

South Bronx Greenway Partnership

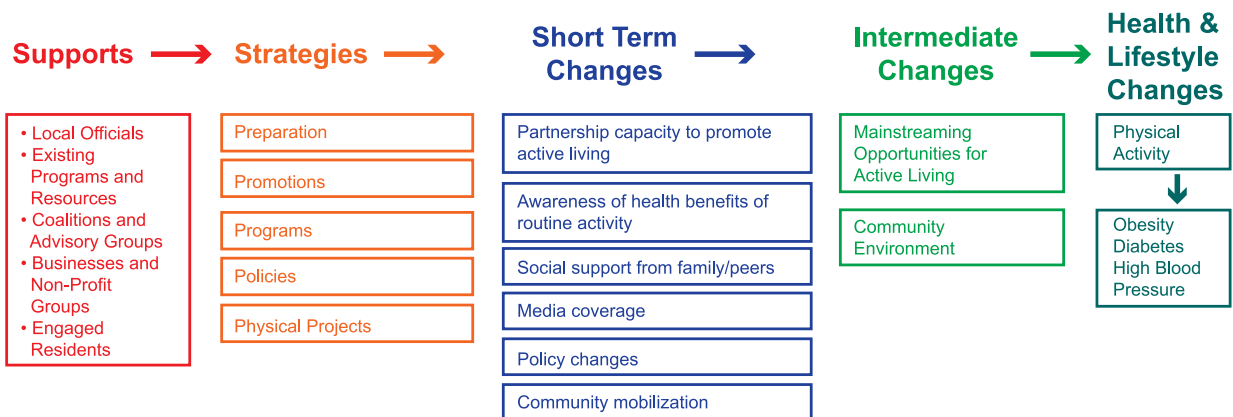
Evaluation of Active Living by Design | Bronx, New York | 2003-2008

If you look carefully, you can see a change in the South Bronx Hunts Point neighborhood. Eva, a daycare provider, collected money for and created three murals on her block as a welcoming sign of respect. Carl, a lifelong resident, talked to his neighbors and friends about the importance of trees and asked dog owners to pick up after their pets to ensure the community stays clean for his afternoon walks. An auto repair store owner and avid runner, Hipolito, took it upon himself to put up posters and flyers all around the community for a local 5K because he never had the opportunity to actually exercise in the neighborhood. Thanks to the advocacy efforts of one community partnership, the pedestrian-crossing timer at the most dangerous intersection lasts eight seconds longer. Hunts Point residents and businesspeople feel empowered to take initiative to create a more active living-friendly community.

“Active living” is a way of life that integrates physical activity into daily routines in order to accumulate at least 30 minutes of activity each day. In November 2003, Sustainable South Bronx received a five-year, \$200,000 grant as part of the Active Living by Design national program (www.activelivingbydesign.org) funded by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation. By advocating for changes in community design, specifically land use, transportation, parks, trails, and greenways, the Active Living by Design initiative intended to make it easier for people to be active in their daily routines.¹

The Active Living by Design Community Action Model provided five active living strategies to influence community change: Preparation, Promotions, Programs, Policies, and Physical Projects. The 5Ps represent a comprehensive approach to increasing physical activity through short-term, intermediate, and long-term community changes. Sustainable South Bronx reflected upon this model and adopted a simpler version that allowed its partnership to focus on designing, building, and promoting the open space in the project area while building awareness of active living and the communities’ capacity to create change.

Active Living by Design Community Action Model



Founded in 2001, Sustainable South Bronx worked to usher in infrastructure and policy changes to improve the environment in the South Bronx. Seeking an opportunity to support the effort to create open space and improve physical activity opportunities for Bronx residents, Sustainable South Bronx, at the suggestion of the Montefiore Medical Center, applied for ALbD funding.

¹ The Active Living by Design (ALbD) initiative was established by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation (RWJF) in 2001, and its National Program Office (NPO) is part of the University of North Carolina Gillings School of Global Public Health in Chapel Hill, North Carolina. Twenty-five interdisciplinary community partnerships were selected across the country to demonstrate how changing community design can impact physical activity. Transtria was funded by RWJF to work with the NPO to conduct ALbD evaluation and dissemination activities. This case report draws from Transtria’s evaluation efforts.

