



BEDFORD-CHURCH COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT REPORT

**Findings from the Flatbush African Burial Ground
Remembrance and Redevelopment Process**



PREFACE

In October 2020, Mayor Bill de Blasio and City Council Member Mathieu Eugene announced a proposal to transform 2286 Church Avenue (the Bedford-Church site referred to in this report as ‘the site’) into 100% affordable homes and youth-focused programming, alongside memorialization of the Flatbush African Burial Ground and other history connected to the site. The proposed project and its community engagement process were conceived with these multiple goals in mind: responding to existing needs in the Flatbush community for truly affordable housing, youth programming, and memorialization. The history of the Flatbush African Burial Ground and its location adjacent to and on a portion of the Bedford-Church site, which was new information for many community members, broadened the focus of this engagement process. As the collective understanding of this history grew, it became clear that the proposal for the site needed to be reexamined.

In engaging with this process and other forums, the community made clear their priority and need to focus the future of the site on honoring and memorializing the Flatbush African Burial Ground and associated history of slavery in Brooklyn and NYC. Subsequently, Task Force members, community activists, and organizers called on the City to revisit the proposed use of this City-owned site for affordable housing and youth programming. This sentiment was amplified by current and incoming elected officials.

Before this process, and engrained in this Administration’s approach to identify and root out structural racism, there has been a multi-year realignment of how the City invests and helps support communities across the five boroughs, especially in communities of color and the most vulnerable neighborhoods. This lens has been applied to every policy area – from public health, to land use, to public works planning and more – and is evident in the framework of initiatives like the Where We Live NYC Plan, the Racial Justice Commission, and the Taskforce for Racial Inclusion and Equity, to name just a few. This approach is defined by a shared objective to use the collective impact City leaders can have to address deeply rooted racial and economic disparities by applying an equity-based approach to the City’s planning work.

Given the emphasis this process has placed on the recognition of history and affirmation of cultural memory, in addition to the clear and thoughtful feedback from participants in the process, the City has decided to not move forward with the release of a Request for Proposals (“RFP”) for affordable housing, youth services and memorialization.

While this report will no longer be informing an affordable housing, youth services and memorialization RFP, the engagement process and the priorities identified in this report are useful in several ways. Most importantly, the conversations had throughout this process have been critical to advancing the City and community’s collective understanding of how the site connects to the previously little-known history of the Flatbush African Burial Ground and slavery in Flatbush. This increased awareness is due both to the archaeological research and public engagement provided by the City, and the important work led by local community organizers and activists to raise awareness of the burial ground’s history through their local networks and public education events. Together, this dialogue and research started the conversation around how to memorialize the history of the Flatbush African Burial Ground and it can inform conversations to come. The engagement process also surfaced the community’s priorities for affordable housing, youth programming, and other programming that can serve as a starting point for future projects in the neighborhood.

The City looks forward to continuing conversations with local organizations and the Flatbush community about how to respectfully memorialize the Flatbush African Burial Ground on this site together, building off of the engagement process and findings described in this report.

INTRODUCTION

In October 2020, Mayor Bill de Blasio and City Council Member Mathieu Eugene announced a proposal to transform 2286 Church Avenue (the Bedford-Church site referred to in this report as ‘the site’) into 100% affordable homes and youth-focused programming, alongside memorialization of the Flatbush African Burial Ground and other history connected to the site. This site’s location adjacent to and on a portion of the Flatbush African Burial Ground is of critical importance and is deeply connected to the history of slavery in New York City. Engaging with this history provides an opportunity to build awareness, memorialize, and honor the enslaved and freed Africans who built the early community of Flatbush.

Historical records about the Bedford-Church site and the Flatbush African Burial Ground document a complex evolution of use and ownership. The documentary research and archaeological testing conducted to date, detailed in the “[History and Archaeological Research](#)” section on pages 5 to 9, confirm that a burial ground for enslaved and freed Africans existed adjacent to and on a portion of the site from as early as the 17th century and was used for new burials through at least 1810, and possibly through the 1840s. Beginning in the latter half of the 19th century, the site was home to educational facilities, including Flatbush School No. 1, later renamed Public School 90. When the proposed project was announced, this complex and important history remained largely unknown to the community. The Bedford-Church site provides an opportunity to appropriately memorialize and contextualize the Flatbush African Burial Ground’s legacy within the broader histories of New York City and the country and deliver critical community investments to the Flatbush community.

The 2021, this community engagement process for the proposed project was led by the NYC Department of Housing Preservation and Development (HPD), with support from the NYC Economic Development Corporation (NYCEDC) and the Landmarks Preservation Commission (LPC). TYTHEdesign, a mission-driven community-based consulting firm, supported the City Team in designing and leading productive community dialogues. Historical Perspectives Inc. (HPI), a cultural resources management firm, supported the City Team in conducting archaeological and descendant community research. The City Team and TYTHEdesign worked closely with community leaders appointed to the Flatbush African Burial Ground Remembrance and Redevelopment (FABGRR) Task Force, which was formed by Borough President Eric Adams and Council Member Mathieu Eugene. The Task Force played a critical role in engaging the Flatbush community to develop key priorities. These priorities are compiled in this report and serve as a record for this engagement process.

The engagement report documents a process that consisted of a series of Task Force meetings, three community workshops, a public questionnaire, two public report back events, as well as many conversations across the Flatbush community. This document:

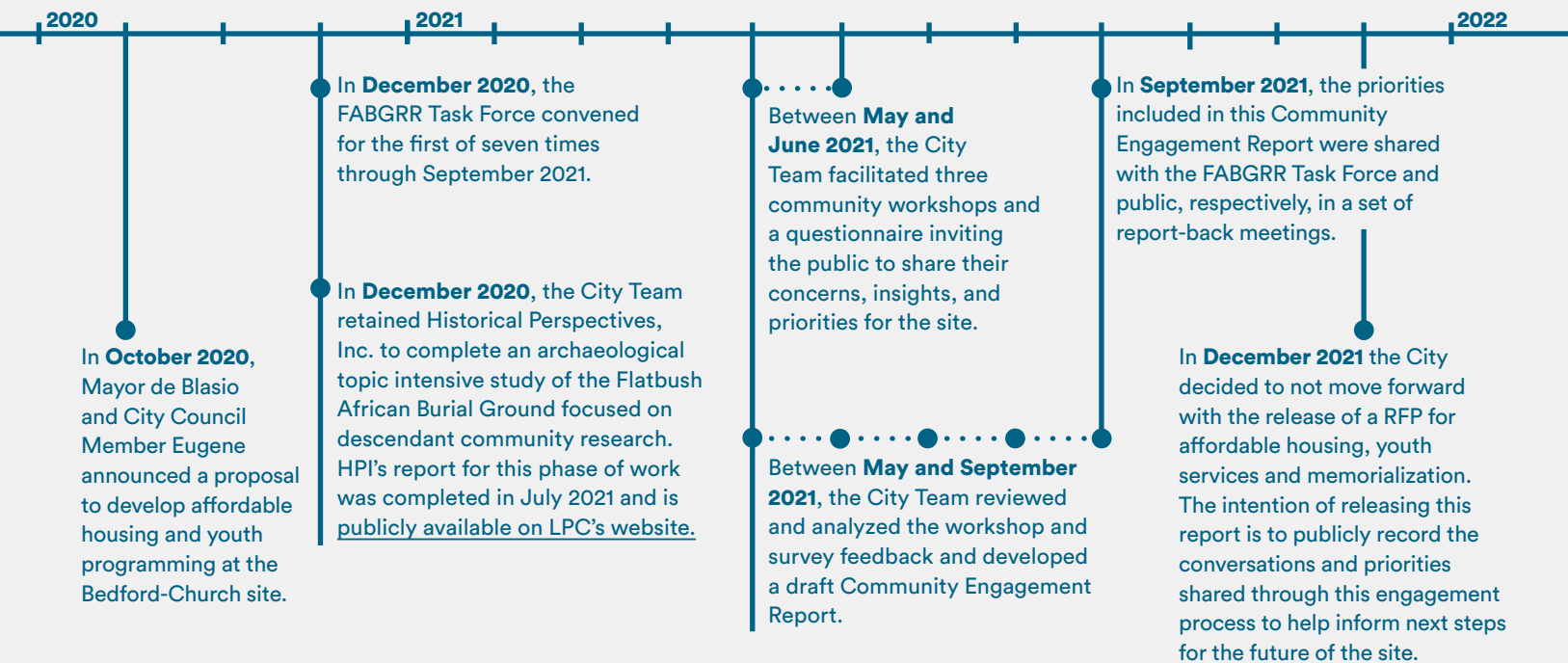
- Captures and organizes insights heard through all the various community engagements;
- Provides a starting point for planning the memorialization of the Flatbush African Burial Ground, including programming for youth and other populations, and future memorial operations and communications; and
- Serves as a precursor to future conversations among community members, elected officials and City agency officials regarding memorialization at the site and potential affordable housing, youth services and other community-serving uses at other current and future projects in the area.

THE COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT REPORT STRUCTURE

This community engagement report is organized into the following sections:

PAGE	5	History and Archaeological Research This section summarizes the history of the Flatbush African Burial Ground and the Bedford-Church site, as well as the City’s archaeological research to date.
PAGE	10	Community Engagement Process This section provides an overview of who was engaged through this process, how information was collected, and what was discussed. Additionally, this section reviews the different outreach methods used to capture as many voices and perspectives as possible from across the Flatbush community.
PAGE	19	Priorities This section presents the Flatbush community’s priorities articulated across Task Force meetings, community workshops, the community questionnaire, and public report-back events. These insights can support continued engagement with the community to determine options for the best course forward for the site and potentially help inform other projects in the area.
PAGE	40	Acknowledgements This section thanks the Flatbush community, Task Force, consultants, and all other stakeholders involved in this engagement process.

ENGAGEMENT PROCESS TIMELINE





HISTORY AND ARCHAEOLOGICAL RESEARCH

As you review this report, please keep in mind that some of the history documented can be triggering or traumatic, as it relates to the history of enslavement in Flatbush, Brooklyn, New York City, and the United States.

SUMMARY OF THE KNOWN HISTORY OF THE FLATBUSH AFRICAN BURIAL GROUND & THE BEDFORD-CHURCH SITE

Indigenous Peoples lived in the area for thousands of years. At European contact, the land the Flatbush African Burial Ground and the Bedford-Church site occupy was inhabited by the Canarsie, a band of Munsee-speaking Lenape, who are ancestors of today's Delaware Nation, Delaware Tribe of Indians, Stockbridge-Munsee Community Band of Mohicans, and the Shinnecock Nation. The area, known first as Midwout and later as Flatbush, was settled in 1651 by the Dutch as a village center for local farms.

In the colonial era, many Dutch families in Flatbush owned enslaved Africans. In 1800, between 70 and 80 percent of all Flatbush families enslaved at least one person. When enslaved people in Flatbush died, most were not permitted to be buried in the cemetery of the Flatbush Reformed Church, which was founded in 1654 and was the only church in Flatbush for a long period of time. At an unknown time as early as the 17th century after the Dutch arrived, a separate burial ground for people of African ancestry was established on land the Flatbush Reformed Church owned at what is now the intersection of what are now Church and Bedford Avenues. Historical documents establish that it was used for new burials through at least 1810, and possibly through the 1840s.

