



mybrooklyn

study guide

a companion to the documentary film My Brooklyn



JAMEL SHABAZZ

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Letter from the Filmmakers



Kelly Anderson & Allison Lirish Dean

By the time Michael Bloomberg was elected mayor of New York City in 2001, gentrification in Brooklyn was already well underway, but it was piecemeal and slow-paced compared to what was to come.

The new administration inaugurated a sweeping city-wide development agenda that, as we both witnessed, would accelerate gentrification, and reshape New York City on a scale not seen since the Robert Moses era of the mid-twentieth century. As this vision unfolded over the next decade, many of the things we cherished about Brooklyn—its racial, economic, and social diversity, its unique independent businesses, and its vibrant street life—began to disappear.

Nowhere was this sort of change more visible than at Downtown Brooklyn's Fulton Mall, an eight-block pedestrian strip and collection of side streets sandwiched between two major city thoroughfares. Near where we both lived, Fulton Mall had been notoriously resistant to gentrification for decades, holding out as a funky and bustling African-American and Caribbean shopping district that served Brooklyn's working class. The Mall, we later learned, was also the city's third most profitable shopping district, attracting over 100,000 people per day. Despite this success, a major plan to rezone Downtown Brooklyn threatened to erase it. Documenting what was to become of the Mall would allow us to dig into one of the most critical questions facing New Yorkers: What sort of a place was the city becoming, and who was it for?

That we ourselves were gentrifiers of a sort—white, highly educated women who had moved to New York to pursue creative interests—complicated our position as filmmakers. We knew our presence in Brooklyn was part of what had made it more attractive to developers. At the same time, we were also being pushed out of our neighborhoods by rising rents. In local debates, much of the blame for gentrification was leveled at white, more affluent newcomers. This was understandable, but what we found in making the film was that there were also much larger, invisible forces at work, namely private corporations in collusion with city officials. To unpack and demystify these hidden drivers of urban change and get beyond individual blame were the primary reasons we made *My Brooklyn*.



While filming, we witnessed a tendency for those who patronized the Mall to talk about it very differently from those who didn't. Mall patrons went for good deals, to socialize, and to enjoy the vibrant street life. They often evoked the Mall's rich cultural history as a source of attachment: from the 1980s on it had been a hub of hip-hop fashion and music. Those who didn't use the Mall on the other hand—generally newer white residents—disparaged it as blighted and in need of fixing. The media largely amplified this view and excluded positive perspectives, perpetuating a false sense of consensus that Fulton Mall was a failed space. With *My Brooklyn*, we sought to provide a corrective to this lopsided narrative by elevating the voices of the communities who had long been rooted downtown and who cherished the Mall.

Finally, we made the film in hopes that it would encourage people to begin to investigate the planning process in their own localities. While they can seem dull, tools like zoning, subsidies, and public-private partnerships have an enormous role in shaping our environments: whether places are affordable, provide good jobs for local residents, quality transportation, healthy food, opportunities for human connection, and so on. Understanding these tools and the power structures in which their use is embedded is critical to the pursuit of equitable development.

We hope that *My Brooklyn* provides a starting point from which students of urban change can begin to critically examine the kinds of development unfolding in their own communities.

Enjoy the film!

Kelly Anderson, Director

Allison Lirish Dean, Producer

2015

www.mybrooklynmovie.com

“The mythology has it that gentrification is a process led by individual pioneers whose sweat equity, daring and vision are paving the way for those among us who are more timid. But... it is apparent that where urban pioneers venture, the banks, real estate companies, the state, or other collective economic actors have generally gone before.”

—NEIL SMITH

Introduction



My Brooklyn documents the transformation of Downtown Brooklyn’s Fulton Mall from a successful working-class African-American and Caribbean shopping district into a more upscale neighborhood of luxury residential towers and corporate chain retail.

The film also follows Director Kelly Anderson’s personal journey, as a Brooklyn “gentrifier,” to unravel the complex and often invisible forces behind this dramatic change. As Anderson’s investigation progresses, a multi-layered story emerges involving a web of local residents and small business owners, community activists, city agencies, and private developers.

The story unfolds in the middle of New York City’s now historic Bloomberg years (2002-2013). Using Fulton Mall as a lens, *My Brooklyn* traces what occurs on the ground when a CEO mayor treats government as a private corporation, desirable residents and businesses as customers and clients, and the city itself as a luxury product to be branded and forcefully marketed. The film presents intimate portraits of Downtown Brooklyn residents, small business owners, and community leaders as they confront a secretive, top-down planning process and advocate for accountability, affordability, and inclusion. We also hear from promi-

nent planners and decision-makers who, through the film, enter into a dialogue with those affected by their plans. This conflict is set against the historical backdrop of Brooklyn’s legacy of racially discriminatory land use patterns going back to the 1930s. This larger context helps explain the deep connection local residents have developed to Fulton Mall, and the profound ways in which race and class have shaped, and continue to shape, differences in our perceptions and experiences of urban space.

While rooted in New York, the story presented in *My Brooklyn* has relevance for national audiences, as the Bloomberg-style neoliberal¹ approach to urban development replicates in cities across the country, from San Francisco to New Orleans, and even globally. An increasing number of ordinary citizens in the 21st century, threatened with economic marginalization and displacement, are asking: Whose desires matter? Who gets to say what the shape of the city will be? And how can we ensure that urban environments

¹ See the glossary within this guide for a definition of this term.

get developed in a way that meets the needs of local inhabitants, instead of just those of developers, and the corporate powers behind them?

By providing a detailed look at the transformation of a contested locality—the Fulton Mall—*My Brooklyn* provides insight into how people of different backgrounds and with different historical legacies view urban change. It also makes clear the negative effects that neoliberal development policies can have in low-income communities of color in particular, and the urgent need for urban residents to unite across social divides in support of equitable development.

As an educational tool, the film gives us an opportunity to examine our own experiences, attitudes, and beliefs about different kinds of neighborhoods and development patterns. It is the filmmakers' hope that this process of reflection will help viewers engage more closely with local development and make the planning process one that affirms urban space's value as a commons that serves everyone's basic needs.

By following local community members as they navigate institutions that have a significant impact on our lives, *My Brooklyn* encourages viewers to examine their own beliefs about neighborhood change, reclaim their right to participate in the planning process, and work with neighbors and policymakers to ensure that development is equitable.

“White people do not have to expressly target black people in order to exploit them. They only have to locate their interests in private and public policies that have disparate impact. Freed from involvement in color-specific political decisions and specific acts of racial oppression, white Americans can more easily imagine the injustices of their society to be natural or irrational.”

—CRAIG STEVEN WILDER

Craig Steven Wilder, *A Covenant With Color: Race and Social Power in Brooklyn*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 2001)



Key Issues and Disciplines

My Brooklyn raises critical issues of contemporary urban planning relevant to a wide variety of urban contexts in the United States and beyond. The film has the capacity to engage students and audiences from diverse backgrounds, and will be of particular interest to people exploring or working on the issues and within the disciplines below.

KEY ISSUES

Affordable Housing

African-American Downtowns &

Commercial Districts

Commercial Gentrification & Displacement

Community Organizing & Activism

Economic Development

Gentrification & Displacement

Immigrant Communities

Land Use Planning

Neoliberalism

Political Economy of Urban Space

Privatization

Public-Private Partnerships

Race & Space

Redlining

Reimagining the City/Right to the City

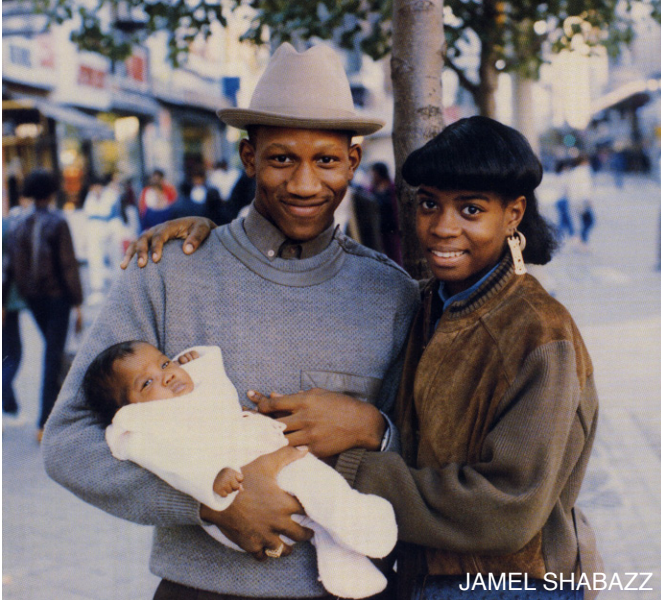
Small Business Issues & Local Economies

Tax Policy (e.g. development subsidies)

