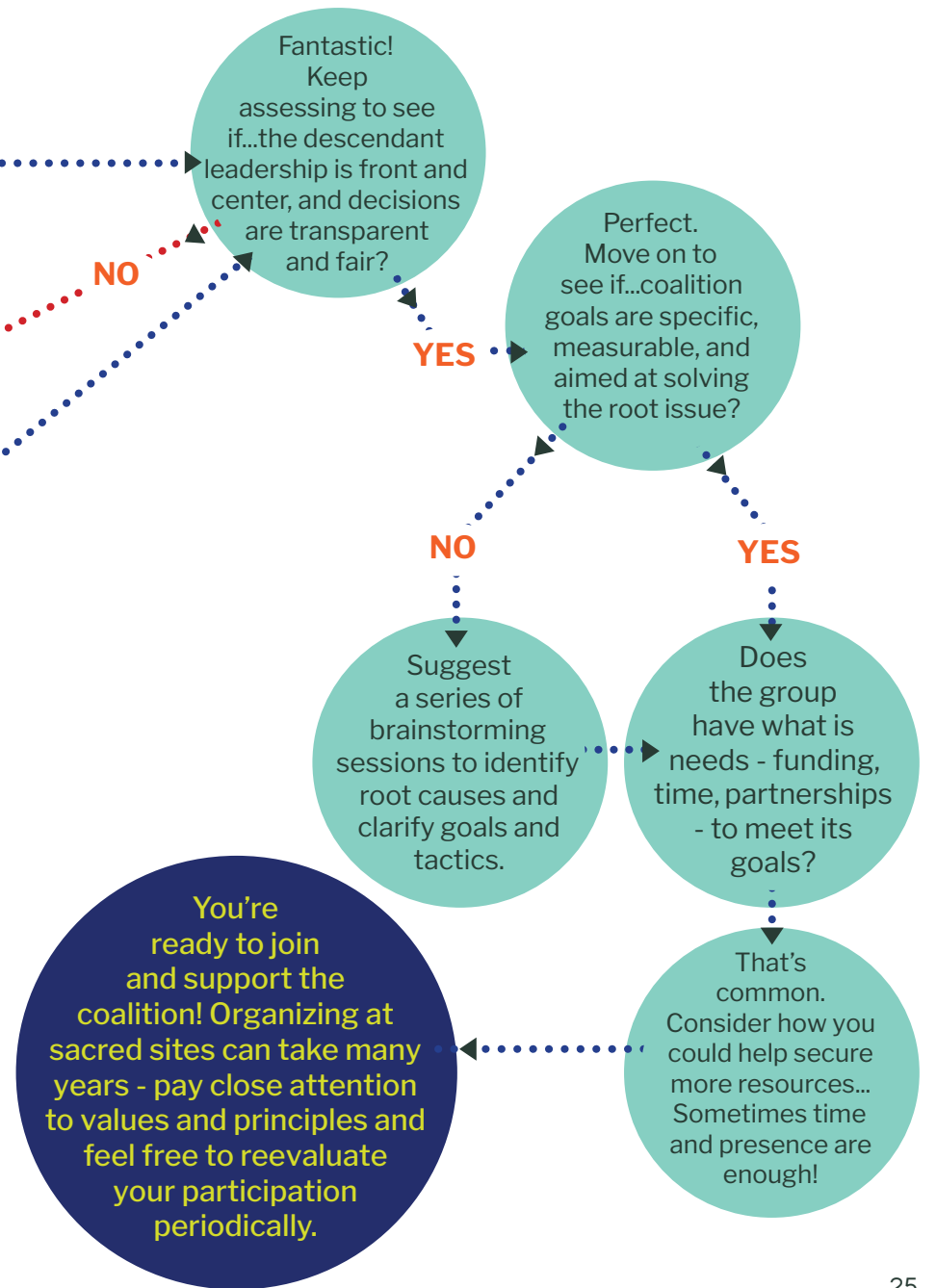
Image Credit: GrowHouse



# EVALUATING COALITIONS:



# TO JOIN OR TO BUILD ANEW?





*Engaging Descendant Communities Pillar: Relationship Building with Descendant Communities*

*High Standards: The ultimate goal of cultural institutions is to provide audiences with valuable experiential learning opportunities. For institutions that interpret slavery, it is not enough simply to discuss the humanity and contributions of the enslaved. It is imperative that these institutions also unpack and interrogate white privilege and supremacy and systemic racism.*



Image Credit: Tenneh Sandimanie





## THE BLACK UTOPIA PROJECT

The Black Utopia Project began as a collective artist residency of GrowHouse advisory council members at the Laundromat Project; Aisha Shillingford of Intelligent Mischief, Faith Robinson of Bed Stuy Forever, Genel Ambrose of GOOD Mirrors and GrowHouse Co-Founder Shanna Sabio. In the midst of rapid gentrification, the residency sought to connect past, present, and future memory to catalyze Black staying power in Brooklyn. Each member of the collective brought their individual artistic practices to bear culminating in a salon where community members made art, archived their stories, and envisioned a future where Black folks in Brooklyn were thriving.

After the residency concluded, the Black Utopia Project evolved into a regular convening of multigenerational Black Brooklynites and allies who gather and find collective healing through conversation, creative-making, and meditation orchestrated by Growhouse. Each member of Black Utopia is a community leader that is connected to institutions and/or communities that hold sacred importance to the legacy of Black Brooklyn. Some of the organizations represented include the Weeksville Heritage Center, the Friends of Abolitionist Place and Lefferts Historic House. They convene in visioning salons infused with joy and food that foster collaboration, connection, and collective power. As a part of our process of activation of the Burial Ground the design team joined the monthly gatherings to gain insight into the best strategies to engage the broader community and the ideas that should be centered in the transformation of the Burial Ground into a space for community activation.



Laundromat Project, Images Credit: Kay Hickman



# THE CORRIDOR TO BLACK UTOPIA

An initiative emerged as part of GrowHouse’s work to use collective ownership as a strategy to combat gentrification and reclaim Black spaces from erasure. The dream is of green spaces, beautiful art and history signage that connects Black heritage sites across Brooklyn including but not limited to the Flatbush African Burial Ground, the Lefferts House, Weeksville Heritage Society, United Order of the Tents in Bed Stuy, Brownsville Heritage House, and the Friends of Abolitionist Place (227 Duffield).

We envision THE CORRIDOR will go beyond preserving history; it will build a cultural and economic ecosystem that prevents the displacement of Black communities, all while safeguarding our cultural legacy.

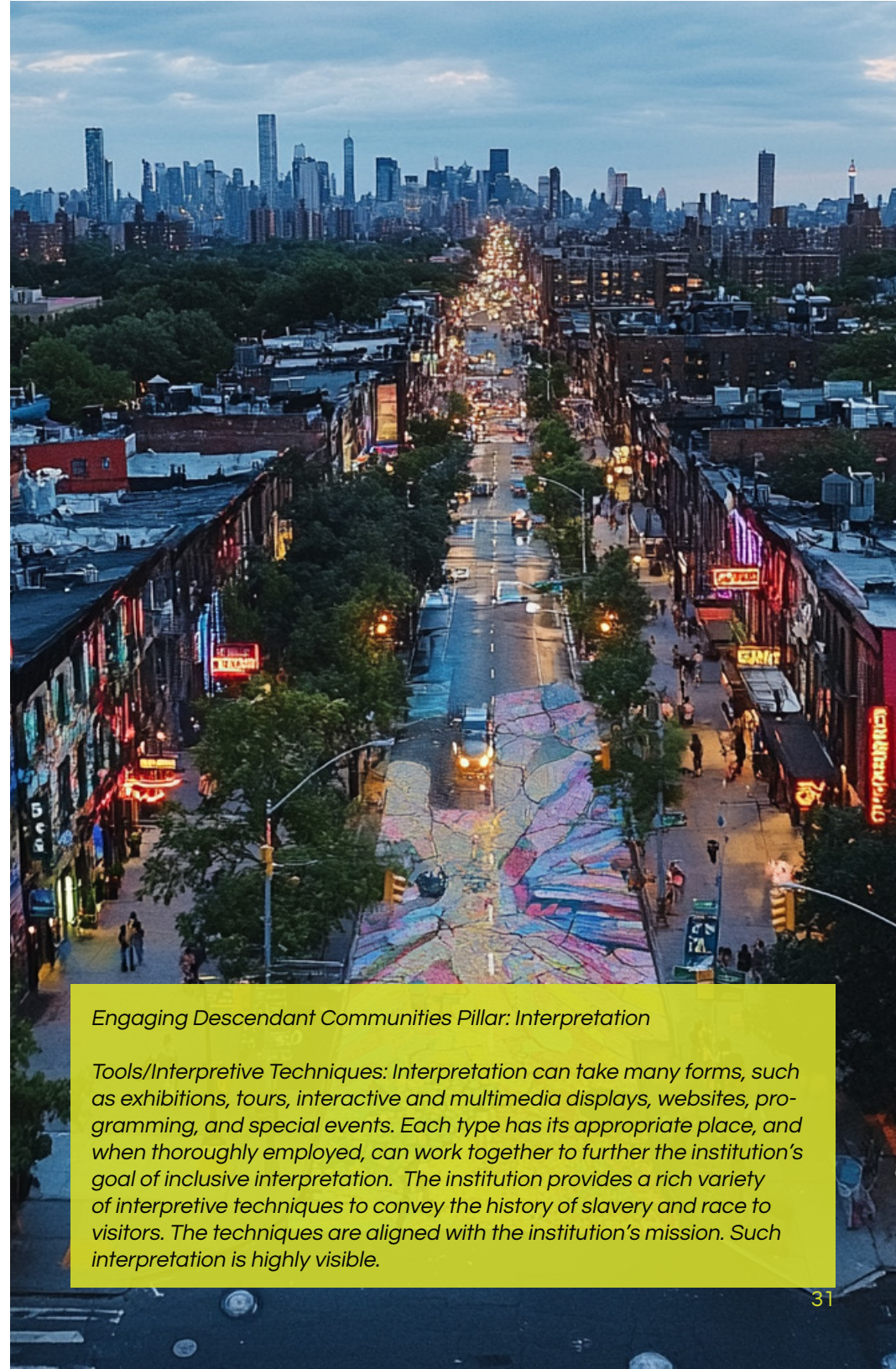
By combining art, history, design, celebrations, festivals, and play, THE CORRIDOR will come alive - utilizing physical markers, Open Maps technology, and augmented reality to seamlessly bridge the richness of Black agricultural science, history, culture and historic sites to contemporary Black-owned businesses and nightlife. More than safeguarding Black history, it fuels a thriving environment fostering cultural preservation and evolution in rapidly gentrifying neighborhoods in Brooklyn.