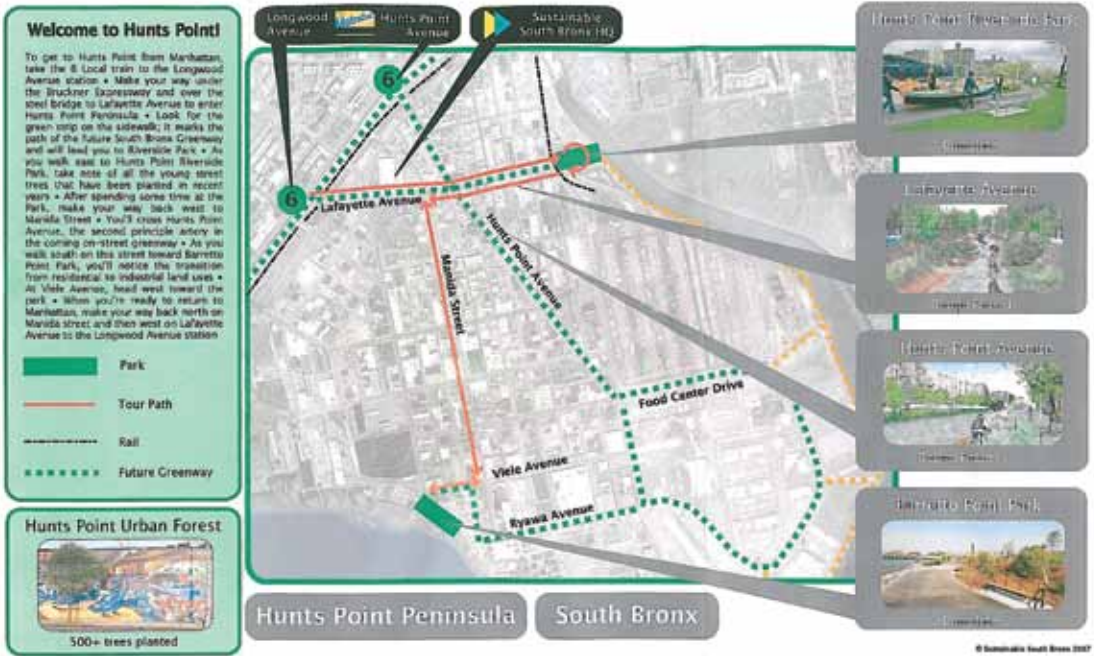
“We needed an opportunity; we’re a culture that didn’t really have any of these kind of amenities. Parks are still fairly new to communities like ours. We had the least amount of open space in New York City as far as community districts went and we knew that if people didn’t have access to [open space] they wouldn’t necessarily know how to [become active]. We knew that there would need to be public education tied up in it. So, we saw the active living grant as an opportunity to sort of bring us in line with other communities that looked at physical activity as a way to make the community healthier, and also help meet our community planning goals, because parks and greenways are an important part of that, things that have been traditionally ignored when our city and state had thought about planning our community. -Staff

The ALbD grant brought a greater level of awareness and attention to the importance of active living to Bronx organizations and residents. Although the community was already aware of the relationships between physical activity and health, the ALbD initiative brought the issue into public discussions. Political leaders and community members began to recognize the need for open space to create healthy activity and were moved to action.

“Active living funding was a great resource for an agenda that the community organizations had already conceived and developed pretty well... It isn’t that the project would not have happened but for Active Living by Design, but it was able to happen in a way that was better and richer and especially was less stressful on the organizations fundraising resources and capacity...” -Partner

South Bronx, New York

The South Bronx is located in the southwest region of the Bronx, the northernmost borough in New York City. For the ALbD grant, Sustainable South Bronx focused mainly on the neighborhoods of Hunts Point and Port Morris. The Hunts Point and Port Morris neighborhoods are part of a dense, urban district bounded by the Harlem River and the Bronx River. The district is roughly 66% Latino and 33% African American, with 33% of residents under the age of 18. From the late sixties until recent years, the community underwent a severe economic downfall brought about by many factors, including the completion of the Cross Bronx Expressway in 1963. Intended to renew the area, the Expressway displaced thousands of residents and local businesses with disastrous economic effects. Since that time, Hunts Point has been one of the poorest neighborhoods in the country with 44% of its residents living in poverty.



Both Hunts Point and Port Morris have high rates of obesity and diabetes and six times the national rate of asthma. Because of heavy industry in the neighborhoods – over 1,000 truck visits daily – it is estimated that 20% of Bronx children suffer from asthma. The combination of poverty, health issues and the surrounding environment has greatly influenced the attitude of area residents. Many blame their children’s health on their income level, which inhibits them from moving to a cleaner neighborhood.

“Parents blame themselves for not being affluent enough to get their kids out of there. ‘My kid has asthma. It’s my fault, because I can’t earn enough at my job to live in a nicer place.’” -Partner

Although crime rates have declined since their highest levels in the 1980s, the South Bronx still has the highest rates of crime and violence in New York City. Prostitution, drug use, and gang-related violence are commonplace. Many residents may feel comfortable on their block but feel unsafe outside that area, leading to a feeling of isolation.

Residents of the South Bronx have been promised many improvements over the years, and more often than not, those promises have fallen through or have turned out to negatively impact their neighborhood. Because of this past mistreatment, Sustainable South Bronx observed an environment of mistrust and detachment in the community.