Urban Governance

Zoning





KEY DISCIPLINES

African-American Studies

American Studies

Architecture

Cultural Anthropology

Cultural Studies

Environmental Psychology

Geography

Historic Preservation

Political Science

Public Policy

Sociology

Urban Affairs

Urban Design

Urban History

Urban Planning

People We Meet in *My Brooklyn*

Small Business Owners & Employees



Jeff Gargiulo

Owner, Bagel Guys; threatened with displacement by a high-rise development



Jack Fuzalov

Owner, Jack's Barber Shop; threatened with displacement by a high-rise development



Arnold Evans

Barber extraordinaire; employed at Jack's Barber Shop



Eric Gift

Owner, A&B Bookstore, which specializes in black history and culture, and which has been in Downtown Brooklyn since the 1980s



Joyce Kheim

Owner, Lawrence Street Wigs and Hats (now Hair Heaven); threatened with displacement by a large condo development

Local Residents



Rahsun Houston
Social worker and Brooklyn resident; has been coming to Fulton Mall all his life



Randy Leigh & Beverly Corbin
Longtime Brooklyn residents and members of Families United for Racial and Economic Equality (FU-REE), which is fighting for inclusion in Downtown Brooklyn's redevelopment



Kelly Anderson
My Brooklyn Director and Brooklyn resident since 1988; working through her own role in gentrification

City Officials



Purnima Kapur
Head of the Brooklyn office of the New York City Department of City Planning



Mayor Michael Bloomberg
The mayor of New York City from 2002-2013; also the founder and partial owner of Bloomberg LP, the global financial data and media company, and one of the 20 wealthiest people in the world



Charles Barron
Member of the New York City Council from the 42nd District

Economic Development Officials



Joe Chan

President of the Downtown Brooklyn Partnership, a public-private organization charged with implementing the Downtown Brooklyn Plan

Developers



Joe Sitt

Developer, owns Thor Equities, made \$100 million from the sale of the Albee Square Mall lease to new developers after Downtown Brooklyn was rezoned

Community Organizations



Families United for Racial and Economic Equality (FUREE)

A Brooklyn-based community organization helping local residents and small business owners fight for inclusion in the Downtown Brooklyn planning process

Experts



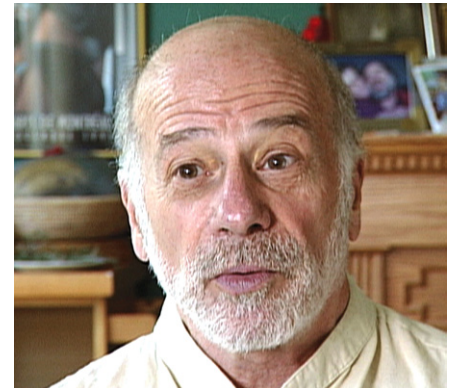
Jamel Shabazz

Photographer; documented Brooklyn's black and immigrant communities and the social and cultural life of Downtown Brooklyn in the 1970s, 80s, and 90s



Craig Wilder

Historian and Professor, Massachusetts Institute of Technology; grew up in the Brooklyn neighborhood of Bed-Stuy; author of *A Covenant With Color: Race and Social Power in Brooklyn*



Tom Angotti

Author of *New York For Sale: Community Planning Confronts Global Real Estate* and Professor of Urban Planning, Hunter College of the City University of New York



Alyssa Katz

Journalist; author of *Our Lot: How Real Estate Came to Own Us*, and Senior Fellow at the Pratt Institute for Community Development



Michelle De La Uz

Executive Director of Fifth Avenue Committee, one of the nation's most successful community development corporations and nonprofit housing developers



**“If I am not yet
disenchanted, I too have
been dismayed by the
way the city has morphed
from a lumbering modern
giant to a smooth, sleek,
more expensive replica
of its former self. I have
seen this not just as a
gradual or even inevitable
process of revitalization,
but as a determined,
concentrated process of
destruction.”**

—SHARON ZUKIN

Sharon Zukin, *Naked City: The Death and Life of Authentic Places* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010)

Since *My Brooklyn*



SHAWN HOKE

In 2013, New Yorkers elected Bill de Blasio, New York City's first Democratic mayor since 1993. De Blasio won on a platform that vowed to address the problem of "two New Yorks," one for the rich and one for the poor.

Momentum had been building toward this shift in political tone well before the election, and community organizing and activism played a major role.

In June of 2012, for instance, the New York City Council passed the Fair Wages for New Yorkers Act, overriding Mayor Bloomberg's veto. The new law requires any private development project accepting \$1 million or more in taxpayer subsidies to pay employees a living wage of \$10 per hour with health benefits, or \$11.50 per hour without benefits. This is an important step toward more equality because it means that the city's economic development programs now contain enforceable wage standards, giving credence to the notion that when tax dollars are used to promote private enterprise, citizens have the right to expect something in return.

But De Blasio's approach to development may not be turning out to be as different as many hoped it might be from that of the Bloomberg Administration. As of August 2014, a 116-page housing report by the new administration commits to building 200,000 affordable housing units over ten years, but still emphasizes the primary role of government as facilitating private, market-driven development through public-private partnerships.² The report endorses a continuation of the Bloomberg building boom, the idea being that, as the city increases its housing supply, rents will naturally come down because there will be more to go around for all. Tom Angotti points out, however, that over the past two decades, this trickle-down theory has failed: rents in the city have actually grown dramatically despite an increase in the total housing supply, while 250,000 units of rental housing have been

² The City of New York, Office of Housing and Economic Development, Housing New York: A Five-Borough, Ten-Year Plan, 2014, accessed August 20, 2014, http://www.nyc.gov/html/housing/assets/downloads/pdf/housing_plan.pdf

deregulated.³

While De Blasio's approach to development may not fundamentally differ from Bloomberg's, his administration has promised greater commitment to leveraging private development for greater public benefit. If this promise is fulfilled, we should see the city adopt tougher equity standards to which developers must conform before their projects are given city support. If such standards are adopted, more housing units, whether new or existing, should be reserved for truly low-income people. In addition, the New York City Housing Authority (NYCHA) is likely to have a larger budget than it has had in a long time, and units that were vacant for years under prior administrations will be made habitable and available to families who need them.

In Downtown Brooklyn, the effects of the rezoning continue to unfold. Most of the small businesses displaced in *My Brooklyn* have been unable to return to the downtown area. Two exceptions are Lawrence Street Wigs and Hats (now Hair Heaven), and A&B Bookstore (now Official Connection), both of which have successfully relocated a few blocks from their former buildings. Time will tell whether these businesses are eventually pushed out as well, as gentrification often involves a pattern of multiple relocations before being priced out entirely.

Meanwhile, scores of new chain retail stores continue to open in the area, including Aeropostale, Aldo, American Eagle Outfitters, Armani Exchange, Banana Republic, Brooklyn Industries, Express, Gap, H+M, Nordstrom Rack, Panera Bread, Shake Shack, and Starbucks. Upscale food markets including Brooklyn Fare and Khim's Millennium Market have also opened. Many of these stores are more expensive and serve a more affluent clientele than the people who have historically patronized Downtown Brooklyn.

On the housing front, news reports as of August 2014 continue to herald Downtown Brooklyn's housing market as a "gold rush."⁴ Ever more high-rise condos are being built, as rents and housing prices continue to increase in Brooklyn as a whole. 388 Bridge Street, on the block where Jack's Barber Shop used to be, is now Brooklyn's tallest building, with rentals priced from \$2,730 to \$5,995 a month, and condos selling for between \$700,000 and \$1.6 million. Just 48 (or 12 percent) of the development's 378 units, the largest of which are 2-bedroom, will be "below market rate," with rents between \$546 and \$908 per month.

Several additional, even bigger projects are also under construction, including Avalon Willoughby West, a 57-story tower that will include 861 market-rate rental units, and a 70-story tower on Flatbush Avenue that will include 495 apartments and nearly 109,000

3 Tom Angotti, "A Tale of Two Housing Plans: De Blasio's Drive to Build Big Undermines Neighborhood Preservation," *The Independent*, June 12, 2014, accessed August 20, 2014, <http://independent.org/2014/06/12/tale-two-housing-plans>

4 Max Gross, "Forget Rentals, Downtown Brooklyn Condos Booming," *New York Post*, July 16, 2014, accessed August 20, 2014, <http://nypost.com/2014/07/16/forget-rentals-downtown-brooklyn-condos-booming/>



“The conundrum of gentrification does not turn on explaining where middle-class demand comes from. Rather, it turns on explaining the essentially geographical question of why central and inner areas of cities, which for decades could not satisfy the demands of the middle class, now appear to do so handsomely.”