In the face of climate change and shifting demographics in Black Brooklyn, THE CORRIDOR will open a pathway for community resilience, healing, connection and inspiration, allowing our communities to tap into our shared legacy that empowers us to forge collective futures. Through this initiative, we are not only preserving the past but also crafting a future by us, with us and for us, that resonates with the essence of Black people throughout the diaspora across generations.



Left Image Credit:  
Creative Urban Alchemy

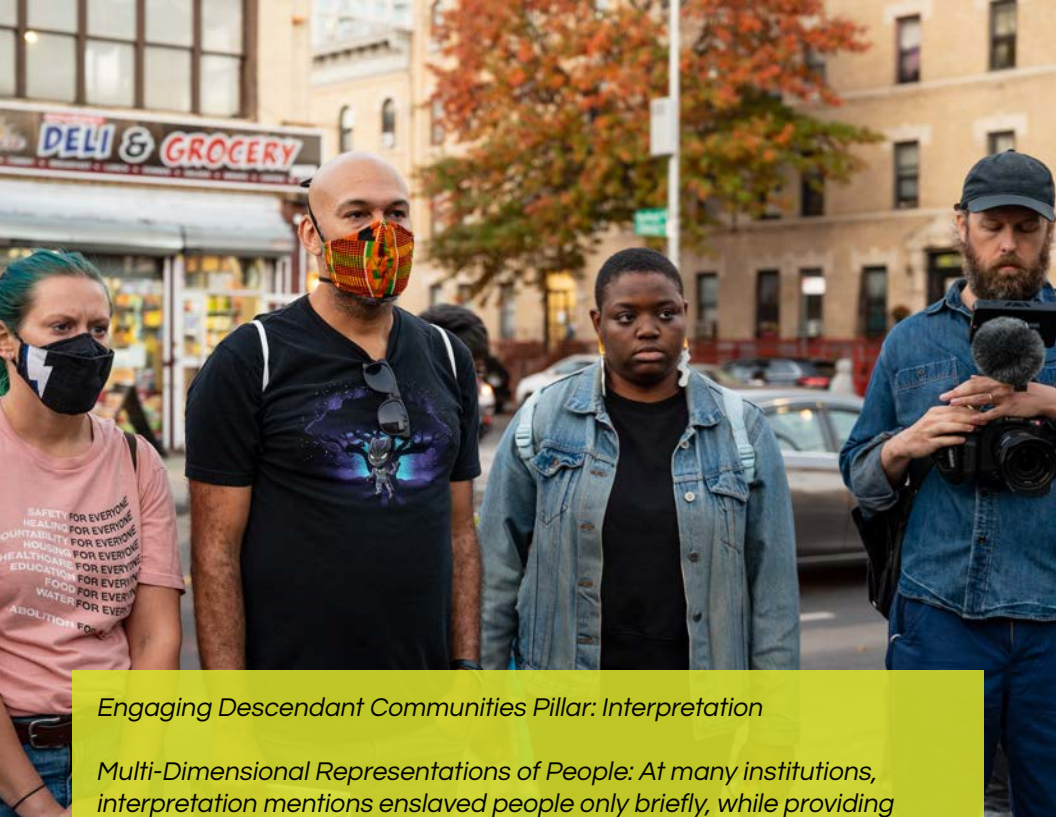
Right AI Image Credit:  
Creative Urban Alchemy



## Engaging Descendant Communities Pillar: Interpretation

*Tools/Interpretive Techniques: Interpretation can take many forms, such as exhibitions, tours, interactive and multimedia displays, websites, programming, and special events. Each type has its appropriate place, and when thoroughly employed, can work together to further the institution’s goal of inclusive interpretation. The institution provides a rich variety of interpretive techniques to convey the history of slavery and race to visitors. The techniques are aligned with the institution’s mission. Such interpretation is highly visible.*





### Engaging Descendant Communities Pillar: Interpretation

*Multi-Dimensional Representations of People: At many institutions, interpretation mentions enslaved people only briefly, while providing extensive and detailed accounts of the lives of the white enslaver class. Institutions should ensure that interpretation of the lives of enslaved people provides the nuance, detail, and humanity afforded other historical figures.*



## HISTORY WALKS AS RECLAMATION OF TIME, SPACE, AND CULTURE

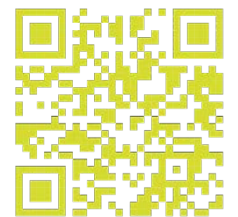
GrowHouse developed a walking tour focused on sharing the history of those enslaved in Flatbush. Our research uncovered stories that stretched across Brooklyn, connecting Flatbush to Weeksville, Downtown Brooklyn, and Bedford-Stuyvesant. We found tales of resistance and survival, of enslaved and free Black people working with nature to preserve their health and freedom, and deep collaboration between communities that may have seemed distant at first glance.

To capture the attention of passersby in Flatbush's busy streets, we used amplified sound during the walks, handed out fliers highlighting key facts about slavery in the area, and provided links to join the FABG Coalition. Our weekly walks helped raise awareness, and soon, commissioned walks led to the idea of engaging youth to lead them, turning the walks into an economic engine for young people.

Each walk ended with a question: "Knowing what you know now, what would be a fitting memorial?" The responses were as varied as the participants, but common themes emerged:

- Creating open space for learning and gathering
- Keeping it green - more green space needed in Flatbush
- Beautifying the fence and sharing stories
- Renaming streets after enslaved people
- Honoring those interred with visible markers

We partnered with Kinfolk Tech to create virtual reality monuments honoring the individuals we researched and shared these monuments with the community. We also created an audio version of the walk with students from Hunter College, with community members voicing ancestors we researched.



Images Credit: Tenneh Sandimanie





*Engaging Descendant Communities Pillar: Relationship Building with Descendant Communities*

*Through innovation and collaboration, descendant communities can help institutions create transformative experiences that enhance cultural competency. Truthful and authentic storytelling can convey powerful messages that are both illuminating and uncomfortable. The entire organization should serve as a safe space for such sharing and discovery.*

## NINE NIGHTS

The Caribbean ritual of Nine Nights, also known as “Dead Yard” or “Set Up,” is a traditional mourning practice that spans nine days after a loved one’s passing. Rooted in African spiritual customs and adapted across the Caribbean, this communal gathering is both a celebration of life and a means of supporting the deceased’s journey to the ancestral realm. Family and friends come together to share food, music, prayers, and storytelling, creating an atmosphere of collective reflection and healing. Each night serves as a space for honoring the departed, affirming connections among the living, and ensuring the spirit’s peaceful transition. The ritual embodies the resilience and vibrancy of Caribbean culture, preserving ancestral practices while fostering community unity in times of grief. Each night focused on a different region of the world where enslaved people in Flatbush were captured, and we funneled over \$20,000 into local Black-owned businesses, showing that the burial ground’s significance extended beyond Flatbush.



Images Credit: GrowHouse



# FENCE WEAVING

As we cleaned up the burial ground weekly, we turned our attention to the fence, recognizing it as an opportunity to visibly mark the site and raise awareness. Coalition members created artwork, including a tombstone honoring the two individuals believed to be buried there.

Reaching into our networks, GrowHouse connected the FABG to the Global Fence Weaving Project - a Blade of Grass initiative using the fence weaving technique of Brooklyn Hi-Art! Machine (artists Mildred Beltré and Oasa DuVerney). Entitled *The Song I Sing is Part of An Echo*, the project concept was inspired by the poem *Leftovers — What is Left?* by Assata Shakur. Envisioned as a celebration of survival and an enactment of communal grieving, communities around the country installed weavings on fences.

