

Energy Democracy

Broadway Triangle: Multi-Racial Efforts towards a Sustainable Neighborhood

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PREFACE

We introduce the second installment of our case study series, *Energy Democracy: Broadway Triangle – Multi-racial Efforts towards a Sustainable Neighborhood*. In this case study, we examine the **Broadway Triangle Community Coalition (BTCC) Plan to develop vacant land for renewable energy, green jobs, energy efficiency and affordable housing for a multi-racial constituency**. Communities are at the frontline of our national challenges, be it jobs, housing or climate change, and often see opportunities to solve multiple challenges holistically, as does the Broadway Triangle Coalition. But while communities of color are generating new ideas and multiple efforts to build a more inclusive and green future we, as a nation, are not yet discussing policies to support these endeavors.

The 2009 American Reinvestment and Recovery Act (ARRA), in response to our nation's worst economic crisis since the Great Depression, set out to build a foundation for a more prosperous long-term economy. To meet this goal, the Act included support for energy efficiency and renewable energy innovation. It supported a variety of measures, from weatherizing homes and businesses to funding electric vehicles and investing in better public transit. Additionally, ARRA funded renewable energy research and production by expanding production tax credits to develop wind energy and research grants on alternative fuels. The 2012 Presidential candidates, the media and advocates hotly debated the impact of these policies, with opponents pointing to the bankruptcy of Solyndra, a solar panel company that received a \$535 million dollar grant from the Department of Energy, and supporters counting green jobs. ARRA helped support steps to a more renewable energy future. But the debate missed an important part of the innovation we need to promote a clean, sustainable and economically vibrant future: local innovation is a critical component of solving our nation's economic and energy crisis.

Investing in green technologies and demanding corporate responsibility are important, but local innovation is also a necessary ingredient. Communities of color are highly motivated to take on climate change because they face some of its most devastating impacts. Two weeks after the landfall of Hurricane Sandy, public housing residents in New York's Red Hook, Chinatown and the Rockaways were without power. Yet, communities of color, the fastest growing demographic in the US today, face many obstacles to moving ideas to implementation, such as access to capital, property ownership and legal support. We must not only learn from local solutions but also engage rural, low-income and communities of color around innovation locally. In doing so, we can build the policy and financial will necessary to elevate local innovation as a solution to national and global problems.

In our previous case study, *Energy Democracy: Community Innovation in Boston*,¹ we learned that if local innovators in Boston receive financial support from foundations and governments to leverage private capital, it would be possible to start a weatherization cooperative that creates local ownership and jobs, saves residents money through energy efficiency and supports Massachusetts's ability to achieve an 80% reduction in carbon emissions.

¹ <http://www.centerforsocialinclusion.org/energy-democracy-community-innovation-in-boston-a-case-study/>

This case study finds that **BTCC's vision for sustainable development would provide affordable housing, create jobs, generate renewable energy and cut carbon emissions.** We identify the opportunities to implement effectively the BTCC Plan and identify challenges, including the lack of inclusion by the city-planning processes and lack of available capital needed to support the project. We discuss how communities might use the BTCC Plan to scale out local renewable energy and efficiency solutions that take into account the rapidly diversifying demographics of our communities.

THE BROADWAY TRIANGLE: AN OPPORTUNITY FOR INNOVATION

AN INTRODUCTION

Far too many communities all over the country struggle with interlocking problems: there are not enough jobs and available jobs are often located far from home; housing is unaffordable; and children face increasing health problems from an unhealthy environment. While far too many Americans struggle against these challenges, it is particularly apparent in communities of color:

- In 2012, overall unemployment fell to 7.8 percent. The share of Black workers seeking jobs was approximately 14 percent; for Latinos around 9.6 percent.
- National median household income remained depressed, declining slightly for Whites and Asians, but down 3.7% for Black households, who make \$34,625 compared to \$56,000 for Whites.²
- In rural areas and urban communities with high rates of unemployment, Americans are earning less, widening the housing affordability gap. HUD has reported a 20% increase in housing distress for the most vulnerable children and families, particularly people of color.³
- 56% of residents living near hazardous waste facilities are people of color.⁴

These are national problems. And local communities are identifying opportunities to solve them. This is the story of north Brooklyn, where a multi-racial coalition created a plan to utilize a shared asset, land, for a shared solution, a mixed-use housing development that would include:

- high-density units, with 75% being preserved as “affordable” units;
- energy-efficient appliances, windows and electrical wiring;
- geothermal heating and cooling systems;
- “green roofs” that would host small-scale wind and solar energy generation and rooftop gardens;
- community ownership of the energy savings and production; and
- incubation of local entrepreneurs interested in eco-conscious goods and services.

This plan, known as the Broadway Triangle Community Coalition Plan, is a model for the future. **It exemplifies triple bottom-line sustainable development in excluded communities. It creates jobs and affordable housing, and contributes to the city’s carbon reduction goal.** Yet, the City has not implemented the BTCC Plan. The City’s planning process lacked transparency and inclusion and the BTCC lacks the financial investment needed to make this plan work. Elected officials and city agencies must actively engage communities in the planning process and find ways to develop the capital to make the plan a reality.

² CSI analysis of the 2010 and 2011 American Community Survey, US Census Bureau.

