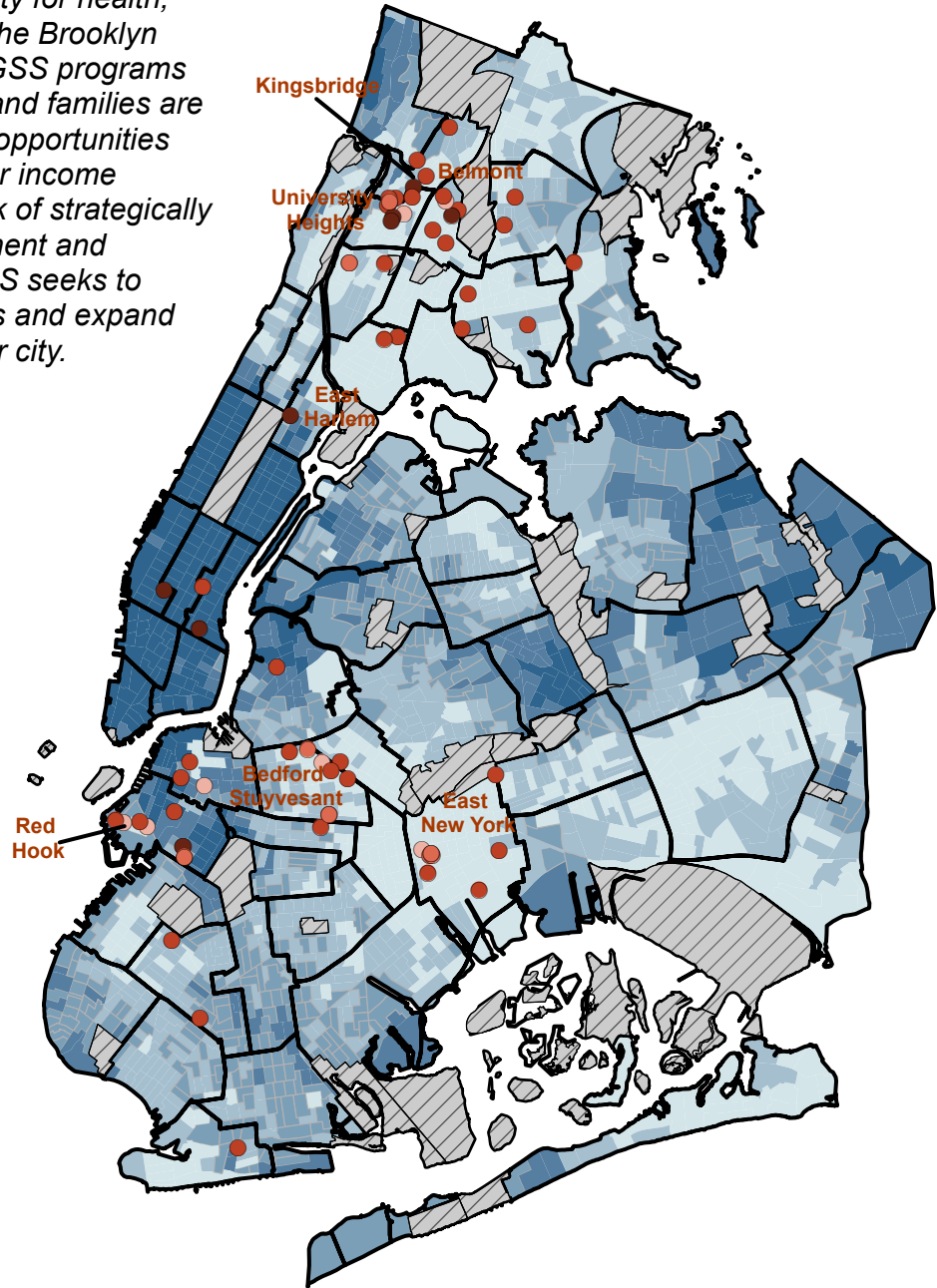
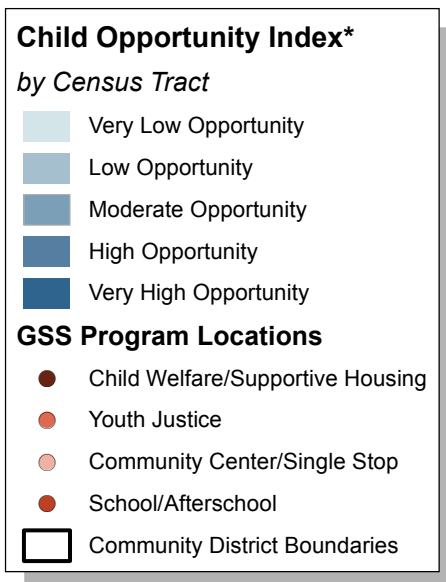