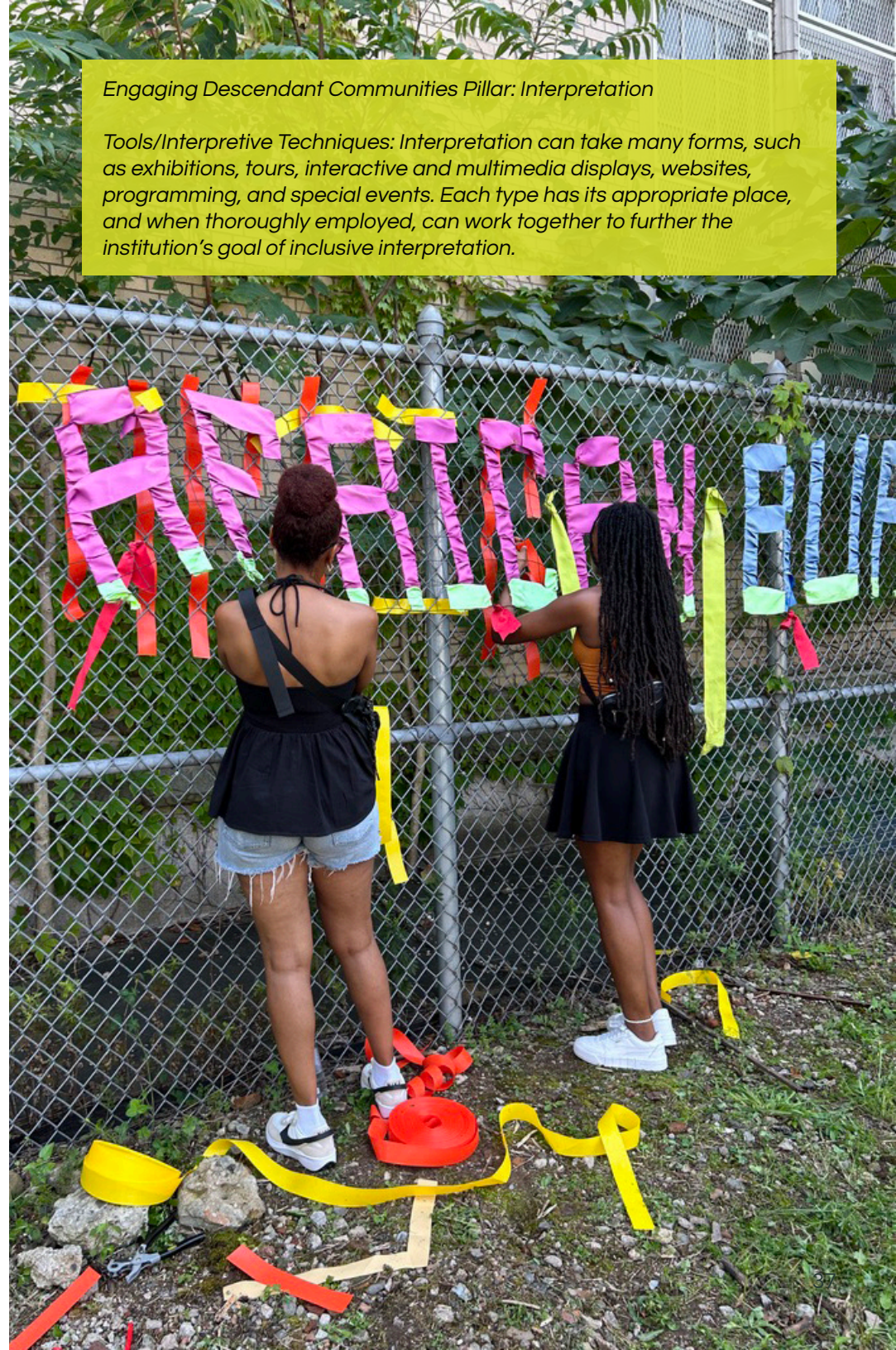
After participating in workshop sessions to learn the technique and define our vision, we chose the phrase “Truth is my compass. Love is my sword” to weave into the fence, alongside “What is Left?” We refreshed the weaving as it weathered, making sure the message remained visible to all who passed by.



Left Image Credit: Tenneh Sandimanie    Right Image Credit: Deena Darby  
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*Engaging Descendant Communities Pillar: Interpretation*

*Tools/Interpretive Techniques: Interpretation can take many forms, such as exhibitions, tours, interactive and multimedia displays, websites, programming, and special events. Each type has its appropriate place, and when thoroughly employed, can work together to further the institution’s goal of inclusive interpretation.*







## GROUND PENETRATING RADAR EVENT

One of the first questions many ask when learning of the Flatbush African Burial Ground is “How many people are buried there?” For sites of Black history, primary and secondary sources are generally scarce due to the legacies of white supremacy. Ground penetrating radar is a non-invasive technology that uses electromagnetic waves to detect subsurface anomalies, helping to locate burial sites without disturbing the sacred ground. The Coalition received a prestigious Wenner Gren grant to conduct GPR at the FABG. To continue to strengthen public knowledge and build trust and transparency, the Coalition selected a GPR provider who was experienced with engaging community members with patience and care. The three-day GPR Event was called “Unearthing History” and started with an online teach-in with Dr. Tim Horsely of Horsely Archeological Prospection, who shared an overview of the technology and its capabilities. On site, Dr. Horsely worked with groups of students and community members, allowing them to use the machine. As support, expressive arts designed to process grief were provided by mental health providers at Ibisami Relational Health, and libations were poured to honor the ancestors interred at the site.. The use of GPR underscores the importance of respecting and preserving sacred spaces while advancing research and public awareness. By combining technology with cultural stewardship, efforts at the FABG honored its legacy and advocated for its protection as a vital part of Black heritage.



Images Credit: GrowHouse



PART 2

# PLACEKEEPING AND VISION BUILDING

## BLACK HISTORY + HERITAGE PROGRAM FRAMEWORK

Placekeeping strategies at the Flatbush African Burial Ground (FABG) balanced the need to dismantle principles of white supremacy culture—such as urgency, individualism, and control—with the restorative frameworks of the BlackSpace Manifesto, which emphasize care, collective agency, and cultural preservation. Drawing from case studies like the Destination Crenshaw and other BIPOC-led community projects, the FABG embodies principles of inclusion, shared leadership, and healing. Efforts prioritize slowing down to honor ancestral legacies, fostering trust through community-driven processes, and designing spaces that reflect Black joy, resilience, and identity. By challenging oppressive structures and centering Black cultural values, the placekeeping work at the FABG exemplifies how historic sites can become spaces for collective liberation and transformative justice.







## PHILANTHROPIC PARTNERSHIP FOR PLACEKEEPING

Philanthropic partnerships play a vital role in supporting placekeeping efforts, providing resources and networks to sustain community-centered design projects. Organizations such as the Architectural League, New York Council on the Arts, Black Artists and Designers Guild, the Laundromat Project, United States Artists, and the Urban Design Forum brought invaluable expertise, funding, and advocacy to ensure that our work was impactful. Their collaboration helped bridge gaps between our creative vision and practical implementation, fostering a shared commitment to inclusive and equitable urban futures.

This resource guide was catalyzed by Urban Design Forum's Local Center initiative - a collaborative effort to empower designers, planners, and community leaders to address pressing urban challenges in their neighborhoods. By fostering partnerships with local organizations, the initiative emphasizes community-led solutions that prioritize equity, sustainability, and resilience in urban development. Through the support from this initiative the partnership between Growhouse NYC and Creative Urban Alchemy was born to activate the Flatbush African Burial Ground through acts of memorialization, youth engagement, coalition building and public education. The initiative championed a grassroots approach to urban design, encouraging us as design practitioners to think beyond traditional frameworks and ensuring that design interventions reflect the needs and aspirations of the diverse communities of the FABG .



# FLATBUSH BURIAL GROUND ACTIVATION TIMELINE



2023  
The Local Center  
First Parks Department Engagement  
Vandalism  
Focus Groups



2024  
Focus Groups  
Pop-Ups



2023  
Fence Weaving  
Walking Tours



2024  
Brooklyn. Black. Utopia. Event



# THEMES FOR COLLECTIVELY BUILDING A FUTURE VISION FOR THE FLATBUSH AFRICAN BURIAL GROUND

Over the course of 18 months, we sought to strengthen the work that began in 2021 by deepening community engagement to ensure this sacred ground remains meaningful to present and future generations. Our efforts centered on four key areas: memorialization, public education, coalition building, and youth leadership. Together, these pillars support a holistic approach to preserving and activating historic Black spaces as sites of reflection, empowerment, and action.

## Memorialization

We collectively see memorialization as a cultural process of engaging with acts of remembering in both insightful and creative ways. From visually bringing the history alive through visual art in the public realm to engaging with the stewardship practices and cultural stories of native and indigenous plants, memorialization can become a community practice of civic engagement. We engaged in cultural performances, collective storytelling, honoring the ancestors, planting indigenous plants, and other activities in an effort to bring the history alive and make it meaningful for today.

## Public Education

Civic Engagement as a critical part of memorialization can take the form of public conversations that builds public awareness, collective understanding and reinforces public commitment to the preservation of the natural and cultural resources embedded in the landscape. We used public art and the development of land stewardship guides as tools for educating the public on the rich history and meaning of the FABG.



# THEMES FOR COLLECTIVELY BUILDING A FUTURE VISION FOR THE FLATBUSH AFRICAN BURIAL GROUND

## Coalition Building

Building and strengthening the Flatbush African Burial Ground Coalition (FABG-C) is a significant way to honor the labor of our ancestors who organized towards freedom from enslavement, fought for civil rights and mobilized for Black empowerment. Those who pool their resources and work together are more powerful and more able to advance their mutual interests. Involvement in a coalition equates to greater support, more accountability, advocacy and ability to leverage the contacts, connections and relationships of each member group towards collective action. We held regular meetings with members in an effort to gain interest and support towards amplifying the work of the FABG-C.