³ The National Low-Income Housing Coalition. “Out of Reach 2012”. March, 2012. <http://nlihc.org/sites/default/files/oor/2012-OOR.pdf>

⁴ CERD Working Group on Health and Environmental Health Report on Healthcare “Unequal Health Outcomes in the United States”. January 2008

AN INCLUSIVE COMMUNITY SOLUTION

In 2008, with support from the Pratt Graduate Center for Planning and Environment, neighborhood groups came together to form the Broadway Triangle Community Coalition (BTCC). The BTCC is a multi-racial coalition of forty churches, civic groups, businesses and nonprofits. The groups reflect each of the three neighborhoods surrounding the tract of land called the Broadway Triangle, with members coming from Hasidic, Black and Latino community groups.⁵

Collaboratively, the groups were able to raise the voices of all three communities. The Broadway Triangle Community Coalition Plan uses shared assets to create a shared solution for all three neighborhoods that **builds affordable housing units, creates jobs and pioneers urban efforts to fight against climate change.**

The BTCC engaged in a series of participatory planning and visioning charettes during evenings and on weekends to create a proposal for an **energy-plus neighborhood**. The energy-plus neighborhood would develop energy-efficient affordable housing units, create a community-owned energy utility and incubate green jobs.

DEVELOPING AFFORDABLE HOUSING

The BTCC's plan called for the creation of 4,800 carbon-neutral housing units (75% defined as affordable, which means paying no more than 30% of one's income on housing). The housing would:

- Be owned by community-based organizations in the BTCC, using a housing trust fund to guarantee affordability and meet the needs of the residents from these three communities.
- Include proper technology so residents can participate in Con Edison's demand-response program. This local utility plan allows people to receive a payback for not using electricity during certain peak hours.
- Include "green roofs" that use solar panels to create energy that could be sold back to the grid.
- Use geothermal heat and sewage waste heat to produce heating and cooling, slashing reliance on oil-burning furnaces that add to the City's emissions.

Figure 1:

What is an Energy-Plus Neighborhood?

An energy-plus neighborhood is an area where residents collaboratively create more energy than they consume.

Energy-plus neighborhoods rely on households being energy efficient (such as having new windows, Energy Star appliances, and smart meters to help monitor and control energy use). The neighborhood is also producing its own energy, heating and cooling from non-carbon sources (such as solar roofs, wind turbines and waste heat.)

⁵ The Broadway Triangle Community Coalition. www.broadwaytriangle.com

CREATING A COMMUNITY-OWNED ENERGY UTILITY

The energy utility would save energy by installing energy-efficient designs (insulation, windows, heating/cooling systems and smart meters) and appliances in the new housing units while retrofitting existing buildings in the surrounding neighborhoods. The energy utility would create clean, renewable energy by:

- Siting small-scale wind turbines and solar panels on roofs and open spaces in the Triangle area.
- Converting subway and sewer waste-heat into a combined heating and power system to deliver heating and cooling into the housing units.
- Selling excess energy back to the grid for a profit.

Furthermore, the community utility has the potential to build wealth for neighborhood residents, who would be owners and share in the success of the project while also lowering their energy bills, allowing residents to allocate dollars to other areas. As an established organization it can negotiate with Con Edison on the rates for energy produced by the community and payment structures for residents participating in demand-response programs.

INCUBATING GREEN JOBS

By creating both affordable housing and a community energy utility the BTCC's plan links local workers to job opportunities. Some jobs would be short-term, such as the construction of housing units, while other jobs would be long-term. For example, the energy utility would create installation and permanent maintenance jobs for the renewable energy production occurring in the Broadway Triangle area. It also would create green weatherization jobs to retrofit local community homes. With even further innovation, the BTCC also reimagined the primary buildings on the lot as a space for incubating businesses developing energy technologies and other local entrepreneurial activities.

LOCAL ASSETS: DIVERSITY OF HISTORY, STRATEGIC RELATIONSHIPS AND LAND

The BTCC Plan is innovative, not only for its triple bottom line approach, but also for its use of specific local assets embedded in the community. Though these neighborhoods struggle with poverty and gentrification, there is much to build upon. The Broadway Triangle community holds an abundance of diversity, collaborative relationships, available land, accessible transit and new ideas. The BTCC strives to use these assets to solve multiple problems with innovative planning.

THE BROADWAY TRIANGLE COMMUNITY

The Broadway Triangle is a mostly vacant plot of land in Brooklyn, New York, where three neighborhoods (Bedford-Stuyvesant, Bushwick and Williamsburg) meet. Together these historically distinct and vibrant neighborhoods comprise nearly a half-million residents. Bedford-Stuyvesant encompasses one of the oldest free Black communities in the United States, Weeksville.⁶ A primarily residential community with a strong locally-based commercial economy, Bedford-Stuyvesant is majority Black and home to some of the nation's most notable musicians. Williamsburg, formerly a manufacturing neighborhood, has grown more residential over time, while developing a rich community of artists and musicians. It is a neighborhood of ethnic enclaves, majority White and primarily Hasidic Jewish, with smaller Italian, Dominican and Puerto Rican communities. Formerly known for its railways and breweries, Bushwick is home to a growing residential community with a locally-based commercial economy. It is majority Latino, with a strong representation of Puerto Ricans and Dominicans.⁷

Despite the differences, these three neighborhoods have a history of working together through local coalitions on issues of environmental health. For example, the Bedford-Stuyvesant Restoration Corporation, a community organization supporting economic and social wellbeing; Williamsburg's El Puente, a community organization working on environmental health and other issues; and the Pratt Institute, a private liberal arts college with a long history of community engagement, worked with other city-wide groups to pilot a low-income housing energy efficiency program to help cut energy costs for these communities. While retrofitting homes is a key towards a cleaner planet, the need for an alternative to dirty energy is critical if we want to curb the direction of climate change. These groups, recognizing the opportunity to do more, had a foundation that would make the Broadway Triangle Community Coalition possible.