The Flatbush African Burial Ground was not depicted on early known maps of Flatbush. A 2020 discovery from The Center for Brooklyn History's archives of a land ownership map of the area made by T.G. Bergen in July 1855 "for the commissioners for assessing expenses on the opening of Flatbush Avenue" established the only currently known geographic extent of the Flatbush African Burial Ground. Geo-referencing to place the 1855 boundaries of the burial ground on a modern map, which has a high degree of accuracy, shows that it was located adjacent to and on a northeast portion of the Bedford-Church site.

Evidence shows that the burial ground may have once been larger than the 1855 mapped boundaries and extended farther west along what is Church Avenue today. The Flatbush Reformed Church's property surrounding and including the Flatbush African Burial Ground was gradually reduced in size as sections were given away, paved over for roads, or sold off.

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In 1651, Flatbush, then called Midwout, was settled by the Dutch.
In the colonial era, many Dutch families in Flatbush enslaved Africans.

In 1654, the Flatbush Reformed Church was established.



Historical documents, and especially primary source documents, that reference the Flatbush African Burial Ground are scarce and not well detailed. Records about enslaved people from the 18th and 19th centuries were scant, or often lacked personal information. The lack of records kept by Flatbush landowners reflects the gross imbalance of power at the time and was not due to poor record keeping by those who were enslaved. Instead, people in power often did not keep records relevant to enslaved peoples' lives and deaths thereby diminishing the validity of their existence. However, archaeological analysis and historical research do confirm that people of African ancestry were buried adjacent to and on a portion of the Bedford-Church site.

An 1875 article reported that human remains were discovered when the foundation for the Van Dyke house, once located at the southeast corner of the intersection of Church and Bedford Avenues mostly within the 1855 known boundaries of the burial ground, was excavated in the late 1800s. Newspaper articles from 1890 and 1904 report that human remains were discovered during separate sewer excavations on Bedford and Church Avenues, respectively, near the intersection.

Approximate Bedford-
Church site location ●

Location of Flatbush
School No. 1 ●

Approximate boundaries of the
● Flatbush African Burial Ground

At an unknown time as early as the 17th century, the Flatbush African Burial Ground was established on land owned by the Flatbush Reformed Church at the intersection of Church and Bedford Avenues, adjacent to and on a portion of the modern-day Bedford-Church site. It was used for new burials through at least **1810, and possibly through the 1840s.**

1873 Flatbush Map



Flatbush Village School, 1842-1878

HISTORY OF EDUCATION ON THE BEDFORD-CHURCH SITE

The Bedford-Church site's multi-century history is deeply rooted in promoting education in the neighborhood. The original Flatbush School No. 1 was built in the early 1840s on what is now Church Avenue just north of the modern-day Bedford-Church site. The second school building was constructed in 1878 on the Bedford-Church site and stood until 2015. The school was renamed P.S. 90 when Flatbush was annexed by Brooklyn and used as such through the mid-20th century. The building then became the Yeshiva University Boys' High School, followed by the Beth Rivkah Institute.

Following the Bedford-Church site's closure as an educational facility, the building was designated a New York City Landmark in 2007 for its architectural significance and historical significance as a major contributor to Flatbush's long and rich educational history. This status stands today, even after the school structure was demolished in 2015 due to hazardous structural conditions. Artifacts from the 18th, 19th and early 20th centuries, such as ceramics, bottles, pencil leads, inscribed slates and buttons found during excavation in 2001 were collected and curated for presentation at the nearby Erasmus Hall High School campus, and were later moved to the [NYC Archaeological Repository: the Nan A Rothschild Research Center](#).

This summary of the history of the Flatbush African Burial Ground and all but one of the images and maps on pages 6-9 draw from archaeological research conducted by Historical Perspectives, Inc. (HPI), a cultural resources management firm, on behalf of the City, its presentations at Flatbush African Burial Ground Task Force Meetings #1 and #2 in December 2020 and February 2021, its presentation at Community Workshop #1 in May 2021, and its publicly available report completed in July 2021, titled [Archaeological Topic Intensive Study to Identify the Descendant Community for the 2286 Church Avenue Site](#). More information about the report, HPI and the City's research efforts is included in the section below. Additional information about the Bedford-Church site's educational history and the image on the bottom right-hand side of page 8 are drawn from [LPC's 2007 designation](#) of former Flatbush District No. 1 School as a New York City landmark.

CITY ARCHAEOLOGICAL RESEARCH

The City's archaeological research on the Flatbush African Burial Ground and its connection to the Bedford-Church site is an ongoing and evolving process. In the early 2000s, the NYC School Construction Authority retained HPI to conduct archaeological research for a planned renovation project of the former school building, which resulted in a [Stage 1A Archaeological Assessment](#) completed in 2000. HPI then conducted further archaeological research and archaeological testing at the Bedford-Church site in 2001 for a [Stage 1B Archaeological Investigation](#).



Flatbush School No. 1 was replaced by a new building constructed within the modern-day Bedford-Church site in **1878**. The school was renamed Public School 90 when Flatbush was annexed by Brooklyn and operated as a public school until the mid-20th century.

The school building then became the Yeshiva University Boys' High School from **1954-1967**, followed by the Beth Rivkah Institute from **1968 through the 1990s**.

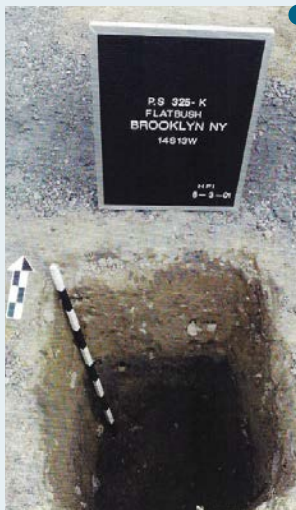
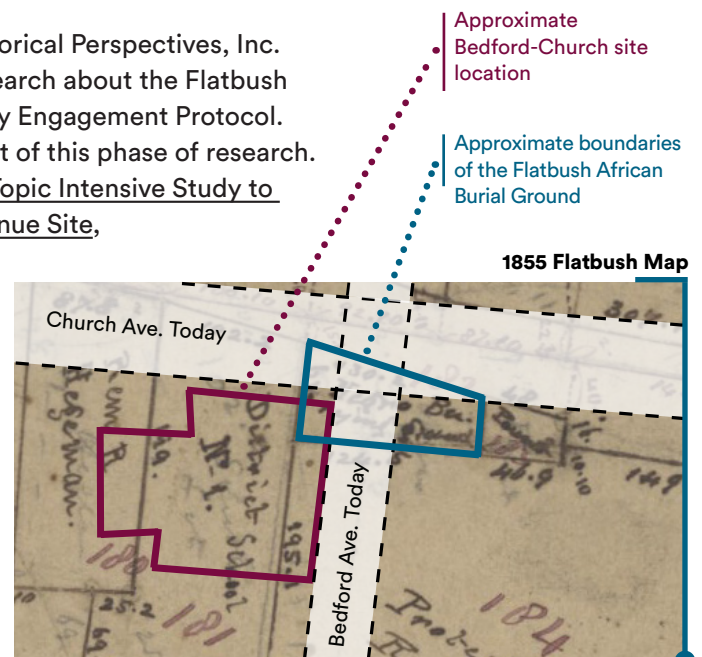


Physical evidence of the burial ground was affirmed through archaeological testing in 2001. At that time, disarticulated human remains were uncovered in the upper, disturbed layer of soil along the northern edge and northeast corner of the Bedford-Church site, aligning with the now known historical boundaries of the Flatbush African Burial Ground from the 1855 map and the evidence that it extended west. A physical anthropologist affirmed the likelihood that the human remains are of African ancestry. At the time, archaeological testing was physically limited due to the presence of the former school building, then located on a portion of the site. The human remains discovered were reburied at the Flatbush Reformed Church in their cemetery, located one block west on Flatbush Avenue.

All subsurface work has since halted at the Bedford-Church site until an Archaeological Work Plan and Unanticipated Discoveries Protocol are in place, which are regulatory documents required by the New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission to ensure that additional human remains that may be discovered in the future will be appropriately and sensitively honored. In 2019, under the direction of Council Member Mathieu Eugene and Mayor de Blasio, NYCEDC worked with HPI to develop a Community Engagement Protocol as an initial step toward advancing these regulatory documents.

Beginning in December 2020, the City Team retained Historical Perspectives, Inc. to complete archaeology and descendant community research about the Flatbush African Burial Ground, as recommended in the Community Engagement Protocol. Lineal descendants were not able to be established as part of this phase of research. HPI's report for this phase of work, titled Archaeological Topic Intensive Study to Identify Descendant Community for the 2286 Church Avenue Site, was completed in July 2021.

As is typical of archaeological research, new primary and secondary source documents become accessible over time. Research into the history of the burial ground and those buried there, including by the Descendant Community, is critical to uncovering the full history of the Flatbush African Burial Ground and is ongoing.



In **2001**, HPI, on behalf of the New York City School Construction Authority, conducted archaeological testing on the Bedford-Church site, which uncovered disarticulated fragments of human remains, likely of African ancestry and believed to be connected with the Flatbush African Burial Ground, along the northern edge and northeast corner of the Bedford-Church site.

In **2007**, the City designated the school building a New York City Landmark.

The school building was demolished in **2015** due to hazardous conditions.

In **2020**, an 1855 land ownership map was uncovered, and established, for the first time, known geographic extents of the Flatbush African Burial Ground. Its full extents likely were larger, but still remain unknown. The 1855 boundaries overlap with the northeast corner of the Bedford-Church site.



COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT PROCESS

In order to ensure that future plans for the site reflect community needs and concerns, community engagement was a core component of this process. The outreach to and engagement with community members and the FABGRR Task Force prioritized inclusion, equity, and accessibility. The engagement process was conducted to formulate recommendations and priorities that would inform an RFP for the future affordable housing and youth services project planned at the time. Through the engagement process, the community prioritized honoring and promoting knowledge of the Flatbush African Burial Ground, and the City has since decided not to release the RFP. The content below is a record of the community engagement process. For more information about the current plans for the site, review the [Preface on page 2](#).

OVER THE COURSE OF ENGAGEMENT

240+

Community Workshop
Participants

206

Questionnaire Responses

17

Task Force
Members

7

FABGRR Task
Force Meetings

5

Public Workshops
and Events

PROCESS OVERVIEW

To collect community insights while ensuring safety for all participants during the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, the FABGRR Task Force meetings and public community workshops were held virtually. Additionally, a community questionnaire was made available online and in-person from April through July 2021. After an initial analysis of the community insights, the City Team hosted two public report-back events – one online and one in-person, outdoors in Flatbush.

For community members who could not participate in these events, the City team provided workshops and educational materials online, including select materials and questionnaires in Kreyòl and Spanish. Digital and in-person communication tools were developed by the City team to enhance accessible community outreach.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT METHODS

FLATBUSH AVENUE BURIAL GROUND REMEMBRANCE AND REDEVELOPMENT TASK FORCE MEETINGS

The Task Force was composed of 17 members appointed to support the community engagement process to identify memorialization and redevelopment priorities for the Bedford-Church site. Task Force members were asked to represent their constituents and offer recommendations on memorializing the Flatbush African Burial Ground's history and on the proposed affordable housing and youth services project. (To see the full list of Task Force members, go to the [Acknowledgements section](#) in this report).