—NEIL SMITH

square feet of commercial space. As of September 2014, it is unknown to the public whether the latter building will include any affordable housing. As an indicator of how sharply prices have risen over time, a unit in the BellTell Loft building (where Rahsun Houston used to pay his phone bill) that sold in 2008 for \$896,135 is now selling for \$1.35 million, an appreciation of over 50 percent.

After several years of organizing, Families United for Racial and Economic Equality (FUREE), in collaboration with other local advocacy groups, has made significant progress on an agreement with the developers of City Point, a new complex being developed on the parcel of city land once occupied by the now-demolished Albee Square Mall. As of October 2014, unions and developers are in the process of negotiating a Project Labor Agreement (PLA) which, if finalized and put into effect, will apply to the construction component of the third and final phase of City Point. The PLA includes 100 percent union labor, local hiring of construction workers, and genuine community oversight of the hiring process and local contracting goals. The third phase of City Point will consist of a 65-story tower with retail at the base and residential on top. There is no affordable housing in the first or third phases of the project, but of the 690 total housing units in phase two, 125—or 18 percent of them—will be designated affordable. Organizers are currently working to increase the amount of affordable housing in the complex.

Beyond New York, countless media reports continue to confirm gentrification and displacement as serious and growing problems nationwide. More and more low-income communities, often communities of color, are threatened with the expansion of luxury development, rising housing costs, shrinking opportunity for ordinary people, and a government retreat from regulation of real estate markets. This crisis is magnified and complicated by the effects of climate change because so-called natural disasters, such as hurricanes Katrina and Sandy, create prime opportunities for real estate speculation when poor residents are displaced and subsequently excluded from rebuilding plans. In response, many communities are organizing

for equitable development and framing gentrification and displacement as urban human rights issues. An outstanding leader in this effort has been Right to the City (RTTC). Formed in 2007, RTTC is a national alliance of racial, economic, and environmental justice organizations working to stop the displacement of marginalized communities and ensure that they are able to shape and design their historic urban neighborhoods according to community needs.





DANNY LYON

“Inequitable real estate development in cities is the knife-edge of neoliberal urbanism, reflecting a wider shift toward a more individualist and market-driven political economy in cities. Gentrification, publicly funded projects for private benefit, and the demolition of affordable housing are all part of this knife-edge.”

—JASON HACKWORTH

Jason Hackworth, *The Neoliberal City: governance, ideology and development in American urbanism* (London and Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2007), 191–192.

Glossary



Alternative Plans

As the term suggests, alternative plans offer a different vision of development from official plans put forth by government or business. Often formed in response to planning that occurs behind closed doors and with little local input, communities may develop alternative plans as a way to better address the realities and needs of people most affected by development.

In *My Brooklyn*, The Pratt Center for Community Development puts forth an alternative plan that proposes an integrated old-meets-new aesthetic, using vacant floors instead of demolishing buildings, enhancing the current retail to include hip-hop fashion and music, and engaging a diverse group in the planning process. In the film, Kelly comments on how these plans were shared with the Downtown Brooklyn Partnership, The New York City Economic Development Corporation, and Department of City Planning, but were essentially ignored. This may seem discouraging, but organizing efforts often take long periods to succeed. Since the film, community groups have won a number of important battles in Downtown Brooklyn. See the “Since *My Brooklyn*” section of this guide for examples of victories at the Albee Square Mall/City Point site.

Economic Development and Subsidies

In its best sense, economic development aims to raise the living standards of average working people. Governments attempt to accomplish this goal by channeling resources, often in the form of subsidies, into fostering new enterprise and creating jobs. (Subsidies are any form of government support that lowers a company's cost of doing business.) While these are uncontroversial goals, in reality economic development is all too often an obscure and complicated process by which scarce tax revenue is diverted to private interests with no real guarantee of any public benefit. As a result, school systems, hospitals, libraries, and other public institutions and programs are drained of funding while cities pour money into projects such as stadiums and shopping malls that do not bring higher wages, better benefits, a stronger tax base, or better public services. In fact, the jobs these projects promise often never fully materialize. If they do, workers are often paid such low wages that they become dependent on tax-financed health care or other public relief systems, thereby shifting the tax burden from large companies onto working families and small businesses.

In an example from the film, the City Point Development—featured in *My Brooklyn* and being built on the former Albee Square Mall site—was approved for millions in public subsidies by an arm of the NYC Economic Development Corporation despite no commitment to living-wage jobs, local hiring, or affordable space for small businesses displaced from the demolished site. The average U.S. state now has more than 30 economic development subsidies, even though research shows that tax cuts don't make a difference in attracting jobs. An alternative concept of economic development favors devoting money to public purposes that can be expected to benefit present and future generations, such as infrastructure and skill development. In fact, private enterprise benefits enormously from this sort of public investment. Some thinkers on economic development, such as Amartya Sen, go much further and reject the idea of economic development as only material welfare, expanding the definition to encompass a range of political, economic, and social freedoms as well.⁵



⁵ Amartya Sen, *Development as Freedom* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1999).

Gentrification & Gentrifiers

Gentrification is a contested concept with multiple definitions, but can generally be described as a set of processes in which capital is reinvested in neighborhoods—usually those that have experienced a period of disinvestment—to create spaces that appeal to wealthier groups of people, often whites. The process leads to significant changes in the way neighborhoods look and feel; for instance, the housing, stores, amenities, and even infrastructure may undergo significant changes or upgrades.

But as Craig Wilder points out in *My Brooklyn*, gentrification is not necessarily about creating better places to live. Over time, lower-income groups are displaced, and therefore do not benefit from the changes. Even for those not displaced, a neighborhood's "improvement" may simultaneously mean the erasure of their history, culture, social ties, or other community attachments. Gentrification can therefore entail a lost sense of belonging to, and being valued within, a community, for both displaced and remaining residents.

In *My Brooklyn*, Kelly identifies herself as a "gentrifier." By this she means that she is relatively new to the neighborhood, and is more representative of the type of person that government and developers would like to attract to the city. However, as the film shows, gentrifiers exist on a spectrum: Kelly eventually becomes a victim of gentrification herself when rents continue to rise and even wealthier residents move in.



“If the pain of displacement is not a central component of what we are dealing with in studying gentrification—indeed, is not what brings us to the subject in the first place—we are not just missing one factor in a multi-factorial equation; we are missing the central point that needs to be addressed.”

– PETER MARCUSE

Peter Marcuse, "A note from Peter Marcuse," *City 14* (2010): 187–188, accessed October 29, 2014, DOI: 10.1080/13604811003732420



Luxury and Affordable Housing

Luxury housing is a marketing concept real estate firms use to attract their target demographic. These developments often offer amenities such as gyms, lounges, upgraded fixtures, and increased security, and are typically priced well above existing area rents. Following federal guidelines, “affordable housing” is defined as housing that costs less than 30 percent of a household’s total income. This is not the same as “low-income housing,” which specifically targets households that fall well below the area median income (AMI). Local governments have some discretion in how they allocate resources to incentivize housing for families at different income levels, and specific towns, cities, and regions will differ in this regard. How “affordable” is defined is important to scrutinize in any given context—in other words, to whom, exactly, is “affordable” housing in fact affordable?

In *My Brooklyn*, Kelly and Alyssa Katz tour new developments in Downtown Brooklyn, some of which include subsidized affordable units. But, because the AMI is calculated based on a geographic area that includes very wealthy counties outside the city of New York, it tends to be approximately twice as high as the AMI for Brooklyn. This means that many of these “affordable” units are not accessible to Brooklyn residents who need them most. The city must therefore find other tools to make housing available to lower-income groups. Cities also subsidize luxury housing. In the film, Katz points out the Oro, a luxury condo with no affordable housing that, through a program called 421-a, received millions of dollars in property tax breaks in a booming real estate market.

Neoliberalism

In an economic development context, Neoliberalism refers to a shift away from government as having primary responsibility for the creation and allocation of public resources, and toward policies that favor privatization, free trade, open markets, deregulation, and reductions in government spending in order to enhance the private sector’s role in the economy.