LAND AND ACCESSIBILITY

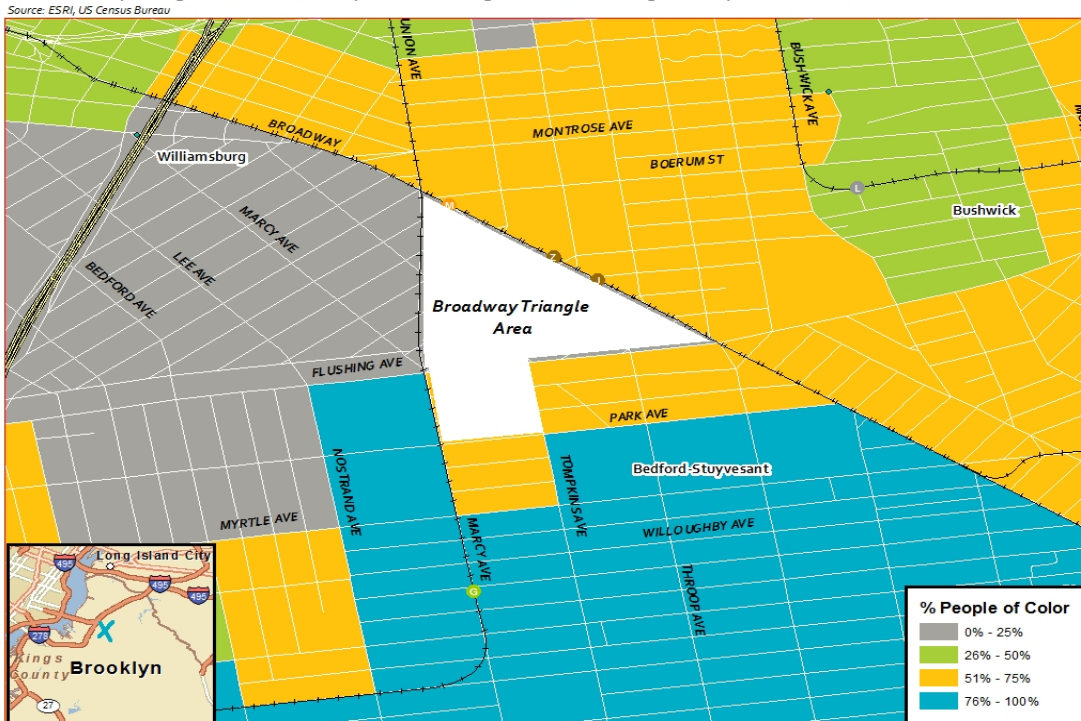
The Broadway Triangle is desirable not only for the rich diversity of its surrounding neighborhoods. The area is also well-served by public transportation, both for local neighborhood travel and travel to other areas of New York City. The Triangle itself is formerly a manufacturing hub, but has been rezoned for

⁶ The African American Registry. http://www.aaregistry.org/historic_events/view/weeksville-jewel-brooklyn-ny

⁷ According to data from the US Census Bureau. American Community Survey. Bedford-Stuyvesant is 60% Black, 20% Latino; Bushwick is nearly 75% Latino, 15% Black, and Williamsburg is over 60% White and nearly 30% Latino.

mixed-use development. This provides an opportunity to use a mostly vacant plot of land for housing, business and green generation.

Figure 2:
The Broadway Triangle Section of Brooklyn NY (including the Pfizer Building) and Population of Color



The Triangle, comprising a sizeable 31 acres and 20 city blocks, formerly housed Pfizer Pharmaceuticals. In 2008, Pfizer closed its Brooklyn location after 150 years in operation, leaving behind a shuttered production plant with 660,000 square feet of prime manufacturing, warehousing and retail space. While Pfizer continues to own some of the land (roughly 4 acres), New York City owns the majority of the Triangle and deemed it an Urban Renewal Area in 1989.⁸ Beyond rezoning the area for residential and manufacturing use, the City did not take concerted action on its development for many years.

The land's classification as a remediation site by the State of New York means that it requires clean-up to remove toxins or other chemicals from the ground to ensure a safe and healthy living environment. Despite the high costs of remediation, which can range from \$600,000 to \$1,000,000 depending on size of property⁹, the accessibility, size and mixed-zoning potential make the Broadway Triangle a very attractive space. The Triangle offers a viable opportunity to build housing units, provide manufacturing space for a growing sector and provide the space for the incubation of local and small businesses that could create jobs.

⁸ New York City: Department of Housing Preservation. *Executive Summary* <http://www.nyc.gov/html/hpd/downloads/pdf/Executive-Summary-09.pdf>

⁹ Paull, Evans (2008). The Northeast Midwest Institute. "The Environmental and Economic Impacts of Brownfields Redevelopment."

In the mid-2000s, the combination of housing needs, availability of brownfield renewal grants, pressure from Brooklyn Assemblyman Vito Lopez and the closing of the Pfizer plant, led to acceleration in plans to develop the Broadway Triangle. Community members, the City and private investors began to explore the Triangle's potential to meet the many housing and business needs of the City.