The Task Force was co-chaired by Brooklyn Borough President Eric Adams and City Council Member Mathieu Eugene, and supported by the City and consultant teams. Task Force meetings were scheduled from December 2020 to September 2021 on Wednesday evenings from 5:30-8:00 pm and were held virtually.

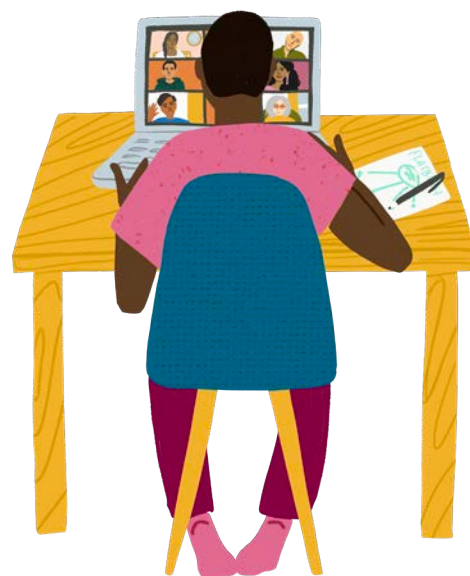
To maximize engagement opportunities and transparency, Task Force meetings were livestreamed, and recordings of the meetings, presentations, and notes were added to the [engagement process website](#).

11

On average, 11 of 17 Task Force members attended each meeting



The Task Force was represented by members of cultural organizations, local clergy, business development organizations, housing and tenant advocacy organizations, and representatives of schools, libraries, and the local Community Boards.



The following summarizes the agendas of each Task Force meeting. To learn more about each Task Force meeting, review meeting notes, recordings and slides on the [engagement process website](#).

Task Force Meeting #1: December 9, 2020

At the kickoff, Task Force members were introduced to each other and the City Team, including the consultants supporting the engagement process. Members shared their knowledge and perspective about the site and built alignment around their capacity and expectations. Historical Perspectives Inc. (HPI), a cultural resources management firm, presented an overview of the history of the Flatbush African Burial Ground and the Bedford-Church site to Task Force members. Additionally, the City team presented guidelines for productive dialogue, which were utilized in future meetings.

Task Force Meeting #2: February 1, 2021

HPI provided a more in-depth presentation about the Flatbush African Burial Ground's archeological and cultural history, as well as an overview of regulations for the sensitive handling of human remains if any are discovered on the Bedford-Church site in the future. In breakout sessions, Task Force members had smaller group dialogues around preliminary priorities for honoring those buried at or connected to the Flatbush African Burial Ground. The Task Force then began to build priorities for memorialization.

Task Force Meeting #3: February 24, 2021

As the original task force name (Former PS 90 Site) did not resonate with many Task Force members, the group collectively agreed to rename itself the Flatbush African Burial Ground Remembrance and Redevelopment Task Force. NYCEDC then provided Task Force members with different examples and best practices for memorialization from other projects. The group split into breakout room sessions to continue discussing memorialization priorities, followed by a large group discussion on the priorities and best practices for community engagement across Flatbush's two Community Districts (CD 14 and CD 17).

Task Force Meeting #4: March 22, 2021

This meeting focused on the affordable housing component of the proposed project. HPD presented an introduction to affordable housing across the city and in Flatbush in particular. Following the presentation, Task Force members split into small breakout groups to discuss priorities and considerations for the populations that could be served by the planned future site development. In addition, Task Force members identified the priorities for youth programming and what amenities could be located on the ground floor.

Task Force Meeting #5: April 12, 2021

To continue the discussion on affordable housing, the Department of City Planning (DCP) presented possible scenarios for site design and development to achieve both residential and memorialization uses. After learning about possibilities based on the site parameters, Task Force members split into breakout rooms to set priorities for the building and site design. Concluding the meeting, Task Force members discussed how to best synthesize their priorities and present them to the larger community in public workshops.

Task Force Meeting #6: July 21, 2021

This meeting followed the three community workshops and provided members with an overview of what was achieved across community engagement efforts. This included updates regarding the community questionnaire, the workshops completed, and the contents of the community engagement report to be drafted. Afterwards, the Task Force discussed its future role. A member of the Harlem African Burial Ground Task Force was invited to attend and provided insight into project development at the site of the Harlem African Burial Ground in the East Harlem community.

Task Force Meeting #7: September 1, 2021

Task Force members were provided with a comprehensive overview of the draft priorities. After Task Force members had the opportunity to provide feedback, the priorities were finalized and are included below in this community engagement report.

COMMUNITY QUESTIONNAIRE

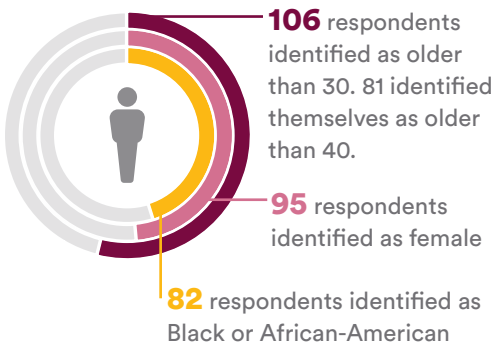
The community questionnaire provided an additional platform for the public to share insights and concerns. The City Team and Task Force were instrumental in providing both digital and hard copies of the questionnaire to the community. Paper questionnaires were available for pickup and submission at select locations in the neighborhood.



Questions focused on three areas: memorialization, the potential affordable housing development, and youth voices. Similar to the community workshops, the questionnaire was translated into Spanish and Kreyòl to boost participation and access. Additionally, youth-focused questions were incorporated into the questionnaire for respondents ages 14-21.

206 respondents completed or partially completed the 30-question questionnaire in English.

61% of respondents answered every question.



113 respondents identified as from Flatbush or a directly adjacent zip code



72 respondents identified their annual household income. Incomes ranged between \$20,000 and \$99,999



43 respondents said they rent
63 respondents stated they own their home
95 respondents did not say
5 respondents said they rented in a NYCHA building or used a voucher for rent

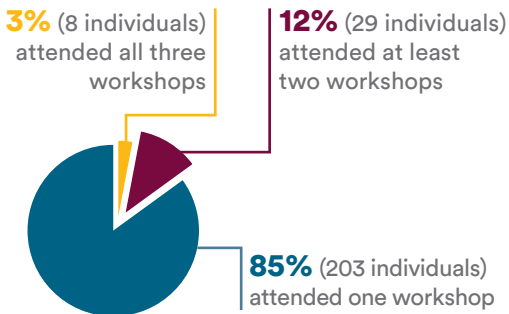
COMMUNITY WORKSHOPS

Three virtual community workshops were held to inform the public about the history of the Flatbush African Burial Ground and the Bedford-Church site and gather perspectives on memorializing the Flatbush African Burial Ground and priorities for the affordable housing and youth services project planned at the time. To ensure workshop accessibility for the surrounding community, translation services were provided in Spanish and Kreyòl.

Two public report-back events were held in early September offering the public an opportunity to provide feedback on the draft priorities included in this report. One event was held on Zoom and the second event was held in person.

The following page summarizes the agendas for the community workshops and public report-back meetings.

240+ total individuals were engaged throughout the three workshops.



Participants were not counted during the two report back events.

Community Workshop #1: May 5, 2021

Workshop participants were provided a comprehensive summary by HPI of the history of the Flatbush African Burial Ground and the Bedford-Church site, a presentation similar to what Task Force members received in Meeting #2. After the presentation, the workshop participants split into multiple breakout rooms to engage in dialogue around three key themes: honoring the Flatbush African Burial Ground, future memorialization, and sensitive handling of human remains, should they be discovered on the site in the future.

Community Workshop #2: May 22, 2021

Workshop participants received an overview of the affordable housing and youth services project planned for the site at the time. HPD presented on affordable housing basics and the context of affordable housing in Flatbush. Afterwards, workshop participants split up into breakout rooms to set priorities related to affordable housing, including the populations to be prioritized, as well as non-residential amenities that could be incorporated onto the site and ground floor. A separate breakout room for questions about the Flatbush African Burial Ground's history was offered for participants to join if they desired.

Community Workshop #3: June 25, 2021

DCP presented diagrams for building and site design for the project planned at the time, including specific considerations for the Bedford-Church site. The participants then were split into breakout rooms, where they had in-depth discussions about the options for incorporating open space and memorialization into the site plan and building design. They also talked about how these considerations align with affordable housing and how a future building's design could relate to neighboring buildings. A separate breakout room for questions about the Flatbush African Burial Ground's history was offered for participants to join if they desired.

Public Report Back Events: September 9th & 11th, 2021

HPD hosted two public report-back events for the Flatbush community to collectively learn about the priorities included in the draft community engagement report. One event was held on Zoom on September 9, 2021 and the second event was held outdoors, in person in Flatbush on September 11, 2021. At both events, HPD staff guided the participants in small groups through the draft priorities and gathered feedback. Additionally, HPD spent time addressing questions and concerns related to the report draft and future RFP process planned at the time. The insights support the ordering of the priorities and additional feedback to refine the community engagement report.



COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT LIMITATIONS

COVID-19 pandemic

The proposed project was announced during the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, requiring the engagement process to be conducted primarily on a digital platform. While working on Zoom guaranteed a safer way to engage, it also had limitations. Working in this context also presented limitations to how the Task Force and community connected with the physical site, since City-led in-person engagements on or near the site were not considered feasible or safe. More importantly, the pandemic presented a significant hardship to Flatbush residents. Participants frequently discussed how the pandemic has exacerbated economic and housing insecurity for many community members, further perpetuating the neighborhood's affordability crisis.

Digital divide

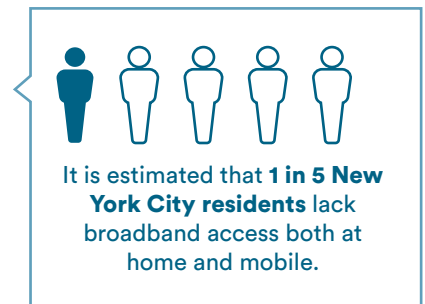
Task Force members shared that many individuals in the neighborhood lack access to broadband internet, smartphones or other tools that would support virtually engaging in this process. Although the City team provided a variety of engagement platforms and opportunities, the digital divide certainly impacted community participation.

