

Letter from the Borough President



I am so proud to represent Brooklyn, the greatest borough in the City of New York. Our borough's diversity gives it strength — we have more than 2.73 million people living in 77 neighborhoods, representing over 100 countries and speaking more than 150 languages!

Yet what neighborhood you call home shouldn't influence the opportunities you have access to, your safety, or your health. It shouldn't mean that you'll face dangerously unbearable heat in the summer or travel farther just to make a living wage. But right now, in Brooklyn, our health and well-being depend greatly on where we live.

This pattern of inequities in our borough is the consequence of our city's failure to plan for public health — or even to *plan* at all. Instead of doing what most large cities across the world do by creating a long-term comprehensive plan to guide our growth and development, in New York City, we zone. That's it. We don't plan, we just zone. We add housing here, we open up a new school there, and we make piecemeal changes that fail to think of the bigger picture. We deepen disparities instead of solving for them.

What does this look like in Brooklyn? Some neighborhoods have seen decades of neglect and disinvestment. Their schools are underfunded, their healthcare options are few and far between, their transit is inaccessible and inconvenient. Other neighborhoods, however, have seen tremendous investment. They have new and growing cultural institutions, excellent schools, and clean streets lined with trees and open businesses. The disparity when it comes to housing development is just as intense. In the last 10 years, the majority of new development has been concentrated in a handful of Brooklyn neighborhoods, while other areas of the borough have created almost no new housing in decades.

This haphazard approach to New York's growth is how we got where we are today — in the midst of a profound housing crisis and with unplanned neighborhoods that fail those who live in them. The question then becomes: how do we get ourselves out of this crisis? How do we bring balance to our borough, heal communities, and open up opportunities in the areas that are rich in resources but decades behind in housing development? The answer is to return to the heart of why we plan — for people to have what they need to be happy and healthy — and create the first boroughwide comprehensive plan that this city has ever seen.

Our comprehensive plan is many things at once: 1) It is a vision of a Brooklyn for all. 2) It is a recognition that the well-being of a neighborhood and of our borough is dictated by how we use our land, allocate our funding, and administer our programs. 3) It's a tool with which we can measure the merits of a proposal, advocate for community needs, and push for changes to our neighborhoods that make sense. 4) It is an information and data resource that can be useful to anyone and everyone. 5) And, critically, it is a space where dialogue can coalesce and a comprehensive plan for our entire city can grow.

As Borough President, there are limitations to what my comprehensive plan can do. I cannot implement it all on my own, nor can I make it law or promise it will outlive my time in office — that will be up to my successor. I can promise, however, that what drives this project is my firm belief that this is the right thing to do for Brooklyn. I can promise that this plan is *for* the community and therefore must be *by* the community, and as such will live and evolve with the hopes and needs of the people of Brooklyn. And I can promise that if we work together, guided by the greater good, we can accomplish a Brooklyn for all.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Antonio Reynoso'.

Antonio Reynoso
Brooklyn Borough President

Executive Summary

Almost every major city in the world except New York City has a long-term, comprehensive plan to guide growth and development. Despite various local and citywide zoning-focused, issue-based, or geographically specific planning efforts, the need for a true comprehensive plan — encompassing all areas of urban planning, all aspects of city governance, and all of its diverse neighborhoods — remains acute and unfulfilled.

For too long, NYC decision-makers have been forced to make choices about development projects and resource allocations without this greater context. We've seen time and again that planning issues do not occur in isolation, and we cannot solve entrenched problems on a site-by-site, or issue-by-issue, basis. The Comprehensive Plan for Brooklyn ("The Plan") provides this framework at the borough level.

Analyzing data across multiple metrics, patterns emerge in which low-income neighborhoods of color are less likely to have access to safe and affordable housing, healthy food, reliable transportation, quality educational and employment opportunities, active recreation, and preventative health services. The Plan examines all of these, with a focus on two deeply intertwined issues: housing and health.

The Plan's creation began shortly after Borough President Reynoso took office in January 2022. His office led the process, the Regional Plan Association (RPA) and New York Academy of Medicine (NYAM) provided support with data collection and analysis, and Hester Street provided support with outreach and engagement. An Advisory Committee of over 25 organizations from throughout the borough provided feedback and guidance along the way. The team engaged the public multiple times, including two in-person public workshops held at Borough Hall, public presentations to Brooklyn's community boards, and an online survey covering the draft recommendations.