Figure 3: *The Former Pfizer Building*



Source: Chamber of Commerce.com

COMMUNITY NEEDS

The BTCC Plan builds on assets to address the poverty, unemployment, housing, and energy issues in Bedford-Stuyvesant, Bushwick and Williamsburg. Redevelopment of the Broadway Triangle provides a unique opportunity to address the needs of its surrounding neighborhoods.

POVERTY, UNEMPLOYMENT AND HOUSING INSECURITY

Within these neighborhoods, approximately one in three people live in poverty. In 2010, at the height of the BTCC's efforts, unemployment was higher than the city and national averages, with one in eight residents unemployed in Bedford-Stuyvesant, one in ten unemployed in Bushwick and one in twelve unemployed in Williamsburg, compared with one in nine in New York City and one in ten in the US overall.¹⁰

The lack of quality, accessible and affordable housing, while a national issue, is especially intense in New York City, which has one of the highest percentages of renters,¹¹ one of the lowest rental vacancy rates and one of the highest cost of living indices in the country.¹² There are never enough units for people in need. In 2009, there were ten million extremely low-income renter households in the US, but less than four million units deemed affordable and available.¹³ At the beginning of 2009, when residents began discussing the Broadway Triangle, over 120,000 affordable units existed in Brooklyn,¹⁴ yet there were almost 230,000 extremely low-income renter households.¹⁵

The neighborhoods surrounding the Broadway Triangle feel this acute housing stress. The median rent burden for these neighborhoods is above 30%, the standard accepted level of income a person should pay for housing, electricity and fuel costs combined. It is highest for Bushwick and Bedford-Stuyvesant, whose rates hover closer to 34%.¹⁶ And when considering transit costs plus housing, many residents spend up to 48% on transit and housing in the Broadway Triangle area compared to the Brooklyn average of 36%.¹⁷ Likely related to housing costs, all three neighborhoods have seen increases in severe crowding rates.¹⁸ For example, nearly eight percent of renter households in the Bushwick neighborhood are overcrowded, up from five percent just two years ago.¹⁹

¹⁰ New York University Furman Center for Real Estate and Urban Policy. *State of New York City's Housing and Neighborhoods, 2011*. http://furmancenter.org/files/sotc/SOC_2011.pdf

¹¹ US Census Bureau. *Housing Vacancies and Home Ownership* "Annual Statistics: 2011." <http://www.census.gov/hhes/www/housing/hvs/annual11/ann11ind.html>

¹² Council for Community and Economic Research. "Cost of Living Index" <http://www.coli.org/ReleaseHighlights.asp>

¹³ *Ibid.*

¹⁴ Research and Analysis by the NYU Furman Center for Real Estate and Urban Policy

¹⁵ US Census Bureau. American Community Survey

¹⁶ New York University Furman Center for Real Estate and Urban Policy. *State of New York City's Housing and Neighborhoods, 2011*. http://furmancenter.org/files/sotc/SOC_2011.pdf

¹⁷ Center for Neighborhood and Technology. "Housing and Transit Affordability Index". <http://htaindex.cnt.org/map/>

¹⁸ Severe crowding means that the ratio of people living in a room is over 1.5: 1.

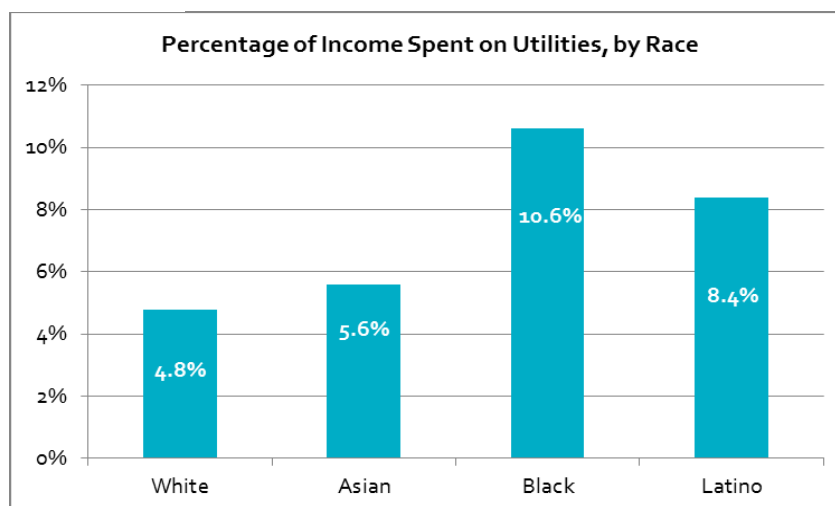
¹⁹ New York University Furman Center for Real Estate and Urban Policy. *State of New York City's Housing and Neighborhoods, 2011*. http://furmancenter.org/files/sotc/SOC_2011.pdf

Though a majority of residents rent, homeowners in these three neighborhoods are also struggling to remain in their homes. One in five Bedford-Stuyvesant residents owns a home, but the neighborhood has the second highest foreclosure rate in the city at 42.8 per 1,000 homes. In Bushwick, one in seven owns a home, but the community faces the third highest foreclosure rate in the city at 41.8 per 1,000. Williamsburg’s homeowners fare better with a foreclosure rate at 7 per 1,000.²⁰

HIGH ENERGY EXPENDITURES

High-energy costs can place an additional burden on a family’s income. Nationally, on average, households of color pay more in energy costs than all White households²¹, mostly for electricity and space heating. People of color tend to live in older homes²² without proper insulation or energy efficient appliances that can help cut costs. As figure 4 shows, Black and Latino households spend over ten and over eight percent of their income, respectively, on energy costs, while White households spend less than five percent.²³

Figure 4:



Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics Consumer Expenditure Survey

This difference can be even more drastic in New York City where average electricity rates hover around eighteen cents per kilowatt of energy used, nearly seven cents more than the national average.²⁴ Black, Latino and Asian New Yorkers therefore have the double burden of living in an expensive city and spending more of their income on utilities compared to White New Yorkers.