Limited participation from youth

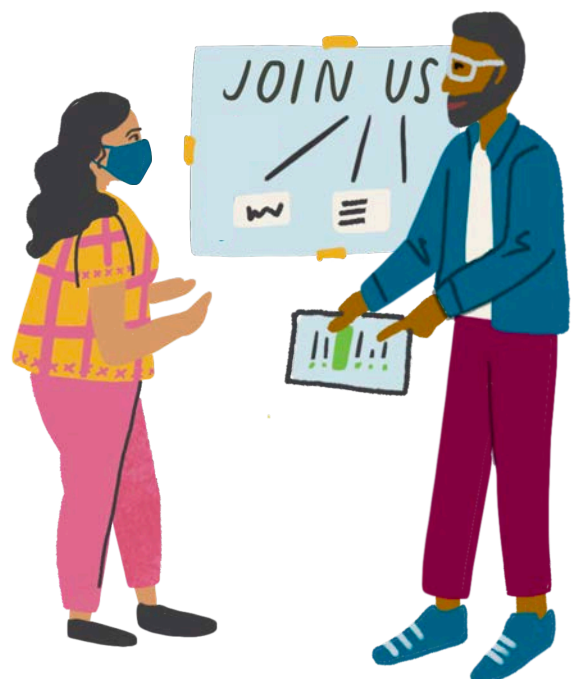
As a key component of the planned redevelopment project included youth programming, hearing from youth became a high priority in the engagement process, with the City team reaching out to as many young community members as possible to gain their perspectives and ideas for memorialization and site development. Youth were invited to the community workshops, but the workshops took place at the end of the school year, a busy time for students and their families. To address this, the City team specifically customized a component of the community questionnaire for youth respondents. Unfortunately, both attempts at engagement resulted in low youth participation.

Reaching non-English speakers

Acknowledging the diversity of the neighborhood, the City team prioritized translating all materials and engagements related to the process into Spanish and Kreyòl based on feedback from the Task Force and other community partners. In addition, the community workshops offered live interpretation of presentations and live translation in breakout rooms in these two languages. Even with these efforts, the City team still faced limitations in reaching community members who do not speak English. The engagement process timeline, in addition to the COVID-19 pandemic, likely contributed to this gap.



New York City Master Plan
<https://www1.nyc.gov/assets/cto/#/project/internet-master-plan>



OUTREACH METHODOLOGIES

A multi-pronged approach was taken to engage Flatbush community members. Outreach and engagement about the proposed project and history of the Flatbush African Burial Ground and the Bedford-Church site were conducted by the City Team and by the FABGRR Task Force members. HPD took primary lead on outreach to the community with support from NYCEDC. The main goals of the outreach included:

- **Task Force Engagement:** outreach efforts focused on onboarding Task Force members through individual meetings and encouraging them to connect with their constituents about the engagement process. These individuals were identified by the co-chairs and City Team as being representatives from organizations that serve the Flatbush community in a variety of ways.
- **Awareness Building:** as this was the first time many in the Flatbush neighborhood were hearing about the Flatbush African Burial Ground's history, the City team's efforts focused on building the community's knowledge of the history of the Flatbush African Burial Ground and the Bedford-Church site, as well as informing the community of the City's proposed plan to build affordable housing, youth programming and memorialization features at the site.
- **Community Engagement:** outreach efforts focused on promoting ways for community members to become involved in the process, including watching livestreams of Task Force meetings, participating in the community workshops, flyering at the location to raise awareness about the community engagement opportunities, and filling out the community questionnaire.

All communication materials, including flyers, social media, and the questionnaire were developed in three languages: English, Spanish and Kreyol. The information below highlights the efforts of the City Team and the FABGRR Task Force to inform the community on the engagement process and encourage participation.

FLYERS AND BANNERS: Flyers and banners included information about the history of the Flatbush African Burial Ground and upcoming engagement opportunities. The City Team and Task Force members distributed them both digitally and in print, posting them at the site and at major hubs throughout the neighborhood.

City Team Outreach Efforts

HPD distributed printed flyers at events, to community partners, health clinics, and churches in the area. They also posted flyers at local storefronts and banners at the Bedford-Church site. Digital flyers were posted on the HPD website and the engagement process website.

HPD performed **six in-person flyering events** at the site and throughout the Flatbush neighborhood, letting people know about the proposed project and about public meetings.

Task Force members shared the flyers through their websites and shared directly with their community and clients. Flyers were distributed to:

- Libraries in the surrounding neighborhoods
- Tabling at neighborhood parks
- Borough President's website and community calendars
- Churches & pantry packages
- Health Clinics
- Storefronts



Task Force Outreach Efforts

WORD-OF-MOUTH: The City Team and Task Force members shared information with their networks through conversations, direct email correspondence and distributing flyers throughout the neighborhood. Word-of-mouth outreach leveraged existing relationships to spread information.

The City Team utilized word-of-mouth through direct conversations and phone calls with individual community members, Task Force members, local religious groups and offices of local elected officials.



Task Force members utilized their networks to share information about community engagement opportunities, receiving support to distribute flyers and information directly with community members and partners. Cultural organizations, block associations, tenant groups and community/business development organizations received information from members through their word-of-mouth efforts.



30 of the 118 paper questionnaire respondents indicated that they are part of St. Paul's Church in the Village of Flatbush.

SOCIAL MEDIA AND NEWSLETTERS: The City Team and Task Force members leveraged existing networks by connecting through their social media and email lists. This differs from word-of-mouth as messages are posted publicly, not directly to an individual.

The City Team shared information about social media. In addition, targeted ads for each community workshop were utilized in local zip codes of Flatbush (11226) and East Flatbush (11203). The social media promotion's combined reach was:

- Over **100,000 social media** impressions and **5,160 views on Facebook**.
- Over **990 discrete user actions** (click throughs, retweets, likes) across Instagram, Facebook and Twitter.

Task Force members utilized their organization's social media platforms and newsletters to share information about the upcoming meeting, workshops, and questionnaire. Social media was not utilized as much for knowledge-building around the Flatbush African Burial Ground's history. The social media promotion's combined reach was:

- **Over 70,000 social media followers.**
- Newsletters distribution reached over **4,700 individuals.**

COMMUNITY MEETINGS: City Team and Task Force members utilized opportunities to share information with a wider audience by presenting at in-person and virtual meetings like community board events and cultural organization networking meetings.

HPD presented information about the proposed project, the process and community engagement opportunities at various meetings including at Community Board meetings, to elected officials or representatives, and to housing organizations, BIDs and cultural organizations. Additionally, HPD presented information about the Bedford-Church site and engagement process at Community District 14's Youth Summit.

Many Task Force members shared information about the proposed project at public or community meetings. Cultural organizations shared information about the proposed project to further engage with their community around issues related to African burial grounds.



ENGAGEMENT PROCESS WEBSITE: The City team hosted and updated an [engagement process website](http://nyc.gov/fabg) (<http://nyc.gov/fabg>) which included key information about the site, recordings of meetings, and upcoming engagement opportunities.

CONCERNS REGARDING THE PROCESS

The Bedford-Church site is unique, with a complex and sobering history in connection with the Flatbush African Burial Ground. Both Task Force and community members raised a variety of concerns regarding the City Team's engagement process to determine priorities for the planned affordable housing and youth services project. These concerns helped inform the City's decision not to release the RFP (please see the [Preface on page 2](#) for more information). The following introduces the themes heard regarding these concerns related to this community engagement process:

Insufficient community input

Many community members expressed frustration that the Mayor and Council Member announced proposed plans to develop housing and youth services on the site without conducting public engagement first. These participants felt this decision lacked transparency and fostered mistrust for the engagement process because they were not given the opportunity to voice their objection to the development of housing at the outset. Additionally, several participants expressed that many residents in the neighborhood remain unaware of the site's connection to the Flatbush African Burial Ground, and the proposed plan for future development at the site. Participants articulated that this in particular hurts the Black community as historically inadequate engagement has prevented community members from shaping the development decisions that impact them most.

"I feel like we missed an opportunity here... what I see here is something that has been pre-decided, and is not necessarily very democratic."

Insufficient time for the engagement process

Participants voiced that the timeline allocated for this engagement process was insufficient, not allowing enough time to reflect, process, and prioritize the Flatbush African Burial Ground's historical significance. From the outset of the engagement, participants shared that the Flatbush African Burial Ground and connection with the Bedford-Church site is traumatic and triggering to learn about, especially for members of the Black community. Many participants felt that the time deficiencies in community engagement would further exacerbate that trauma and desecration of the Flatbush African Burial Ground. Many felt the process was rushed and not inclusive of most Flatbush residents' voices. Task Force members and community members attending the report-back events expressed that too few community residents were reached and that more outreach is necessary for the community to make an informed decision about the development.

Separating the memorialization and affordable housing dialogue

In the report-back events, community members brought up how they felt that the topics of memorialization and affordable housing were compartmentalized rather than planned as complements to each other. Task Force members remained apprehensive as to whether both memorialization and affordable housing could be achieved on the site in a way that is both respectful to the vision for memorialization, while also meeting the community's needs.

COMMUNITY ORGANIZING AND ACTIVISM AROUND SITE

In response to concerns surrounding the proposed project, some members of the Flatbush community gathered regularly to challenge the redevelopment plans because of the site's relationship with the Flatbush African Burial Ground. Simultaneous to the engagement process timeline, different organizing groups hosted site cleanings, history walking tours, protests and rallies, and circulated petitions for the City to halt the development process. Their mobilization demonstrates strong community organizing power in Flatbush and contributed to the City's decision not to release the RFP for affordable housing, youth services and memorialization.



PRIORITIES

The following sections detail community priorities as articulated during the nine-month community engagement process. The priorities, including those regarding memorialization, were formulated for the primary purpose of informing prospective development teams responding to the planned affordable housing, youth services and memorialization RFP of the community's needs and vision for development of the site. As the City has since decided not to release the RFP, (please see the [Preface on page 2](#) for more information), the priorities below are a record of the community's perspectives. These can serve as a starting point for future conversations among all stakeholders regarding memorialization at the site, and for other projects within the area with affordable housing, youth services, and other community-serving uses.

CONCERNS REGARDING THE PROPOSED PROJECT

Throughout the process, many participants - both on the Task Force and from the community - raised a variety of concerns regarding the City's proposed development on the site. These concerns, among other factors, informed the City's decision not to release the planned RFP for affordable housing, youth services and memorialization. Although participants were not always in agreement, the areas of concern listed below were heard during all community engagement activities:

Do not build anything

Some participants expressed that the site should remain undisturbed or undeveloped. They felt that any development on the site would be disrespectful towards their ancestors, especially if more human remains might be discovered. Given this perspective, these participants provided little feedback or comments regarding building design possibilities making statements such as 'this was premature,' 'this assumes a building,' and 'this is inappropriate.' Whereas some participants at the community workshops and public report-back events declared that no building or construction should take place at all (no disturbance of the soil), some participants would prefer the site be cleaned up, with minimal disturbance of the soil, and slated for a park or community garden, without any building construction. Some wanted to explore minimal structures, such as decorative fencing, to allow for the space to be a community gathering place.

**Educate.
Do not build
over. Respect and love
Black lives.**

Do not build housing here

While many participants indicated that some form of development may be appropriate, a housing development would not be, regardless of the need for affordable housing in the neighborhood. Additionally, participants voiced that allowing an affordable housing entity to profit from building at an ancestral burial ground would be inappropriate. During the workshops and in the report-back meeting participants cited a lack of publicly-accessible

open space in this neighborhood, and several community members urged the City to pursue community-led options for open space and other uses. Some participants stated that a museum that connects directly to the history of the Flatbush African Burial Ground and the Bedford-Church site and helps bring the community together would be appropriate for this site. In addition, others at the public report-back events expressed their interest in the development of a community center, learning center, or even a large-scale memorial, as long as the site is not built as housing of any kind. Many also shared the sentiment that discussing building design possibilities for a building that assumes housing was inappropriate.