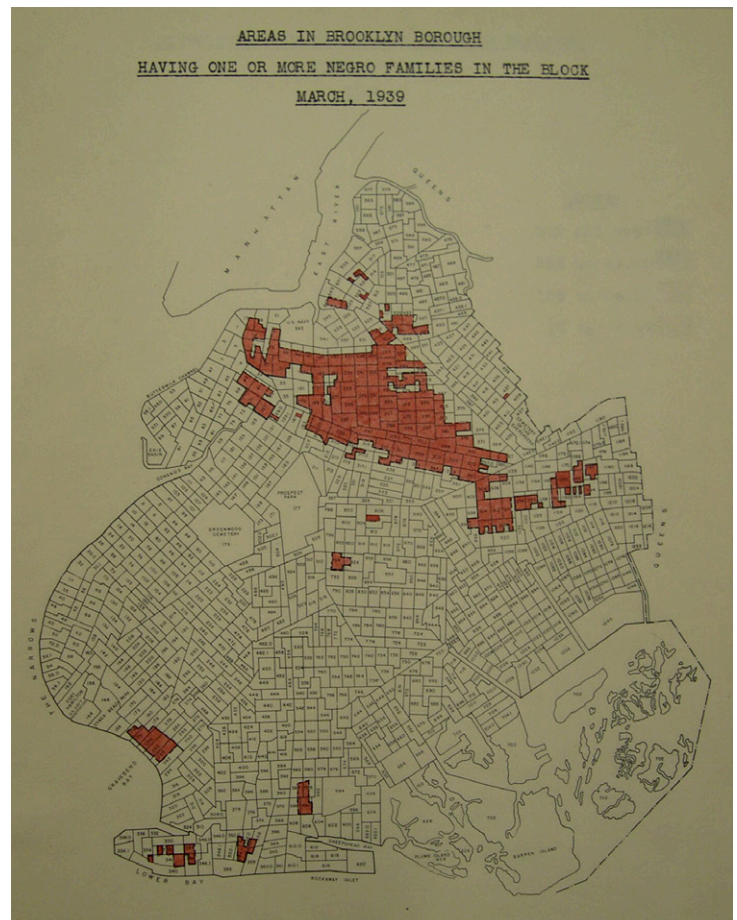
Public-Private Partnerships ⁶

This is a vague, slippery term. In its best sense, it refers to projects in which government and business play their respective roles properly, such as a regional training program in which both parties add to a region's skills base and thereby raise incomes. In its worst sense, business interests use it as a euphemism while they fail to produce promised benefits in exchange for vital tax resources. "Quasi-public" is a related term sometimes used to describe privatized economic development agencies, such as the Downtown Brooklyn Partnership, which is featured prominently in *My Brooklyn*. Such organizations rely heavily on public funds, and may or may not be subject to open records acts. The term "quasi-public" does not appear in state constitutions and may be of dubious legal standing. As documented in the film, these organizations also take private money and may be legally shielded from disclosing donors' identity (as is the case with the Downtown Brooklyn Partnership), making it difficult to analyze the relationship between money flows and development agendas.

Redlining & White Flight

Redlining is the practice of denying access to credit and financial services to homeowners and prospective homebuyers based on the perceived economic riskiness of a neighborhood. In cities across the United States, lenders literally drew red lines on maps designating certain neighborhoods ineligible for investment. The determination of risk was based not on rational criteria, such as the borrower's creditworthiness, but on arbitrary factors, such as the presence of African-Americans.

In *My Brooklyn*, historian Craig Wilder explains how white residents' mass abandonment of inner-city neighborhoods in the mid-20th century, commonly known as "white flight," was triggered in part by the economic quarantine that redlining placed on those communities. Because African-Americans and other people of color were unable to access the same types of loans and economic incentives that enabled whites to escape inner cities for the growing suburbs, they had no choice but to remain in increasingly isolated, declining urban districts. Meanwhile, developers profited from redlining by selling new suburban housing to whites, marketed under a promise of racial purity. Wilder explains how one of the great myths of this process of ghettoization is that black people, Puerto Ricans, and other non-white people "moved into these neighborhoods and destroyed them." But the real story, he says, is that despite the deleterious effects of redlining, these communities kept the real estate market from collapsing by opening new businesses, building community gardens, forming block associations,



⁶ Definition courtesy of Good Jobs First, Economic Development Glossary, <http://www.goodjobsfirst.org/resources/glossary>



and engaging in other collective efforts that “kept Brooklyn viable through one of the most miserable periods in the urban history of the United States.” Downtown Brooklyn’s evolution into a black working-class shopping district is part of that story.

Resistance & Community Organizing

Gentrification is often perceived as an inevitable process. This is in part because so many of the complex forces driving it are invisible to ordinary citizens. But as Craig Wilder explains in *My Brooklyn*, gentrification is always connected to a set of policy decisions in which ordinary people can intervene. This is true whether policies exist to actively promote gentrification or whether it is allowed to run rampant simply by lack of government regulation.

My Brooklyn documents the efforts of small-business owners and members of the nonprofit Families United for Racial and Economic Equality (FUREE) to resist being shut out of the process of redeveloping Downtown Brooklyn and to reshape plans in accordance with their needs. We witness community members engaged in the process of organizing—that is, identifying issues and common goals, and building a network of local people committed to mobilizing around them over the long term. Ordinary citizens hold meetings and rallies, attend public hearings to protest unfair subsidies for developers, engage in direct conflict with various officials, and educate each other about the policy tools (such as zoning) being used to promote gentrification.

FUREE’s efforts as portrayed in *My Brooklyn* represent a relatively short period of time. Many effective organizing campaigns take years, even decades. Notably, community groups in the Bronx used a similar set of strategies to successfully stop a major, publicly subsidized development plan for the Kingsbridge Armory when the developer refused to require that commercial tenants pay workers a living wage. The Right to the City Alliance was launched in 2007 to support community groups and their allies fighting pro-gentrification policies in cities across the nation.

Zoning

Local governments use zoning to regulate buildings' density, height, and design, as well as the type of use permitted (e.g. residential, commercial, industrial). In 1916, New York City passed the nation's first comprehensive zoning ordinance in response to the unregulated development of skyscrapers and the encroachment of industry upon wealthy residential neighborhoods, the latter being a classic example of using zoning to prevent what are perceived to be "incompatible" uses. Zoning is one of many tools urban planners use to manage existing resources and balance the needs of different constituencies and interests in a city. As such, it is inherently political. As Tom Angotti explains in *My Brooklyn*, zoning is not a neutral tool. For example, it can increase the value of land exponentially overnight, as occurred in Downtown Brooklyn, unleashing a flood of real estate speculation, and bringing social implications that must be confronted.

During Bloomberg's tenure as mayor, planning officials approved over 110 rezonings covering over 20 percent of the city. A major critique of planning during this era is that the administration relied too heavily on zoning as planning at the expense of other approaches and tools that could have led to healthier, more sustainable development patterns. As Michelle de la Uz of Fifth Avenue Committee explains in *My Brooklyn*, the Bloomberg-era rezonings allowed affluent communities to avoid new construction that might have encouraged racial and income diversity, while lower-income neighborhoods were targeted for large-scale redevelopment like that seen in Downtown Brooklyn. A more creative and tailored approach to zoning that anticipated and mitigated some of the private market's negative effects might have led to better outcomes.



Questions for Discussion

General Discussion Questions

1. In *My Brooklyn*, who was harmed by gentrification? In what specific ways were they harmed?
2. In *My Brooklyn*, who benefitted from gentrification? In what specific ways did they benefit?
3. Were there characters in the film you identified with or whose story particularly affected you? Which ones, and why?
4. Did the film change your understanding of gentrification? If so, how did it change?
5. Are the neighborhoods where you live, work, and shop similar to or different from the neighborhoods represented in the film? How are they similar or different?