²⁰ New York University Furman Center for Real Estate and Urban Policy. *State of New York City’s Housing and Neighborhoods, 2011.* http://furmancenter.org/files/sotc/SOC_2011.pdf

²¹ Center for Social Inclusion. *Energy Democracy Community-Scale Green Solutions* <http://www.centerforsocialinclusion.org/energy-democracy-community-scale-green-energy-solutions/>

²² University of California Berkeley, Building Resilient Regions. Institute of Governmental Studies <http://brr.berkeley.edu/2012/07/to-build-resilient-regions-pay-attention-to-housing/>

²³ Though not specifically reported, White household energy cost estimates are calculated from the weighted average costs for all consumers (7.6%) and the percentage of all households that are White (63.4%). Please see *Center for Social Inclusion’s Energy Democracy: Community-scale Green Energy Solutions* for more information.

²⁴ New York State Energy Research and Development Agency. “Residential Energy Prices in Nominal Dollars 1996 -2010” http://www.nyserda.ny.gov/Page-Sections/Energy-Prices-Supplies-and-Weather-Data/-/media/Files/EDPPP/Energy%20Prices/Annual%20Prices/residential_energy05_09.ashx

THE CHALLENGES: ACCOUNTABLE GOVERNING AND FINANCING

A year *prior* to the BTCC's efforts, two locally powerful nonprofits, the Ridgewood Bushwick Senior Citizen's Council (RBSCC), founded by Brooklyn Assembly member Vito Lopez, and the United Jewish Organizations (UJO) won a grant from New York State's Brownfield Opportunities Areas (BOA) Program to remediate and develop the Broadway Triangle for new housing options. Less representative of the area's diversity, the RBSCC primarily serves elderly residents in a majority-White neighborhood in Queens and Bushwick, and the UJO primarily serves elderly white Hasidic residents in Williamsburg. Upon winning the grant, the UJO and RBSCC worked with city officials on a redevelopment plan for the Broadway Triangle.

THE CITY-BACKED PLAN

The City-backed RBSCC/UJO plan neither addressed needs nor built on assets. It would result in the exclusion of people of color, who make up the majority of residents surrounding the Triangle.²⁵ And the plan provided a less innovative solution compared to the BTCC's.

First, the RBSCC/UJO plan called for low-density, which would provide fewer units and thereby limit housing relief for communities of color experiencing overcrowding. Second, less than half of the units would be deemed affordable, despite the fact that in Brooklyn there are twice as many residents needing affordable units as there are units available. Additionally, the plan included residency preferences for those currently living in Williamsburg, to the exclusion of those living in Bedford-Stuyvesant, raising concerns that Black and Latino housing applicants would have a lower probability of acceptance.²⁶ Many also felt the choice to build low-density housing put the needs of Hasidic Jewish families, who preferred three-to-four bedroom apartments, ahead of the needs of Black and Latino families. The City-backed RBSCC/UJO plan failed to consider these racially disparate impacts.

By failing to include the community, the City missed an opportunity to benefit everyone. The RBSCC/UJO plan **failed to build upon the innovation and relationships in the community that could contribute to PlaNYC 2030.** PlaNYC 2030, which outlines the City's strategy on planning and climate change, includes weatherizing buildings, planting trees and creating city-owned renewable generation, exactly what the BTCC proposed. Instead, the City approved a plan with no commitment that the new housing would utilize alternative energy sources, provide efficient appliances or build green roofs to help the City's effort to cut its emissions.²⁷

Because of the failure to consider the racial impacts of the plan and the lack of commitment to the surrounding neighborhoods, **the BTCC formed to create an alternative plan with the hopes and**

²⁵ New York Civil Liberties Union <http://www.nyclu.org/files/Broadway%20Triangle%20Plaintiffs%20Post%20Hearing%20Brief.pdf>

²⁶ New York Civil Liberties Union <http://www.nyclu.org/files/Broadway%20Triangle%20Plaintiffs%20Post%20Hearing%20Brief.pdf> and <http://www.nyclu.org/news/court-order-blocks-discriminatory-brooklyn-housing-development>

²⁷ New York Civil Liberties Union http://www.nyclu.org/files/releases/Broadway_Injunction_Decision_1.4.12.pdf

intentions of negotiating with the City, RBSCC and UJO on a more comprehensive, inclusive and innovative plan that worked for everyone.

Figure 5:

Based on a summary by students from the Pratt Graduate Center for Planning and the Environment, the BTCC plan provides more housing, job opportunities and environmental stewardship than the City-sponsored plan:

RBSCC/UJO Plan	BTCC Plan
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1,895 Total Units (Low Density) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 4,800 Total Units (High Density)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 48% Affordable 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 75% Affordable
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Piecemeal Planning – Ad Hoc Zoning 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Comprehensive Plan Addressing Equity, Ecology, and Economy
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ignores Job Creation and Enterprise Development 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Links Jobs and Enterprise Development to Re-Building of the Area
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No Carbon Reduction or Sustainability Strategy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Links Sustainable Development and Green Jobs and Federal Initiative to Address Global Warming.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meets Status Quo 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Twenty-First Century Plan

OBSTACLES TO IMPLEMENTING THE BTCC PLAN

For now, neither the City-backed plan, nor the BTCC Plan is being implemented and the Broadway Triangle’s great potential remains unfulfilled. A lack of transparency and community engagement in the planning process are largely to blame.