"If you want to have a building, it should be for history and learning about the enslaved Africans' lives and the indigenous people that were forced out. No housing."

There is historic trauma that threads from the time people were enslaved here in Brooklyn until this very day. The trauma today manifests as disenfranchisement and inequities that are often not acknowledged or solved for in community development in NYC... Let's make sure this community input process and RFP process is fair and results in a space culturally relevant and financially supported for the long term.

Perpetuating systemic inequality

Many participants throughout community engagement made clear how housing development and other planning practices in this city have a clear linkage to disenfranchisement, systemic racism in housing policy, historical and intergenerational trauma. They expressed having reservations about this proposed project not centering the local Black community and their needs. As such, there is a concern that this development could be triggering and further exacerbate the obstacles and marginalization experienced by the Black community.

Affordable for whom?

Many participants expressed doubts that this proposed project would include housing that is affordable for this specific neighborhood. Throughout the process participants shared the concern that not enough of the affordable housing financed is available to those who have the lowest incomes. Participants also stated that there is a perceived disconnect between the intentions of the proposed project and its ability to meet the actual housing insecurity of current residents.

“People without housing security need truly affordable housing. This can be hard to determine by economic/income groups.”

VISION FOR HONORING THE FLATBUSH AFRICAN BURIAL GROUND'S HISTORY

This set of priorities answers: What is the participants' vision for honoring the Flatbush African Burial Ground?

These priorities articulate a vision for honoring the historical connection between the Flatbush African Burial Ground and the Bedford-Church site. During the community engagement process, these insights were discussed in the context of the planned project and a potential building to be constructed on the site. Irrespective of the building's status, participants primarily discussed the importance of honoring the Flatbush African Burial Ground as well as honoring the history of Indigenous peoples in the area and the site's historic location of an important school building. These priorities can be used as a starting point for future conversations and engagement in the community to help shape future memorialization.

PRIORITY #1:

Honor those interred with reverence and respect.

For some participants, respect means not developing a building. For others, it means focusing on developing a memorial. However, a shared understanding exists across participants that demonstrating respect for those being honored is essential.

Participants prioritized the need to appropriately honor, memorialize and mark the significance of the complex history of the Flatbush African Burial Ground and the Bedford-Church site. They emphasized that honoring needs to be done with patience and reverence as the historical context is traumatic. As a sign of reverence and respect, many insisted that the future memorial be preserved in perpetuity, regardless of any changes in the future.

Task Force members also believe in the importance of acknowledging the history and contributions of all of those who were buried at the Flatbush African Burial Ground, and how those narratives tie back to the history of Flatbush at large. This includes the history connected to enslaved Africans, but also the evolution of the site and its historical connection to education.

WHAT WE HEARD

Participants believe reverence can be demonstrated in a variety of ways, including educational markers, engagement opportunities, or through thoughtful site and building design.

At the public report back event, participants brought up the idea of renaming the streets at the intersections of Bedford and Church to the names of those known to have been buried at the Flatbush African Burial Ground.

“The site should make explicit and intentional connections to the descendants of the African diaspora through education, workshops, and public events.”

PRIORITIZE A BLACK-LED DEVELOPMENT TEAM FOR MEMORIALIZATION

Participants, especially in the public report-back event, articulated that the memorial design--and any future building on the site-- should be led by Black designers, archaeologists, or architects. Doing so would ensure that the Black community is represented and celebrated.

PRIORITY #2:

This site’s history and its connection to the Flatbush African Burial Ground should spark a larger conversation and ongoing education about the legacy of slavery across the city, state, and nation.

Participants voiced that they would like to see the site become part of citywide, state, and national conversations about honoring desecrated African burial grounds, and that this site could be a model for others. Many indicated that this is a great opportunity to reflect and educate neighbors on this rich history rarely brought to light. This education could include further engaging with local schools including this history in school curriculums.

Participants see this as an opportunity to disrupt the narrative told about enslaved Africans, particularly for youth, shifting the tone of education from shame to one of pride and resilience. Participants believe that memorialization should have components that focus on justice, activation, and reparations.

Participants believe increased engagement is a key priority in fully honoring the history of the Flatbush African Burial Ground and the Bedford-Church site. They brought up how many in the neighborhood are part of the African diaspora. They voiced that history and current context must be acknowledged, especially as communities of color have historically been excluded from important land use processes and decisions.

PRIORITY #3:

Research should continue about the Flatbush African Burial Ground and the Bedford-Church site, and those histories should be preserved.

As another way to honor the site’s connection to the Flatbush African Burial Ground, workshop participants articulated that research should not stop. Research on the free and enslaved Africans buried at the Flatbush African Burial Ground and the history of the Bedford-Church site should continue beyond the immediate development.

Task Force members said that ongoing and long-term research and analysis of historical archives related to the Flatbush African Burial Ground and the Bedford-Church site should be an inclusive community effort in order to ensure the people who were buried at the Flatbush African Burial Ground are remembered and that the public knows about their history.

WHAT WE HEARD

Participants cited they have a concern that the City will erect a memorial that will ‘whitewash’ the significance of the Flatbush African Burial Ground. They voiced that it is of utmost importance to tell a comprehensive truth of the lived histories of African people enslaved in New York City.

Including Indigenous History
According to the questionnaire respondents, because both indigenous peoples and peoples across the African diaspora have been historically disenfranchised and marginalized, they both should now be honored through memorialization.



“The memorialization should catch someone’s interest and build their curiosity. Site history should acknowledge and educate on the history of enslaved Africans and their contributions to Flatbush.”

WHAT WE HEARD

Community members at the public report-back meetings additionally expressed the importance of completing research about the Flatbush African Burial Ground and the Bedford-Church site, especially related to the burial ground boundaries, prior to beginning any redevelopment.

SENSITIVE HANDLING OF HUMAN REMAINS

This set of priorities answers: What are the expectations regarding the sensitive handling of human remains, if found in the future?

The priorities that follow in this section clarify the community's preferences for the sensitive handling of any future human remains found on the site, that will honor and demonstrate reverence for those buried at the Flatbush African Burial Ground. During the community engagement process, Task Force members and workshop participants discussed the importance of an ethical, respectful and appropriate process for the treatment of any human remains discovered, including how and where they should be interred and honored.

PROTOCOL FOR THE SENSITIVE TREATMENT OF HUMAN REMAINS

Before any development on the site begins for either the memorial, other open space or a building, an archaeological work plan and protocol for the sensitive and respectful handling of any human remains that may be found in the future will be created and then reviewed and approved by the Landmarks Preservation Commission (LPC). This protocol will set out who should be contacted, what sort of ceremonies should be conducted, what sort of testing or analysis should happen, and where and how human remains should be reburied. The priorities listed in this section will further support this protocol and identify who should be consulted through the process moving forward. The plan will ensure that future work would be halted if human remains are discovered during future work at the site and construction activity would pause until requirements of the plan are fulfilled to ensure for sensitive and respectful treatment.

PRIORITY #1:

Human remains should be interred back on the site to respect those buried there.

Many ideas were presented, but a vast majority of participants identified interest in reburial on the site. Many felt that reburial of any human remains found on the site in the future brings respect to the site and preserves the legacy and sacredness of the burial ground and of those who were buried there. Many ideas were discussed by participants, including whether the human remains can be left undisturbed. In any case, if human remains must be disturbed, they should be reburied close to where they were discovered on the site.

Some workshop participants discussed the possibility of repatriation to West Africa, through DNA testing discovery that could source the location of where those buried at the Flatbush African Burial Ground originally came from. As passionate as many participants were, there was also a shared acknowledgement, especially among Task Force members, of the challenges with repatriation to West Africa-- DNA analysis may not be able to reveal sufficient information to determine a specific and appropriate location for repatriation.

WHAT WE HEARD

Many participants in the public report-back events wanted to see the site remain undisturbed out of respect and honor to the people formerly buried there and their ancestors.

“ I don't understand why [the human remains] should be moved. This is where they were buried. I think it comes back to respect again...we're just not doing justice to these [human] remains...”

IMPORTANCE OF REBURIAL

Participants at the report-back events expressed concern about moving human remains discovered in the future to the nearby Flatbush Dutch Reformed Church, as the human remains found in 2001 were, and said that it would add another layer of separation, and would further perpetuate the legacy of displacement of people of African ancestry. The Flatbush African Burial Ground was established because most Africans were not allowed to be buried at the Dutch Reformed Church's cemetery and likely other area cemeteries, further perpetuating a system of racism.

PRIORITY #2:

Honor human remains that may be discovered in the future with traditional ceremonies that invite the whole community to pay reverence.

Participants recommended honoring any human remains discovered in the future with traditional ceremonies and cultural rituals that can provide a deeper opportunity for reverence and celebrate the connection between this site's history with the Flatbush African Burial Ground and the diverse cultures that currently thrive in Flatbush.

Workshop participants recommended that ceremonies should be open to the entire community to pay its respect and understand the history of the Flatbush African Burial Ground and the Bedford-Church site, and their context in Flatbush. Task Force members expressed the importance of building relationships with cultural leaders and institutions of the African diaspora to help lead this effort and ensure cultural sensitivity of such ceremonies.

WHAT WE HEARD

“...Is there some type of spiritual cohort on deck to be able to do multiple prayers? Because we know that is who we are, we are this spectrum of all these different groups that came together by force....”

CONSIDERING DNA TESTING

For many participants DNA testing was brought up as a way to honor the legacy and history of the enslaved Africans connected to the burial ground. DNA testing can help confirm history that has too often been erased and help to tell the story of those enslaved and freed.

Ongoing research is a critical priority for participants. They indicated that DNA testing can support further education and build awareness across the community around those buried at the Flatbush African Burial Ground, their role within the larger Flatbush community, as well as education and impact of the transatlantic slave trade in the city's history. Task Force members cited how DNA testing can also link any human remains found in the future to descendants who possibly could be traced today. Testing could help to build upon existing historical records, and glean perspective into the lives, genders, geographic regions, and experiences of those buried here.

DNA testing of skeletal material from archaeological sites is a relatively new methodology that can indicate ancestry and the biological sex of the deceased, and provide sufficient information to link the deceased to their modern descendants. While the test destroys the sample material that is used, the methodology is continuing to improve and reduce the amount of material needed to make these conclusions.

Although there was consensus on the value of the information DNA testing could provide, many participants in the report-back event expressed strong concerns about damaging any human remains found in the future. Those who emphasized leaving the site undisturbed did not see the value in disturbing any human remains that may be located on the site for the purposes of DNA testing.

Due to the lack of consensus on this topic, further discussion should continue with the Flatbush community, including the Descendant Community (described on page 26), to determine the best course of action if human remains are discovered on the site in the future.

RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE TASK FORCE, THE CITY AND COMMUNITY

This set of priorities answers: How should the proposed project stakeholders continue to engage the community?