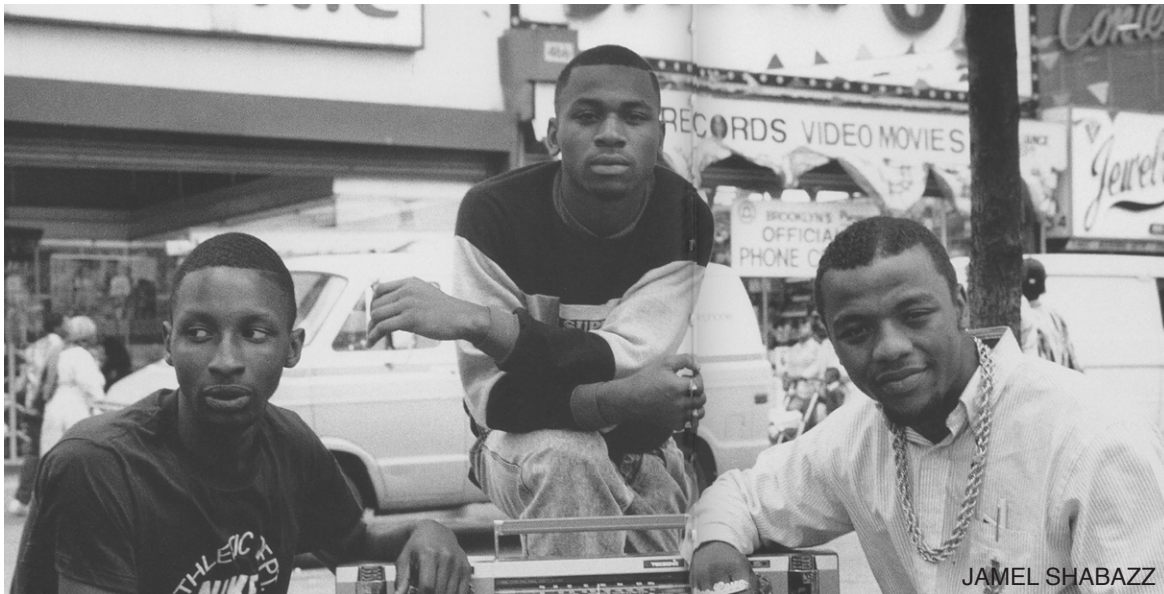
Policy Issues in *My Brooklyn*

My Brooklyn challenges some common assumptions about neighborhood change, namely that it is natural or inevitable, and that it is driven purely by market forces, or simply by people's decisions about where to live.

The following questions focus on how government policies play a significant role in gentrification, and specifically how they informed changes taking place in Downtown Brooklyn.

- 1. What is zoning, and how did zoning policy facilitate gentrification in Downtown Brooklyn? What impact did it have on the real estate market? What were the city's original stated goals in rezoning Downtown Brooklyn, and how did these differ from what was actually built? What does this discrepancy say about the relationship, in this instance, between government policy and the private market?**
- 2. What type of organization is the Downtown Brooklyn Partnership? What is its relationship to the city, and what role did it play in the redevelopment of Downtown Brooklyn? What are some problems the film identifies with the Downtown Brooklyn Partnership's role in the development process? Are there similar organizations in your community?**
- 3. In *My Brooklyn*, author Alyssa Katz takes Kelly to visit the Oro condo building in Downtown Brooklyn, which she explains is a market-rate condo receiving significant public subsidy (\$40 million over a decade), without requiring the developer to provide any public benefits, like affordable housing, in return. What was the film's critique of this use of subsidies in this instance, and do you agree or disagree?**

4. In *My Brooklyn*, Craig Wilder states: “The process of gentrification is not about people moving into a neighborhood and other people moving out of a neighborhood. The process of gentrification is about corporations sectioning off large chunks of those neighborhoods, and then planning out their long-term development.” What do you think Wilder means by this statement, and how does this idea manifest in the process of planning Downtown Brooklyn? Can you think of other examples—in your community and beyond—where this statement is true?



5. In *My Brooklyn*, Mayor Bloomberg states: “If you don’t like wealthy people or successful profit-making businesses, you’re not going to have a city. We want to attract those people here; that’s where we get the money to help those who are less fortunate.” What do you think the mayor means by this, and do you agree with him? What underlying assumptions are embedded in this statement? How might attracting wealthier people benefit the city, and help those who are economically struggling, and how might it not? What are some alternatives to this perspective?
6. Can you think of examples of how specific policies have informed, or are informing, change in your own community?

Race and Space in *My Brooklyn*

My Brooklyn shows how the history of race and racism are integral to an understanding of urban landscapes. The film describes the practice of redlining, for example, in which banks deemed certain neighborhoods too risky for investment based on demographic factors, such as the presence of black people. This practice, combined with other policies such as the subsidization of suburban housing, had a powerful impact on Brooklyn's racial geography.

In the film, photographer Jamel Shabazz refers to the ways in which the experience of race shapes, and is shaped by, different kinds of places when he says: “The first mall that opened up in Brooklyn was King’s Plaza, and King’s Plaza was in the heart of a community where people really didn’t want you. More than likely, back in the 70’s, you got attacked. So it became very dangerous to go out there. A lot of the stores kind of made you feel unwanted. So you just got to the point where, why deal with this when I can just go 20 minutes from my house, 20 minutes in either direction, and you’re in Downtown Brooklyn.”



The following questions unpack the intersections of race, class, and geography the film explores, as well as what this has to do with development decisions today.

- 1. How is Jamel’s individual experience of racism connected to the larger racial history of Brooklyn described in the film? What does it mean to feel comfortable in a space, be it residential, commercial, or otherwise? Can you think of spaces where you feel particularly comfortable or uncomfortable? What factors make you feel one way or another, and what do these have to do with race and/or class?**
- 2. What was Downtown Brooklyn like before redlining and “white flight” occurred? What kinds of stores were there, and who shopped there? How did it evolve into a predominantly black shopping district? Do you know of other examples—in your own community or beyond—where a similar racial and/or class shift has taken place?**



3. In *My Brooklyn*, we hear several people at a farmer's market criticize Downtown Brooklyn and the Fulton Mall as an unattractive, "run-down" space. These comments refer to the Mall's aesthetics—how it looks. This can include anything from a place's urban design to how clean and well-maintained it is over time. Far from being politically neutral, aesthetic descriptions can be highly charged in both racial and class terms. What different elements make up the look of the Fulton Mall? How does the way a space looks tell us which social class or ethnic group "belongs" there? How did historical factors influence the look of Downtown Brooklyn over time?
4. Should a place's racial history inform the planning process? If so, how might the redlining and racial segregation described in the film have influenced the plans for Downtown Brooklyn?
5. Can you think of examples of how specific racial dynamics, historical or more recent, have informed, or are informing, change in your own community?

Planning Alternatives to Gentrification

My Brooklyn implies a distinction between gentrification, which pushes people out and erases established neighborhoods, and true revitalization, which, along with accommodating newcomers, includes the existing community and builds on its strengths.



As Alyssa Katz says in the film of luxury condos being built in Downtown Brooklyn, “Any one of these buildings could have arrived here and not fundamentally transformed the area had the approach to investing in Downtown Brooklyn looked different, had it really focused on integrating the strengths of the neighborhood that existed rather than seeing the existing community and the existing clientele of the retail as an obstacle. And it really brings up very powerful issues about race, about class and about what New York really should be.”

The following questions focus on what might have been done differently in planning Downtown Brooklyn.

- 1. How could the harm people in the film were caused have been prevented? For example, in redeveloping Downtown Brooklyn, what could have been done differently to plan for newcomers while ensuring that the needs of existing residents and business owners were met and respected?**
- 2. More than just a “place to shop,” Downtown Brooklyn/Fulton Mall is also a social and cultural space. What did people in *My Brooklyn* say they valued about Fulton Mall socially and culturally, and why? What might have been done to preserve these things? Can you think of examples of commercial areas in your community that people value for more than just shopping? Why are they valued, and how does this differ from residential areas?**



3. How can the harm people in the film were caused be repaired? Given the type of development that has already occurred in Downtown Brooklyn, what actions could city planners still take to reverse some of the Downtown Brooklyn Plan's negative effects?
4. Do people have a "right" to the city? Do longtime residents and businesses have a right to remain where they are? What about the right to a commercial district? If so, how can these principles guide urban planners and decision-makers in real-life situations?

Organizing and Resistance

In *My Brooklyn*, historian Craig Wilder describes gentrification as “a set of real decisions that ordinary people can intervene in.” The following questions explore how community resistance to gentrification is represented in the film, and what kinds of strategies were employed to change the course of development downtown.

1. In *My Brooklyn*, Families United for Racial and Economic Equality, a nonprofit community group, brings together local residents in opposition to the gentrification of Downtown Brooklyn, and to advocate for the existing community’s inclusion in the plans for the area. What do FUREE members and other local residents, such as social worker Rahsun Houston, believe is wrong with the development process in Downtown Brooklyn? How would they like the process to be different? What kinds of benefits for the local community is FUREE asking for? What strategies and tactics do they use to formulate and communicate their message?



