

4 Connect residents to each other and to information about their community



3 Create, sustain and celebrate community histories and legacies



2 Foster creativity, leadership, community ownership and self-determination



1 Make all residents feel welcomed, valued and safe



The Cultural Blueprint is a participatory tool to support community residents to proactively address the negative impacts of changing demographics in historic and existing arts/cultural spaces and practices in their neighborhoods as well as to inform rezoning processes across New York City (NYC).

OVERARCHING PRINCIPLES

As housing prices escalate, historically uninvested low-income and working class neighborhoods of color are rapidly changing across the City of New York. In an effort to take inventory of arts and culture community institutions, programs, practices, and spaces, the partners established a toolkit that communities and organizations can use to guide an inclusive participatory planning process to ensure a culturally healthy community where they live, work, celebrate and thrive.

Why a Blueprint?

ENGAGING COMMUNITIES

In the second phase of the collaboration, partners piloted the Blueprint tool in two neighborhoods of NYC. To develop this tool, the team held workshops, kitchen table conversations, focus groups, and tabled at community events to engage with residents in Bushwick and Gowanus, Brooklyn. They also collected feedback from neighborhood leaders, organizations, and policymakers in other neighborhoods around the city. The examples of Bushwick and Gowanus detail how collaborations brought a holistic approach to hearing the priorities of those often left out of planning processes.

Cultural Blueprint participants: engaged through a collaborative process that built on existing neighborhood coalitions; mapped the neighborhood landscape and shaped priorities; and created strategies to advance these priorities, both for planning and rezoning processes and toward broader community goals.



Process

Scaling Up Citywide

Project partners have begun sharing the Cultural Blueprint with different NYC communities, particularly those confronting neighborhood planning or rezoning processes.

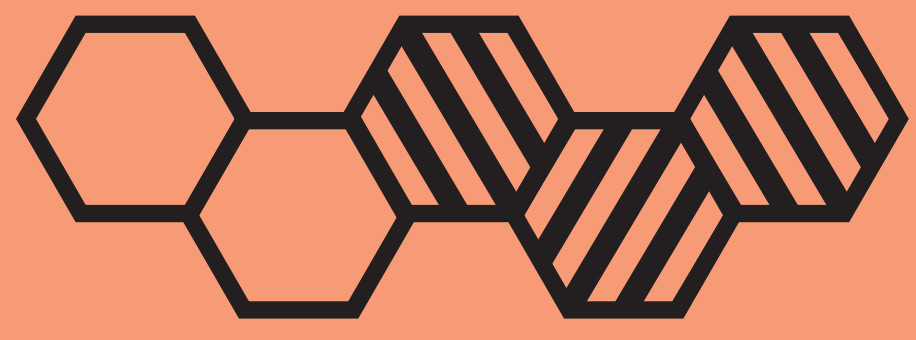
NOCD-NY introduced the Cultural Blueprint to its citywide alliance of peers for feedback. Arts & Democracy and NOCD-NY have also featured it at their annual Cultural Organizing for Community Change workshop.

NOCD-NY and EL Puente convened a peer learning exchange in January 2018, where participants from rezoning processes in East Harlem, East New York, Bushwick and Gowanus shared their rezoning experiences with an audience of artists, community leaders, cultural workers and advocates from across the city.

EL Puente continues to advance the work of the Cultural Blueprint through the NYC Department of Cultural Affairs' (DCLA) Building Community Capacity Initiative. In collaboration with the Bushwick Starr, they are part of a Citywide cohort with Far Rockaway and Morrisania where community members will lead a vision and strategic plan for the cultural lives of their neighborhoods.

- Places where the blueprint has been (or will be) presented and used:
- Hunts Point, Longwood, and Southern Boulevard, Bronx
 - Bushwick, Brooklyn
 - East New York, Brooklyn
 - Gowanus, Brooklyn
 - Harlem, Manhattan
 - East Harlem, Manhattan
 - Far Rockaway, Queens
 - Flushing, Queens
 - North Shore, Staten Island

For more information or to download the toolkit, visit: www.culturalblueprint.org



CULTURAL BLUEPRINT

Planning and Sustaining Culturally Healthy Communities

The Cultural Blueprint for Healthy Communities is a collaborative project among El Puente, Arts & Democracy, Hester Street, and Naturally Occurring Cultural Districts NY (NOCD-NY) to ensure the planning and sustainability of culturally healthy communities in New York City and beyond.

The Cultural Blueprint for Healthy Communities is made possible through the support of the NYC Cultural Agenda Fund in The New York Community Trust and the National Endowment for the Arts.



Case study: Bushwick

As an anchor community institution in Bushwick, El Puente's active participation in the Bushwick Community Plan (BCP) process has connected parents, artists, and youth from the neighborhood to a community planning process that aims to shift the way neighborhood planning is shaped in New York City. El Puente has also ensured that arts and culture enter the conversations about affordability, density, and neighborhood character.