This section presents priorities the FABGRR Task Force identified for its ongoing role in the site's future development. The Task Force emphasized the importance of transparent relationships with the City and any future stakeholders, including development teams. Even though the City has decided not to release the RFP for affordable housing, youth services and memorialization, these priorities can help guide the establishment of a community-led leadership structure for shaping the site's future.

PRIORITY #1:

The Task Force should represent the Descendant Community, but in a different configuration.

Given the current lack of identified biological kin of those buried at the Flatbush African Burial Ground, Task Force members agreed that they should take on the important role of the Descendant Community – ensuring they are safeguarding the legacy, honoring the vision and respecting the history of the Flatbush African Burial Ground.

Acting as the 'Descendant Community,' the Task Force expressed that they were responsible to ensure the memorialization is not an afterthought of the proposed project and that the vision of the community is represented authentically. However, not all Task Force members identify as a part of the Descendant Community and would prefer the Descendant Community to be represented by a sub-group of Task Force members that identify as having an ancestral connection to enslaved and freed Africans.

WHAT WE HEARD

“I do think that the role of the Task Force should be broader than just thinking about the Descendant Community, but there should be a group strictly focused on making sure that the respect and honoring [of those buried at the site] is at the forefront.”

WHAT IS A DESCENDANT COMMUNITY?

The Descendant Community may comprise lineal descendants of those people buried at the Flatbush African Burial Ground and may also include people who self-identify as descendants, such as people whose ancestors were part of the African diaspora. The Descendant Community has a shared leadership role with the City and others involved regarding the following aspects of the Flatbush African Burial Ground:

- Establishing a preferred course of action for the respectful treatment, examination and reburial of human remains if found in the future
- Supporting ongoing historical research
- Establishing goals for future memorialization
- Supporting the design, location and implementation of a memorial

PRIORITY #2:

The key role of the Task Force is to engage the public and hold the City and other stakeholders accountable to what the community wants.

Task Force members want open, inclusive, ongoing, and reciprocal communication with all stakeholders. The City and any future development teams must be transparent with their process and decision-making, and ensure that community needs are being listened to.

Task Force members expressed that the City and other stakeholders must respect that this proposed project is unique. They should acknowledge the history of Flatbush, including the Flatbush African Burial Ground and those buried there, as well as the opportunities and challenges within the context of this neighborhood.

Moving forward, Task Force members agreed that they should continue to engage the community through more robust education awareness efforts, age-specific activities and celebration, to ensure a more inclusive participation and a fully transparent process.

WHAT WE HEARD

“ I think that there needs to be a real component of real action items, a very tangible, restorative justice piece. Really being innovative, and doing things different than they have been done historically... we are talking about our legacy. **”**

PRIORITY #3:

Open up the Task Force to include more perspectives.

Task Force members felt there was a lack of transparency in the selection of its members, leaving some key community stakeholders out.

Many Task Force members expressed that the membership should be more inclusive and open to diverse members representing the community.

WHAT WE HEARD

Task Force members expressed their responsibility to continually educate themselves on the different organizations and perspectives within the community.

Regardless of what [the Task Force entity calls itself], there needs to be an honest, open inclusion of everyone that is part of the community. **”**

MEMORIALIZATION

This set of priorities answers: What are the community's wishes for memorializing the Flatbush African Burial Ground's history?

This section presents priorities regarding the primary use of the memorial and its location on the site. While these suggestions were made from the lens that an affordable housing project would be built on the site, these priorities could inform the design of the memorial and aid in identifying additional partners to engage.

PRIMARY USE OF THE MEMORIAL

PRIORITY #1:


A place for education that connects with the broader city's history of enslaved Africans.

Participants believe that youth must be engaged through this memorial, and that local schools (all ages) should be connected to the proposed project to support ongoing research. Task Force members highlighted how the existence of slavery and the slave trade in the North, the Underground Railroad and other important connections between the past and present, are often not a part of formal education on the topic. Many youth community members are unaware of this local history.

As such, participants want to ensure that the memorial space is accessible to local students. It should be a free and open space that not only honors those interred but also provides students with connections to the African diaspora with a safe space to learn about their ancestors. Additionally, participants at the public report back events cited how the elders in the community should also be engaged to support memorialization, as they can help pass down ancestral and cultural traditions.

Participants understand that to support ongoing education and public dialogue, the memorial requires active programmatic development. The site can continue to engage the community to learn this history and be an exemplary case study of how to address marginalized histories for sites across the city.

WHAT WE HEARD

 **63%** of questionnaire respondents chose “the memorial as a place for education that prompts discussion about the site’s history” as one of their top three choices for memorialization.¹

52% of questionnaire respondents chose “the memorial as a place that connects to the broader NYC history of enslaved Africans” as one of their top three choices for memorialization.²

Throughout all engagement touchpoints, we heard ideas for developing school curricula and other programming ideas to support the ongoing connection of local schools to this rich local history.

“Education on the history of the site needs to be sustainable for the future and never dissipate, so that the history of this location and the history of Brooklyn are not forgotten.”

1. Questionnaire respondents did not respond to all questions. For this question, there were 141 respondents.

2. Ibid.

FUNDING FOR MEMORIALIZATION

Whereas participants in the public report back events voiced wanting to see the site prioritized for memorialization in perpetuity, they also understand that this cannot be achieved without having a sustainable funding and maintenance model in place and urged that this also be prioritized. Task Force members expressed interest in identifying an existing or creating a new non-profit organization to support ongoing education about the Flatbush African Burial Ground.

PRIORITY #2:

A place for reflection and contemplation.

Some participants imagined that the site could be a place that allows visitors to celebrate life and Black joy, while reckoning with the past to build the future. They believe that memorialization should reflect those goals.

Seating will be critical to cultivating a space where one can gather with others and pay respect to those buried at the Flatbush African Burial Ground. Participants at the public report-back events brought up how the memorial design could also provide shelter from rain and snow, to maximize use.

WHAT WE HEARD

45% of questionnaire respondents chose “the memorial as a place for reflection and contemplation” as one of their top three choices for memorialization.³

Workshop participants noted that creating a memorial space for quiet reflection could be difficult given the site’s location at the busy intersection of Bedford and Church Avenues.

3. Questionnaire respondents did not respond to all questions. For this question, there were 141 respondents.

KEY FEATURES AND DESIGN IDEAS FOR THE MEMORIAL

Participants agreed that no matter the design of the memorial, it should incorporate features that invite and engage the public. Ideas included but were not limited to lighting, murals or a permanent installation (like arches and signage) to illustrate the history of the Flatbush African Burial Ground and the Bedford-Church site.

Participants expressed the desire for the memorial to incorporate a plaque or marker for people to learn about the history of the Flatbush African Burial Ground and the Bedford-Church site. Ideas included a digital marker that could be incorporated into the building facade and viewed from the street. Questionnaire participants highlighted how bridging education and interactive technology can go hand in hand and is a way to educate youth in the community on the history of this site.

Workshop participants also noted that it should create an experience of being in a natural, unbuilt place - learning from nature would be another way of connecting and paying respect to history.

Questionnaire respondents prioritized the following **design elements**:

47% chose “a monument”.⁴

37% chose “an informational plaque”.

46% chose “garden and park landscape features”.⁵

Other features preferred by questionnaire participants included:⁶

34% programming for all ages

24% rituals and observances

21% public mural

21% seating

20% lighting



4. Questionnaire respondents did not respond to all questions. For this question, there were 143 respondents.

5. ibid.

6. ibid.

MEMORIAL LOCATION

PRIORITY #1:

Memorialization should not disturb or further desecrate the burial ground.

Participants across all engagements strongly expressed that every effort should be taken not to further desecrate the burial ground - key to achieving this is not building on the known footprint of the Flatbush African Burial Ground. Some workshop participants recognized that this conflicts with the desire to build a memorial. Many raised the concern that the burial ground may be larger than the known footprint and questioned how a development team and the City would ensure the burial ground would not be disturbed.

WHAT WE HEARD

Workshop participants identified that additional research should be continued to understand the extent of the burial ground, its interaction with a future building's footprint, and its location underneath the intersection of Bedford and Church Avenues. Participants highlighted the possibility of engaging the NYC Department of Transportation in further research.

UNKNOWN BOUNDARIES OF THE FLATBUSH AFRICAN BURIAL GROUND

Participants during the report-back events expressed concerns about knowledge of the Flatbush African Burial Ground's location and boundaries. The 1855 land ownership map uncovered in 2020 established, for the first time, a known geographic extent of the Flatbush African Burial Ground. Many expressed that the map itself may be flawed or inaccurate and should be further contextualized with the time it was created. The unknown boundaries of the Flatbush African Burial Ground and indication that the burial ground boundaries could be larger than those in the 1855 map are noted in HPI's report: [Archaeological Topic Intensive Study to Identify the Descendant Community for the 2286 Church Avenue Site](#).


PRIORITY #2:

The memorial should be visible and accessible to the community while accounting for the busy intersection.

Participants stressed that the memorial space should be visible to the community or immediately accessible from the street. Task Force members highlighted that while the space between Erasmus Hall High School and a new building could be designed to offer a quiet place for reflection, the memorial should not feel pushed to the back or hidden. The memorial should draw people in and further build awareness. People should know what was discovered at the site - it should catch their interest, and then feed their curiosity.

The memorial should be built to accommodate a high volume of foot traffic and made readily accessible. Participants thought the northeast corner of the site would be a great place for memorialization, as it would overlap with the known African Burial Ground footprint and many people walk through this area already. However, fostering the atmosphere necessary for memorialization could be difficult. Community members suggested utilizing trees or taking advantage of setbacks along the side of Erasmus Hall High School and Bedford Avenue to extend the feeling of the memorial space.

WHAT WE HEARD

 **55%** of questionnaire respondents chose "Memorial should be accessible to the public at all times of day" as one of their top priorities.⁷

Prioritized Accessibility

Some workshop participants expressed concerns that an indoor memorial could be a hindrance to those who may not feel comfortable walking into a building with multiple uses. Any memorialization must be physically and psychologically accessible and inviting.

7. Questionnaire respondents did not respond to all questions. For this question, there were 137 respondents.

BUILDING & SITE DESIGN CONSIDERATIONS

This set of priorities answers: What are the recommendations regarding the building and surrounding open space design?

This section details priorities regarding building design considerations intended to guide development teams submitting proposals specifically for the previously planned affordable housing, youth services and memorialization RFP. To support the discussions, a variety of sample building scenarios displaying different versions of the site layout based on open space, setback and building height was shared with the Task Force and in the community workshops. As the City has decided to no longer move forward with the RFP, the following priorities can help inform future conversations in determining the community’s vision for the future design and programming of the site.

A note about this set of priorities: As detailed in Concerns Regarding the Proposed Project on page 20, many participants who objected to building on this site provided little feedback or comments regarding building design possibilities.

PRIORITY #1:

Maximize open space, ensuring it is accessible and of high quality.

Participants strongly preferred maximizing quality open space regardless of the building’s design, massing or height. Open space on the site should feel welcoming and accessible so it belongs to the community as opposed to the building. It should connect to the street and draw people in while showing reverence for the history of the Flatbush African Burial Ground and the Bedford-Church site. The building should be set back from the street edge and should be placed as to not make the open space feel “like a hallway between two buildings or an oversized bus stop.”