2. What specific issues face small-business owners in Downtown Brooklyn after the rezoning occurs? What are the small-business owners asking the city for?
3. The Albee Square Mall is introduced in *My Brooklyn* as a space that has historical importance for the evolution of hip-hop culture, and where many successful small businesses reside. We then learn that developer Joe Sitt plans to sell his lease on the property to a new developer, who will tear down the old structure and build a new mall called City Point. Strong demonstrations ensue. Why? What constituencies express concern with these plans, and what do they want? What aspects of the Albee Square Mall and the land it sits on do they believe deserve special consideration? What sorts of tactics do they use to communicate their message? What is the ultimate outcome? Is it fair?



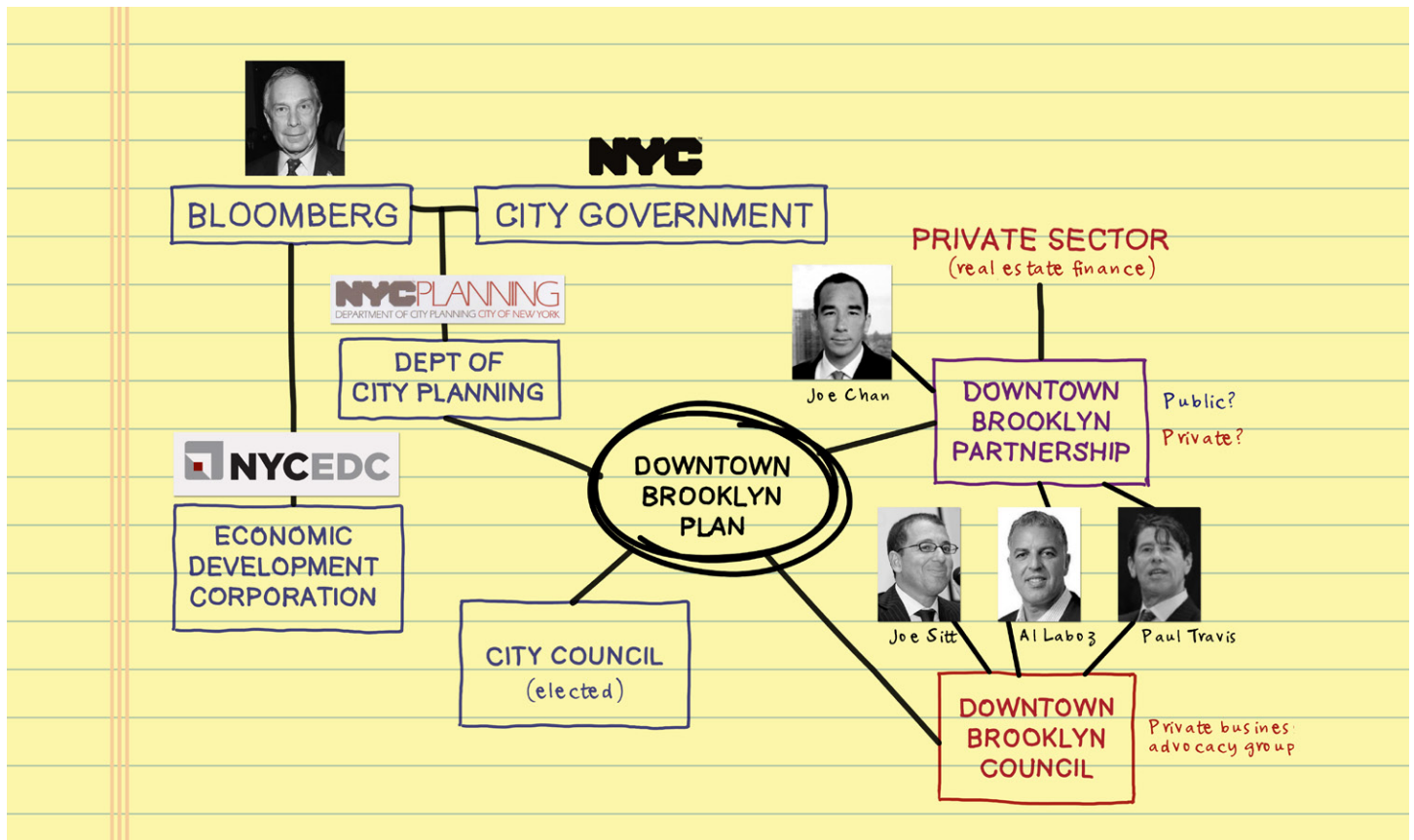
4. What can individuals do when they find themselves in the position of a gentrifier? What can they do when they are part of a community threatened with displacement?
5. What are some examples of change occurring in your community? How are different constituencies responding? Is there conflict? Do you view these changes as positive or negative, and why? What questions would you like to ask about the changes (or lack thereof) in your community?

Activities

Activity #1:

Powermap your Community

Throughout *My Brooklyn*, we see a graphic on yellow legal notebook paper that maps out Kelly's evolving understanding of the different players involved in Downtown Brooklyn development. The graphic includes Mayor Bloomberg and city government, The New York City Planning Commission, The New York City Council, Joe Chan and the Downtown Brooklyn Partnership, the New York City Economic Development Corporation, the private sector (particularly real estate interests), and the Downtown Brooklyn Council, a private business advocacy group with a major role in designing and lobbying for the Downtown Brooklyn Plan. At the center of the graphic is the plan itself.



ACTIVITY:

Create a similar diagram of institutions and players driving development decisions in your community, and indicate their relationships to each other and to the public.

The idea is not only to identify who is involved in decision-making, but also to gain an understanding of their precise roles in the development process, their scope of power, and the relationships among them. For example, who is the local mayor? What other local agencies, such as a planning commission, have a say in development decisions? What is the nature of those decisions, and to whom are they



accountable? Is there a state and/or a local economic development agency? What about public-private partnerships, such as the Downtown Brooklyn Partnership? What sorts of private business groups are involved in lobbying efforts? What are these entities' main activities, how transparent are they, and to whom are they accountable?

Activity #2: Where Should Subsidies Go? You Decide.



In development efforts, cities and states use various types of public subsidies, often in the form of tax breaks, to encourage housing and economic development. An example that appears in *My Brooklyn* is that of the Oro Condo building, whose developer received nearly \$40 million in tax breaks over a ten-year period.

Subsidies are a tool that can make it easier to finance development projects in economically distressed areas that might not otherwise happen. But the developer of the Oro Condo was permitted to take advantage of a generous subsidy program called 421-a despite a booming real estate market, and with no obligation to include any affordable housing in return. In your opinion, was this a fair policy? Why or why not? How do subsidies reflect a city's priorities?

ACTIVITY:

Create a set of development priorities for your city or community, and decide which ones deserve public subsidy.

Keep in mind that resources are limited, and so subsidies should go to the projects that will create the greatest long-term benefit. Examples of benefits include but are not limited to new jobs, housing, amenities such as grocery and other types of stores, schools, libraries, parks, transportation systems, and other types of urban infrastructure. Be creative! You may decide, for instance, that small businesses in your community need more support, and that it makes good sense to subsidize a development that will be affordable for small businesses, and serve as an incubator for local entrepreneurs. Whatever your ideas, identify precisely what benefits you believe your projects will generate, for whom, and how.

Activity #3:

Develop an Oral History of Change in Your Community

Toward the end of *My Brooklyn*, Kelly states that if we are going to create equitable communities, “we need to talk to one another about what’s important to us, connect the dots between city policy and neighborhood change, and advocate for what we really want and need.” Talking to our fellow citizens in particular is one of the most important ways in which we can support equitable planning decisions, because it’s a direct way of learning about what people need and value, and can help bridge social divides and bring people together around a common set of goals.

ACTIVITY:

Choose a neighborhood that interests you and write a brief oral history. It could be where you live, where you grew up, where you go to school, a place where you shop, or some other choice.



Before you approach people, you may want to do some brief background research on the neighborhood’s history and demographics to help you formulate more specific questions. This could include looking at newspaper clips, census data, or anything else that can give you a snapshot of the neighborhood’s history and defining characteristics.

Activity #4:

Analyze the Role of the Media in Development Decisions

My Brooklyn does not deal extensively with how the media shaped public discourse about Downtown Brooklyn's future, but one of the primary reasons the filmmakers made the film was to address unfair and often inaccurate media coverage. This was important because the media influences public opinion and can tip the balance against or in favor of a particular policy or development plan. Most local as well as national news reports characterized Downtown Brooklyn in negative terms, and few included voices from the community describing what they valued about the space.