## Cultivating Youth Leadership

In order to make the significance of the FABG relevant to future generations we engaged young people in the creative process of memorialization and activation of the sacred ground. Engaging youth is an important way to build future capacity and ensure the crucial transfer of knowledge from one generation to the next. We mentored, trained and co-created art with young people as a part of our process in an effort to amplify their voice and encourage youth leadership in cultural production of Black history and heritage.

By prioritizing these themes, we honored the past while striving to shape a more equitable and inclusive future. This ongoing journey reminds us of the strength in collective action and the transformative potential of stewarding historic Black spaces with care and intention. To illustrate this work, we will highlight our approaches to engaging the Flatbush African Burial Ground Coalition, fostering youth leadership, and empowering the broader community. Through coalition-building efforts, we created a unified network advocating for preservation and activation. By mentoring and co-creating with youth, we ensured the next generation's voices and visions were central to the work. Community-centered initiatives, such as public workshops and storytelling projects, further amplified the collective spirit of placekeeping. Together, these approaches reflect the profound impact of shared responsibility and intentional collaboration.



# WHITE SUPREMACY CULTURE

## Urgency:

It creates a constant rush to make decisions, which gets in the way of thoughtful reflection and inclusive decision-making. The result? We end up using and extracting from each other, which can leave us feeling depleted and disconnected.

## Perfectionism:

This focuses on being flawless and harshly judging mistakes, which stirs up a fear of failure. That fear stifles creativity and stops growth before it can even begin.

## Defensiveness:

It protects power structures by blocking feedback, making accountability hard to come by, and shutting down much-needed conversations about race.

## Fear of Open Conflict:

By avoiding tough truths, it labels people who bring up important issues as troublemakers, which stops real change in its tracks.

## Individualism:

It places self-reliance and independence above collective responsibility, making it harder to collaborate and work together.

## Paternalism:

Decision-making is concentrated in the hands of a few, with the assumption that they know what's best for everyone else.

## Objectivity:

This mindset dismisses emotions and lived experiences, putting "rational" thought on a pedestal and reinforcing dominant perspectives.

## Either/Or Thinking:

It pushes binary thinking, reducing complex issues into overly simple, black-and-white terms, limiting our options and possibilities.

# AND SYSTEMIC RACISM

## Fear of Open Conflict:

By avoiding tough truths, it labels people who bring up important issues as troublemakers, which stops real change in its tracks.

## Power Hoarding:

It's all about maintaining control and resisting any changes that would allow for shared decision-making.

## Worship of the Written Word:

This values written communication over other forms of expression, often erasing knowledge traditions outside of Western norms.

## Quantity Over Quality:

Prioritizes measurable outcomes over relationships or the process itself, favoring speed and efficiency over meaningful engagement.

## Progress Equals Bigger and More:

Success is often equated with growth and accumulation, but this usually comes at the expense of sustainability and well-being norms.

## Qualified:

There's an assumption that only people with certain credentials or identities are qualified to lead, overlooking the wisdom and experiences of marginalized communities.

## Right to Comfort:

This protects those in power from discomfort, ensuring that difficult conversations—especially about racism—are avoided or suppressed.

## Denial:

It refuses to recognize the presence of racism and other forms of oppression, often rewriting history to keep the status quo intact.

Regardless of our race, ethnicity, gender expression, or other identities, we live in this culture—it's the air we breathe. Sometimes, we fall into these patterns despite our best intentions, often because these behaviors are trauma or survival responses.

Compilation of Principles of White Supremacy Culture by Tema Okun



# BLACKSPACE



## Create Circles Not Lines:

Create less hierarchy and more dialogue, inclusion, and empowerment.



## Choose Critical Connections over Critical Mass:

Quality over quantity. Focus on creating critical and authentic relationships to support mutual adaptation and evolution over time.\*



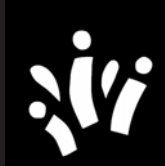
## Celebrate, Catalyze, and Amplify Black Joy:

Black joy is a radical act. Give due space to joy, laughter, humor, and gratitude.



## Plan with, Design With:

Walk with people as they imagine and realize their own futures. Be connectors, conveners, and collaborators—not representatives.



## Move at the Speed of Trust:

Grow trust and move together with fluidity at whatever speed is necessary.\*



## Be Humble Learners who Practice Deep Listening:

Listen deeply and approach the work with an attitude towards learning, without assumptions and predetermined solutions. Take criticism without dispute.



## Center Lived Experience:

Lived experience is an important expertise; center it so it can be a guide and touchstone of all work.



## Seek People at the Margins:

Acknowledge the structures that create, maintain and uphold inequity. Learn and practice new ways of intentionally making space for marginalized voices, stories, and bodies.

This principle is derived from Adrienne Maree Brown's Emergent Strategy: Shaping Change, Changing Worlds. We are grateful to the many individuals and organizations that inspired these principles.



# BLACKSPACE

We are Black urban planners, architects, artists, activists, designers, and leaders working to protect and create Black spaces. Our work includes a range of activities from engagement and projects in historically Black neighborhoods to hosting cross-disciplinary convenings and events. While what we do is very important, the way we do it is also critical. Acknowledging our triumphs, oppressions, aspirations, and challenges, we've created this manifesto to guide our growth as a group and our interactions with one another, partners, and communities. We push ourselves, our partners, our fields, and our work closer to these ideals so we may realize a present and future where Black people, Black spaces, and Black culture matter and thrive.



## Reckon with the Past to Build the Future:

Meaningfully acknowledge the histories, injustice, innovations, and victories of spaces and places before new work begins. Reckon with the past as a means of healing, building trust, and deepening understanding of self and others



## Protect and Strengthen Culture:

Make visible and strengthen Black cultures and spaces to honor their sacredness and prevent their erasure. Amplify and support Black assets of all forms—from leaders, institutions, and businesses to arts, culture, and histories.



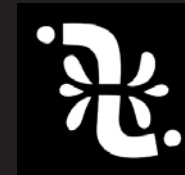
## Cultivate Wealth:

Cultivate a wealth of time, talent, and treasure that provide the freedom to risk, fail, learn, and grow.



## Promote Excellence:

Amplify, elevate, and love Black vanguards and the variety of their challenging, creative, exceptional, and innovative work and spaces. Allow excellence to build influence that creates opportunities for present and future generations.



## Foster Personal and Communal Evolution:

Make opportunities to expand leadership and capacity voices, stories, and bodies.



## Manifest the Future:

Black people, Black culture, and Black spaces exist in the future! Imagine and design the future into existence now, working inside and outside of social and political systems.

# MANIFESTO

This principle is derived from Adrienne Maree Brown's Emergent Strategy: Shaping Change, Changing Worlds. We are grateful to the many individuals and organizations that inspired these principles.



**CASE STUDY:** This is a showcase of relevant case studies, in other communities of color, that demonstrate collective creative action towards preserving cultural heritage in public space.

Images Credit: NYCDOT



## CHINATOWN WALK SIGNAGE COLLECTION

Chinatown Walk is a recent public art collaboration of a local artist (Dingding Hu), the Art department of the NYC Department of Transportation and the Museum of Chinese in America. Officially launched at the end of October 2017, 45 pieces of artwork were printed on street signage and installed all over Chinatown in Manhattan, telling a variety of stories about the culture and life of local residents. The series of 45 pieces of artwork illustrated local community assets such as local restaurants, street food stands, signature architecture pieces, parks and events, as well as representative object collections that represent Chinese culture.





**CASE STUDY:** This is a showcase of relevant case studies, in other communities of color, that demonstrate collective creative action towards preserving cultural heritage in public space.

Images Credit: Perkins and Will

## LOS ANGELES DESTINATION CRENSHAW

The vision for Destination Crenshaw was to transform this urban corridor into 1.3 miles of art and culture celebrating Black Los Angeles. Crenshaw Boulevard is reimagined into transformative infrastructure that will boost the community through economic development, job creation and environmental healing while elevating Black art and culture. Striving to empower Black artists and the creative economy this Boulevard transformation will have commissioned works of art from 100 young, mid-career and established artists. Destination Crenshaw's purpose is to power an economic and cultural revitalization of the Crenshaw corridor





**Cultivating  
Youth  
Leadership**





# ENGAGING THE YOUTH

## Youth Design Competition + Flatbush History Placards

While youth engagement was a central theme of the work of activating the Burial Ground we were also very committed to amplifying the creative energy embedded in the community. The youth design competition was an approach to accomplishing these intersecting goals in a way that created a model that could be replicated and scaled in the future. We first established the rules of the competition and a process of mentorship to help youth develop their art for the final entries of the competition. After we promoted the competition and selected the finalists we scheduled a few mentorship opportunities that included a tour of historic Black Brooklyn, a collage making session at Weeksville Heritage Center and a virtual office hours for the youth to get feedback on their art. At the end of the process three winners were chosen and they were awarded \$1000 while the other finalists received \$250 for their participation in the youth mentorship program. The final artworks were integrated into the design of the History Placards and installed along Flatbush and Church Avenue creating a visual connection between the Flatbush African Burial Ground and the Lefferts Houses former plantation in Prospect Park.