Existing Conditions

The Plan begins with a thorough analysis of Existing Conditions in Brooklyn, created in partnership with RPA and NYAM, divided into eight sections:

Demographic: Brooklyn is New York City's largest borough, with an estimated population of 2.73 million. The borough is also incredibly diverse, with residents from over 100 countries and more than 150 languages. Brooklyn's racial and ethnic makeup is approximately 35% non-Hispanic white, 27% Black or African American, 13% Asian, 4% two or more races, 0.9% American Indian or Alaska Native, 0.1% Native Hawaiian and other Pacific Islander, and 19% Hispanic or Latin American of any race. Despite the borough's diversity, racial groups tend to be clustered together in ways that perpetuate segregation. As a result, there are stark disparities in socioeconomic factors and public health outcomes.

Socioeconomic: Between 2010-2020, seven out of 10 New York neighborhoods with the highest income growth were in Brooklyn, underscoring the borough's prominent position in the city's economy. Yet median household income varies tremendously across the borough, with a difference of nearly \$125,000 between parts of Park Slope and Brownsville. Healthcare and education remain Brooklyn's top employment sectors, accounting for 29% of jobs, followed by the food and hospitality industry (9.4%) and retail (8.9%).

Health: Disparities in the social and physical determinants of health across the borough can result in equally disparate—or sometimes worse—public health outcomes. Life expectancy in Brooklyn can vary as much as twenty years from neighborhood to neighborhood. Across many health metrics, from diabetes, to obesity, to complications in childbirth, we see patterns emerge wherein residents of Eastern Brooklyn tend to have worse outcomes than those living in other neighborhoods.

Land Use and Built Form: Though Brooklyn presents a diversity of land uses across its neighborhoods, more land is devoted to residential use than other uses. Multifamily residential buildings are most common in the northern half of the borough, while one- and two-family homes are more common in the borough's southern half. The manufacturing sector tends to seek proximity to major roadways and industrial waterways.

Open spaces and public facilities are distributed throughout the borough, though certain types are clustered disproportionately in particular neighborhoods. Downtown Brooklyn, the borough's commercial core, contains the bulk of its mixed-use and office buildings. Lower-density commercial buildings are found in outlying residential areas that permit local retail and offices.

Housing: The northern half of the borough has the vast majority of multi-family buildings and has seen the bulk of new development since 2010, including income-restricted and market-rate housing; while neighborhoods such as Park Slope, Carroll Gardens, and Brooklyn Heights saw the largest declines in their housing supply, in some cases losing as many as over 100 units per census tract. Meanwhile, median rent rose more than 20% between 2010-2021, leaving more than half of Brooklyn renters and 46% of its homeowners burdened by housing costs.

Transportation and Utilities: Much of Brooklyn is well-served public transportation; however, transit infrastructure is not evenly distributed. For example, 358 out of 542 subway station pedestrian entrances are concentrated in the borough's northern half. As a result, households in southern Brooklyn tend to have higher levels of automobile use and ownership. Accordingly, those neighborhoods report more frequent and deadly collisions involving pedestrians.

Environmental: Climate change is the most pressing threat to New York City's future. Sea level rise occurring over time is likely to increase coastal flooding during hurricanes and storms, and stormwater flooding poses an increased threat. As the severity of storms increases, temperatures become more extreme and heat waves become more common, the impacts of these changes will hit some communities much harder than others.

Neighborhood Conditions: This section examines other factors that influence health outcomes, such as cleanliness, freedom from violent crime, quality of schools, and presence of supportive community organizations. These indicators also serve as strong determinants of physical health, psychological well-being, and quality of life for youth residents raised in a given area. The supportiveness of a community is largely due to the prevalence of accessible healthcare facilities; places of assembly and community events; and schools, youth services, and daycare programs to enable households and families to maintain stability in everyday life and in times of crisis.

Recommendations

Based on the information collected and analyzed, as well as public feedback received, the Brooklyn Borough President's Office (BBPO) developed the following **Goals and Objectives**, as well as specific **Recommendations** for each that are organized into four categories based on the powers of the Borough President: Land Use, Budget, Advocacy, and Outreach. The recommendations can be found starting on page 126.