Throughout the engagement, participants expressed that open space should be designed for multiple purposes. The space must first accomplish all the memorialization priorities, while also providing varied opportunities for how the space is used. Some also suggested that the open space could also be designed to accommodate a community garden and meet the educational needs of students at Erasmus Hall High School and other nearby schools.

WHAT WE HEARD

Questionnaire respondents chose the following as top priorities for how the space should be programmed:⁸

56%


chose “flowerbeds, trees, gardens.”

49%

chose “walking path & seating.”

42%

chose “contemplative space & site education.”



“ ... this project offers an opportunity to provide open space via a public memorial garden... This should be a model project that will become a destination by residents and visitors alike.”

8. Questionnaire respondents did not respond to all questions. For this question, there were 124 respondents.

PRIORITY #2:

Memorialization should be integrated with the site design.

Participants clearly communicated that no building should be constructed over the known footprint of the Flatbush African Burial Ground and the locations where human remains were found in 2001.

Many expressed that memorialization should incorporate design features that invite and engage those visiting and those passing by. The design should consider incorporating large markers and displays, or other innovative techniques to foster engagement such as digital features and interactive displays that use audio and offer access to Wi-Fi. The building's exterior can also be used to tell the history of the Flatbush African Burial Ground and the Bedford-Church site, using the design and materials of the façade or windows to make the memorialization aspects visible from the sidewalk and inviting to passers-by.

Participants discussed the importance of offering indoor as well as outdoor features to meet the needs for both reflective open space and indoor programming space for memorialization.

Participants called for the building's design to intentionally and aesthetically reflect memorialization elements through specific uses. Incorporating a museum space was consistently raised as an option to intentionally design towards memorialization and respecting the history of the Flatbush African Burial Ground and the Bedford-Church site. The building's design, ground floor use and open space should be flexible and adaptable cultural spaces.

WHAT WE HEARD

51% of questionnaire respondents chose “**maximize open space and memorial** - building is taller to allow for more of the site to be reserved for open space and a public memorial” as one of their top two priorities for building design.⁹

Other options for them to choose from were:

50% Contextual Design -- Building reflects the height and shape of nearby buildings.

42% Maximize Ground Floor Programming & Activation -- Building is designed to meet the streets' edge, have increased lot coverage, and ground floor with active uses.

8 Questionnaire respondents did not respond to all questions. For this question, there were 108 respondents.

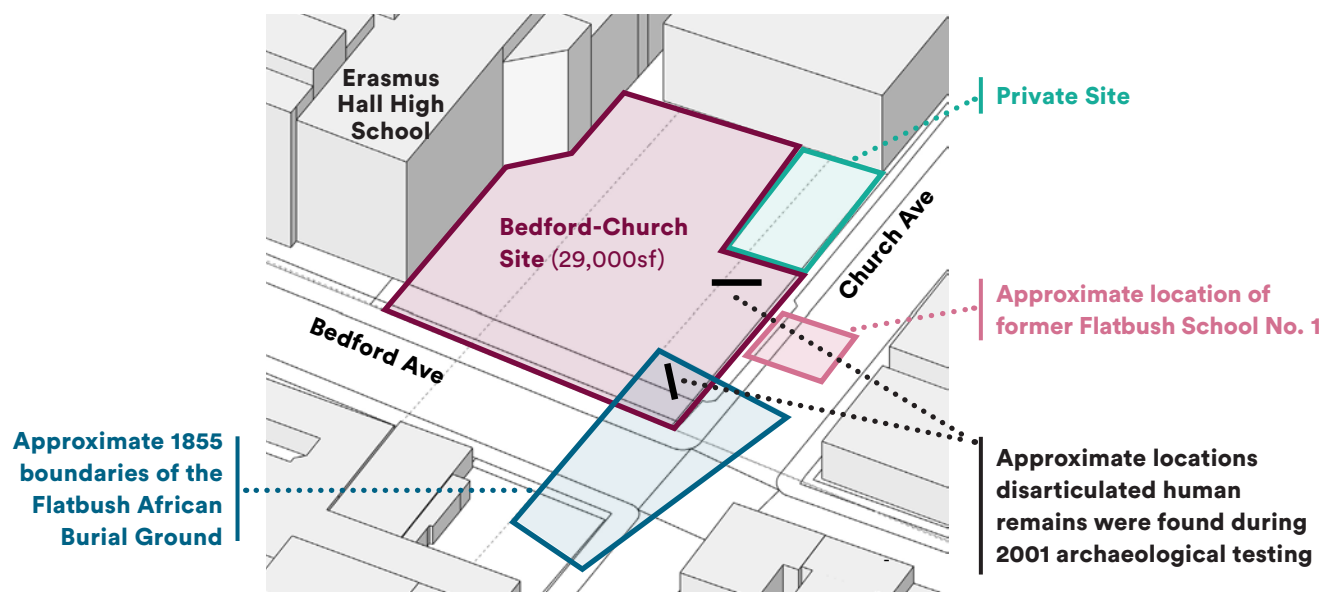


Diagram adapted from Task Force Meeting #5 and Public Workshop #3.

PRIORITY #3:
Building design should be contextual and account for the high volume of foot traffic at the intersection.

Task Force members highlighted that building design should be contextual to other buildings in the neighborhood. This sentiment was echoed in answers on the community questionnaire.

Participants stressed that the design should address the challenge of maintaining public space next to a busy intersection. Many expressed the need for features and initiatives to foster a safe, clean, and reflective open space. Safety should be balanced with a welcoming environment. This location currently struggles with litter and waste management issues. Any building wall setback from Church Avenue should consider more stringent maintenance requirements, while a setback on Bedford Avenue might require less maintenance.

OPEN SPACE AMENITIES

Questionnaire respondents highlighted these other priorities for public open space:

- Community gardening, planters, plants, and green space.
- Seating, trash receptacles, and security.
- Explore opportunities for utilizing rooftop or other areas for open space.

WHAT WE HEARD

Key areas of concern surfaced by Task Force members include:

- Potential that the building will be the tallest in the area and out of scale as the site is surrounded by much shorter buildings.
- Potential that the building height and design will have significant shadow impacts on Erasmus Hall High School and the open space on the site.
- Potential to set an unwanted precedent for future developments along the same corridor.

NON-RESIDENTIAL AMENITIES

This set of priorities answers: Which non-resident amenities can meet the needs and interests of the Flatbush community?

This section identifies the community's priorities for publicly accessible, non-residential amenities that could be located on the ground floor of the originally proposed affordable housing building, and how such amenities can connect to future memorialization. These priorities may still be relevant to this site while also informing other projects with community amenities in the area.

PRIORITY #1:


The ground floor should focus on arts and cultural programming and opportunities for community use.

Task Force members spoke of the Flatbush neighborhood as one with a thriving and vibrant arts and cultural community, yet one where artists are not sufficiently supported through institutional resources. As such, members believe that ground floor amenities should incorporate arts and cultural programming, especially during evenings and weekends. Workshop participants agreed, identifying potential ground floor rental opportunities for rental space, showcases, exhibitions, programs, and community events for local artist.


Participants indicated that by leveraging existing arts and culture resources and networks, the ground floor could become a space to celebrate African and Caribbean culture and the diversity of Flatbush. Many artists and arts organizations of Caribbean descent in the neighborhood believe that arts and culture at this site could pay respect and homage through connection to all of the African diaspora, and that a cultural space should speak to the diversity of the diaspora in Flatbush.

Participants further stated that the arts and cultural programming on the ground floor should also connect to the memorialization. Whether the ground floor becomes part of the memorial design, or through cultural programming tied to the memorialization (such as walking tours, oral histories, and storytelling), the space could encourage reflection, respite, and memory of those buried at the Flatbush African Burial Ground. Many felt a museum erected on the site could showcase artifacts and information to honor and preserve the history of the Flatbush African Burial Ground and the Bedford-Church site, while also supporting arts and culture.

WHAT WE HEARD

 **57%** of questionnaire respondents identified arts and culture as a high priority, indicating its critical role as a non-residential use.¹⁰

Workshop participants believed that arts and culture to come should mirror the cultural identities and histories in the community. Many existing cultural events could engage with the site.

“Arts and cultural programs are needed. Recognize and celebrate the robust arts and cultural landscape, and the developer can support programming to bolster this effort.” 

10. Questionnaire respondents did not respond to all questions. For this question, there were 117 respondents.

PRIORITY #2:

The ground floor should prioritize community-based programming over commercial services.

According to questionnaire respondents, community-based facilities that are locally-operated are needed overwhelmingly more than commercial businesses. Participants highlighted four key areas of need and ideas for how best to address them:

- To meet the demand for recreational space, roof space could be utilized to fill this shortage, in addition to the ground floor. The roof could be adaptable for sports, community gardening, and other activities.
- Incorporating workforce and skills development programming and opportunities is important, as many residents must leave the neighborhood to find these necessary resources to support employment.
- Participants also identified the need for senior services. Task Force members in particular highlighted that programming on the ground floor, including skills training, should be inclusive and welcoming for seniors.
- Workshop participants expressed the need for better access to healthier food. The ground floor could provide resources related to healthy food access or services providing food drives.

WHAT WE HEARD

Questionnaire respondents prioritized the following programming:¹¹

49% prioritized recreational space

34% prioritized workforce development

25% believe a need exists for young children across the community to have better access to childcare and daycare services

17% prioritized a senior center



11. Questionnaire respondents did not respond to all questions. For this question, there were 117 respondents.

YOUTH PROGRAMMING AND YOUTH SPACE

This set of priorities answers: What is the type of services and audience for the Youth Space and Programming that match the needs and interests of the community?

These priorities focus on two aspects: (1) understanding the community priorities and needs with regards to youth programming; and (2) designing a youth programming space suitable for a variety of ages. While originally intended as programming as part of the planned affordable housing, youth services and memorialization RFP, these priorities could inform other youth-focused projects in the area and/or help inform youth programming efforts that may or may not be part of the memorialization of the Flatbush African Burial Ground and the Bedford-Church site.

PRIORITY #1:

Prioritize robust youth programming accompanied by a multi-use space

Participants expressed that youth need a space to gather and foster community. This space should be multi-purpose and easily adaptable to meet youth's most pressing needs and different age audiences. Such flexible multi-use space could also serve other community needs in the off-hours.


Many strongly stated that youth programming should prioritize arts and culture, connecting to the already robust arts and cultural community in the neighborhood. This space could be utilized to host current artists and cultural groups from within the neighborhood on a rotating basis.

Discussions, including specific requests from youth respondents to the questionnaire, highlighted the importance of memorialization through youth educational programming around the history of the Flatbush African Burial Ground and the Bedford-Church site.

Participants stressed the need for programming that bridges the gap between high school and career readiness, specifically vocational or job training for coding and technology sector jobs. However, this was not a key priority of the six youth questionnaire respondents.