“If you live in the areas like that, you are not going to care about it because it is already messed up.” -Community

“I grew up in this neighborhood and I feel like people are always running away from problems instead of solving them.” -Community

Through the leadership of Sustainable South Bronx, the South Bronx Greenway project aimed to 1) plan, design and begin construction of the South Bronx Greenway, 2) link the need for jobs among local residents to the built environment and health, 3) build community capacity to effect change, and 4) develop strong and sustainable relationships with community partners. Overall, staff and partners stressed understanding the community and its needs, creating realistic goals within the capacity of the responsible organization, and ensuring the long-term commitment of a dynamic leader.

Preparation

Partnership

In 2003, Sustainable South Bronx created the South Bronx Greenway Partnership to represent community stakeholders working for more open space, better access to the waterfront, and opportunities to address pressing public health issues. Many of the partners were already involved in environmental justice and working for open space in the South Bronx. The partnership served as a vital way to provide community perspective and conduct outreach related to the South Bronx Greenway Project.

“I don’t know if there are a lot of cities where you will find several different groups working on different pieces of that big elephant the way you do here. I think one of the ways that it is important to the success of the project is that pieces of that partnership existed before Active Living by Design and it will continue, no doubt, after ALbD is finished and signed off.” -Partner

Many of the organizations involved in the partnership had similar missions and goals and an established rapport with community residents. The organizations also had a strong reputation for collaboration rather than independent action.

“I think that also one thing that makes, perhaps, some of our organizations a little different than other nonprofits in the city is collectively all of us had a real interest and role in trying to make sure that we are involved in one of these decisions... we have really sought to have a voice in city decision-making and a role in how the community is built and how it is redeveloped... We have all collaborated and said ‘Alright. These are the ideas that we all collectively support.’” -Partner

The mission of the partnership changed considerably over the grant period. Initially, the partnership held quarterly core partnership meetings led by a steering committee and supported by working groups focused on individual programs and tasks. After a frustrating and obstacle-filled start, the partnership came to the conclusion that its original goals were beyond its capacity. The lead agency and partnership worked with the ALbD National Program Office to restructure the work plan to focus all efforts around a single project. Because the South Bronx Greenway project was a central project for Sustainable South Bronx, it became the focus of the Active Living by Design (ALbD) initiative.

In addition to regular partnership meetings, partners held community meetings and attended meetings of related organizations and projects to forge new relationships and improve collaboration. Initially, the partnership pursued relationships with public health practitioners and schools to promote active living in the area. However, these groups did not have the capacity to take on the active living agenda, in addition to their other duties, and the partnership elected to direct its resources toward more productive efforts.

“The things that did not work well for us at all were, the insistence that we link with a public health provider, not helpful. Public health folks here in this community are stressed enough. We just could not give them another thing to do; they wouldn’t do it.” -Staff

Partners, staff, and community members identified several beneficial characteristics of the South Bronx Greenway partnership:

- The partnership had a good rapport in the community due to its efforts to be consistent and follow through with commitments.
- City-wide efforts to demonstrate the link between the environment, specifically open space and health, increased residents’ understanding and, thus, their support of the partnership and its efforts.
- Relationships with a wide range of organizations and individuals helped increase the reach of the partnership.
- The lead agency learned the value of understanding its strengths and expertise and relying on other organizations to fill gaps.
- The partnership noted the importance of being aware of the larger goals of the city government and making connections where goals aligned.

“That is how you make sure that [residents] understand why it is important to have these things in any community. Make those arguments and insinuate yourself in the process, that’s really all we did. No ifs, ands, or buts about it.” -Staff

“You want to make sure that you are playing to the strengths of whatever organizations you are working with. Everybody doesn’t do everything. And, they should not be required to.” -Staff

Partners, staff, and community members also noted many challenges to creating and maintaining the South Bronx Greenway partnership:

- Early in the grant, the partnership was challenged by a lack of clarity and overall vision, which caused it to be easily sidetracked.
- The partnership found it difficult to manage and follow-up on its numerous projects and activities.
- Timeline delays and busy partner schedules had a negative impact on the progress of partnership goals.
- The lead agency lacked funding to attend to the administrative demands of the partnership.

The table below lists the partners involved in the South Bronx Greenway Project partnership.

