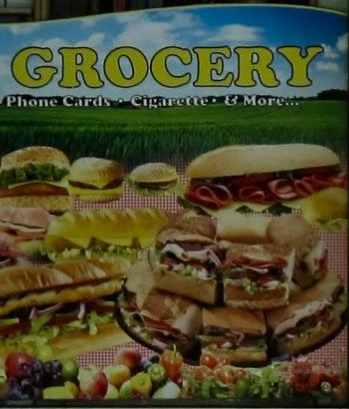


“Myrtle Avenue Was Everything to Me” -

Public Housing Residents Facing Gentrification on a Local Commercial Street



Timna Churges Golan | M.S. City and Regional Planning Candidate
Advisors: Beth Bingham and Patricia Voltolini

Agenda

1. **Introduction** [issue statement, goal, objectives, methodology]
2. **Key Findings**
3. **Recommendations**
4. **Table of Contents**



Myrtle Avenue BID



STRATEGIC PLAN

OUTCOMES

- The community's needs are **visible & acknowledged**
- Myrtle Avenue is a **thriving commercial corridor**

STRATEGIES

- WE... *assess and address* neighborhood needs through a qualitative and quantitative approach
- WE... *celebrate* the history and culture of the neighborhood
- WE... *use storytelling* to highlight our community's strengths and challenges
- WE... *advocate* for resources for our community

CHALLENGE

A sustained period of dramatic development and change in the neighborhood has benefited some, while rendering the needs of others invisible and unmet.

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A sustained period of dramatic development and change in the neighborhood has benefited some, while rendering the needs of others invisible and unmet.

Myrtle Avenue streetscape

VALUES & GUIDING PRINCIPLES

CARING



We bring heart to our work and honor each other's humanity

INNOVATION



We respond to challenges in courageous and creative ways

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT



Input and feedback directs our purpose and amplifies our impact

COLLABORATION



We build stronger relationships and results by working together

EQUITY



We identify opportunities and resources to create a just and healthy neighborhood

Issue

The ability of a local commercial street in a gentrifying neighborhood to meet the needs of its local public housing community

A city-wide challenge

“The larger effort to maintain public housing in the city should be coupled with strategic efforts to integrate public housing residents in the new commercial and social landscape of changing neighborhoods”

(NYU Furman Center, April 2019)

NYU
Furman
Center

made up more than 10.0 percent of all homes in 2017 (Appendix A).¹⁵ Consider that in East Harlem, 32.0 percent of homes were in public housing (Appendix A). The public housing units in these neighborhoods preserve economic diversity over the long-term by enabling low-income households to stay in place.

Table 1. Share of Public Housing Units in Gentrifying Neighborhoods and by Neighborhood Type, New York City, 2017

Gentrifying Neighborhood	% of Public Housing Units
East Harlem	8.7%
Lower East Side/Chinatown	8.1%

Public Housing Plays a Role in Maintaining Neighborhood Diversity

Public housing is disproportionately located in the city's most economically diverse neighborhoods, in part because it helps to lock in diversity as neighborhoods change. In 2017, the ten most economically diverse neighborhoods in the city, as measured by the income diversity ratio, or the ratio of the 80th percentile household income to the 20th percentile household income, housed over a third of the city's

% of Public Housing Units in Gentrifying Neighborhoods

58.8%

% of Public Housing Units in Higher-Income Neighborhoods

27.1%

% of Public Housing Units in Non-Gentrifying Neighborhoods

14.1%

HOW NYCHA PRESERVES DIVERSITY

Morningside Heights/Hamilton Heights	8.2	2.0%
Conex Island	8.2	3.3%
Williamsburg/Greenpoint	7.7	2.8%
Chelsea/Clinton/Midtown	7.5	1.4%
Brooklyn	7.0	1.8%
North Shore	6.9	1.8%

Sources: American Community Survey 2013-15, New York City Housing Authority Development Book, NYU Furman Center

