This report was made possible by a strong foundation of BIFAC members who represent a range of food access and public health initiatives that directly impact the wellbeing of Bronx CD6 residents. Their participation in the work of Bronx Impact Alliance–CD6 has added invaluable perspective and expertise, bringing health and food justice for the Bronx closer to fruition.
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

As an initiative formed just three months before the emergence of the COVID-19 virus, this report serves as a baseline to justify the collective strategies of Bronx Impact Alliance-CD6 (BIA-CD6). The data and experiences described in this report are founded on a deep commitment to the health and mobility of CD6 residents. This report illustrates the BIA-CD6 model of collective impact in action, recognizing mutual reinforcing endeavors to enact sustainable solutions. It demonstrates methods of the Bronx Impact Food Access Collective (BIFAC) to promote food justice.
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This Baseline Report presents an overview of the initial work that BIA-CD6, anchored by backbone organization Phipps Neighborhoods, has accomplished since its launch in December 2019. With three collective impact strategies as its mode of operations, the Bronx Impact Alliance brings together community residents, nonprofits, businesses, and government entities to implement solutions which increase social mobility for local residents.

The backbone team undertook extensive quantitative and qualitative data collection and analysis regarding community wellbeing in Bronx CD6 focused on identifying and characterizing community needs, assets, and underlying causes of current circumstances. From December 2019 through January 2020, demographic and environmental data was compiled to form a picture of the assets and barriers to wellbeing present in Bronx Community District 6. This picture showed a community with systemic barriers to health and economic mobility, with close to three times the city average of residents living under the NYC poverty threshold. BIA-CD6 then completed a listening tour throughout the district interviewing local stakeholders to aggregate on-the-ground insights, the qualitative data described in this report, leading up to the emergence of COVID-19. Three main community issues were repeated in these conversations: food access, economic mobility, and public safety.

The pandemic forced in-person contact to cease, at which point BIA-CD6 shifted gears to support local organizations and community groups, assessing needs and pain points to assist local social service providers, community organizations, businesses, government officials, and mutual aid groups in responding to emergent needs. Efforts were directed to getting information to people and coordinating resources between groups. By May, the most predominant area of need that emerged was access to food and navigating the emergency nutrition support programs available to individuals. As the pandemic’s effects continued to devastate livelihoods throughout the borough, BIFAC was convened to build stronger ties between advocates and service providers. Composed of listening tour contributors, local organizations, and Bronx Impact Alliance partners, BIFAC works to advance food justice by advocating for the redistribution of resources to sustain food security solutions and fill persistent systemic gaps. They work collectively to define and strategize appropriate food support programs and policies for their constituents, which are discussed in this report. These suggestions were submitted for review by the NYC Mayor’s Office of Food Policy (MOFP) for consideration and implementation in their recently published comprehensive plans for the city. Bimonthly meetings continue to bring these stakeholders together, sharing resources and strengthening advocacy.

BIFAC has influenced policymakers, including the Mayor’s Office of Food Policy, elected officials and candidates, all furthering the implementation of services that improve the wellbeing of CD6 residents. The quantitative and qualitative data collected by BIA-CD6 since 2019 is presented throughout this report to ground the next phase of the Collective’s capacity building and community impact strategies. Core indicators for BIA-CD6 have been defined for common progress measures. The increased number of produce points of sale in CD6 will be the central barometer for success. More specifically, Bronx Impact will measure growth in the percentage of residents living within a 10-minute walk of a produce point of sale. Additionally, the expanded acceptance of EBT/SNAP/WIC, or other food and nutrition support benefits such as HealthBucks, will be targets for measurable impact.

As an initiative formed just three months before the emergence of the COVID-19 virus, this report serves as a baseline to justify the collective strategies of BIA-CD6. The data and experiences described in this report are founded on a deep commitment to the health and mobility of CD6 residents. This report illustrates the BIA-CD6 model of collective impact in action, recognizing mutual reinforcing endeavors to enact sustainable solutions, and demonstrates methods of BIFAC to promote food justice.
FOOD ACCESS & EMERGENCY NUTRITION SUPPORT PROGRAMS

BY MAY 2020, EXACERBATED BY THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC, the most predominant area of need that emerged was...