Real Estate
The New York Times
SUNDAY, JANUARY 9, 2011

Suddenly, A Brooklyn Skyline
The borough's altered profile reflects several major residential developments.
What's next?

By JAKE MOONEY
THE view north across the East River from a high floor at Oro.

Jake Mooney, "Suddenly, a Brooklyn Skyline," *The New York Times*, January 7, 2011.
http://www.nytimes.com/2011/01/09/realestate/09cov.html?pagewanted=all&_r=0

AROUND TOWN

Mall of shame?
A new outdoor installation asks Brooklynites to take a closer look at a much-maligned thoroughfare
By Alec Appelbaum

One important

LISTINGS
IF YOU WANT TO BE LISTED...
Thursday 6 Urban affairs

ACTIVITY:

Choose a local development or planning project, then research and analyze the media coverage.

Like Downtown Brooklyn, many places have a long history of development proposals, some successful and some abandoned, so looking at historical media coverage is necessary to put current debates in a wider context.

- What is the overall tone of the coverage?
- Do reporters have their facts straight?
- Do any voices predominate? Are any left out?
- Are reporters neglecting important questions?
- Is the coverage uniformly negative, positive, or mixed?
- Is there anything the media could be doing to better educate the public about your project so that people can make informed decisions about whether to support it?

What Tools Can Be Used to Address Gentrification?

While cities, towns, and regions across the United States differ significantly in the way they go about development, many places face common obstacles to equitable outcomes, such as a lack of transparency and accountability in the planning process, dysfunctional economic development programs, unregulated real estate speculation, and policies that favor unplanned rather than careful and equitable growth.

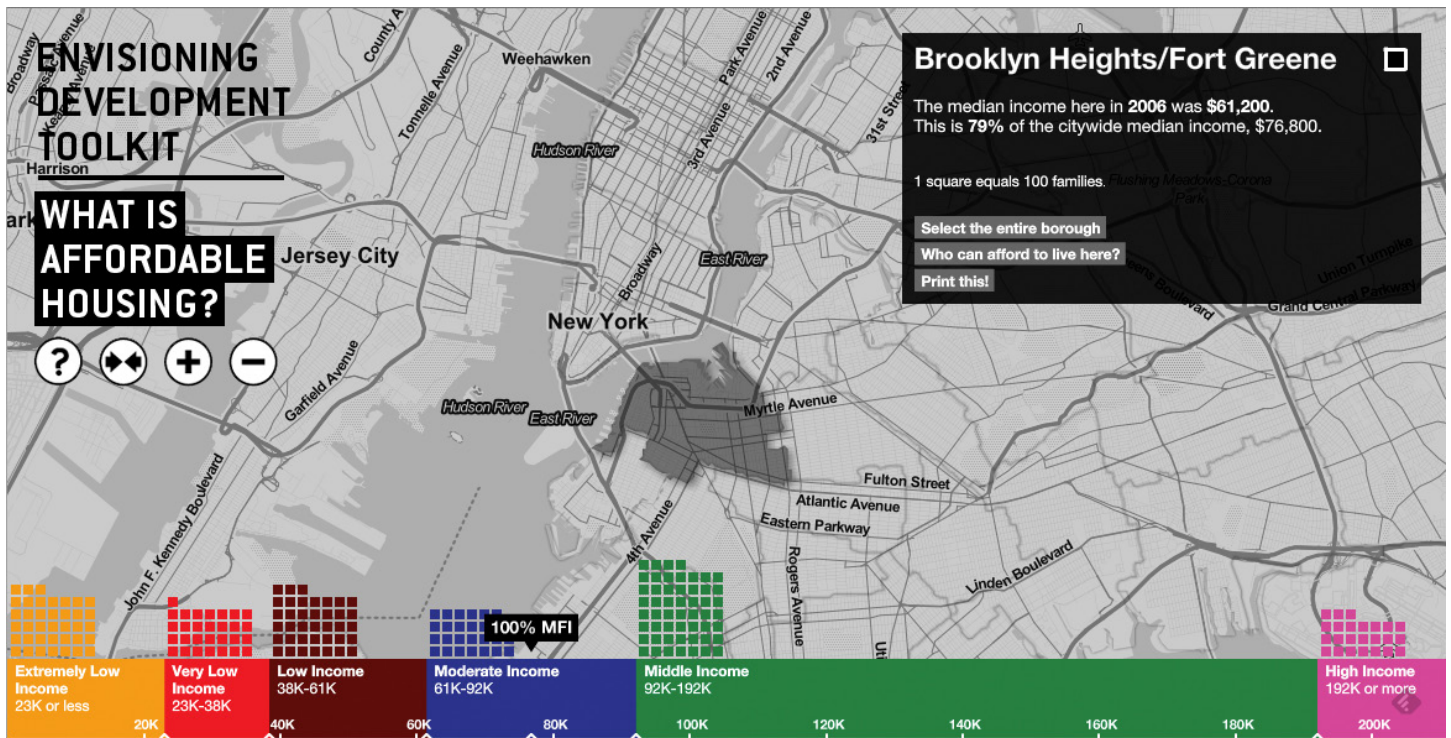
Research tools that increase the transparency of the planning process and help communities demystify development deals are crucial in a context where simply knowing what is going on, much less confronting it, may be a challenge.

In addition to common obstacles, certain common goals can be identified that support equity in a broad range of contexts:

- Strengthen rent laws
- Rezone equitably
- Stop real-estate speculation
- Protect and maintain public/social housing
- Encourage permanent housing affordability
- Stop unfair commercial displacement
- Respect community-led planning
- Ensure that new housing is truly affordable
- Increase the transparency of economic development agencies
- Ensure that public subsidies and other economic development programs are used to create genuine public benefits



These goals can be accomplished with a diverse array of policy tools that may include rent control, cooperative ownership models, community land trusts, inclusionary zoning, and living-wage provisions. The following is a sampling of tools designed to help communities research and navigate development issues, and identify and advocate for concrete solutions to the problems of gentrification and displacement.



The Center for Urban Pedagogy’s “What is Affordable Housing?” Tool

Breaks down affordable housing policy into easy-to-understand visuals, and helps communities answer the all-important question, “Affordable to whom?”

<http://welcometocup.org/Projects/EnvisioningDevelopment/WhatIsAffordableHousing>

The Center for Urban Pedagogy’s “What is Zoning?” Tool

Helps communities understand how zoning works and why it is so controversial. The toolkit includes a set of activities that break down density, bulk, land use, and how proposed rezonings could affect neighborhoods.

<http://welcometocup.org/Projects/EnvisioningDevelopment/WhatIsZoning>

Good Jobs First’s Glossary of Economic Development

An excellent primer on terms commonly used in the field.

<http://www.goodjobsfirst.org/resources/glossary>

Good Jobs First’s Subsidy Tracker

Brings together information from far-flung sources in the first national search engine for economic development subsidies.

<http://www.goodjobsfirst.org/subsidy-tracker>

Good Jobs First’s Accountable USA Tool

Allows communities to monitor whether taxpayer money is being wasted on extravagant and ineffective give-aways to corporations in the name of economic development.

<http://www.goodjobsfirst.org/accountable-usa>

PolicyLink’s Equitable Development Toolkit

Provides details on specific tools communities can use in the areas of affordable housing, economic opportunity, health equity and place, and land use and environment.

<http://policylink.org/equity-tools/equitable-development-toolkit/about-toolkit>

Right to the City’s Problem, Solution, Action Graphic

A quick one-pager that allows you to see how they define the crisis in housing and their solution to fix it.

<http://homesforall.org/campaign/document/problem-solution-action-graphic/>

The Urban Institute’s “In the Face of Gentrification” Report

Case studies of local efforts to mitigate displacement.
www.urban.org/uploadedpdf/411294_gentrification.pdf

The Urban Institute’s “Keeping the Neighborhood Affordable Handbook”

A handbook of housing strategies for gentrifying areas.
www.urban.org/uploadedpdf/411295_gentrifying_areas.pdf



Resources

Organizations

Gentrification has implications for many aspects of community life, from housing and jobs to transportation and education systems, and there are many local and national organizations throughout the country working in these different areas.

The following is a sampling of organizations specializing in a diverse array of issues related to gentrification and development. Their activities focus to varying degrees on research, policy development, advocacy and technical assistance, organizing and capacity building, and communications work.

Architects, Designers and Planners for Social Responsibility

ADPSR works for the development of healthy communities and supports social responsibility in the planning and design profession.