Members of the South Bronx Greenway Project partnership	
Health	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Montefiore Medical Center • New York City Department of Health, Bronx Division
Schools	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • IS 201 Elementary School • PS 48 Elementary School • Pratt Institute
Parks & Recreation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New York City <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Department of Parks and Recreation - Hunts Point Recreation Center
Urban Design, Planning & Transportation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New York City Department of Transportation • New York State Department of Transportation • Transportation Alternatives
Community Leaders, Policy & Decision-makers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New York State Assemblyman • New York City Mayor's Office
Other Government	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New York State Department of Environmental Conservation, Region 2 • Police Athletic League
Advocacy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bronx River Alliance • Greening for Breathing • Southern Bronx River Watershed Alliance
Business	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Global Strategies Group, Inc. • Mathews Nielson Landscape Architects • New York City Economic Development Corporation • Recycle-a-Bicycle • Rocking the Boat, Inc. • Timberland
Community & Faith-based	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Boost Mobil Rock Corp • City Year New York • New York City Road Runners Foundation • Sustainable South Bronx* • The Point Community Development Corporation • Youth Ministries for Peace and Justice

*Organization that served as lead agency during the ALbD grant period

Leadership and Champions

As lead agency, Sustainable South Bronx's history of success and continued commitment to environmental justice and trust generated in the community was an asset to the partnership. Sustainable South Bronx created solidarity among residents, reducing isolation and bringing people together on common issues. Residents realized they shared common concerns and interests and trusted Sustainable South Bronx to be a powerful voice in their fight to improve living conditions in the South Bronx.

"I grew up in this neighborhood and I feel like people are always running away from problems instead of solving them... Instead of complaining about it, why don't I do something about it? And, that's why I work with Sustainable South Bronx. It's gratifying knowing that good things are happening because you grow up in a community like this and you feel like nothing is ever going to change. It just takes good people to do it. The Sustainable South Bronx is filled with good people that want to improve where they live." -Community Member

"Sustainable South Bronx was like that force that is actually giving hope and showing somebody cares about you, and now [residents] are starting to care for themselves." -Community Member

The founder and former Executive Director of Sustainable South Bronx served as Project Director for the ALbD grant and was instrumental in the success of partnership's efforts and related active living and environmental justice projects in the South Bronx area. A lifelong Hunts Point resident, the Project Director initiated and crusaded for many environmental changes to better life in the community. Her previous contributions included the development of Hunts Point Riverside Park, an electric truck bay to reduce idling truck emissions, a workplace development program for ecological restoration, and many economic development projects. The Project Director was seen as a hero and idol by many in the community.

"I think when it comes to [Project Director], she inspires. You see her do so well that she inspires you to do the same for yourself." -Community Member

Several staff positions at Sustainable South Bronx were devoted to the partnership and the South Bronx Greenway project. An Active Living by Design Coordinator, a Greenway and Sheridan Expressway Coordinator, and a Bronx Environmental Stewardship Program Coordinator all contributed to the partnership's activities in the South Bronx. The major internal challenge that existed was the turnover in lead staff. The Active Living by Design Coordinator position was filled by four different individuals, making it difficult to maintain momentum and continuity.

Funding and Resources

The majority of the ALbD funding was used to cover administrative costs of the partnership and staff wages, allowing the staff to devote more time and energy into community organizing and advocacy. Sustainable South Bronx and the partnership reached out to a number of local, state, and national funding sources to expand the resources available to support and nourish active living efforts. Financial and in-kind support came from the following sources:

- Best Point Pizza
- Bronx Overall Economic Development Corporation
- Canela Grocery
- Denham Wolf
- Development Planning
- Green for All
- Hipolito Auto Electrician
- HSBC Bank
- Kellogg New York City Food and Fitness Partnership
- Livable Streets Program
- McGraw Hill Publishing Company
- Networx
- New York City Mayor's Office
- New York State Energy Research and Development Authority
- Partnership for Parks
- Puffin Foundation
- Rockefeller Brothers Fund
- Sundance Channel
- Transportation Alternatives
- United States Department of Transportation
- United States Forest Service
- Urban Health Plan
- Waste Management

Community Supports and Challenges

Believing that the New York City population was on the decline, the neighborhoods in the ALbD project area were rezoned for manufacturing in 1961. The area quickly became dominated by highways, sewage treatment plants, sludge palletizing plants, and truck intensive industry. However, over the past few decades, both the New York population and housing prices increased dramatically. Out of the necessity for affordable housing, Hunts Point and the surrounding areas became the new home of highly concentrated, lower income housing.

“The South Bronx has been on the receiving end of mostly pretty bad stuff, most of what has come from the top down in terms of land use and infrastructure has been negative and the community has been a regional sacrifice zone. To this day you have political leadership saying things like, ‘No community wants this, but it has to go someplace.’ Like all environmental justice communities, the South Bronx has been the preferred location for stuff that communities with more political power and more economic power are able to fight off.” -Partner

While these industrial and commercial facilities were economically-vital to the South Bronx, they limited available green space, diminished pedestrian safety, and degraded air quality. New York City guidelines called for 2.5 acres of open space per 1,000 residents. However, in the South Bronx, there was less than 0.5 acres per 1,000 residents. Many of these open areas served as illegal dumps for construction and demolition material. Throughout the neighborhoods, children played in the streets and adults were without a place for activity. Pedestrian safety was a concern in the area because of heavy truck traffic in the industrial areas.