THREE ISSUES were repeated in these community conversations:
1. FOOD ACCESS
2. ECONOMIC MOBILITY
3. PUBLIC SAFETY

NEXT STEPS
1. CORE IMPACT INDICATORS
2. IMPLEMENTATION/ POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

JUNE 2020
Convening Bronx Impact Food Access Collective (BIFAC)
Collective Priorities

The Bronx Impact Food Access Collective has co-created this preliminary list of priority targets for collective action to overcome barriers to food justice in CD6. These priority targets represent the foundational strategy that informs the Collective’s initial platform:

1. Enhance Cultural Relevance and Appropriateness
2. Reconcile Information-sharing Sensitivities
3. Improve Reliance on Emergency Food/Nutrition Support

Collective Action

The group has identified multiple goals for collective action to overcome or break down barriers to food justice, and has co-created a preliminary list of priority targets for collective action. Their vision statement, slate of priorities pertaining to their populations of focus, and other pertinent contextual statements have been compiled as a platform with recommendations for policymakers. The backbone team submitted this platform with an introductory letter on behalf of the Collective to the NYC Mayor’s Office of Food Policy (MOFP) for consideration in their Food Forward NYC: 10-Year Food Policy Plan. Over 20 community partners endorsed the platform submission, and the backbone team was invited to engagement sessions with MOFP and their advisors to represent the Collective as MOFP finalized its 10-Year Plan.
Opportunities & Next Steps

With the end of the current city administration drawing near, implementation of the policies outlined in *Food Forward NYC* by the forthcoming administration is uncertain. The food policy community is pleased with the City’s interest in exploring the formation of a community engaged working group and BIFAC is deeply invested in ensuring the implementation of a model which affords the community a legitimate opportunity to hold the City accountable to their point of view.

BIFAC will submit a response to *Food Forward NYC* within this precarious context. Key targets for collaboration and collective action within the new administration will be identified; and the incorporation of community feedback will inform additional recommendations for the new administration’s efforts. This Implementation Recommendations report will, among other policies, call for a citywide food policy council with community oversight and accountability as well as propose equitable expansions of EBT to produce vendors.

Looking Ahead

The Bronx Impact Food Access Collective has identified core indicators which its efforts could most profoundly improve. BIFAC has determined an increase in the number of produce points of sale in CD6 as the core indicator by which to measure the group’s impact. This includes increasing the percent of CD6 residents that live within a 10-minute walk of at least 1 produce point of sale as well as the percent of produce points of sale which accept nutrition support benefits.

These indicators can be quantitatively measured and actively address a number of the major barriers to improving health outcomes in the Bronx. BIFAC’s ability to affect these metrics will bring increased options for Bronx families to achieve food security and promote healthier neighborhoods.
COLLECTIVE IMPACT FOR FOOD JUSTICE

COLLECTIVE IMPACT IN BRONX CD6
EMPIRE STATE POVERTY REDUCTION INITIATIVE (ESPRI) IN NEW YORK CITY

Of all 16 regions across New York State engaged in the Governor’s Empire State Poverty Reduction Initiative (ESPRI), the Bronx is the only jurisdiction within New York City to participate. Of the over 1.4 million residents of the borough, more than 370,000 live below the federal poverty line, greater than the total number of residents living in poverty across the 15 other ESPRI-designated regions combined.2 [FIGURE 1] Bronx Borough President Rubén Díaz, Jr. selected Children’s Aid to lead the initiative for the Bronx, which was allocated $2.75 million of the total $25 million for the statewide initiative to cover planning, implementation, and administration of the project. Children’s Aid designed and coordinated a community-led planning process with data and research organized by Citizens’ Committee for Children of New York, including a planning institute and a series of focus groups across the borough. Analysis of the planning activities’ outcomes resulted in the identification of three strategies to be implemented, including the development of backbone infrastructure in community districts across the borough to drive and facilitate collective impact efforts. The resulting initiatives and backbone teams comprise Bronx Impact, the local name for the partnership of collective impact teams working to implement ESPRI across the Bronx.

“The Empire State Poverty Reduction Initiative in the Bronx—or ‘Bronx Impact,’ as we refer to it locally—is an unprecedented opportunity to lift up the voices of our community to identify and meet the root causes of poverty in the Bronx with viable, long-term solutions that will unlock economic mobility.”