Image Credit: Ifeoma Ebo

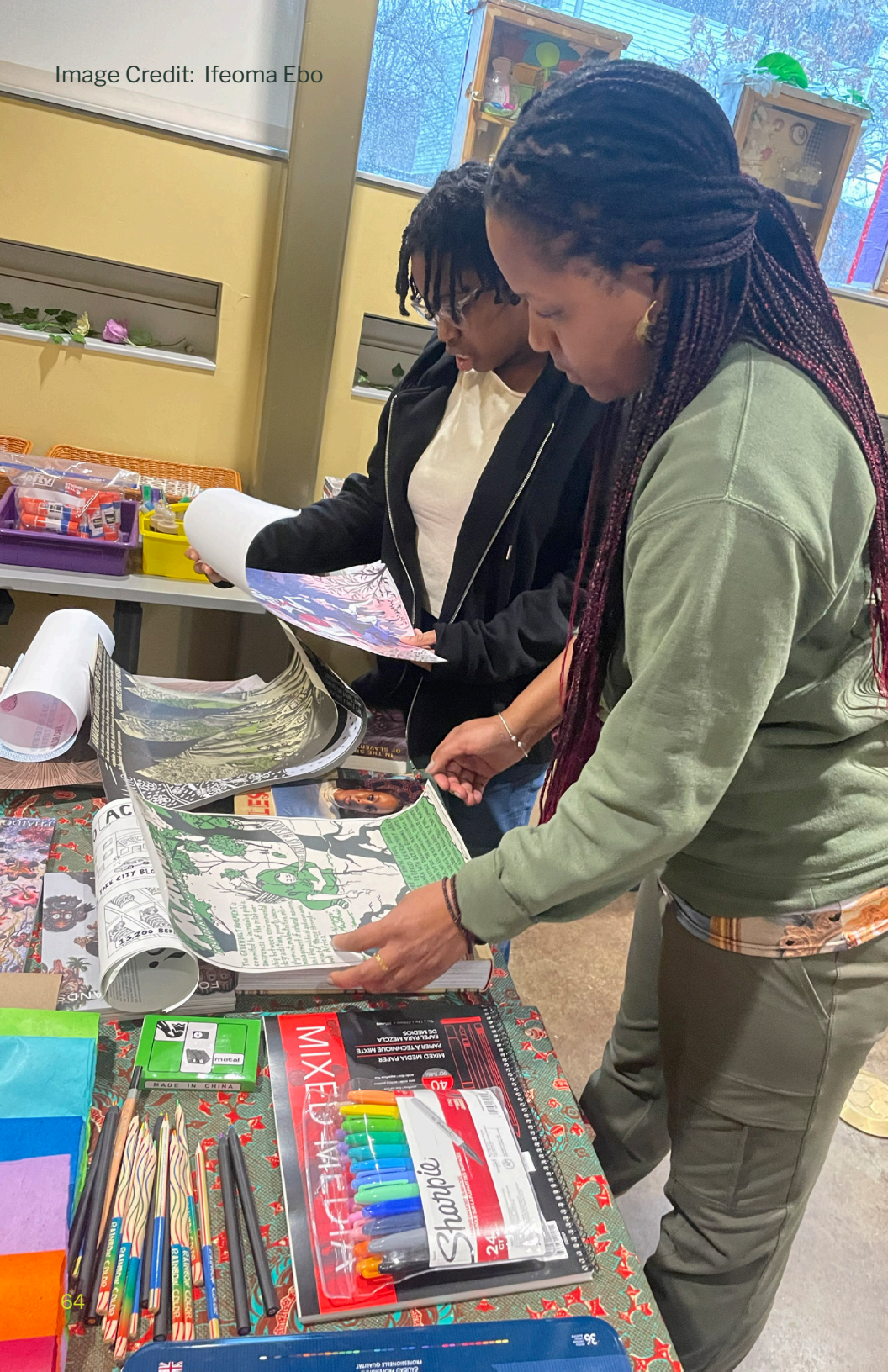
### Engaging Descendant Communities Pillar: Interpretation

*Descendant Community Engagement and Collaboration: As an institution develops and implements interpretation, it should involve as many stakeholders as possible in the process. Engaging members of the descendant community as equal partners is especially vital and highly recommended*



Image Credit: Growhouse

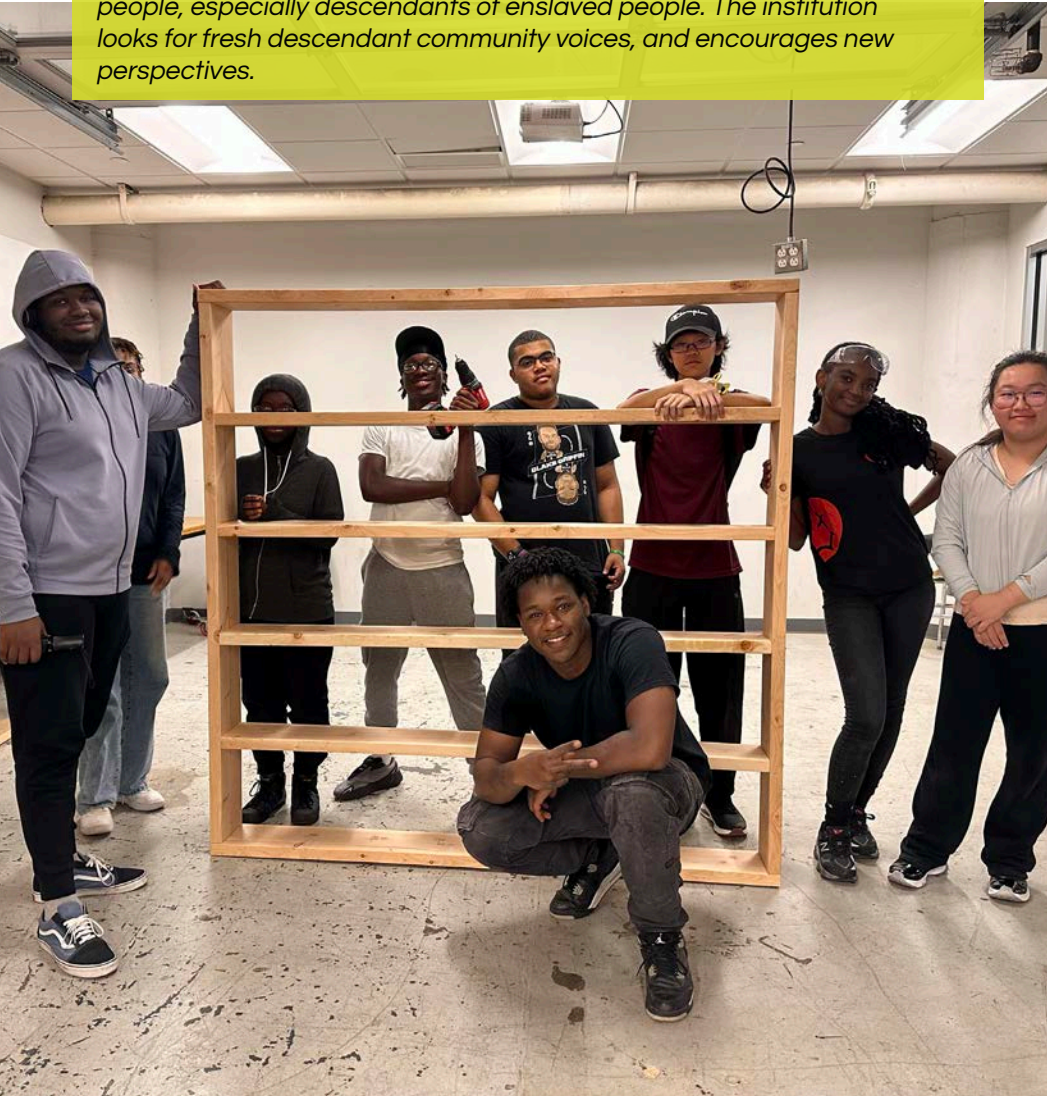






*Engaging Descendant Communities Pillar: Multi-Disciplinary Research*

*Multi-vocality: The institution uses multiple sources and highlights multiple voices. Lifts up the voices and perspectives of marginalized people, especially descendants of enslaved people. The institution looks for fresh descendant community voices, and encourages new perspectives.*



Youth participants complete the construction of a community altar for the FABG.

Image Credit: Growhouse

## YOUTH STEWARDSHIP TRAINING

Today's young adults are stepping into a world shaped by the choices of past generations, and they have a critical role in shaping what comes next. Our goal was to engage and empower 16 to 24-year-olds, not just as participants, but as active partners in envisioning the future of the Flatbush African Burial Ground and its connection to communities across the city.

Over the course of a six-week program, we brought on 12 interns from Brooklyn and Queens, reflecting the diversity of New York City—young people with roots in the Caribbean, the American South, and China. The first two weeks focused on self-discovery, helping the interns identify their personal strengths and values while exploring how the burial ground's history ties into global narratives of colonization and resistance. We wanted to illustrate that the FABG's influence could spread beyond Flatbush.

From there, the interns chose one of four tracks: community engagement, programming, urban planning, or marketing. Their work was hands-on—they mapped out key locations along the Black History + Heritage Corridor, contributing to a deeper understanding of the sites' importance. They also supported preparations for the "Brooklyn. Black. Utopia." event, ensuring that its activations could reach a broader audience by translating materials into Haitian Kreyol, a language central to the local community.