Expanding the Geography of Opportunity in NYC



All New Yorkers should have equal opportunity to achieve the American Dream of social mobility and prosperity. Expanding opportunity for our children, youth and families has tangible social and economic benefits for us all. The reality, however, is that geography often plays a major role in determining one's opportunity for health, well-being and future success. In the Brooklyn and Bronx neighborhoods where GSS programs are concentrated, children, youth and families are disconnected from resources and opportunities that are available to those in higher income neighborhoods. Through a network of strategically located youth and family development and educational support programs, GSS seeks to address these structural disparities and expand the geography of opportunity in our city.

Geographic Disparity of Opportunity for Children, Youth and Families in NYC



*Child Opportunity Index Components (source: DiversityDataKids.org)

Educational Opportunity

Student Poverty
Math/Reading Proficiency
Early Childhood Education
High School Graduation
Educational Attainment

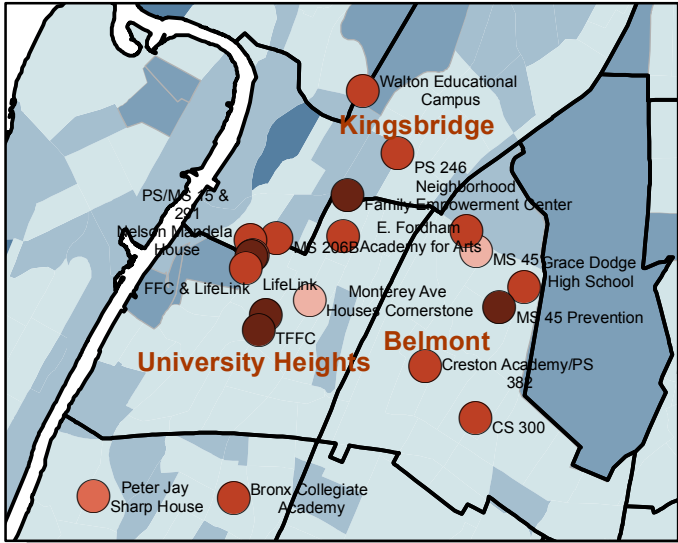
Health and Environmental Opportunity

Proximity to Health Facilities
Healthy Food Index
Proximity to Toxic Waste Sites
Volume of Nearby Toxic Release
Proximity to Parks/Open Space
Housing Vacancy Rates

Social and Economic Opportunity

Foreclosure Rates
Poverty Rates
Unemployment Rates
Public Assistance Rates
Proximity to Employment

Central Bronx, Red Hook and East New York: Building Program Networks in Key Communities

