

Building Healthy Communities



East Harlem, also known as El Barrio, was a welcoming community to Latinos and other immigrant communities for most of the 20th century—from Italians to Puerto Ricans to Dominicans, and most recently, to Mexicans and Chinese. In the 1950s and 60s, urban renewal efforts led to a concentration of poverty in this neighborhood. East Harlem now has the second-highest concentration of public housing in the United States. Overlapping issues of poor health outcomes, high unemployment, and other social determinants of health have threatened the vibrancy of this

community. Neighborhood advocates, Harlem residents, and the Harlem District Public Health Office are working hard to improve the health of and increase opportunities for advancement for East Harlem residents.

COMMUNITY FAST FACTS

- The median income in East Harlem is \$33,500.
- 31% of residents live below the Federal Poverty Level.
- 44.2% of children live in poverty.
- The unemployment rate in East Harlem is 12%.
- The obesity rate is 33%.
- The smoking rate is 19%.
- The diabetes rate is 13%.

PROJECT GOALS

- Increase access to fresh, affordable produce (wholesale and retail);
- Enhance the physical environment to be responsive to the community's needs and conducive to a healthy lifestyle;
- Improve visibility and increase use of existing neighborhood resources for physical activity; and
- Increase income and opportunities for economic mobility for residents.

WHAT WE'VE ACHIEVED TO DATE

HEALTHY FOODS:

- Launched a Fresh Food Box program and distributed 2,269 boxes to community residents; and
- Launched a healthy restaurant program, highlighting healthy offerings and low-calorie options.

BUILT ENVIRONMENT & PHYSICAL ACTIVITY:

- Created and tested a street assessment tool for the East Harlem Community Walking Trail;
- Connected community groups to funding to activate the Walking Trail and other public spaces; and
- Organized bilingual (English and Spanish) Shape Up NYC fitness instructor trainings.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT:

- Led workshops contributing to the East Harlem Neighborhood Plan;
- Carried out MAPSCorps data collection projects to create maps of neighborhood assets to share with the community; and
- Hosted the Health in Action Community Celebration to recognize how community activation grants have improved the health of residents.

WHAT WE'RE INVESTING IN

- A cohort of residents to oversee implementation of mini-grants; and
- A coordinated neighborhood response to supermarket closings.