Images Credit: GrowHouse







Images Credit: Growhouse







Youth participants engaged in community survey training.  
Image Credit: ANHD



**Memorialization**





# ENGAGING THE COMMUNITY

## Community Visioning and Engagement

From the beginnings of coalition building in 2021, we felt it was crucial that our community was empowered to make informed decisions about the FABG, and hosted online town hall meetings and teach-ins. The subject of these meetings included decolonizing archaeology, visions for the burial ground, the history of the burial ground and of slavery in Flatbush, and development processes.

In 2021, an online town hall entitled “Decolonizing Archaeology” was produced in conjunction with The Center for the Study of Brooklyn at Brooklyn College and featured guest speakers Uzma Rivzi, Dr. Michael Blakey, and brought together sacred sites from as far away as Bethesda, MD and Kingston, NY.

Continuing to engage youth, we contracted members of GrowHouse’s youth advisory council to take photos at events and also assist in delivering the tours. Additionally, leaders of Flatbush Tenants Coalition led youth visioning sessions for the burial ground using our online whiteboard. We aimed to illustrate how this work could form a cultural economy for youth.

Our efforts culminated in a protest/rally at Brooklyn Borough Hall, where we stood in solidarity with African Graves Matter and the FABGC. The rally, combined with press coverage from MSNBC’s “Positively Black”, pressured the City to stop any plans to develop housing on the FABG, marking a pivotal victory for our coalition.

Image Credits: Creative Urban Alchemy

Engaging Descendant Communities Pillar: Multi-disciplinary Research

Collaboration: Building community with descendants by working together to achieve a common set of goals and objectives.

Multi-voicing: The institution uses multiple sources and highlights multiple voices. Lifts up the voices and perspectives of marginalized people, especially descendants of enslaved people.





## COMMUNITY DESIGN VISIONING WORKSHOPS

As a part of the design visioning process and in an effort for the Coalition community to brainstorm around Afrofuturism the design team facilitated an AI community design workshop. This workshop held space for members of the Flatbush African Burial Ground Coalition to join members of other Brooklyn based Black communities to collectively embody and release rage, grief, and joy through a visioning session to reimagine the Flatbush African Burial Ground into a healing space of the future. As a tool for co-design we used Midjourney - a generative artificial intelligence program that generates images from natural language descriptions. The workshop resulted in the co-creation of a series of hand collages and mid journey images that centered on themes of afro indigenous land stewardship practices, youth engagement, community learning, community art making, rest and repair. The session was a great opportunity to define what community healing meant, explore trauma informed practice and discuss a way forward for centering these themes at the Flatbush African Burial Ground.

AI Image Credit: Creative Urban Alchemy





*Engaging Descendant Communities Pillar: Relationship Building with Descendant Communities*

*This same culture of fearless storytelling and anti-racism must also be reflected in materials, programs, outreach, and partnerships. Only then will institutions and descendants have embraced the highest standards of collaborative engagement.*













# REPARATIONS IN PUBLIC SPACE INSTALLATION AND EXHIBITION

As a development of the generated images from the community design workshop using artificial intelligence the design team developed a series of speculative design ideas represented in collage quilts. The work was exhibited in "Reparations in Public Space: Reclaiming Sacred Ground," an immersive exhibit that showcased a series of quilts depicting images that reimagine the Flatbush African Burial Ground as a site of healing and remembrance. The design ideas were a manifestation of the set of design values, strategies and artificial intelligence visualizations that were co-created with workshop participants. Through speculative design, poetic narratives, and community participation, the exhibit honored the historical wounds of African Burial Grounds while envisioning more liberatory futures for the collective. The original workshop participants and the Flatbush community were invited to the exhibition opening showcasing the final designs held at the Flatbush Central Caribbean Marketplace. The exhibition opening had an engagement component for attendees to participate in liberatory spatial practice including meditation, body movement and listening to soothing music.



Images Credit: Creative Urban Alchemy





# DIKENGA AS A DESIGN PRINCIPLE

The Dikenga Cosmogram, central to Kongo spiritual traditions, is a symbolic representation of the cyclical nature of life, death, and rebirth. Its circular design, intersected by a cross, reflects the interconnectedness of the physical and spiritual realms, guiding principles of balance, harmony, and renewal. Each quadrant of the cosmogram represents a phase in the cycle of existence—birth, life, death, and the afterlife—underscoring the continuity of the soul’s journey. In the context of African diasporic traditions, the Dikenga serves as both a spiritual map and a cultural tool, connecting communities to ancestral wisdom and fostering resilience. This cosmogram offered profound insights for designing spaces of healing, remembrance, and regeneration, such as the Flatbush African Burial Ground, where it can inspire practices of cultural preservation and collective repair

The Dikenga became an organizing principle for both the walks and later events we produced at the burial ground. Events that we held in the Flatbush African Burial Ground were organized in the shape of a circle with the four directions marked either with candles and offerings during Nine Nights, and with altars, offerings, fabric and more during “Brooklyn. Black. Utopia.”

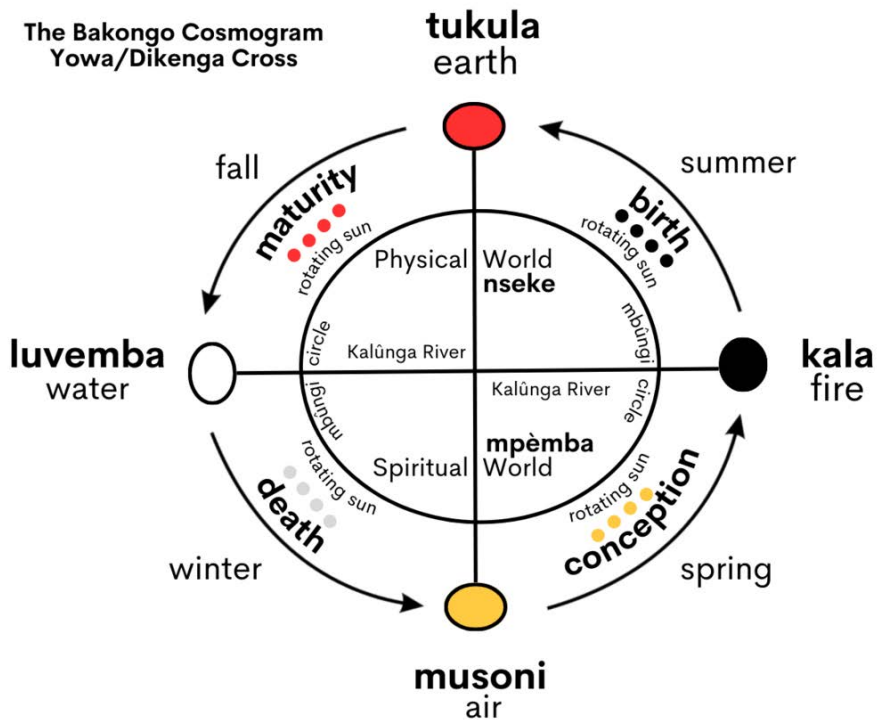


Image Credit: Aerial View of FABG by Daequan Collier





Images Credit: Creative Urban Alchemy

## DIKENGA PAVILION

Our initial idea of Burial Ground activation was to create both temporary art and a pavilion that could be used both by the Coalition, the local Council member and the Parks Department to engage the community around the future ideas for the permanent memorial that will be built in the Burial Ground. The design of the Dikenga Pavillion combines Central African cosmology and West African symbology into a form that celebrates and creates space for community rest and ritual gathering. The gabion enclosure presents an opportunity for participatory art, youth skill building and a community crafted gravestone that carries on a life of its own. The goal of the pavilion was to create a space that transforms the Burial Ground into a sacred place for remembrance, emotional release, intergenerational connection, and collective imagining of more equitable futures.

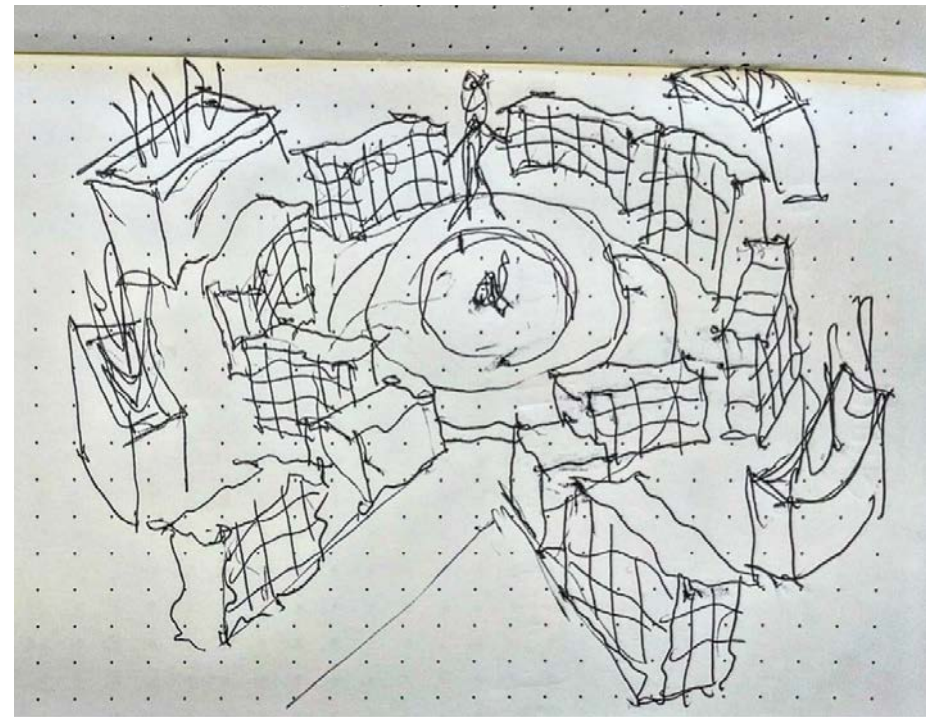


Image Credit: Creative Urban Alchemy



Image Credits: Creative Urban Alchemy



# Flatbush African Burial Ground



## PART 3

# IMPLEMENTATION

## PARTNERING WITH THE CITY

Working with city agencies has been an essential yet complex aspect of advancing the preservation and activation of the Flatbush African Burial Ground (FABG). Collaboration with entities such as the Parks Department and the District Council Member can provide critical support for protecting the site and securing funding for future projects. However, these partnerships require continuous advocacy to ensure that community voices and cultural priorities are centered in decision-making processes. Navigating bureaucratic structures often involves addressing competing interests and negotiating policies that may not align with the community's vision.