“The trucks sometimes have no respect for pedestrians. If they want to run you over, they will.” -Community Member

“The trucks, when they turn that corner, they basically get on the sidewalk. When you wait as a pedestrian you have to basically wait in the middle of the sidewalk.” -Community Member

The industrial factories and heavy truck traffic also negatively influenced the air quality and appearance of the neighborhoods. For example, Barretto Point Park was sandwiched in between a sewage treatment plant and a fertilizer plant, both of which emitted foul odors. While such conditions may or may not be harmful, they kept residents from enjoying the few open spaces available in the region.

“You are going to start smelling something funky, and that is the New York organic fertilizer company, which is one of the neighbors of Barretto Point Park... [On the other] side of Barretto Point Park there is a sewage treatment facility, which stinks every now and then, but it’s a methane kind of smell.” -Staff

Community support for the partnership and the South Bronx Greenway project was mixed. Because of past mistreatment of residents of the South Bronx, there was a history of mistrust in the community. Some community members did not believe that the South Bronx Greenway would come to fruition, and others believed other, more pressing, issues should be addressed. It was difficult for residents to advocate for cleaner water and a better sewage system when there were rats in their homes and drugs in their neighborhood.

Crime and safety were a few of the biggest concerns identified by area residents, concerns that were amplified by the lack of good relationships between residents and the local police precinct. Residents felt that officers tended to only interact with residents when they are suspicious, rather than to build community rapport by continuous engagement.

“[The police] get insulted because we ask those questions and we had a captain walk away from a meeting because he got angry. We were asking him questions... You have to build that relationship with the community because, growing up in this neighborhood, all I know about [the police] is that [they] are bad. The only way [the police] can change that is outreach and becoming more involved in the community. [Police officers] have to show [community members] respect, and show kids that [they] are friendly. A lot of these kids in communities like this one believe that they can’t trust the cops.” -Community Member

The partnership was able to overcome many of these issues by partnering with the established community organizations in the neighborhood and by using a large portion of its ALBD resources to support community outreach.

“What we’ve got going on in the South Bronx is an incredible amount of capital investment and incredible goodwill with all members of the community. If nothing else, the one thing that I point to is the ease of being able to work with the community, and I think that is the direct impact of the funding. I don’t think that could have been done had there not been an injection to the capacity of the neighborhood to facilitate such tremendous outreach.” -Partner

These efforts influenced the perceptions of many residents and stirred many to become actively involved in advocacy and change in their neighborhoods.

“I actually do feel a certain good about it when I walk down the street and I can see a garden area that isn’t full of dog manure or plastic bags...when I see that, I get a little enthusiastic.” -Community

South Bronx business owners did not necessarily have a vested interest in community improvements, because of potential costly repairs for their properties. Since local industries relied on trucking and other emission-generating processes, long-term improvements and tougher standards had a perceived negative impact to many businesses.

“[Businesses] are not into it. That’s the thing. They want to keep this neighborhood as crappy-looking as possible because then they don’t have all of the issues. If it doesn’t look good then no one cares about it, and they can do whatever they want in the neighborhood as far as truck traffic.” -Staff

Likewise, working with the many government departments proved to be a challenge for the partnership and for partner organizations. While the partnership received some support from government staff, the bureaucracy inherently present in such a large municipality made it difficult to create momentum from limited support. The partnership gained support from policy and decision-makers by presenting the results of community assessments and encouraging officials to stand by their promises for a better South Bronx. Area-elected officials pushed for changes at dangerous intersections and advocated for increased funding for various partnership projects.

“Thinking back to when the planning of the greenway was first unfolding and when the Active Living by Design grant was first written, even though everybody in the community knew to their bones that there was a connection between open space and space where you can safely be physically active... I think it elevated the way people make those connections in public discussions. Now you probably won’t find a public official in the Bronx that can’t kind of say, ‘Well, it is important for people to have open space so they can be physically active because look at all these health issues.’ It wouldn’t have been top of the line for them the way it is now.” -Partner

One government agency, the Department of Parks and Recreation, worked with the partnership to open facilities and offer programming in the community but would not take ownership of the South Bronx Greenway because the department did not have the staff or resources to provide the maintenance required by New York City. However, Parks and Recreation was supportive of the building and ongoing maintenance and security of new, smaller parks, even if on a much slower timeline than desired by the partnership.