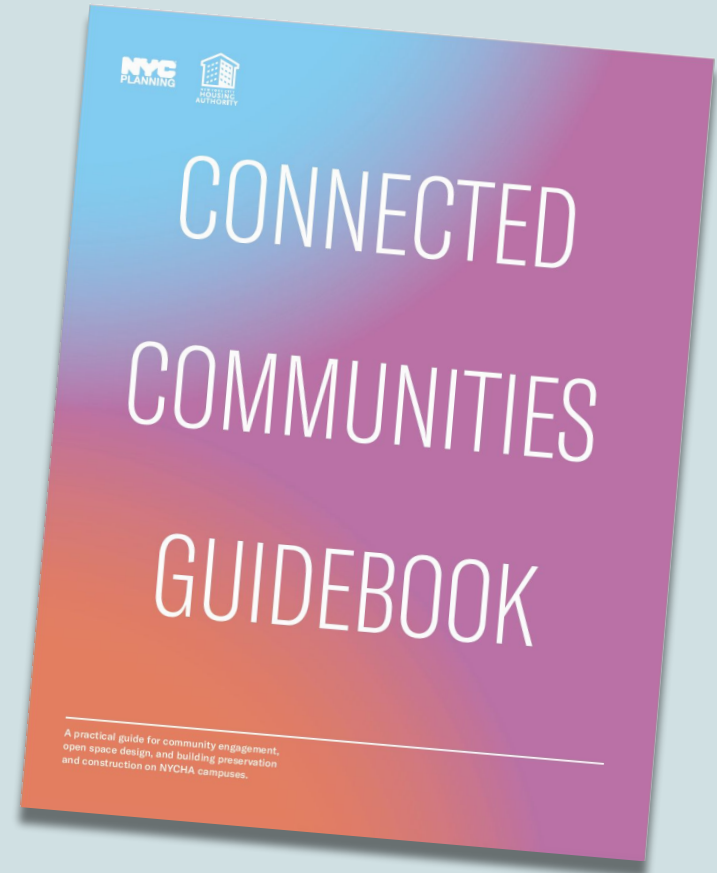
Note: Gentrifying neighborhoods are in blue; Higher-income neighborhoods are in black; Non-gentrifying neighborhoods are in red.

¹⁵ Appendix A provides further information at the neighborhood level on the share of occupied housing units that are public housing units.

NYCHA TODAY

“While the city as a whole has prospered economically, many NYCHA campuses and their residents have been excluded from the prosperity of their immediate neighborhoods.”

(NYCHA, 2020, p. 28)

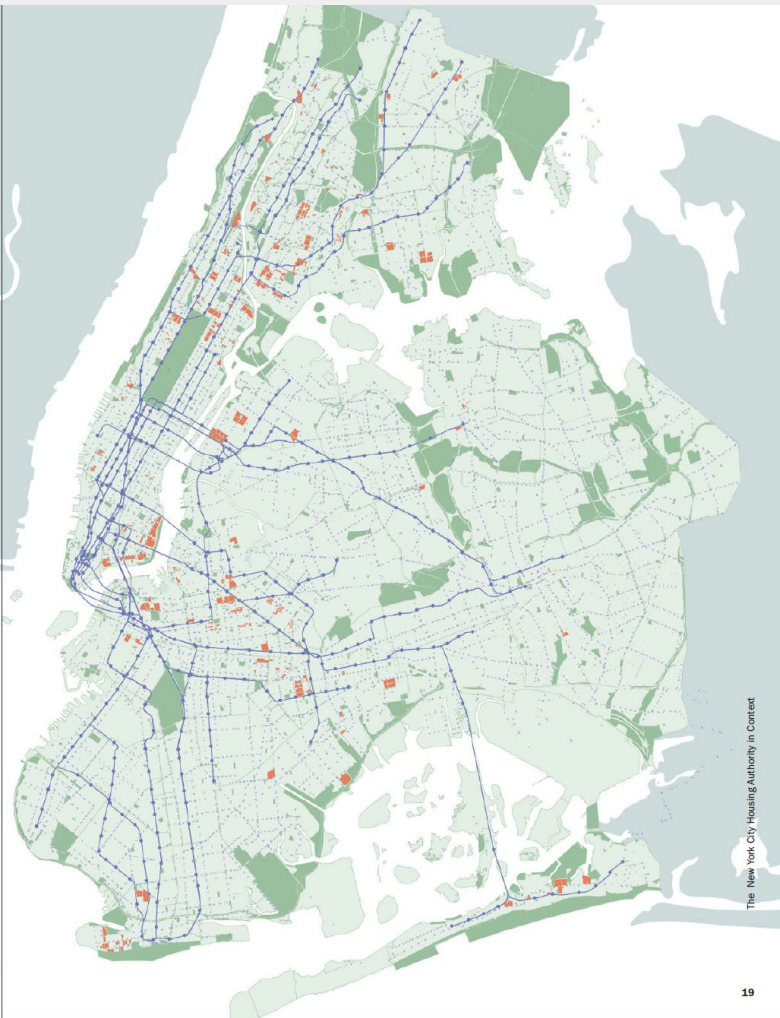
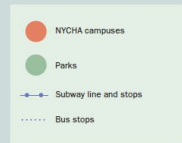


NYCHA Campuses in New York City

NYCHA campuses were generally planned and built next to major parks, public institutions, and mass transit. While some are well connected to the rest of the city, the size and configuration of many campuses

“Moreover, many campuses suffer a lack of access to a diverse mix of neighborhood amenities and services, such as fresh food stores, pharmacies, or stores”

(NYCHA, 2020, p. 18)





“But unlike residential gentrification, the disappearance of traditional, local stores, and their replacement by chain stores and boutiques, has not been recognized as a social problem.”

