

# Tobacco Tunnels and Commercial Corridors:

## A cross-sector approach to addressing tobacco density in the NYC built environment

Danielle Hosein, Edric Robinson II, MS, Patrick Kwan, Deidre Sully, MPH

### ABOUT US

- **Public Health Solutions** – as the largest public health nonprofit organization in New York City, Public Health Solutions improves health among New York City’s most vulnerable populations by tackling social, physical, and environmental factors that impact New Yorkers’ ability to thrive. Today, PHS serves 200,000+ New Yorkers annually, and we support the work of more than 200 community-based nonprofit organizations. **To learn more, please visit us at [HealthSolutions.org](http://HealthSolutions.org)**
- **NYC Smoke-Free** – a program of Public Health Solutions – works to end the devastating tobacco epidemic and protect the health of all New Yorkers through tobacco control policy, advocacy, and education.
- Tobacco use remains the #1 cause of preventable death in the United States, killing over 480,000 annually. In New York City, 12,000 residents die from a smoking-related illness every year. Our advocacy efforts serve to foster environments that support the prevention and reduction of tobacco use through the development and reinforcement of tobacco-free norms in communities throughout New York City. **For more information, please visit [NYCSmokeFree.org](http://NYCSmokeFree.org)**

**NYC Smoke-Free is an Advancing Tobacco-Free Communities (ATFC) Partner:** The New York State Department of Health, Bureau of Tobacco Control funds NYC Smoke-Free at Public Health Solutions to increase support for New York State’s tobacco-free norm through youth action and community engagement. Efforts are evidence-based, policy-driven, and cost-effective approaches that decrease youth tobacco use, motivate adult smokers to quit, and eliminate exposure to secondhand smoke.

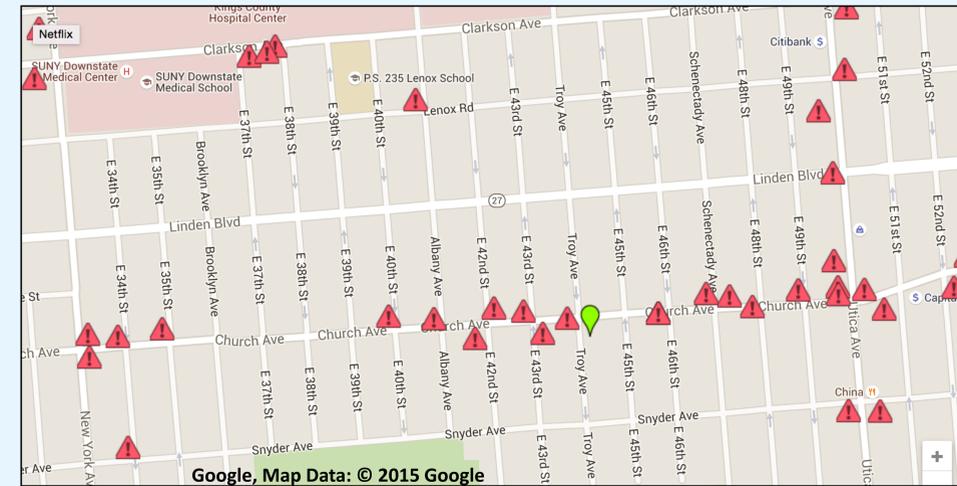
### BACKGROUND

- **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 (2014),** the local health department has found higher numbers of tobacco outlets in lower-income neighborhoods.

### ACTIVITIES

- **Using 2014 NYC cigarette retail dealer data, NYC Smoke-Free partnered with local high school students to create a series of maps that illustrate tobacco retail outlet density in their neighborhoods.**

### DENSITY MAPS



**Neighborhood:** East Flatbush, Brooklyn  
**Public Transportation:** B35 Bus Route (Church Ave), B46 Bus Route (Utica Ave)



**Neighborhood:** Jackson Heights, Queens  
**Public Transportation:** 7 Subway (Roosevelt Ave), E/M/F/R Subway (Broadway), Q66 Bus Route (Northern Blvd)

### FINDINGS

- **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.
- **“Tobacco tunnels” occur on safer, well-lit streets** that have easy access to public transportation.

### RECOMMENDATIONS

- **Encourage property owners to voluntarily prohibit tobacco retail outlets in commercial corridor storefront space.**
- **Engage Business Improvement Districts (BIDs), Local Development Corporations (LDCs), and Economic Development Corporations (EDCs)** to examine the impact of tobacco tunnels when considering their retail attraction strategy.