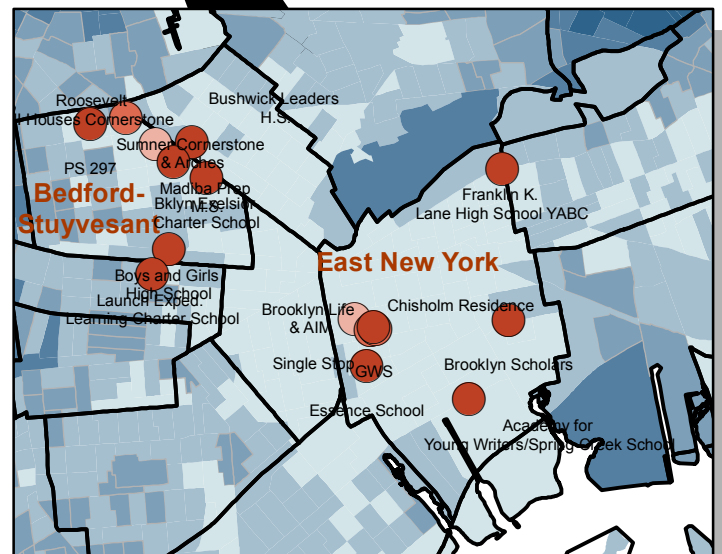
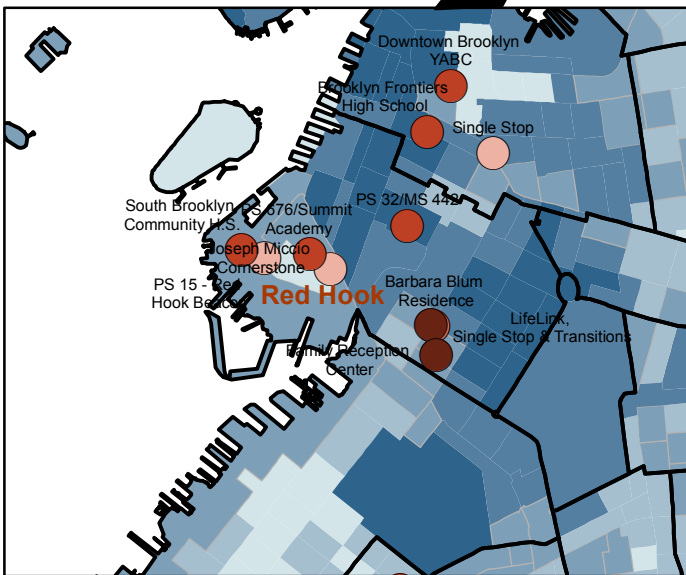
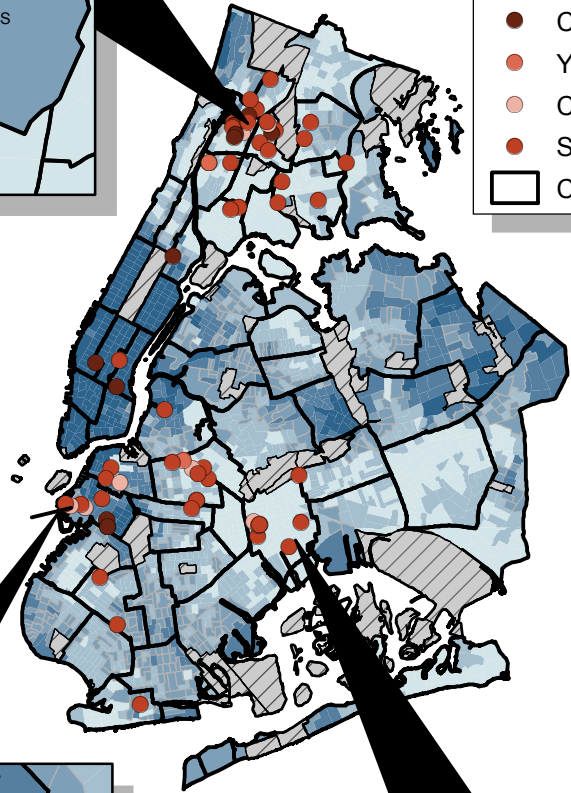


Child Opportunity Index by Census Tract

- Very Low Opportunity
- Low Opportunity
- Moderate Opportunity
- High Opportunity
- Very High Opportunity

GSS Program Locations

- Child Welfare/Supportive Housing
- Youth Justice
- Community Center/Single Stop
- School/Afterschool
- Community District Boundaries



Source: Diversity Data Kids Child Opportunity Index, Brandeis University. For more information about the index, please visit diversitydatakids.org. Pulled June 2014. Map created by Annie Gleason, Senior Program Analyst, GSS Program Evaluation and Planning Department.