> BRONX BOROUGH PRESIDENT RUBÉN DÍAZ, JR., BRONX IMPACT 2020 PROGRESS REPORT

FIGURE 1 Demographic Overview

Of the over 1.4 MILLION BRONX RESIDENTS, more than 370,000 live below the federal poverty line, greater than the total number of residents living in poverty across the 15 other ESPRI-designated regions combined.

1. Albany
2. Binghamton
3. Buffalo
4. Elmira
5. Hempstead
6. Jamestown
7. Newburgh
8. Niagara Falls
9. Oneonta
10. Oswego
11. Rochester
12. Syracuse
13. Troy
14. Utica
15. Watertown
16. Bronx

THE BRONX HAS A GREATER NUMBER OF RESIDENTS LIVING IN POVERTY than the 15 other ESPRI-designated regions combined.
BRONX IMPACT

Bronx Impact initiatives transform systems by working with community residents and cross-sector stakeholders to address long-standing, unjust inequities in the South Bronx so that residents can realize the community’s shared vision of vibrant neighborhoods with infinite opportunity; where people aspire to live, work, and raise families. Through three collective impact strategies, Bronx Impact brings together community residents, nonprofits, businesses, and government entities to implement solutions which increase social mobility in communities from which have been historically divested. The Bronx Impact Alliance convenes stakeholders of Bronx Community Districts 3, 6, and 9 to develop community-driven strategies to transcend poverty. In addition to this Alliance, Bronx Impact includes My.BronxImpact.Org, an online resource search and referral platform, and the Jerome Avenue Revitalization Collaborative, a Bronx employment network led by JobsFirstNYC in response to the largest rezoning in NYC history.

Across the various strategies, Bronx Impact holds these values as central to their approach:

- **Bronx residents deserve just and equitable pathways** which promote self-determination.

- **Community stakeholders deserve the power and resources** to realize and sustain the solutions they envision for their community. By centering these innovative solutions and interrogating existing systems, Bronx Impact advocates for the equitable redistribution of power and resources towards supporting historically divested communities.

- **Equitable systems fuel entire communities**, fostering healthier livelihoods, thriving local economies, and sustainable environments vital to community wellbeing. Focusing on root causes leads to transformative change.

- **Data can tell a story**, create baseline understanding, and promote a culture of continuous improvement. Bronx Impact seeks to tell the most authentic story that reflects the vast spectrum of beauty and harsh reality for Bronx residents.

BRONX IMPACT ALLIANCE–COMMUNITY DISTRICT 6

Phipps Neighborhoods was chosen by Children’s Aid to serve as the backbone organization for Bronx Impact in Bronx Community District 6 (CD6). Also comprising the alliance include Youth Ministries for Peace and Justice (YMPJ) serving as backbone for Bronx Community District 9 (CD9), and South Bronx Rising Together (SBRT) as backbone for Bronx Community District 3 (CD3).
**Applying a Collective Impact Approach**

First widely introduced to communities and organizations as a concept in 2011, collective impact is an approach through which communities and organizations align, coordinate, and share information to achieve large-scale systemic change.\(^4\) [FIGURE 2]

"Collective impact" describes an intentional way of working together and sharing information for the purpose of solving a complex problem. Proponents of collective impact believe that the approach is more likely to solve complex problems than if a single nonprofit were to approach the same problem(s) on its own.\(^5\)

While collective impact builds upon existing models of collaboration, the collective impact model is distinguished by its 5 Conditions for Collective Success which "produce true alignment and lead to powerful results."\(^6\) In practice the 5 key conditions typically present in successful collective impact initiatives include:

1. **Backbone support**, which fills the role of coordinating the collective’s activities
2. **A common agenda**, which keeps all parties moving towards the same goal
3. **Continuous communications**, which promote a culture of collaboration and information-sharing across the initiative
4. **Mutually reinforcing activities**, which strategically and intentionally leverage each party’s expertise and resources towards implementation of the common agenda
5. **Common progress measures**, which cut across the initiative’s activities to evaluate overall movement towards achievement of the group’s shared goal