By fostering transparent dialogue and building strategic relationships, stakeholders at the FABG have worked to align municipal resources with the principles of equity, cultural preservation, and environmental justice. These efforts demonstrate how partnerships with city agencies can both empower and challenge grassroots movements, highlighting the need for persistent engagement and community-led advocacy.



## POLITICS OF PUBLIC SPACE:

The politics of public space are deeply intertwined with power dynamics, requiring intentional strategies to navigate landscapes of contested authority. Power mapping becomes essential in identifying key stakeholders, their motivations, and the networks of influence shaping decision-making processes. Appealing to political will and self-interest is central to these efforts, as demonstrating the alignment between community-led initiatives and broader policy priorities can unlock resources and support. Campaigning becomes a critical tool, leveraging public awareness, advocacy, and coalition-building to build momentum and apply pressure on decision-makers. For spaces like the Flatbush African Burial Ground (FABG), where histories of trauma and erasure intersect, trauma-informed practice ensures that the community's healing and empowerment remain central to these campaigns. This approach emphasizes safety, agency, and collective care in addressing the historical injustices embedded within these landscapes. Public spaces like the FABG are often arenas of contested power, where the interests of developers, policymakers, and local residents collide. By reframing these spaces as sites of cultural resilience and restorative justice, advocates can shift narratives and negotiate transformative outcomes. Ultimately, navigating the politics of public space demands a balance of strategic advocacy and community stewardship to create equitable, inclusive spaces that honor shared histories and futures.

Council Woman Rita Joseph speaks at Brooklyn Black Utopia event  
Photo Credit: Elijah Mogoli



*Engaging Descendant Communities Pillar: Relationship-building with Descendant Communities*

*Expressed Commitment: One important way institutions can powerfully and publicly express commitment to descendant communities is by articulating it in their governing and planning documents: mission statements, by-laws, and strategic plans. The institution can also create a written memorandum of understanding with descendants that explicitly outlines commitments and responsibilities.*





## NY PARKS DEPARTMENT:

Collaboration with the NYC Parks Department on the Flatbush African Burial Ground (FABG) has been vital yet fraught with challenges, particularly around community engagement and site access. While the Parks Department's commitment to empowering communities is evident through initiatives like their Temporary Art Program, community members often feel that engagement efforts lack transparency and inclusivity. At the end of 2021, as the site jurisdiction was shifted to the Parks Department by the Councilmember, community advocates were kept out of the process and learned of the move afterwards. Close to 18 months passed without community engagement or communication. During which time the FABG sidewalk became a site for community conflict in a Flatbush where residents are feeling the pressures of dwindling public space and gentrification. Access to the site has also posed barriers to fostering a deep connection between the public and this sacred space.

The flow of events at the FABG has highlighted a need for specific protocols for handling sacred sites in order to minimize community conflict and build trust between city agencies and community members. Plans for a permanent memorial hold great promise but require a shared vision that prioritizes community-led design and decision-making. Advocates continue to push for collaborative frameworks that elevate ancestral respect, cultural preservation, and environmental justice in shaping the FABG's future.

Photo Credit: Deena Darby



## NY DEPARTMENT OF YOUTH AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT:

Collaborating with NYC Department of Youth and Community Development and the Summer Youth Employment Program (SYEP) has created valuable opportunities to engage local youth in the preservation and activation of the Flatbush African Burial Ground. These partnerships have enabled us to cultivate youth leadership by involving young people in storytelling, cultural production, and community engagement efforts tied to this historic site. GrowHouse has a deep commitment to empowering youth through hands-on learning and employment opportunities. The partnership with SYEP was yet another avenue for GrowHouse to compensate youth for their contributions. These programs empower young leaders to actively shape the future of the FABG, building skills and awareness that extend far beyond this initiative. By bridging government resources with grassroots efforts, we've established a model for sustainable youth involvement in placekeeping work.



Photo Credit: GrowHouse





## NYC DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION:

The Design Team brought precious connections to city agencies, including the Department of Transportation. After permits for the Dikenga Pavilion were declined by NYC Parks, we brainstormed ways to engage residents in impactful ways around community art and activation at the FABG. Working with the NYC Department of Transportation on the Flatbush African Burial Ground has opened opportunities to creatively engage the surrounding community through programs like Open Streets and ArtEvention. The Open Streets initiative allows you to reimagine an area by creating vibrant public spaces that invite reflection, dialogue, and celebration of the burial ground's history. Meanwhile, the ArtEvention program has enabled collaboration with local artists to produce temporary public art that honors the site's cultural legacy and fosters community connection. These programs helped activate the surrounding streetscape, bridging the burial ground's sacred history with present-day community life and artistic expression.

Photo Credit: Creative Urban Alchemy



## NEW YORK CITY COUNCIL:

Working with District Councilwoman Rita Joseph on the Flatbush African Burial Ground has been both challenging and rewarding. Gaining access to her office and aligning with her broader agenda required persistent advocacy and careful navigation of competing priorities. Engaging her constituents to build widespread community support was critical, as their voices helped reinforce the importance of the site. Despite these challenges, the District Council's leadership was instrumental in securing \$4 million for the future permanent memorial, reflecting her commitment to honoring the burial ground's cultural and historical significance. Furthermore, the Councilwoman Joseph has shown a commitment to honoring the FABG's significance while ensuring all of her constituents are heard. Her support has laid a foundation for continued collaboration toward realizing a memorial that serves the entire community.

A great foundation has been laid towards deepening collaboration at the FABG and other burial grounds as they are discovered.



Members of the Flatbush African Burial Ground Coalition meet with Councilwoman Rita Joseph.  
Image Credit: GrowHouse NYC



## BROOKLYN. BLACK. UTOPIA

The Brooklyn Black Utopia Community Activation event at the Flatbush African Burial Ground—was a day of collective action, cultural celebration, and visionary planning. An experiential journey across the African diaspora through music, dance, art, environmentalism and acts of rest. Rooted in partnerships with community organizations, local leaders, and cultural stewards, this event brought us together to honor the rich heritage of this sacred space and imagine its future as a thriving community hub.

Images Credit: Creative Urban Alchemy







Images Credit: Creative Urban Alchemy









This program showcased the power of collaboration in reclaiming and activating spaces of Black history. Seed bombing and fence weaving symbolized our commitment to regeneration and creativity, transforming the landscape into a living testament to resilience. Martial arts workshops and designated spaces of rest prioritized healing and empowerment, while stewardship activities fostered deeper connections to the land. African musical performances infused the event with joy and rhythm, grounding us in the traditions of our ancestors.



Image Credit: Zachary Schwartz

Mental health programming and community discussions with NYC Parks opened spaces for dialogue on how we can collectively steward this land while addressing current challenges. At the heart of it all, an ancestral altar stood as a sacred space for reflection and gratitude, reminding us of the legacy we inherit and the future we can build together.





Through this activation, we celebrated the power of partnership, creativity, and community in preserving cultural heritage and envisioning a Black utopia rooted in care, justice, and belonging.

Image Credit: Creative Urban Alchemy

Image Credit: Deera Darby





















## LAND STEWARDSHIP

As a part of Brooklyn Black Utopia we created a village-like experience with a central altar honoring the ancestors that was surrounded by stations of creative activity. One station focused on sharing knowledge about indigenous land stewardship practices. We learned about native perennials such as Feverwort, Yarrow, and Sweet Goldenrod – plants that naturally grow in Brooklyn and were used by indigenous people for health and wellness. We created balls using clay, compost and seeds with the intention of repopulating the sacred ground with these medicinal plants. This immersive cultural experience allowed people to develop a new appreciation for the plants that grow wild around the city. Some community members shared childhood memories of these plants being used by their parents in the Caribbean. For participants the activity fostered a strong emotional connection to the Burial Ground, their natural surroundings and the stories of place. Central Brooklyn’s Little Caribbean exemplifies the intersection of climate and cultural justice. This vibrant Caribbean community faces compounded challenges of climate change, economic disparity, and cultural erasure exacerbated by gentrification. The Flatbush African Burial Ground (FABG) is a crucial site for both climate action and cultural preservation.



Images Credit: Abolitionist Place



# COMMUNITY CENTERED LAND STEWARDSHIP

## 1. Seed Balls

Seed balls are a mixture of seed, compost and clay and are mixed together and allowed to dry. Later, they are thrown/distributed into bare sites such as vacant lots or empty tree pits to encourage community greening via “guerrilla gardening”.