First, the RBSCC/UJO process made no efforts to engage the greater community. No BTCC participants or other representative groups were invited in the planning process from the beginning. When this happened, the City planning department should have interceded and demanded public feedback from the impacted communities. This would have created an opportunity to create a more inclusive and creative plan. Instead, the City continued to fast track the RBSCC/UJO plan that was established earlier in 2008. As Councilwoman Diana Reyna, who opposed the city-sanctioned plan, stated: **"This [city] plan had no open process, no participatory process; it was exclusive to two organizations."**²⁸

Second, the approval process succumbed to political horse-trading. The RBSCC and UJO are deeply tied to the powerful Brooklyn political broker Assemblyman Vito Lopez. Lopez used his political muscle to generate support among community boards and members of the City Council to get the

²⁸ Gross, Courtney. "Stated Meeting: Broadway Triangle Approved by Council" *Gotham Gazette*. December 22, 2009 <http://www.gothamgazette.com/index.php/topics/416-stated-meeting-broadway-triangle-approved-by-council>

RBSCC/UJO's plan fast-tracked.²⁹ Despite efforts by the BTCC to protest the plan, the City ignored the community concerns and quickly approved the plan.

The BTCC responded immediately and, with the help of the New York Civil Liberties Union, sued the City. The lawsuit alleged race discrimination, religious discrimination, land use violations and environmental review violations under federal, state and city civil rights, fair housing, environmental and rezoning laws. The State Supreme Court issued a preliminary injunction that stopped implementation of the RBSCC/UJO plan. Two years later, in January 2012, the Court issued a final ruling blocking the plan. (*See Appendix I for details of the legal battle.*)

In the meantime, the BTCC missed out on funding opportunities that could have supported its Broadway Triangle plan and, as detailed in *Appendix II*, Pfizer sold its building to a private investor, Acumen Capital Partners, in 2011. In May 2012, six of the BTCC member organizations made an offer on adjacent land owned by Pfizer but were outbid by another private developer. While the BTCC members are striving to work with these investors, the lack of necessary capital to buy and control land makes community solutions very difficult to achieve.

²⁹ Brown, Elliot. *New York Observer*. "Planned Broadway Triangle Housing Passes Council, but Not Without a Fight" <http://observer.com/2009/12/planned-broadway-triangle-housing-passes-council-but-not-without-a-fight/>. December 21, 2009.

THE SOLUTIONS: A RESPONSIVE GOVERNMENT FOR AN INNOVATIVE COMMUNITY

Two critical lessons can be learned from the BTCC's work:

- 1.) Communities need to have a responsive government that listens to community residents, responds to community needs and supports community innovation;
- 2.) Communities need access to capital to put forth a vision that can create a healthier economy and environment.

TRANSPARENCY AND PARTICIPATION IN THE PLANNING PROCESS

Governments' actions are better and constituents' needs are better met when governments are transparent and participatory. A transparent government provides information to residents about how and why decisions are made. A participatory government actively involves residents in the decision-making process.

In the Broadway Triangle, the lack of transparency and community engagement led to a weaker plan, protracted litigation, and prime development land that is still fallow. With more transparency and community participation, plans for Broadway Triangle could produce greater public benefits, speed development by gaining resident cooperation and advance the goals of reducing energy consumption and creating clean energy as outlined by the City's PlaNYC 2030.

To improve transparency in the process of building sustainable neighborhoods, local governments should:

- Collect data on multiple variables³⁰, including demographic data like employment, health and rent burden that influence sustainability, disaggregated by race, and use this data to identify who will benefit and who will be marginalized by potential rezoning or redevelopment plans.
- Make data publicly available in accessible formats including print, online and in Excel or Word formats.
- Disclose to the public which organizations and individuals are participating in the planning process.
- Appoint a local official to liaise with community leaders and residents.

In addition to transparency, governments should incorporate full participation by affected residents in all planning efforts that impact land use.

Community engagement is not new; New York City has collaborated with communities in the past to devise inclusive development plans. For example, in Brooklyn's Sunset Park neighborhood, Community Board 7, City Councilwoman Sarah Gonzalez and the Pratt Center collaborated in an effort to engage

³⁰ Some metrics that can and should be measured include: unemployment, health factors, age of housing, median rent-burden, access to public spaces and green space, proximity to brownfields, green house gas emissions, renewable energy potential, number of affordable housing units, median household income. Elements of sustainability planning can be found at ICLEI USA: <http://www.icleiusa.org/action-center/planning/sustainability-planning-toolkit/planning-overview/scope-of-a-sustainability-plan>.

community residents around rezoning. The original plan favored high-rise development that threatened to drive up rents in the predominantly Latino and Chinese working class community. In response, Pratt, the Community Board and Councilwoman Gonzalez co-convened a series of workshops, held during evenings and weekends, bringing together city officials and residents. As a result, the City Planning Commission crafted a rezoning plan that maintained access to the park and built affordable housing. It is a successful example of a responsive City agency meeting the needs of its residents.