Community Assessment

To gain an understanding of the population as well as the community's historical and present-day social, political, and environmental context, the partners in the South Bronx Greenway Partnership incorporated a variety of methods and measures to conduct their community assessment. The majority of assessments centered on the South Bronx Greenway Project, including a large feasibility assessment, charrettes, and focus groups. In addition to the assessments conducted for the Greenway, mapping projects were also implemented to address specific concerns in the neighborhood.

During the first year of the grant, the partnership participated in the selection of Mathews Nielson Landscape Architects as the planning consultant for the South Bronx Greenway. The partnership secured a \$1.25 million transportation planning grant from US Department of Transportation's Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality program to conduct a feasibility study for the Greenway. Mathews Nielson Landscape Architects collected neighborhood information on land ownership and condition, surveyed property and business owners, and met with policy stakeholders. As a result of the feasibility study, over \$28.5 million was designated to the South Bronx Greenway for phase one construction.

In conjunction with Montefiore Medical Center and Global Strategies, a consulting firm, the partnership conducted focus groups to look at community interest and concerns related to active living and the Greenway project. Global Strategies was selected for its extensive work with Spanish-speaking groups and communities of color. Through an open invitation to area residents, the focus groups attracted a range of participants, including adolescent girls, older adults, single mothers, and parents.

Results from the focus groups indicated that safety and security of the South Bronx was a recurring theme for every audience and that there was a need for more green space in the neighborhoods. Residents felt the Greenway and proposed parks would be a positive solution, as long as their safety was assured. The focus groups were useful for the partnership to understand resident's concerns and to address those concerns as the Greenway and other projects were completed. Four community charrettes were also conducted to gain extensive input on the design of the Greenway from the residents who would use it.

“What we are trying to pull out now is to understand what are the sort of hurdles that we are going to have to overcome in order to get people to use this and to feel safe in visiting and to feel safe to explore it.” -Partner

The partnership collaborated with the New York State Department of Transportation to collect data for pedestrian and bicycle crashes in the South Bronx. The partnership then mapped the most dangerous intersections in the city. These maps were used as an advocacy tool to convince state decision-makers to improve the conditions of unsafe intersections.

Policies and Physical Projects

Policy influences and physical projects, related partner, staff, and community implementation activities, and associated outcomes include the following:

▶ **South Bronx Greenway**

- The partnership secured funding for a feasibility study and selected Mathews Nielson Landscape Architects to complete the study.
- The Greenway Master Plan, unveiled in November of 2006, was designed to connect parks to the riverfront and eventually connect existing greenways.
- The first phase of the Living Memorial Trail, a physical entry point to the South Bronx Greenway, was installed in May of 2005 by Greening for Breathing. The project included 18 new trees, tree guards, and flowers in the beds of the trees.
- The partnership successfully advocated for the redevelopment of two waterside parks along the future Greenway, Hunts Point Riverside Park and Barretto Point Park. The parks are maintained and staffed by Parks and Recreation.
- Additional physical projects completed along the Greenway included safety improvements to intersections and bicycle lane striping added along the future Greenway.
- To improve connections between neighborhoods in Community District 1 of the South Bronx and the Greenway path to Randall's Island, the partnership assisted in the creation of recommendations, which have been used as an advocacy tool for community improvements.
- The South Bronx Greenway Partnership and Sustainable South Bronx continued to advocate for the City to expedite construction of the Greenway.



“The process that led to [the greenway plans] was really authentically community-driven and people in the community liked that, the design for the Greenway not only reflects people’s priorities in the community, but that people have had a sense of ownership of the Greenway...people are integrally involved in the design and conception of a big transformative piece of infrastructure.” -Partner

► ***Sheridan Expressway***

- As an active partner of the Southern Bronx River Watershed Alliance, the partnership advocated for replacing the 28-acre under-utilized Sheridan Expressway with affordable housing, green space, manufacturing space, and waterfront amenities.
- The partnership hosted a symposium showcasing two other cities that successfully tore down underutilized highways.
- Five sessions were held to talk about potential uses of the Sheridan Expressway acreage, including housing, commercial, and open space options.
- Through five visioning sessions, a community land use plan was created and the partnership launched a city-wide outreach campaign.
- The partnership worked to compose an official community vision for the Expressway and presented the community's vision for the Sheridan redevelopment throughout Manhattan, Brooklyn, and the Bronx.

► ***Park Development and Safety***

- The partnership secured \$5.2 million in funding from the Parks and Recreation Department for the future completion of the Concrete Plant Park.
- The partnership sought to collaborate with the local police precinct in hopes of increasing safety at local parks and along the proposed Greenway.
- After initial resistance, the precinct agreed to monitor new open spaces and improve the working relationship with the community.

► ***Street Design Projects***

- Street design improvements made throughout the South Bronx neighborhood included traffic signal timing improvements and safety improvements at an intersection in Hunts Point identified as one of the most dangerous in New York City.
- Sustainable South Bronx partnered with Greening for Breathing to plant over 400 trees along residential streets during the five-year funding period to make streets more conducive to activity, and improve visibility, safety and future air quality.