The Bushwick Community Plan started in 2014 through the leadership of council members Antonio Reynoso (CD 34) and Rafael Espinal (CD 37) in a response to a letter from Community Board 4 to City Planning to request a rezoning. The plan has been guided by a steering committee of residents, community board members and representatives from local organizations. The overarching goal of the Community Plan is to create a rezoning plan led by the people and for the people.

ENGAGEMENT SNAPSHOT:

100+ Bushwick Residents (May-Aug 2017)

Who: local artists, youth, seniors, and parents

Where: El Puente Bushwick Center, street festivals, and community events

KEY TAKEAWAYS:

Participants generally had similar ideas and insights on the importance of cultural heritage and cultural preservation.

- REVIVE**
 - Minority-owned businesses
 - Improved schools
 - Green and open spaces
 - Church services
 - Street festivals, block parties, and cultural celebrations
- PRESERVE**
 - Existing open space
 - Libraries
 - Community and senior centers
 - Afterschool programs
 - Affordable housing
 - CBOs
 - Neighborhood culture
- CREATE**
 - Family entertainment
 - Movie and community theaters
 - Bowling alleys
 - Sit-down restaurants
 - Arts and culture facilities
 - Affordable housing
 - Job and business opportunities



Case study: Gowanus

Arts & Democracy was engaged in Bridging Gowanus, a community planning process to shape a sustainable, livable, and inclusive future for the Gowanus neighborhood. They were also part of the arts and culture committee of the Department of City Planning's Gowanus PLACES Neighborhood Planning Study. Additionally, Arts & Democracy and NOCD-NY are part of the Gowanus Neighborhood Coalition for Justice, a concerted effort by local residents and stakeholders to specifically elevate the priorities of low- and moderate-income residents, industrial firms, and the neighborhood-based organizations and small businesses that serve them.

Hester Street, in collaboration with Arts & Democracy, NOCD-NY and a steering committee of community organizations, joined forces with local artist and resident

Imani Gayle Gillison to recognize and elevate the neighborhood's arts and culture landscape through the Making Gowanus project which included the social justice performance "Soft" by Theater of the Liberated.

ENGAGEMENT SNAPSHOT:

75+ people

Who:

- Making Gowanus and Theater of the Liberated: Soft (Cast + Audience)
- Gowanus Neighborhood Coalition for Justice
- CHiPS (Park Slope Christian Help, Inc.)
- Gowanus Neighborhood Planning Study arts and culture committee

KEY ISSUES:

- Challenged community engagement and trust
- Recognition of and reinvestment in community assets
- Erosion of neighborhood health and livability
- Concern over affordability and development
- Focus on public and green spaces
- Recognition of community artistic and youth resources and leadership



POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

BUSHWICK:

Values and Principles - Create a common framework of values to which cultural policy recommendations should adhere. These should include: inclusive community building, open and transparent dialogue and communication, collaboration, cultural equity, access and exchange. Bushwick residents expressed "feeling unwelcomed" in their own neighborhood given the influx of new residents and socio-demographic change. They stressed the importance of being heard through this participatory Blueprint and the rezoning processes.

Cultural Heritage Preservation - Support and create venues, events and ongoing programs that acknowledge and celebrate the existing Latinx culture, especially of the long standing communities most prevalent in the neighborhood (Puerto Rican, Mexican and Dominican). Preservation of Latinx culture, Spanish language, and cultural heritage as key to a sense of belonging and empowerment was strongly emphasized particularly in light of the current process of gentrification and displacement.

Cultural Programming - Streamline the permit process for community cultural festivals, events and block parties on the streets and in neighborhood open spaces. Residents stressed the rich legacy of these events and their potential to be transformative spaces for cultural exchange, celebration and unity among neighbors.

Place Preservation - Increase funding to grow and sustain community institutions and spaces, such as libraries, schools, museums, community organizations and cultural centers. Support places where art and cultural programming, training, creation and innovation occur at all levels and are accessible to and affordable for the entire community.

GOWANUS:

Reinvest in and further support cultural assets. Invest in mapping, formally recognizing, and restoring valuable tangible and intangible cultural assets, narratives and sites in the community.

Ensure spatial access. Address systemic exclusion of low income communities in accessing open, public and dedicated spaces to gather, rehearse, exhibit, perform and connect with the wider community, including the reopening of the Gowanus Houses Community Center.

Target arts funding where it makes the most difference. Reduce structural barriers faced by creative, low-income communities of color who do not have access to mainstream arts networks and resources.

Protect cultural ecosystems. Introduce mechanisms in the plan that promote culturally sensitive and equitable economic development practices.

Actively engage youth. Provide access to culturally relevant programming, arts education, artistic mentorship and leadership training for youth.

Build stronger relationships. Employ artists and cultural organizers to facilitate trust building initiatives and streamline communication between political representatives, city agencies, police officers, community partners and residents.

Promote healthy communities. Establish multidisciplinary programs that recognize the link between cultural resources, neighborhood health, and social wellbeing.