To be inclusive and participatory in the process of building sustainable neighborhoods, local governments should:

- Reach out to all constituents across race and, if a multi-racial coalition like the BTCC exists, make it a key partner.
- Identify established community leaders and institutions, like the Pratt Center, El Puente, or Bedford-Stuyvesant Restoration Corporation, to ensure outreach and invitations to as many constituents as possible.
- Engage community leaders and nonprofits at the beginning of and throughout the planning process by holding community workshops, hosting charettes and meeting with individuals to ask about community needs, priorities and interests. These meetings should be scheduled at different times of the day, including weekends and evenings, to provide meaningful opportunities for residents to participate.

ACCESS TO FINANCING

Historically and currently, financial institutions have invested insufficiently in communities of color. Public and private support for cooperative ventures is lacking. And communities of color often struggle to access necessary funding for exciting plans like the BTCC's.³¹ A mix of public and private support is critical for communities of color to lead in a renewable energy economy.

The BTCC targeted two public programs that could support their endeavors and be used to leverage private investment to help finance the rest of the project. First, the BTCC identified the Federal Sustainable Communities Grant as a source of funding. Local governments are vital partners to receive these grants. Yet, due to the failure of City officials to include and engage the BTCC in redeveloping the Broadway Triangle, the City and the community missed out on the window of opportunity to apply for and receive the grant.

Secondly, the BTCC identified the New York State Energy Research & Development Authority (NYSERDA) as a potential partner. NYSERDA funding alone would not be large enough to implement its plan, and given the strain on its resources and its legal battle with the City, the BTCC did not have enough technical or staffing capacity to leverage NYSERDA support to attract other investors.

³¹ Oliver, Melvin and Shapiro, Thomas. *Black Wealth, White Wealth: A New Perspective on Racial Inequality*

These types of federal and state programs can provide vital grants to innovative community and regional plans for energy, transit and housing. Funding levels are often too small to fully support larger projects like the one the BTCC proposed. Yet public grants can provide the initial capital to communities of color that cannot easily access private dollars so they can attract the private dollars they need to make their plans a reality.

Private support could come from mission or program-related investments from foundations. These are low-interest loans made to support projects that are close to the foundation's mission. These funds can often be used to leverage additional funding opportunities as well.

Whether it is from public, foundation or other private sources, in addition to bricks and mortar, funding for community development should include:

- Legal capacity to advise communities on regulatory policies and planning processes;
- Time, resources, and meeting space for community-planning charettes;
- Building capacity of local leadership to develop business and fundraising plans;
- Supporting the strategic capacity of multi-racial coalitions to engage in city planning and policy efforts; and
- Implementation of community-based plans.

A POLICY SOLUTION COMBINING TRANSPARENCY AND PARTICIPATION WITH FINANCING

The Center for Social Inclusion is developing a policy idea to support local innovations like the BTCC's vision for an Energy Plus neighborhood through creation of community-based "Energy Improvement Districts" (EIDs).³²

An EID is an area designated by the local government that can be as large as a neighborhood or as small as a single block, depending on the identified need in the community. EID designation would provide the community targeted financing, such as public bonds, state and federal grants or low-interest loans from public and private lenders. EIDs receive regulatory incentives and technical assistance to support energy efficiency efforts or development of small-scale alternative energy systems. In Connecticut, for example, legislation authorizes municipalities to set up EIDs and finance them by issuing bonds.

With an EID designation, communities can influence how they use and create energy and are given a pathway to financing their innovation. Focusing EIDs on communities most in need of energy improvement, whose residents are least likely to be able to afford energy alternatives on their own, can help spur community-scale innovation. Community members can use EIDs to improve their neighborhood, whether it is through efficiency upgrades or community-scale renewable energy generation. Selecting areas for EID investment should account for community assets, such as vacant properties or buildings owned by community institutions that have potential not only for efficiency

³² For more information about EIDs please see CSI's recent paper: *Energy Democracy: Supporting Community Innovation* <http://www.centerforsocialinclusion.org/supporting-community-innovation/>

upgrades, but also for solar or other renewable energy generation projects. [To elevate fairness and equity, and target communities that stand to benefit the most, metrics for determining EID designation should take into consideration income status, race and ethnicity as well as sustainability indicators like housing costs, access to green spaces and health factors.](#)

EIDs can also support creative public-private partnerships. For example, an EID could provide an opportunity for collaboration among city officials, a local church and nearby businesses to develop the area. One example could be using EIDs to create a community-solar project on a former brownfield site. To ensure measurable community inclusion, EID's would incorporate measures like those described earlier to incorporate transparency and true community participation every step of the way.

In the case of the Broadway Triangle, an EID designation would have helped the City recognize the BTCC as a potential partner in the process. The three neighborhoods fall under the EID focus on "energy-poor" areas, those that lack efficient technologies while paying more for energy costs. Rather than fast-tracking a plan and excluding community voices, as the original city-backed RBSCC/UJO solution did, an EID would require City officials to engage in participatory planning processes with community groups in the impacted area.

An EID could also have helped finance the BTCC plan. As entities created by a state or local government, EIDs could be eligible for public support, such as federal grants and loans, or they might benefit from loan guarantees, low-interest loans, grants, municipal bonding opportunities or even special taxes. If the Broadway Triangle was a designated EID, it might have gotten a state guarantee of financing that could be leveraged for other funding opportunities, like private-public partnerships.

Lastly, EID designation can make communities eligible for needed technical assistance. For example, many federal energy technical assistance programs deal with municipal governments, not community organizations. Since the local government administers an EID, EIDs can be a conduit for technical assistance to communities that want to develop energy efficiency and generation projects.