Healthcare

Goal: Increase access to quality, affordable health care and preventative services

Objectives:

- 1.1 Reduce health care costs
- 1.2 Remove barriers to health care
- 1.3 Reduce complications related to childbirth
- 1.4 Address violence and its public health impacts
- 1.5 Expand programs that provide support for behavioral health issues and substance use disorders

Housing

Goal: Increase access to safe and healthy affordable housing

Objectives:

- 2.1 Develop new affordable housing in keeping with fair housing principles, especially in areas where housing production has not kept pace with population growth
- 2.2 Support transit-oriented development
- 2.3 Preserve and improve government-regulated housing, including rent-regulated, income-restricted, and public housing; and protect homeowners from foreclosure

Environmental Conditions

Goal: Reduce exposure to hazardous environmental conditions, including those exacerbated by climate change, that affect the most vulnerable Brooklynites

Objectives:

- 3.1 Complete remediation of toxic sites in the borough
- 3.2 Improve indoor and outdoor air quality
- 3.3 Protect vulnerable populations from high heat
- 3.4 Plan for climate change and prepare for future disasters

Active Living and Transit

Goal: Encourage and facilitate a lifestyle that prioritizes physical activity in everyday routines to reduce chronic diseases through investments in transit and the public realm

Objectives:

- 4.1** Strengthen Brooklyn's cycling, pedestrian, and bus infrastructure
- 4.2** Foster healthy and active public spaces, including transforming public streets into public spaces
- 4.3** Better manage Brooklyn's curb space
- 4.4** Build a safer, more sustainable regional transportation and freight network
- 4.5** Reduce food insecurity and increase access to healthy food

Community Services

Goal: Support local community-based organizations that focus on reducing health disparities

Objectives:

- 5.1** Support community-based organizations through funding and advocacy
- 5.2** Ensure communities with a high number of foreign-born populations have access to translation services, health care facilities, and strong community services
- 5.3** Increase access to quality educational opportunities in Brooklyn

Jobs

Goal: Increase access to employment opportunities and support pathways to well-paying jobs

Objectives:

- 6.1** Maintain and expand opportunities for new manufacturing land
- 6.2** Support Brooklyn's industrial business sector
- 6.3** Support existing and new workforce development programs that increase economic mobility
- 6.4** Retain and expand Brooklyn-based small businesses

Accessibility

Goal: Integrate planning for accessibility

Objectives:

- 7.1** Ensure Brooklyn is a welcoming place to people with all abilities
- 7.2** Raise the standards for accessibility

Frameworks

The Plan also includes four frameworks that apply these recommendations spatially in the borough and will guide the Borough President's land use strategies. They are:

Housing Growth & Parking Demand Management: With a focus on southern and eastern Brooklyn, where housing growth has not kept pace with population growth and lack of transit access leads to more vehicle miles traveled, this framework recommends housing growth furthering fair transit-oriented development (within a half-mile of existing and proposed mass transit), and less congested streets.

Health & Wellness Economy: With a focus on eastern Brooklyn, where data shows disparate health outcomes compared to the rest of the borough, and southeast Brooklyn, where many healthcare workers live, this framework facilitates stronger community services, reduced barriers to care, and better health outcomes.

Healthy Streets & Environment: With a focus on northern and central Brooklyn, where crash rates are high and environmental justice is a pressing concern, this framework facilitates complete streets, accessible neighborhoods, better air quality, and remediation of toxic sites.

Resilient Infrastructure & Jobs: With a focus on the borough's waterfront and industrial areas, this framework facilitates industrial job growth, new multimodal options for freight delivery, and a resilient waterfront, all of which create opportunities to build Brooklyn's green economy.

Next Steps

The Borough President will begin to use the plan immediately as a guiding document for all projects that come to his office during public review. The Borough President is also committed to ongoing engagement and outreach to see that as many of our 2.73 million Brooklynites as possible are aware of the Plan. The Brooklyn Borough President's Office (BBPO) will continually collect and review feedback from the public at testimony@brooklynbp.nyc.gov. Based on receiving new public comments, as new research or datasets are released, and as legislation is passed, the Borough President has committed to reviewing the plan and issuing updates on a yearly basis, as well as take on special projects and work resulting from the recommendations.