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**Phipps Neighborhoods**

Phipps Neighborhoods helps children, youth, and families in low-income communities rise above poverty. The organization works in South Bronx neighborhoods where they can address the greatest barriers to lasting success through education and career programs, and access to community resources. Phipps Neighborhoods is dedicated to the South Bronx for the long term, supporting individuals and families as they establish self-sufficiency. Their services create opportunities for people to thrive in every aspect of their lives. With almost 50 years of service to the South Bronx community, Phipps Neighborhoods has established an impactful footprint of services across the West Farms neighborhood of CD6. Phipps Neighborhoods operates education services including Universal Pre-Kindergarten, College Access and Afterschool, and is the CBO partner for multiple Community Schools across the district, including Bronx Leadership Academy High School and P.S. 67 the Mohegan School for grades 6 through 8. The organization also operates youth civic engagement programming in the district through its Bronx Community Action Team, and provides workforce development opportunities to young adults through its Career Network: Healthcare program in partnership with Montefiore Health System and Hostos Community College. Through its founding partnership with Phipps Houses, the oldest and largest not-for-profit provider of affordable housing in New York City, Phipps Neighborhoods supports the West Farms community with a full spectrum of vital resources. The organization integrates services, like the Healthy Families case management program and supports for seniors, into Phipps Houses residences and their wider community. The organization also provides supportive housing resources across the district, including to residents of Lee Goodwin Residence, which supports former foster youth, and Honeywell Apartments, which serves adults with mental illness and a history of chronic homelessness.
Backbone as Facilitator of Collaborative Action

By bringing together cross-sector stakeholders from the community, the backbone organization implements a collective impact approach to direct individual efforts’ trajectories towards a shared goal through the identification of a common agenda. With this common agenda towards the goal identified, the backbone facilitates the alignment and coordination of activities between individual efforts, and brings these efforts together in collaborative action. To achieve collaborative action, the backbone builds and continually fortifies a supported ecosystem of communication and information-sharing where each effort can strategically and intentionally leverage their expertise and resources towards the common agenda. In this environment, the backbone helps identify and implement a strategy of mutually reinforcing activities through which each effort’s impacts are amplified to reach achievement of the group’s shared goal.

Backbone Role in CD6

As the backbone organization in CD6, Phipps Neighborhoods brings together cross-sector stakeholders within Bronx Community District 6 to develop community-driven strategies to transcend poverty. This backbone, BIA-CD6, believes that community members are best positioned to identify barriers to collective wellbeing, and that residents should be included in the proposal and realization of relevant solutions. Their collective impact work convenes community members to envision and achieve shared outcomes. At its inception, the initiative aimed to:

1. **Co-create goals:** listen to and work with community members to identify common goals which create opportunity and promote wellbeing for the whole community

2. **Align efforts:** convene stakeholders to work towards common outcomes and achieve long-lasting progress in the Bronx

3. **Solve problems:** promote solutions to systemic issues by identifying factors that undermine individual, family, and community wellbeing, allowing poverty to persist and perpetuate

4. **Access resources:** break down systemic barriers to connect systems and facilitate greater and more efficient access to resources
Overview of Backbone Progress

BIA-CD6 officially launched in December 2019, establishing its backbone team in the community. From December 2019 through early February 2020, the backbone team undertook extensive data collection and analysis regarding community wellbeing in Bronx CD6, and designed an interview guide to inform community listening tour conversations. From mid-February through mid-March 2020, the team conducted semi-structured interviews with community stakeholders including community board leaders, community school staff, social service providers, and local parents. Interviews focused on identifying and characterizing community needs, assets, and underlying causes of current circumstances. In addition to listening tour interviews and data analysis efforts, the team attended a diverse calendar of community convenings, council meetings, and town hall events throughout the winter to build the initiative’s network of stakeholders, supporters, and partners while gleaning additional community points of view and identifying opportunities for collective work. These diverse community perspectives overwhelmingly reinforced the findings of the data analysis, indicating a significant opportunity to motivate cross-sectoral collaboration around a common agenda to solve problems and achieve shared goals.

In response to the rise of the COVID-19 pandemic and the social distancing measures required, and with foresight of the indelible, disproportionate impact the epidemic would have on the district, BIA-CD6 significantly shifted its work in mid-March. The team mobilized to identify and operationalize opportunities to provide structure and bandwidth to stakeholders working directly with impacted communities across the Bronx. By providing this backbone support, BIA-CD6 helped to surface the most pressing emerging needs from the community, communicate those needs to policymakers, and to coordinate efforts together to identify common agendas and collective plans of action.