CONCLUSION

The Broadway Triangle energy-plus neighborhood is a transformative solution. It recognizes a shared asset and provides a shared solution where communities of color are producers and decision-makers in how they can create and save energy rather than acting solely as consumers. While this innovative solution has been stymied for now in Brooklyn, the BTCC journey shows that the fight for community-scale energy requires perseverance, multi-racial coalition building and flexibility in strategy. While the Broadway Triangle remains fallow, opportunities still exist for success. It will require an accountable government - one that is transparent, participatory and collaborative from beginning to end. And it will require a real dedication of public and private capital to create a more sustainable and just future for the communities surrounding Broadway Triangle and the City as a whole.

APPENDIX I: COURT DECISION ON THE BROADWAY TRIANGLE COMMUNITY COALITION LAWSUIT

When it became clear the City would move to adopt the UJO/RBSCC Plan without any community outreach, the BTCC partnered with the New York Civil Liberties Union and sued to enjoin the City's rezoning plan for lack of transparency in planning and civil rights violations under the Fair Housing Act.³³ The BTCC quickly won a preliminary injunction blocking the City from transferring land to the RBSCC/UJO, and the final court ruling effectively ended the City-backed plan to redevelop the Broadway Triangle. The ultimate legal decision found that the City violated the Fair Housing Act by proposing development that would further segregate the community and discriminate against Black and Latino residents. The decision gives the BTCC an opportunity to continue to pursue its vision for an energy-plus neighborhood.

Court Finds City Plan Discriminatory

Nearly two years after the lawsuit was filed, the New York Supreme Court found merit in the BTCC's claim that the city violated the Fair Housing Act in its planning proposal for the Broadway Triangle. On January 4, 2012, the Court halted the City plan. The Court states that race neutral housing policies violate the Fair Housing Act when "racial segregation is perpetuated or if a minority group or groups are adversely impacted." According to Justice Emily Jane Goodman, the city's "race-neutral" plan does just that.

The Court found that the no-bid designation to transfer land to the UJO and RBSCC to develop large apartments, despite the demand for smaller apartments, "perpetuates segregation and disproportionately impacts minority groups". Further, the Court found that the City failed to consider racial impacts in their plan and the City must be accountable to the Fair Housing Act, which requires that any housing plans using federal funding must assess the development with a racial lens.

Furthermore, the Court dismissed the City's evidence-less and offensive claim that the reason Blacks and Latinos would not benefit is because they choose **not** to live in the Williamsburg area. In fact, the Court cites research by Columbia Professor Lance Freedman which shows that the City's housing proposal disproportionately favors and benefits White populations.

³³ Interview notes from conversation with Professor Ron Shiffman at the Pratt Graduate Center for Planning and the Environment.

APPENDIX II: NEW POSSIBILITIES FOR THE BROADWAY TRIANGLE

In the midst of the Court battle, Pfizer sold its building to a developer, Acumen Capital Partners, in February 2011. Acumen has a track record of environmentally friendly, sustainable and inclusive business practices. Hopeful for a possible partnership, Acumen and members from the BTCC met in June of 2011 to start the dialogue on how they can work together.

So far, Acumen has expressed interest in using its roof for urban agriculture and energy generation and is open to having community entrepreneurs occupy space in the building. But prior to such actions, Acumen must establish an anchor business large enough that it could pay the majority of the building costs, making it sustainable for the developer to involve small businesses.

With support from the Pratt Institute, the BTCC has reached out to other strategic partners who have worked on redeveloping old manufacturing spaces. The BTCC invited representatives from community organizations, particularly those interested in energy production, as well as a major Black-owned developer, New Spectrum, which wants to pursue a food security business in the region. Other partners include developers from the Brooklyn Navy Yard who have worked to support community-focused businesses in their area. Additionally, El Puente, a Latino-based community organization, and CADRE, an organization representing Latino artists and artisans in the area, have worked with Acumen to develop some related cooperative endeavors.

Building a relationship with Acumen Partners to use the Pfizer building has the potential to achieve the BTCC's goal of incubating green jobs. The building is now host to an emerging market of start-up and established small-scale food manufacturers. However, the rest of the Triangle's land remains fallow. Efforts to develop this land continue. In April 2012, six members of the BTCC put forth a bid of \$10 million to purchase lots adjacent to the Pfizer building (not the entire Triangle) and create over 800 units of affordable housing. These units would "ensure a balanced economic, racial and religious community."³⁴ Unfortunately they lost this bid to a private company that specializes in housing and mixed-use developments.³⁵

While the community's holistic plan for the Broadway Triangle has yet to be achieved, there is still hope. Victory in the courtroom brought attention to the communities' demand for transparency and inclusion. Any plans by the City to develop the Triangle will be closely watched and hopefully incorporate the BTCC's continual efforts. While next steps are not clear, the recent incremental changes forecast a more sustainable community with more jobs, affordable housing and racial inclusion.

³⁴ Durkin, Erin. "Groups bid \$10M to buy vacant Pfizer property" *New York Daily News*. April 5, 2012.

http://articles.nydailynews.com/2012-04-05/news/31296293_1_pfizer-spokesman-chris-loder-pfizer-property-pfizer-property

³⁵ Short, Aaron. "Pfizer Sells off Last Properties in Brooklyn" *Brooklyn Paper*. April 23, 2012

http://www.brooklynpaper.com/stories/35/17/dtg_pfizersale_2012_04_27_bk.html

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We work with community groups and national organizations to develop policy ideas, foster effective leadership, and develop communications tools for an opportunity-rich world in which we all will thrive.

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