(Zukin, 2009)

Goal

Provide recommendations for City agencies to support Myrtle Avenue BID's ability to meet the needs of local public housing residents in face of neighborhood change

Objectives

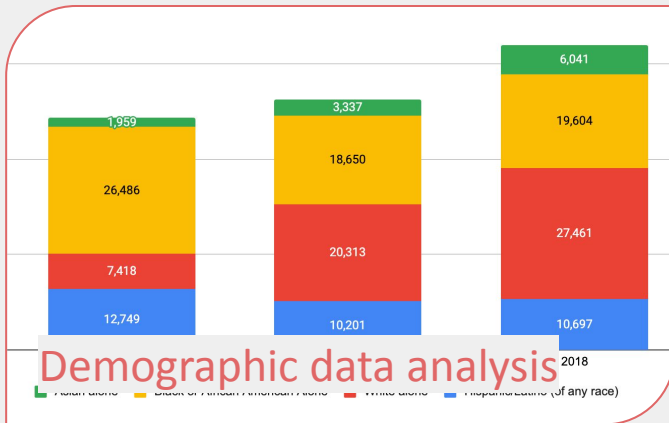
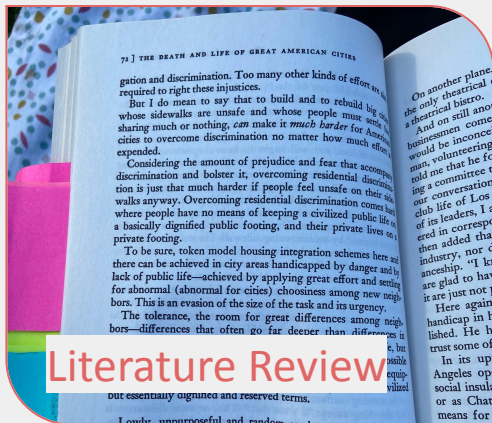
1. Explore what revitalization of local commercial streets mean for NYCHA residents

2. Establish the Myrtle Avenue BID case Study - history and existing conditions

3. Present how Myrtle Avenue is used and perceived by Whitman and Ingersoll residents

4. Make recommendations that would support the ability of New York City' BIDs to meet the needs of local public housing residents as their neighborhood changes

Methodology: mixed method



Key Findings



#1 The Myrtle Avenue BID Satisfaction Survey does not capture public housing residents feedback

Public housing residents are undercounted and unidentified

Income Distribution in BID Trade Area, 2000-2018



BID Survey Respondents Income Distribution, 2019



#2 While Whitman resident's opinions vary, Ingersoll residents fare worse

Myrtle Avenue BID is not providing Ingersoll's residents day-to-day convenience



Myrtle and Prince, 1934

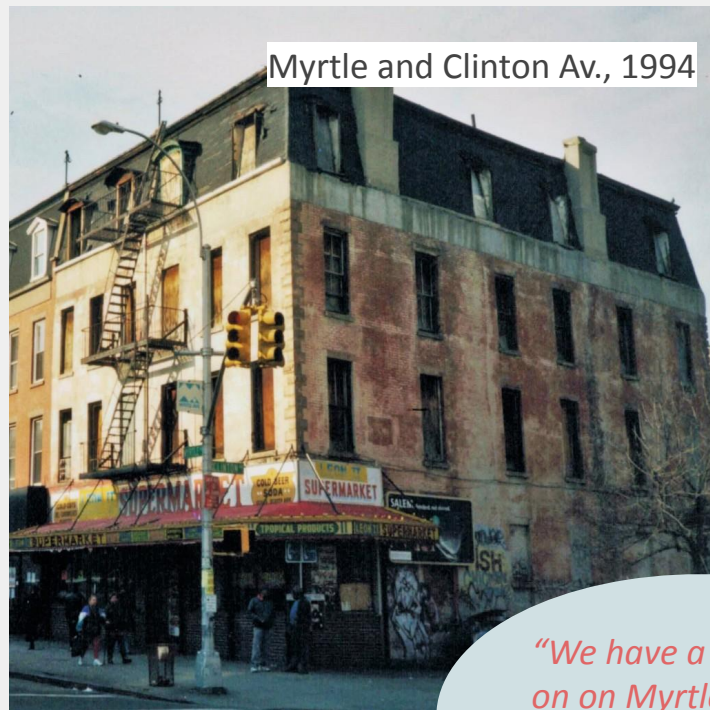


Myrtle and Prince, 2020

"The highrises replaced all of the resources that we had in the community"