<http://adpsr.org/>

The Furman Center for Real Estate and Urban Policy

The Furman Center conducts academic research and provides data and analysis on critical issues in land use, real estate, and urban policy.

<http://furmancenter.org/>

Good Jobs First

GJF is a national policy resource center promoting corporate and government accountability in economic development. GJF provides information on best practices in state and local job subsidies, and on the many ties between smart growth and good jobs.

<http://www.goodjobsfirst.org/>

National Economic and Social Rights Initiative (NESRI)

NESRI emerged in response to growing interest across the United States in applying human rights standards at home. NESRI works to integrate economic and social rights into U.S. law, policy and political culture.

<http://www.nesri.org/>

National Low-Income Housing Coalition

NLIHC does research, policy advocacy, outreach, and communications work to ensure that people with the lowest incomes in the United States have affordable and decent homes.

<http://nlihc.org/>

Partnership for Working Families

The Partnership for Working Families is a national network of regional advocacy organizations that support innovative solutions to economic and environmental problems. Activities include building labor and community power, promoting policies that create quality jobs, and addressing the needs of low-income communities.

<http://www.forworkingfamilies.org/>

Planners Network

Planners Network is a network of professionals, activists, academics, and students concerned with urban planning and social and environmental justice. PN produces a quarterly magazine covering planning issues from progressive perspectives.

<http://www.plannersnetwork.org/>

PolicyLink

PolicyLink is a national research and action institute grounded in the belief that those closest to the nation's challenges are central to finding solutions. PolicyLink produces a wide range of reports and tools that support access to quality jobs, affordable housing, good schools, transportation, and healthy food and physical activity.

<http://www.policylink.org/>

Poverty and Race Research Action Council

Founded in 1989-90, PRRAC is a civil rights policy organization bringing together the worlds of research and advocacy. Focus areas include housing, education, health, and civil rights policy.

http://www.prrac.org/about_staff.php



DANNY LYON

The Praxis Project

The Praxis Project supports national, regional, and local organizing and movement building. Their mission is to build healthy communities by changing the power relationships between people of color and the institutional structures that affect their lives.

<http://www.thepraxisproject.org/>

Right to the City

RTTC is a national alliance of racial, economic, and environmental justice organizations across the country working to ensure that everyone, particularly the disenfranchised, is able to shape and design the city to meet real human needs. The Brooklyn-based organization FUREE, featured in *My Brooklyn*, is an active member of RTC (<http://furee.org/>).

<http://righttothecity.org/>

For a full list of Right to the City member organizations across the country:

<http://righttothecity.org/about/member-organizations/>

Take Back the Land

The Take Back the Land movement is a national network of organizations dedicated to elevating housing to the level of a human right and securing community control over land.

<http://takebacktheland.org/>

Urban Institute

Founded in 1968, the Urban Institute conducts research, gathers data and evaluates programs to solve problems facing America's cities.

<http://www.urban.org/>

Center for Urban Pedagogy

CUP is a non-profit organization that uses design and art to improve civic engagement. Projects are collaborations among art and design professionals, community-based advocates, policymakers, and their staff, and take complex issues—from zoning laws to food access—and break them down into simple, accessible, visual explanations.

<http://welcometocup.org/>

Pratt Center for Community Development

Based in New York City, The Pratt Center produces research and resources in support of sustainable community development, transportation equity, urban manufacturing, and energy efficiency.

<http://prattcenter.net/>



Media Resources

My Brooklyn Interactive: Out With the Old, In With the New

This interactive segment is based on material from *My Brooklyn* and is featured as part of the Land of Opportunity Interactive (see below for more about this project).

<http://landofopportunityinteractive.com/#/video/out-old-new>

Land of Opportunity Interactive

This series of interactive videos by various filmmakers explores urban change and crisis in cities across the United States, including post-Katrina New Orleans, Post-Sandy New York City, the Gulf Coast, Brooklyn, Boston, Detroit, and Chicago. Videos focus on four pairs of themes: Devastation/Rebuilding, Displacement/Home, Community/Commodity, and Exclusion/Engagement.

<http://landofopportunityinteractive.com/>

Precious Places (Scribe Video Center)

Precious Places is a community oral history project in which residents of Philadelphia neighborhoods learn video production in order to document the buildings, public spaces, parks, landmarks and other sites that have meaning to them. Many of these videos are used as part of larger organizing efforts in response to gentrification and the threat of displacement.

<http://scribe.org/about/preciousplaces>

Urban Studies Films from New Day Films

Many documentary films deal with aspects of gentrification and community planning. This collection of Urban Studies films from New Day Films contains some important and timely titles.

[http://www.newday.com/films?f\[0\]=field_subject_area%3A54](http://www.newday.com/films?f[0]=field_subject_area%3A54)

Recommended Readings

Gentrification is an interdisciplinary topic that spans issues of race, class, segregation, land use control, and many others, and that brings together a diverse array of thinkers from urban planning, sociology, anthropology, policy analysis, history, and other areas. Over several decades since gentrification became a focus of urban investigation, experts have hotly debated what drives it. Scholars can be placed in varying camps depending on the degree to which they explain gentrification in terms of economic factors, cultural factors, or some combination thereof. These approaches range from Marxist to postmodern cultural analyses, and may include the role of the private market (e.g. corporations and investors), government policy, and consumer choice (e.g. the cultural and lifestyle preferences of different types of gentrifiers). Many scholars have moved the debate beyond just class issues to include analysis of gentrification through the lenses of gender, sexuality, and race and ethnicity.

The following is an eclectic selection of readings on gentrification and topics related to the film. It is by no means exhaustive, but includes some of the most original, provocative, and often-cited thinkers confronting urban development issues today. This list is restricted to British, American, and Canadian thinkers, but there are many more important people working on the topic in other languages and cultures not represented here.

Tom Angotti, *New York For Sale: Community Planning Confronts Global Real Estate* (MIT Press, 2008)

Chester Hartmann, *Displacement: How to Fight It* (National Housing Law Project, 1982)

David Harvey, *Rebel Cities: From the Right to the City to the Urban Revolution* (Verso, 2013)

Greg LeRoy, *The Great American Jobs Scam: Corporate Tax Dodging and the Myth of Job Creation* (San Francisco: Berrett-Koehler Publishers, 2005)

Excellent investigative look at the failure of economic development policies throughout the United States and what we can do about it. Relevant to issues surrounding retail subsidies and the Albee Square Mall/City Point deal featured in *My Brooklyn*.

Loretta Lees, Tom Slater and Elvin Wyly, *Gentrification* (London: Routledge, 2007)

Loretta Lees, Tom Slater and Elvin Wyly, *The Gentrification Reader* (London: Routledge 2010)

Includes an array of influential articles on gentrification by key thinkers on the topic including Neil Smith, David Ley, Damaris Rose, Sharon Zukin, Chris Hamnett, Liz Bondi, Monique M. Taylor, Peter Marcuse, Lance Freeman, Loretta Lees, and many others.

Leonie Sandercock, *Cosmopolis II: Mongrel Cities of the 21st Century* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2003)



JAMEL SHABAZZ

Neil Smith, *The New Urban Frontier: Gentrification and the Revanchist City* (London: Routledge, 1996)

Craig Steven Wilder, *A Covenant With Color: Race and Social Power in Brooklyn* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2001)

Includes an excellent overview of redlining in Brooklyn, which served as the basis for the historical narrative about redlining in *My Brooklyn*.

Rosten Woo and Meredith TenHoor with Damon Rich, *Street Value: Shopping, Planning, and Politics at Fulton Mall* (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 2010)

Looks at the history of attempts to redevelop Fulton Mall, and is a good case study for other working-class urban commercial developments around the country. An excellent companion reading to *My Brooklyn*.

Sharon Zukin, *Naked City: The Death and Life of Authentic Places* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010)

How to Buy the Film

My Brooklyn for educational use is distributed by New Day Films.

New Day Films

www.newday.com/film/my-brooklyn

Email: orders@newday.com

Phone: 888.367.9154

Fax: 845.774.2945

Director Kelly Anderson, Producer Allison Lirish Dean, and some of the people who appear in the film are available for speaking.

Please contact us at mybklyn1@gmail.com.



Credits and Acknowledgments

My Brooklyn

a film by **Kelly Anderson & Allison Lirish Dean**

www.mybrooklynmovie.com

My Brooklyn Study Guide: a companion to the documentary film *My Brooklyn*

Written and researched by **Allison Lirish Dean**

Research Assistant - Sam Imperatrice

Design - Laurie Sumiye

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