► ***Other Policies and Physical Projects***

- The partnership also coordinated a farmer and local vendor market, located at a major transportation hub along the Greenway.

Challenges

Although there was funding for phase one of construction, the Greenway Project did not break ground during the funding period. Delays were due to several reasons:

- Numerous rounds of city approvals were needed for large capital construction projects.
- Plan modifications were needed because of infrastructure problems and cost.
- It was difficult to develop a plan in accordance with a large coalition of interests.
- The contracting process and administrative schedule of New York City Economic Development Corporation slowed progress.
- New York City required a full maintenance plan for all new projects, which the partnership had difficulty finalizing.

“I think the maintenance conversation is the biggest challenge we’ve had. Everything hinges on understanding how things happen that are taken care of over time. And some of them will not happen until that question is answered... That is without a doubt our biggest challenge. It’s never easy to raise money or to make plans or design things to get built, but relative to [maintenance], it is pretty easy.” -Staff

“The thing to emphasize about this is that [the Greenway] really is a vision plan, and as we are narrowing down to creating design documents and construction documents to reach individual phases of this, we are realizing that the feasibility and the sum of this stuff is just not realistic.” -Staff

In an attempt to move the project along, the partnership worked to create a public and private maintenance partnership with the City to meet the maintenance plan requirement.

“Negotiating the agreement that lets community-based organizations take responsibility for maintenance tasks is harder than it looks. It’s easier, obviously, for affluent communities to come up with revenue streams and make that level of maintenance possible than it is for low-income communities. You have to find revenue streams that don’t sort of place the burden on a community that hasn’t got the money...” -Partner

Promotions and Programs

At the beginning of the funding period, the partnership attempted a wide array of events to promote active living, but eventually focused only on events that tied directly to the proposed Greenway. The partnership promoted community involvement with active living components rather than promoting active living specifically. Programmatic and promotional efforts, related partner, staff, and community implementation activities, and associated outcomes are described as follows.

► Social Marketing Campaign

- The South Bronx Gateway partnership worked with Spitfire Communications, Montefiore Health Center, and Global Solutions to design a social marketing campaign to promote physical activity opportunities in the South Bronx.
- Focus groups were conducted with four main audiences in the community: single mothers, mixed-race parents, adolescent girls, and senior adults.
- The campaign, “Now Playing in the South Bronx,” was launched in conjunction with the opening of Hunts Point Riverside Park and Baretto Point Park.
- The campaign included advertisements on 50 buses and bus stops throughout the Bronx, 10 English and Spanish billboards in the Hunts Point neighborhood, and bilingual postcards advertising events at the parks that were distributed in local schools, major community events, and community centers.
- No formal evaluation was conducted to assess the effectiveness of the social marketing campaign, but staff members noted an increase in park usage and event turnout following the campaign.
- Although the partnership valued the campaign, partner organizations felt that South Bronx residents were not in need of additional encouragement to utilize the new amenities.



“So we think those were pretty useful in helping to let people know that [the parks] were there. But, I think that now that they know they are there, they don’t need any more encouragement.” –Partner

▶ **Hunts Point Hustle**

- The first annual Hunts Point Hustle was a 5K Run/Walk on the future path of the South Bronx Greenway, held at the culmination of the “Now Playing in the South Bronx” marketing campaign.
- Over 100 people, both race participants and observers, enjoyed the event, which included an awards ceremony, live music, food, a children’s race, and health information.

“So it was just mind blowing not only for folks who came from outside of the neighborhood to come and race here to see what is going on here but also for folks in the neighborhood to see people from outside coming in and doing something like this at Hunts Point. Everybody was having sort of this cultural moment and folks realized you can get outside and you can live a little bit more actively. It was modeled for them basically by the race. So I think that was a huge impact.” -Staff

▶ **Earth Day**

- In partnership with City Year New York and Timberland, an Earth Day event was held to complete environmental projects in the neighborhood.
- Over 100 volunteers from the neighborhood participated in building tree guards for street trees located on Hunts Point Avenue and Lafayette Avenue, working on Sustainable South Bronx’s green roof, planting trees at The Point Community Development Corporation, and performing general street tree care within the South Bronx.
- The event concluded with a celebration for participants at Barretto Point Park.

▶ **Greenway Stewardship Event**

- South Bronx Greenway partnered with Boost Mobile Rock Corps, a volunteer networking organization, to bring nearly fifty South Bronx youth to Hunts Point to prepare Hunts Point’s streets for winter by weeding, soil cultivating, tree limb pruning, and picking up garbage.
- The project was a stewardship initiative that provided physical activity and increased teenager’s awareness of their local parks.
- The partnership reached out to local schools to implement an ongoing weekly youth “junior greenway steward” program.