Darold Burgess,
President of the Ingersoll
Tenant Association

Myrtle and Clinton Av., 1994



Myrtle and Clinton Av., 2020



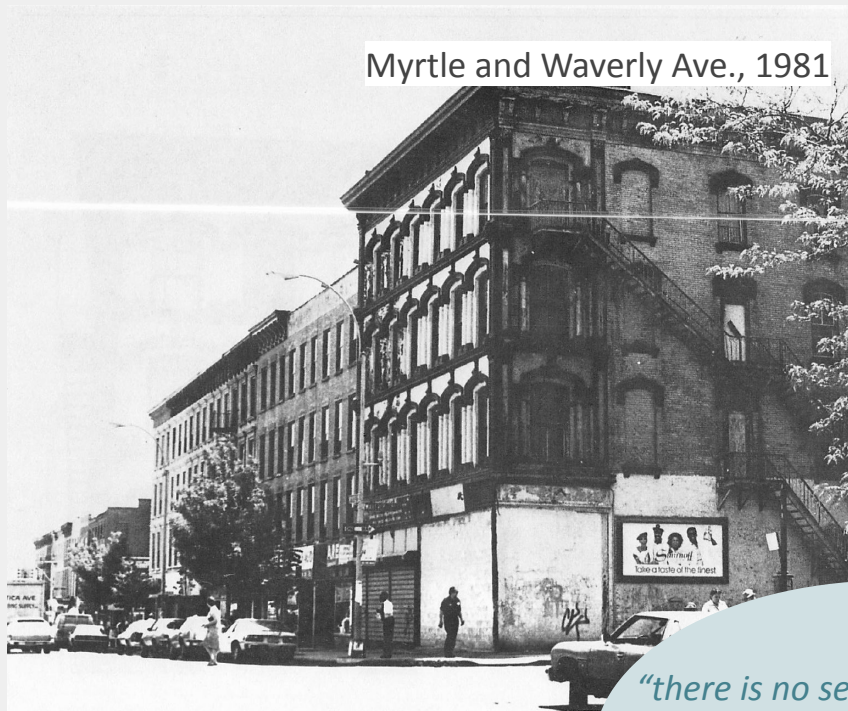
*“We have a lot going on on Myrtle Avenue **now**, that we didn’t have **then**”*

Isabella Lee,
President of the Whitman
Tenant Association

#3 Selection of stores and products impacts residents sense of belonging

Specifically ethnic hair product were mentioned as “gone-overnight”

Myrtle and Waverly Ave., 1981



Myrtle and Waverly Ave., 2020



*“there is no sense of me here
because I need to go Downtown
to get hair products”*

Shaquana Boykin,
Treasurer of the Whitman
Tenant Association

#4 Fort Greene Park is a key public space

Benches and direct and indirect policing were mentioned as impacting usage

“when you are sitting in the park, you are sitting on a bench with other people and you are meeting people just by looking around you”

Betty Wyman
Vice President of the
Whitman Tenant Association



#5 Wegmans sets a positive model for community economic development

Both as an employer and as a large supermarket

A photograph of a modern Wegmans supermarket building. The building features a large glass facade with a dark metal frame and a prominent 'Wegmans' sign in a white script font. The sign is mounted on a dark metal structure. The building is surrounded by a parking lot with orange and white striped curbs. In the foreground, there are some construction barriers and a white car partially visible on the right.

Wegmans

“we sent our residents, they were trained, they were interviewed, they were hired, and once they were hired, it changed their lives. Wegmans is not just a store or a supermarket, it is a career.”

Darold Burgess,
President of the Ingersoll
Tenant Association

#6 Residents are mostly unsatisfied with stores located on NYCHA's commercial property

Which seem to be treating residents as captive customers

Betty Wyman

Vice President of the
Whitman Tenant Association

“some of them are from different nationalities from us from where they come from, and they don't know how to talk to some of the seniors, they don't know how to talk to people at all.”



Recommendations



Myrtle Avenue BID

#1 Conduct a BID satisfaction survey among Ingersoll and Whitman residents

#2 Devise a short and long term plan for meeting public housing residents needs

#3 Secure two voting board seats for Ingersoll and Whitman residents



#1 Connect NYCHA Commercial properties with NYCHA REES

#2 Prioritize NYCHA residents as commercial tenants

#3 Collaborate with tenant associations to assure residents satisfaction with NYCHA commercial tenants



NYC SBS

#1 Provide technical assistance and support to tenants of NYCHA commercial properties

#2 Advance legislation for the taxation of vacant storefronts

#3 Advance legislative update of BIDs' board composition to include a higher share of local residents



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Thanks!



Myrtle Hall, Timna Churges Golan, February 2020