WHAT WE HEARD

46% of questionnaire respondents chose "multi-generational programing" as one of their top priorities for how the space could benefit the broader community.¹²

 **42%** of questionnaire respondents chose "arts and culture programs" as their top choice of types of youth services/programming they would like to see in the neighborhood.¹³

Programming tied to the Black experience in Flatbush

Participants shared their hopes that through programming, youth should have the opportunity to learn about and engage with the Flatbush African Burial Ground, the history of the Bedford-Church site and the history of Black people in Flatbush. There is an opportunity to train youth through cultural employment opportunities - they could act as ambassadors for the site. Programming could include training opportunities for young people to learn how to lead intergenerational conversations, oral histories, or walking tours.

12. Questionnaire respondents did not respond to all questions. For this question, there were 115 respondents.

13. Questionnaire respondents did not respond to all questions. For this question, there were 117 respondents.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT ON MISSING YOUTH VOICE

Throughout this process Task Force and community members articulated that much more youth community outreach must be done, as only six youths responded to the community questionnaire. Additional outreach would allow for youth voices to participate in the future of the site and vision of their community.

PRIORITY #2:

Youth programming should prioritize all ages but have an emphasis on high-school-age children.

While Task Force members stressed the importance of providing a space for all ages, they suggested focusing heavily on high-school-aged youth as they have the fewest services available to them. With the adjacency next to Erasmus Hall High School, this feels like a natural synergy between the goals of the two sites. This priority was echoed in the community workshop and the questionnaire, which also singled out special needs or youth with disabilities as another group to prioritize.

WHAT WE HEARD

In the community questionnaire, respondents chose the following as their top three audiences for the youth space:¹⁴

45% high school (age 15-18)

43% special needs or youth with disabilities

42% youth of all ages (infant-age 24)

PRIORITY #3:

The youth programming and space should leverage existing services and resources in the community.

Participants expressed that the youth space and programming should be tied to vocational and job training that connects youth to the larger community. Local skilled tradespeople, entrepreneurs, and grassroots organizers should be available to offer their experience or mentorship. Many highlighted how the break from school instruction in the summer is a major concern for this community. Programming in the space should act as a hub where residents can find employment training resources, connect with employers in the neighborhood and access opportunities such as the Summer Youth Employment Program.

WHAT WE HEARD

42% of questionnaire respondents chose “mentorship programs” as their top choice of types of youth services/programming they would like to see in the neighborhood.¹⁵



Respondents to the community questionnaire and Task Force members suggested youth programming with local cultural institutions, specifically Afro-Caribbean organizations. The neighborhood has a thriving and vibrant arts and cultural scene, but it does not receive significant institutional support. A space for rehearsals, showcases and exhibitions would offer necessary support to Caribbean culture and heritage programming.

The youth space and programming should also prioritize a multi-generational and multi-use focus. Participants expressed that programming should bring members of the community together and explore the opportunity to employ young people to teach senior residents. The space should be able to host different types of events, workshops, exhibits, and performances. Local musicians and artists of all ages need open space to create, practice and share their talents with the community.

“This Caribbean community has many generations living next to each other and the elders are very vibrant and have much to offer. There are NO youth programs - if you put them both together this would be a dynamic, progressive and healing bit of work.” ”

14. Questionnaire respondents did not respond to all questions. For this question, there were 109 respondents.

15. Questionnaire respondents did not respond to all questions. For this question, there were 115 respondents.

PRIORITIZATION OF POPULATIONS SERVED

This set of priorities answers: Which populations should be served through a possible affordable housing program at this site?

As the community engagement process focused on recommendations that would inform planned affordable housing, youth services and memorialization RFP, this section presents priorities for an affordable housing program that would meet the needs identified by the community. These priorities could be utilized to inform other City-led affordable housing projects in the area.

PRIORITY #1:

The residents of Flatbush should be prioritized for new affordable housing opportunities in the neighborhood.

Participants expressed a great need for housing for long-time residents of the neighborhood, and that the housing should be designed to serve these residents' unmet needs.

Workshop participants expressed concern about the rent burden challenges of the neighborhood, both in CD 14 and CD 17. Task Force members brought up how many people who face high rents make ends meet by doubling up in small units and sharing rent.

WHAT WE HEARD



What I am seeing and hearing is that people are being priced out of this neighborhood.”

PRIORITY #2:

Residents in the neighborhood living at the extremely low and very-low-income level should be prioritized for affordable housing

Workshop participants agreed with demographic data presented by HPD ([view data shared during workshop #2](#)) that across the neighborhood, a significant number of households, including young adults starting their lives and multi-generational families, are living at the extremely low and very-low-income bracket.

Task Force members expressed the need to offer different unit types and sizes for these populations. They felt that studios and one-bedroom units are in supply, but that anecdotally there are not enough two and three-bedroom units, which might be causing families to continue to be priced out of Flatbush.

WHAT WE HEARD



47% of questionnaire respondents prioritized “extremely low-income households” with an additional 37% prioritizing “low-income households.”¹⁶

36% of questionnaire respondents prioritized “low-income residents with special needs.”¹⁷

16. Questionnaire respondents do not respond to all questions. For this question, there were 125 respondents.

17. *ibid.*

INTEREST IN A COMMUNITY LAND TRUST

Community Land Trusts (CLTs) are nonprofit, community-based corporations that own and steward land. CLTs that acquire land to create affordable housing separate the ownership of their land from the ownership of buildings on the land, typically by entering into long-term ground leases with homeowners, mutual housing associations, cooperatives, non-profit landlords, or other entities. This type of ownership structure discourages real estate speculation and preserves the affordability of buildings as they are operated as affordable housing in accordance with the terms laid out in the ground lease.

Many participants find a CLT to be a promising model for the site. It presents an opportunity for residents, neighbors, and community residents to determine land use. Questionnaire respondents felt that a CLT could be a strategy that gives community stakeholder control. When it comes to affordable housing development, some workshop participants and Task Force members believe this model may be the most respectful of those buried at the Flatbush African Burial Ground in that it fosters stewardship and communal ownership of the land and the uses on it.

Participants at the public report-back events agreed that there should be a continued exploration of implementing a CLT model at this site.

PRIORITY #3:

Seniors should be prioritized for affordable housing.

Participants discussed that seniors make up a huge proportion of the neighborhood and are rapidly being priced out, and deserve better living conditions.

Task Force members further noted that the affordable housing development originally proposed through this project must meet the needs of seniors, as many of them are struggling to remain in the neighborhood, and often face tenant harassment.

WHAT WE HEARD

47% of questionnaire respondents prioritized “seniors and elderly households” for affordable housing on the site.¹⁸

“The seniors living in rent subsidized units have seriously . bad housing conditions and face eviction the most...”

THE OPPORTUNITY FOR HOMEOWNERSHIP

63% of questionnaire respondents prioritized homeownership over rental units.¹⁹ Participants identified the importance to preserve and increase Black co-operative homeownership and promote first-time homebuyers from the community. Task Force members stated how homeownership can foster stewardship for the development of the immediate neighborhood, encouraging those living there to maintain and care for the area. Many noted that HPD’s affordable homeownership program would require a household to have a moderate-income, whereas the community prioritizes extremely low and very-low incomes to move into future affordable housing. If the building could provide homeownership opportunities to families with lower incomes, participants would prioritize it over other types of housing.

18. Questionnaire respondents do not respond to all questions. For this question, there were 125 respondents.

19. Questionnaire respondents did not respond to all questions. For this question, there were 102 respondents.



NEXT STEPS

This report no longer serves the purpose of informing the previously planned RFP for affordable housing, youth services and memorialization at the site. However, this report can help guide conversations and planning for the future of the site. Much work remains to articulate a vision for memorialization of the Flatbush African Burial Ground together with the Flatbush community. The City looks forward to continuing the conversations and engagement process described in this report.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

THE CITY TEAM

The City Team is led by the **New York City Department of Housing Preservation and Development (HPD)** which is issuing this report. Supporting HPD were the **New York City Economic Development Corporation (NYCEDC)**, which facilitated consultant work on the Task Force engagement process and archaeological and descendant research, and the **New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission (LPC)**, which provided archaeological technical expertise.

The City Team was supported by two consultants, Historical Perspectives Inc. (HPI), which provided archaeological services, and TYTHEdesign, which provided community engagement services.

HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVES, INC.

Historical Perspectives Inc. (HPI), a cultural resources management firm, provided archaeological technical assistance during the engagement process. HPI has worked on archaeological and historical research for the Flatbush African Burial Ground and the Bedford-Church site since 2001. For this phase of work, HPI provided support through educating the Task Force and the community on the history of the Flatbush African Burial Ground and the Bedford-Church site and the protocol for the sensitive handling of human remains, as well as conducting research to identify a Descendant Community to support long-term remembrance of the Flatbush African Burial Ground. To review a copy of HPI's final report titled Archaeological Topic Intensive Study to Identify the Descendant Community for the 2286 Church Avenue Site, visit LPC's website.

TYTHEDESIGN

TYTHEdesign is a capacity-building firm that provides social impact strategies that help build the capacity of government, nonprofits, and foundations to foster healthy communities and resilient cities. TYTHEdesign uses human-centered design, design thinking methodology, collaborative engagement, and insights gleaned from community-based research to help public sector clients innovate, pilot, and scale efficient programs that create social value. The TYTHEdesign team merges interdisciplinary lenses, creative approaches grounded in experimentation, and diverse experiences, all of which make them powerfully equipped to lead community engagement and consensus-building services.

In addition, the City Team would like to extend their gratitude to the **NYC Department of City Planning (DCP)** who supported the engagement process through educating the Task Force and community members in site design considerations.

The City Team would also like to acknowledge Sharon Wilkins, from the **Harlem African Burial Ground Task Force** who presented on their experience.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT OF COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

The City Team would like to acknowledge the many community members, community organizations, and civic groups of Flatbush that engaged and supported the engagement process.

Flatbush African Burial Ground Remembrance and Redevelopment (FABGRR) Task Force

The FABGRR Task Force played an instrumental role in supporting the community engagement process and expanding the community outreach strategy deployed by the City Team. Task Force members provided thoughtful feedback and personal perspectives that contributed to the multi-layered and nuanced priorities laid out in this report, and the City Team would like to thank them for their time and dedication on the FABGRR Task Force.

Co-chairs:

- Eric Adams, Brooklyn Borough President (Co-Chair)
- Mathieu Eugene, District 40 Council Member (Co-Chair)

Task Force Members:

- Dr. Ben Talton, Author and Professor of African History, Temple University
- Dr. Carol Reneau, Community Board 17
- Chantal Eugene Desdunes, Erasmus Hall High School for Youth & Community Development
- Kathy De Meij, CAMBA
- Lauren Collins, Flatbush Ave. BID & Church Avenue BID
- Naima Oyo, Ifetayo Cultural Arts Academy
- Natiba Guy-Clement, Center for Brooklyn History at Brooklyn Public Library
- Pastor De Lafayette Awkward, Flatbush Reformed Church
- Reverend Sheldon N.N. Hamblin, St. Paul's Church in the Village of Flatbush
- Robin Redmond, Flatbush Development Corporation
- Ron Schweiger, Brooklyn Borough Historian
- Samantha Bernardine, Erasmus Hall High School for Youth and Community Development
- Shawn Campbell, Community Board 14
- Tyrone McDonald, Neighborhood Housing Services of Brooklyn CDC Inc. (NHS Brooklyn)