Expanding the Geography of Opportunity in New York City

June 2014

All New Yorkers should have equal opportunity to achieve the American Dream of social mobility and prosperity. Expanding opportunity for our children, youth, and families has tangible social and economic benefits for us all. The reality, however, is that geography often plays a major role in determining one's opportunity for health, well-being and future success.^{i,ii} In the Brooklyn and Bronx neighborhoods where Good Shepherd Services (GSS) programs are concentrated, children, youth and families are disconnected from resources and opportunities that are available to those in higher income neighborhoods. Through a network of strategically located youth and family development and educational support programs, GSS seeks to address these structural disparities and expand the geography of opportunity in our city.

Going Where We Need to Be. Data from national sources (e.g., the U.S. Census American Community Survey, the National Center for Education Statistics) and state administrative databases provide compelling evidence of geographically-based disparities in the city. Our "Expanding the Geography of Opportunity" maps illustrate clearly the differences between New York City's neighborhoods in terms of key educational, health, environmental, social and economic factors. These maps were produced using the Child Opportunity Index, a composite score measuring the level of opportunity in a given geographic area, which was created by DiversityDataKids.org in partnership with the Heller School of Social Policy and Management at Brandeis University and the Kirwan Institute for the Study of Race and Ethnicity at Ohio State University. The index generates an overall score for a community, based on indicators such as access to early childhood education, proximity to health facilities, housing vacancy rates, and proximity to employment, among others. The maps we have produced clearly show that GSS has concentrated its services in neighborhoods with very low opportunity. They confirm the need for GSS programs in the Brooklyn neighborhoods of Bedford Stuyvesant, East New York, and Red Hook and the Bronx neighborhoods of Belmont, Kingsbridge, and University Heights.

PROVIDING A NETWORK OF PROGRAMS THAT EXPANDS THE GEOGRAPHY OF OPPORTUNITY

To address these disparities in opportunity, GSS has established a network of youth and family development and educational support programs, serving over 26,000 participants annually in New York City's most under-resourced neighborhoods. Our youth and family development approach is informed by a substantial body of empirical evidence on effective strategies that mitigate the impacts of poverty and improve social mobility. This research highlights the transformational impact of targeting specific neighborhoods and enhancing the developmental opportunities afforded within those communities. For more than 40 years, GSS has taken a holistic and community-based approach to serving youth and families in New York City. More recently, GSS has worked to deepen its commitment in our established Brooklyn and Bronx neighborhoods. In each of these neighborhoods, we offer targeted and coordinated services that address basic needs, promote belonging, build on family strengths, create developmental opportunities (such as leadership and civic involvement initiatives), improve academic achievement, and strengthen job readiness.

Addressing Basic Needs. Research has long shown that individuals must have basic needs met, such as food, shelter and safety, before they can succeed in the school, work or community setting. Young people with inadequate nutrition cannot focus in the classroom. Parents who are worried about safe and secure housing for their families have a compromised ability to be successful at work. GSS has three Single Stop sites located throughout Brooklyn that connect families to the supports they need, such as public benefits, rental assistance, legal counseling to prevent eviction, and

immigration counseling. **In East New York, where nearly 30 percent of families live under the poverty line, the GSS Single Stop site connected nearly 1,000 individuals with crucial benefits and counseling services and referrals in 2013.**

