

American Public Health Association 2017 Annual Meeting & Expo

Abstract 375078: Tobacco Tunnels and Commercial Corridors: A cross-sector approach to addressing tobacco density in the NYC built environment

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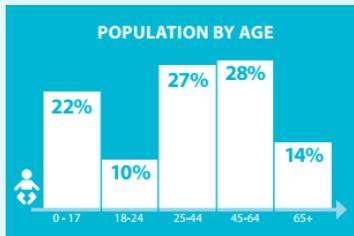
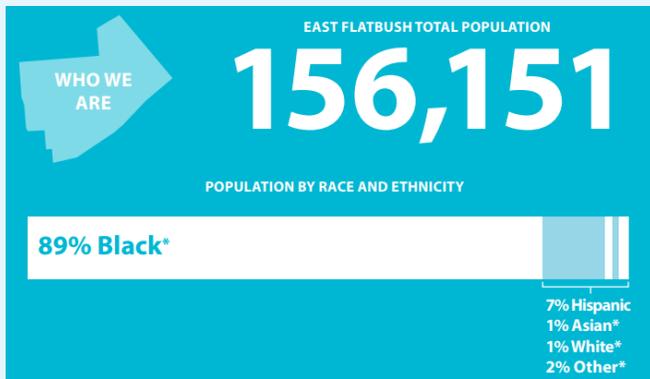
Issues: Tobacco retailer density and proliferation is one of the tobacco industry’s last avenues of marketing its products to youth and other vulnerable populations. Public health advocates consider areas highly clustered with tobacco retailers as “tobacco swamps”, abundant with deadly and addictive products. In New York City, a major metropolis with over 9,000 licensed tobacco retailers, the local health department has found higher numbers of tobacco outlets in lower-income neighborhoods. This finding presented an opportunity to take a closer snapshot of individual NYC neighborhoods to track tobacco retailer patterns in the built environment.

Description: Using 2014 NYC licensed tobacco retailer data, high school and college students mapped the tobacco outlets in their communities and near local schools, libraries, parks and recreation sites to provide a micro view of tobacco density in their individual neighborhoods.

Lessons learned: The maps revealed that within the citywide tobacco swamp, there are individual linear patterns of tobacco outlets, we termed “tobacco tunnels”, that exist along local commercial corridors. These tunnels appear along safer routes that have direct access to public transportation, attract heavy foot traffic, and have storefront tobacco advertisements, subjecting youth and other New Yorkers to tunnels of tobacco marketing on their way to and from school, work and daily errands.

Recommendations: NYC public health advocates have been encouraging neighborhood and community developers to stop tobacco retail density and proliferation in vulnerable communities by prohibiting new tobacco retail in their developments. This voluntary policy expands on the protection of New Yorkers provided by smoke-free housing and tobacco-free outdoor air policies resulting in a healthier built environment and community design.

**East Flatbush, Brooklyn
AT A GLANCE**



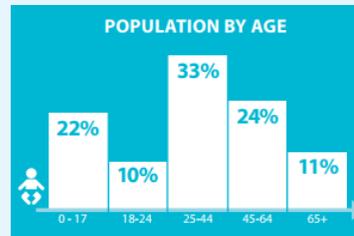
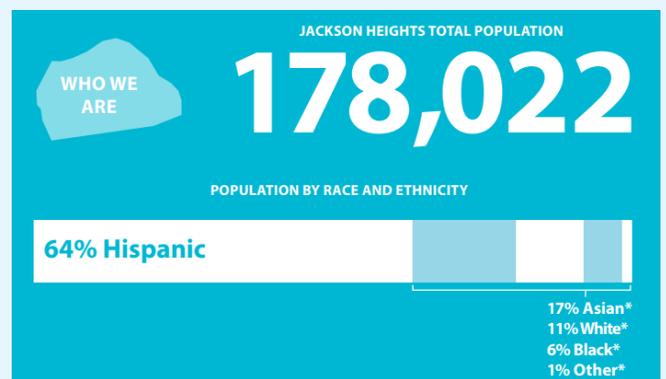
Economic stress

	East Flatbush	Best-performing community district	Brooklyn	NYC
Poverty	18% (RANKS 34 th)	6% Tottenville and Great Kills (RANKS 59 th)	24%	21%
Unemployment	12% (RANKS 20 th)	5% Greenwich Village and Soho & Financial District (RANKS 58 th)	11%	11%
Rent burden	54% (RANKS 22 nd)	37% Greenwich Village and Soho & Financial District (RANKS 58 th)	52%	51%

Poverty, unemployment and rent burden: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2011-2013; Avertible deaths: NYC DOHMH, Bureau of Vital Statistics 2008-2012

Source: King L, Hinterland K, Dragan KL, Driver CR, Harris TG, Gwynn RC, Linos N, Barbot O, Bassett MT. Community Health Profiles 2015, Brooklyn Community District 17: East Flatbush; 2015; 41(59):1-16.

**Jackson Heights, Queens
AT A GLANCE**



Economic stress

	Jackson Heights	Best-performing community district	Queens	NYC
Poverty	22% (RANKS 24 th)	6% Tottenville and Great Kills (RANKS 59 th)	16%	21%
Unemployment	8% (RANKS 43 rd)	5% Greenwich Village and Soho & Financial District (RANKS 58 th)	10%	11%
Rent burden	59% (RANKS 9 th)	37% Greenwich Village and Soho & Financial District (RANKS 58 th)	53%	51%

Poverty, unemployment and rent burden: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2011-2013; Avertible deaths: NYC DOHMH, Bureau of Vital Statistics 2008-2012

Source: King L, Hinterland K, Dragan KL, Driver CR, Harris TG, Gwynn RC, Linos N, Barbot O, Bassett MT. Community Health Profiles 2015, Queens Community District 3: Jackson Heights; 2015; 45(59):1-16.

UPDATE: On August 28, 2017, New York City Mayor Bill de Blasio signed into law a package of tobacco legislation, which included a cap on the number of tobacco retail outlets in each of the 59 community districts. This new law will reduce the number of tobacco retailers in all NYC neighborhoods. If New York City projects a similar outcome as San Francisco’s policy, it will take upwards of a decade for the 50% cap to be met in each district. Encouraging property owners to voluntarily prohibit tobacco retail in their commercial storefront space, as well as engaging BIDs, LDCs and EDCs to examine the impact of tobacco tunnels when considering their retail attraction strategy will supplement the City’s comprehensive tobacco control policy efforts and presents an additional opportunity to help protect youth and other vulnerable New Yorkers from exposure to deadly and addictive products.