▶ **Bicycle Programs and Events**

- The partnership hoped to increase bicycle usage in the neighborhood by hosting bicycle riding events, including South Bronx Bike Tour, a Community Bike Ride ending at the NYC Summer Streets Event, and a Greenway Bike Tour.
- Bicycles, helmets, Greenway information, and park materials were given away to participants at the bike riding events.
- Car-free Grand Concourse was a neighborhood-hosted event featuring free helmets and bike lessons for children.
- Tour de Bronx was a Bronx-wide bike tour held on a temporarily closed Sheridan Expressway at which the partnership sponsored a table and promoted the community plan to permanently close the Expressway.
- A community bike club was coordinated by AmeriCorps VISTA volunteers, who received League Cycling Instructor certification from the League of American Bicyclists.

▶ **Action Action plans**

- The partnership developed the Action Action (A2) plan program that provided patients with a written physical activity plan.
- A2 plans were modeled after Asthma Action plans that prescribed airway management techniques.
- A2 plans were created and tested with a medical provider audience.
- The partnership created a healthy living resource guide for pediatricians and other medical providers in the area that was eventually incorporated into the program.

▶ **Bronx Ecological Stewardship Training Program**

- Recognizing that environmental restoration and environmental management were growing fields, Sustainable South Bronx created the Bronx Environmental Stewardship (BEST) program to provide “green-collar” job training and job placement to local residents.
- The Greenway Stewards provided free maintenance services to Parks and Recreation and served as a marketing tool because they interacted with residents and businesses to educate them about tree care and to promote new parks in the neighborhood.
- BEST provided an opportunity for residents with little education and training to earn a living by acquiring skills in Brownfield restoration, green roof installation, and parks management. In return, Greenway Stewards provided community members with a sense of security and commitment to the community.
- Greenway Stewards led a NeighborWoods tree education and stewardship event in September of 2008 with Hyde Leadership Charter School.

▶ **Walking Clubs**

- South Bronx Greenway partnered with several organizations to offer walking club opportunities to various population groups throughout the South Bronx:
- The History of Hunts Point Walking Club provided a weekly historical walk around the neighborhood, showcasing components of the proposed Greenway.
- The Senior Walking Club, led by a VISTA volunteer, included walks from the Recreation Center to Hunts Point Riverside Park.
- Mothers on the Move, a morning walking and exercise club, introduced participants to equipment and programs at the free local New York City Recreation Center.
- Despite their efforts, walking programs were ultimately not sustainable, due to the staff time required for community outreach and coordination.

▶ **Fishing Program**

- South Bronx Greenway partnered with the Department of Environmental Conservation for Region 2 to connect students from elementary schools with the local waterways through fishing.
- The program intended to connect students to their parents’ and grandparents’ tradition of fishing while introducing them to the developing waterfront that surrounded their neighborhood.
- Students were given classroom lessons on fishing and water skills and then practiced their new skills at a local park.
- The elementary school fishing program was discontinued after three years due to poor outreach and lack of staff time.

▶ **Other Programmatic Efforts**

- In partnership with the NYC Road Runners Foundation and the Police Athletic League, the partnership offered an after-school track program for one year.
- An Adolescent Weight Management Program, emphasizing physical activity, was led by the South Bronx Health Center and the Police Athletic League.

▶ **Other Promotional Efforts**

- The partnership sponsored and coordinated a number of other promotional events:
 - RiverStage, a South Bronx music festival, featured active sports.
 - Bronx River Flotilla featured free canoeing and kayaking.
 - The Golden Ball Festival included walks, canoe rides, and other physical activities for children.
 - Healthy Living Block Parties raised awareness about healthy living in the community.
 - Advocacy events, workshops, and symposiums generated interest in and support for the Greenway and the Sheridan Expressway.

Challenges

Staff, partners, and community members identified a number of challenges to implementing programs and promotions:

- Because the Greenway and Sheridan were long-term projects, it was difficult to have consistent media coverage.
- One of the biggest challenges to promotion of the partnership and its events was the lack of local bilingual media.
- The Bronx Department of Health agreed to integrate the A2 plans into its outreach but, ultimately, did not have the capacity to distribute the plans.

Sustainability

The South Bronx Greenway partnership did not seek sustainability funding from ALbD, but Sustainable South Bronx planned to continue its efforts to create a more active and healthy community in the South Bronx. The organization maintained staff to coordinate programs related to active living and the South Bronx Greenway project and continued to seek funding to support these efforts. At the conclusion of the grant, Sustainable South Bronx hoped to apply lessons learned from the ALbD grant, particularly those related to project sustainability, to the continuation of existing programs and creating new ones.

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