Promoting a Sense of Belonging. A strong sense of belonging and connection is essential to healthy development and sustained positive outcomes. In all our programs, we emphasize ongoing outreach and engagement, collaboration, peer support and community building. In 2013, we served nearly 7,500 youth and families through our community center and afterschool programs in Brooklyn and the Bronx. **Of those, more than 90% of youth and families said that they felt a strong sense of belonging within our programs and that they had the opportunity to build positive relationships with peers and adults**

Building on Family Strengths. GSS partners with families and builds upon their strengths to address family- and neighborhood-level stressors that can have a pivotal negative impact on life outcomes. Youth exposed to chronic and severe adversity, such as abuse and neglect or community violence, are at risk for a host of poor outcomes that limit their ability to become successful adults, such as delinquency, depression, substance abuse, poor peer relationships and school failure. The research literature has highlighted a link between certain environmental factors (such as poverty and unemployment, social isolation and violence) and child abuse and neglect.ⁱⁱⁱ When these community factors are present, as they are in several of our focus neighborhoods, the incidence of child abuse and neglect is more likely.

GSS works directly with families struggling to stay together in the face of environmental and personal challenges. We offer family counseling, advocacy and referral services to avert the need for foster care placement and prevent incidences of abuse and neglect. In 2013, we served more than 1,500 families in Brooklyn and the Bronx through our community-based foster care prevention programs. **As a result, 99% of children in families receiving services through our prevention programs remained free from abuse, neglect and maltreatment in their homes. Participants in our Parenting Journey groups – one of several evidence-based interventions we implement – reported improved relationships with their children, as well as an enhanced ability to manage and assess their emotions, communicate with others and handle difficult situations.** In short, despite the serious challenges these families face, prevention and evidence-based interventions work, strengthening both families and communities.

Creating Developmental Opportunities. Our programs focus on providing children and youth with access to the developmental opportunities often lacking in their neighborhoods. These opportunities include leadership programming, mentoring, and college and career exploration. A seminal study comparing a low-income, inner-city neighborhood with a high-income suburban community found that youth development opportunities for young people in the two neighborhoods were strikingly different.^{iv} In an average week, youth in the suburban community experienced more than three times as many developmental activities than youth in low-income neighborhoods. This is an important difference because positive youth development is associated with decreased risk behaviors and contributes to a young person's sense of belonging, self-worth, and orientation toward the future. To counteract this disparity, GSS afterschool programs provide youth with crucial developmental experiences, such as the opportunity to develop leadership skills and contribute to their communities. **Our afterschool programs served 2,424 elementary and middle school students in 2013; 91% said they developed leadership skills and 82% saw themselves as active members of their community.**

Improving Academic Achievement. A college education is a key lever of social mobility. However, major inequities exist between the rates of post-secondary schooling in high- and low-income communities. Experts point to two factors that are contributing to growing disparities in college attendance: first, higher income parents have more money to invest in their children to ensure academic success, and second, lower income parents have less knowledge of the “college education game” and, thus, tend to get involved later.^v Financial aid is another major factor, both as a real and imagined barrier. Financial aid for needy students has not kept pace with tuition increases in recent years. This real gap is made worse by the perception among low-income families that college is unaffordable, resulting from a lack of information about financial aid and college costs. These factors help explain the fact that while 82% of high school students from the highest income quartile attend college, just 54% from the lowest income quartile attend.^{vi} Disparities in college access highlight the need for academic leveling experiences, such as SAT prep courses and college visits, often readily available

in high- and middle-income communities, but not offered to students living in low-income neighborhoods. In addition to addressing academic preparation needs, our Groundwork for Success college prep program provides information about the college application process, financial aid, and college norms – information that helps to level the playing field for students coming from low-income neighborhoods who have college ambitions. **In 2013, 93% of the seniors in GWS were admitted to and attended college.** To further support sustained success, our LifeLink college access and retention programs give students the tools they need to succeed once they are in college, including academic tutoring, moral support and help navigating the college environment.