Seed balls are less effective as a horticultural intervention, but are a powerful story telling tool and opportunity for community engagement. Seed balls are best used on sites not regularly maintained, as they are unobtrusive and easy to introduce into a landscape. Ideally, seed balls are placed in the fall for maximum opportunity for success.



Image Credits: Creative Urban Alchemy



Images Credits: Creative Urban Alchemy



## 2. Seed/Plant Giveaway

Using a mixture of printed and digital materials, plants and seeds may be given away following community events (or as an event itself), with the goal of encouraging increased connection to plants as well as in-home engagement opportunities.

Some resources: Black Urban Gardeners (BUGs), Brooklyn Botanic Garden's Community Greening Initiative, GrowNYC, and other community gardens in the area. placed in the fall for maximum opportunity for success.





### 3. Street Tree Pits

Street trees need care to thrive. Community members can help street trees grow to maturity by planting out the tree pit with seeds or small plants.

Other stewardship opportunities include mulching, application of compost, watering in the summer, and the installation of small fencing and or interpretation of the importance of street trees and/ or community ownership of the street trees.







4. Supporting people's relationship with nature





5. Sharing Plant Stories



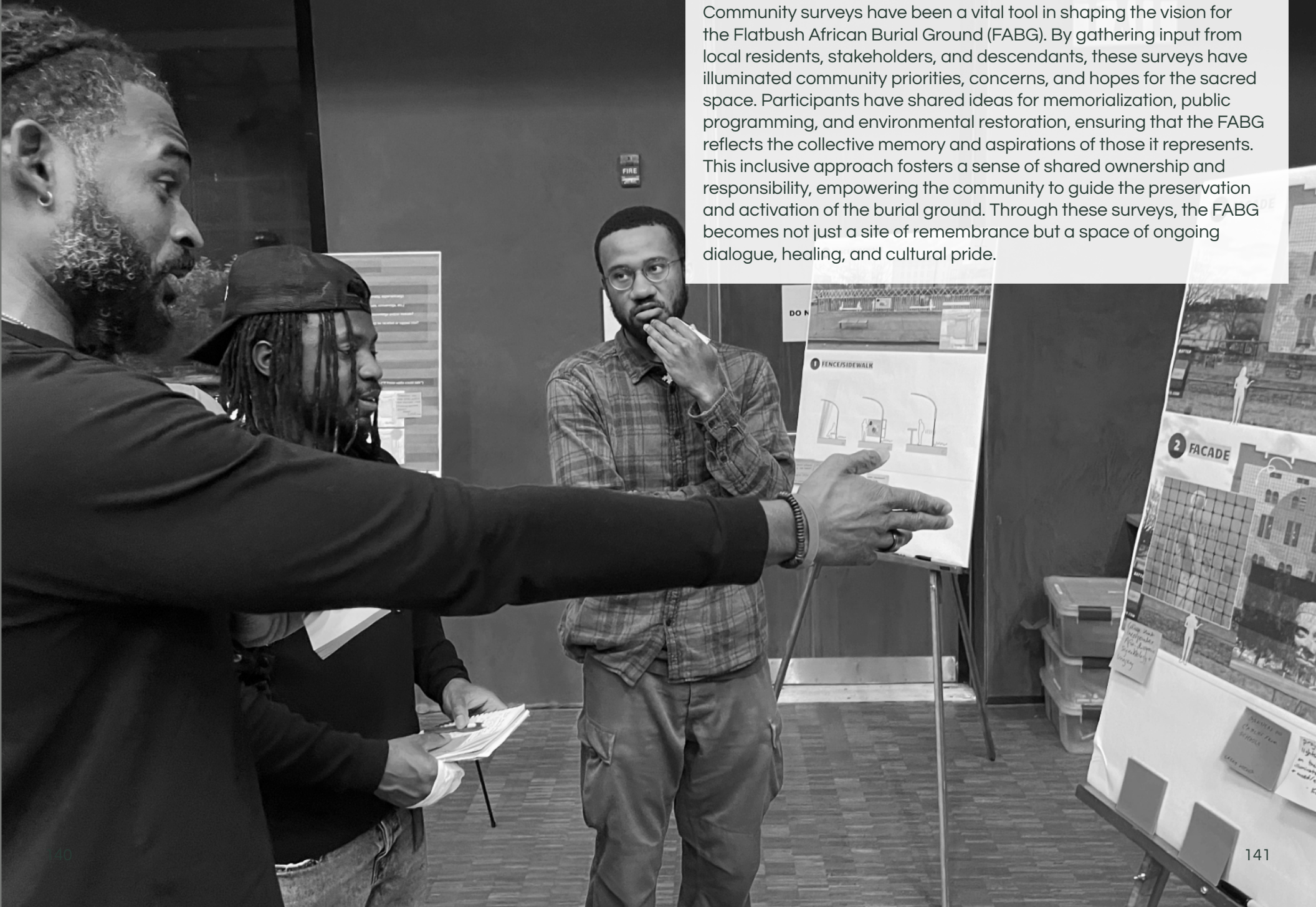
6. Indigenous and  
Afro-Indigenous culture  
sharing and knowledge  
building





## COMMUNITY SURVEY

Community surveys have been a vital tool in shaping the vision for the Flatbush African Burial Ground (FABG). By gathering input from local residents, stakeholders, and descendants, these surveys have illuminated community priorities, concerns, and hopes for the sacred space. Participants have shared ideas for memorialization, public programming, and environmental restoration, ensuring that the FABG reflects the collective memory and aspirations of those it represents. This inclusive approach fosters a sense of shared ownership and responsibility, empowering the community to guide the preservation and activation of the burial ground. Through these surveys, the FABG becomes not just a site of remembrance but a space of ongoing dialogue, healing, and cultural pride.





What emotions come up when you think about the Flatbush African Burial Ground?

**Hope and Inspiration**

Emotions of optimism, renewal, and a sense of purpose in honoring or rejuvenating the space. Examples: "Hope since there is an initiative," "Inspiration," "Alchemy."



AI Image Credit: Creative Urban Alchemy





What emotions come up when you think about the Flatbush African Burial Ground?

**Curiosity and Awareness**  
Responses reflecting learning, discovery, and a desire to understand or engage more deeply with the burial ground.  
Examples: "Excited to learn new things," "Curiosity," "Awareness, appreciation."

Image Credit: GrowHouse



What emotions come up when you think about the Flatbush African Burial Ground?

**Sacredness and Community**

Emotions tied to viewing the burial ground as a sacred or communal space, fostering a sense of grounding and shared purpose. Examples: "Sacred space, connection," "Peace and community," "Community groundness."







What emotions come up when you think about the Flatbush African Burial Ground?

**Grief and Sadness**  
Responses expressing sorrow, mourning, or loss related to the history and neglect of the burial ground.  
Examples: "Grief over the atrocity," "Very sad," "Deep sadness"



What emotions come up when you think about the Flatbush African Burial Ground?



**Connection to Ancestors and History**

Feelings of reverence, love, or a deep sense of connection to the ancestors and historical significance of the space.

Examples: "Ancestors, I love them," "Connection to a deep past," "Sadness... and appreciation."





**Physical Enhancements and Accessibility**

Suggestions for physical improvements to the space, including entrances, signage, and accessibility features.

Examples:

“More than one entrance,”  
“More signs of what this space represents,” “Making sure it’s also fully physically accessible,” “How clean it is.”

What can be improved about this space?



What can be improved about this space?

**Community Engagement and Activities**

Calls for increased community involvement, events, and shared activities to foster connection and use of the space.

Examples:

“More community activities and involvement,” “Space to tell stories,” “Teamwork,” “Should have more activities.”



Image Credit: Tenneh Sandimanie



Image Credit: GrowHouse?



What can be improved about this space?

### Design and Funding for Longevity

Emphasis on sustaining and enhancing the space through thoughtful design, funding, and maintaining current community-driven efforts.

Examples:

“Permanency,” “More city funding to implement structural support,” “Parks design but the things that are happening today should be maintained,” “So far the ideas put forth have been done with community input.”



What spaces are needed for young people to gather in the community?

### Community and Recreational Spaces

Spaces designed for gathering, recreation, and a variety of activities, including outdoor and indoor options.

Examples:

“Public space,” “Park space, community center, library,” “Shaded spots to sit and congregate,” “Community center with yard space.”







What spaces are needed for young people to gather in the community?

**Programming and Activities**

Organized events and programs that encourage engagement and development across age groups.

Examples:

“More programming that specifically invites age groups,”

“More free events and opportunities,” “Activities,”

“Outdoor activities.”



What spaces are needed for young people to gather in the community?

### Educational and Developmental Spaces

Spaces for learning, skill-building, and personal growth, including cultural and professional development opportunities.

Examples:

“Spaces for community education/development,” “Skill building, learning,” “Professional development,” “Art, literature, information.”







What spaces are needed for young people to gather in the community?

### Cultural and Wellness-Focused Spaces

Areas that emphasize mental health, cultural identity, and connections to heritage and well-being.

Examples:

"Wellness - mental health - gender and sexuality - race and identity," "Things that connect them with their ancestry and the earth," "Maybe a cultural food station," "Intergenerational, cultural educational."





What spaces are needed for young people to gather in the community?

### Interactive and Social Spaces

Spaces that encourage interaction, creativity, and casual socializing in an engaging environment.

Examples:

"Spaces like this, hang out space,"  
"More entertaining with drinks and engaging with fresh juices or local arts," "Dance, date, climb."