Strengthening Job Readiness. The reasons for unequal job access among neighborhoods are varied and complex, but one major contributing factor is lack of access to informational networks related to employment. Research supports that living in areas of concentrated poverty negatively impacts an individual’s access to social networks critical to obtaining jobs, as fewer residents within these neighborhoods have connections to share with each other.^{vii} Low-income students looking to make the school-to-work transition are likewise at a disadvantage, as they are less able to gain vital career experience, network within their field of interest, and develop crucial job skills through opportunities such as internships, which are often unpaid or low-wage and, thus, not a realistic option for those who cannot afford to participate. GSS offers a number of job exposure and training opportunities to youth and families in our focus neighborhoods. Youth in our child welfare, youth justice, and supportive housing programs participate in an evidence-informed job readiness program conducted in partnership with Columbia University’s Workplace Center. Our YABC and transfer school students have the opportunity to complete paid internships through the NYC’s Department of Education Learning to Work program; **in 2013, almost a third of our YABC and transfer school students participated in an LTW internship; of those, 78% successfully completed their placement.** In Red Hook, GSS has spearheaded efforts to create a workers’ cooperative, which helps to foster resident-owned businesses and jobs for members of the community.

Taken together, our network of community-based programs work to achieve comprehensive community impact, providing integrated educational, family and community services and supports to enhance opportunities for children, youth and families living within our target neighborhoods. In concert with our provision of services, we seek to enhance our impact by developing and codifying innovative programs, which can be replicated by other providers. We also engage in advocacy at all levels of government to address public policies that help to shape our communities.

TO LEARN MORE

To learn more about Good Shepherd Services, visit our website at goodshepherds.org. This report was written by Annie Gleason and Miranda Yates from the Program Evaluation and Planning Department at Good Shepherd Services with consultation from Lynn Davey of Davey Strategies.

ⁱ Acevedo-Garcia, D., T. L., N. & Williams, D.R. (2008). Toward a Policy-Relevant Analysis of Geographic and Racial/Ethnic Disparities in Child Health, *Health Affairs*, 27 (2), 321-333. <http://content.healthaffairs.org/content/27/2/321.abstract>

ⁱⁱ Acevedo-García D, Rosenfeld L, McArdle N, & Osypuk T. (2010). The Geography of Opportunity: A Framework for Child Development. In: *Men and Boys of Color*. University of California Press. 358-406. <http://technologylink.typepad.com/files/chapter-12-the-geography-of-opportunity-acevedo-garcia-et-al..pdf>development.diversitydata.org

ⁱⁱⁱ Goldman, J. et al. (2003). *A Coordinated Response to Child Abuse and Neglect: The Foundation for Practice*. Office on Child Abuse and Neglect, Children’s Bureau. <https://www.childwelfare.gov/pubs/usermanuals/foundation/foundation.cfm>

^{iv} Littell, J., & Wynn, J. (1989). *The Availability and Use of Community Resources for Young Adolescents in an Inner-city and Suburban Community*. Chapin Hall Center for Children at the University of Chicago.

^v Haveman, R., & Smeeding, T. (2006). The Role of Higher Education in Social Mobility. *The Future of Children*, 16 (2). <http://futureofchildren.org/publications/journals/article/index.xml?journalid=35&articleid=90§ionid=549>

^{vi} Sawhill, I. (2006). Opportunity in America: The Role of Education. *The Future of Children*. http://www.futureofchildren.org/futureofchildren/publications/docs/16_02_PolicyBrief.pdf

^{vii} Galster, G., and Killen, S. (1995) *The Geography of Metropolitan Opportunity: A Reconnaissance and Conceptual Framework*. The Urban Institute. http://content.knowledgeplex.org/kp2/kp/kp/text_document_summary/scholarly_article/refiles/hpd_0601_galster2.pdf