By May, as food access continued to prove a critical need across the Bronx, and informed by listening tour feedback along with data gathered and analyzed about the district, BIA-CD6 launched and facilitated a Bronx Food Access Collective Response Convening to address the food security needs of Bronx families. With input from stakeholders of this convening and other engagement efforts, BIA-CD6 identified its priority goal of achieving food justice in the Bronx, and formed the Bronx Impact Food Access Collective (BIFAC), a collaborative action network focused on centering community-driven strategies to achieve this goal. Initial meetings brought stakeholders together to analyze gaps in food access systems for the community’s most marginalized residents. By September, the Collective developed a shared vision and strategy statement and identified priority goals for working towards that vision. In November 2020, the Collective submitted their vision, pertinent contextual data, and recommendations for promoting achievement of that vision to the NYC Mayor’s Office of Food Policy (MOFP) for consideration in their 10-Year Food Policy Plan.

The backbone team spent the winter of 2020–2021 engaging with MOFP, leaders of other city agencies, elected officials, and other coalitions across the borough and the city to build momentum behind BIFAC’s recommendations. With the release of Food Forward NYC: A 10-Year Food Policy Plan by MOFP in February 2021, the backbone team continued to facilitate BIFAC collective efforts, promote formal implementation of a city-wide food policy council with partner coalitions, and engage with MOFP to cement BIA-CD6 and BIFAC as vital implementation partners in the decade ahead.
COLLECTIVE IMPACT FOR FOOD JUSTICE

BACKGROUND RESEARCH
The backbone team’s first step toward identifying areas of focus for collective action in CD6 was to cull and analyze a wide range of available data regarding conditions and wellbeing in Bronx Community District 6. A review of the data collected is presented below.

**Location**

Bronx Community District 6 includes the neighborhoods of Bathgate, Belmont, Bronx Park South, East Tremont, and West Farms. According to the FY2022 Community Needs Statement, the 1.5 square mile area is home to a population of over 175,456 residents. The district is bordered on the south by the Cross Bronx Expressway, on the east by the Bronx River Parkway, and on the west by busy thoroughfare, Webster Avenue. The Bronx Zoo and Bronx Botanical Garden comprise the district’s northern border. The district is also home to other New York City institutions, including Fordham University and the Bronx’s Little Italy along Belmont’s Arthur Avenue.

“Bring in resources—there’s NOWHERE to go here, and if there is, there’s rules against it making it hard to access.”

> COMMUNITY SCHOOL DIRECTOR

**Figure 3** Location + Demographic Overview

Bronx CD6 has a population of over 175,456 residents.

<table>
<thead>
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<th>Ethnicity</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
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<tr>
<td>Black</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>6.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian/Pacific Islander</td>
<td>1.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Native America</td>
<td>0.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>1.3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Department of City Planning via NYC Open Data

40.3% of Bronx CD6 residents are living under the NYC CEO poverty threshold.
Demographic Overview

Bronx CD6 is home to a diverse population of over 175,456, with roughly two in every three identifying as Latino (65.4%), roughly one in four as Black (25.6%), 6.6% as White, 1.1% as Asian/Pacific Islander, 0.1% as Native American, and 1.3% as other.16 65% of residents speak a language other than English at home, compared to the city average of 48.4%, with 57% of the district population speaking Spanish at home.17 In 2018, 31% of the district population was foreign-born, and 27% of residents aged 5 and older had limited English proficiency.18 In 2019, 40.3% of residents were living under the NYC CEO poverty threshold, close to 25% higher than the city average,19 and 60% of district residents received some form of income assistance.20 In a city with a median household income of $63,611, the CD6 median is less than half at $25,596 per year.21

[FIGURE 4] Disconnection from quality work and education contributes heavily to poverty in the district, which had the highest unemployment of all districts across the city as of 2018 at 16%.22 20% of youth ages 16 to 24 are not in school and not working, compared to the citywide average of 13.8%.23 In the 2016–2017 school year, 35% of public elementary school students were chronically absent from school (missing 19 or more school days), far over the citywide average of 20% that school year. In that same school year, 61% of public high school students in the district graduated on-time (in 4 years), compared to the citywide average of 75%.24 Third lowest in the city, only 13% of adults hold a bachelor’s degree, contributing to the fact that almost 19% of employed workers earned incomes below the poverty line that year.25 Poverty, unemployment, and a lack of access to quality educational opportunities are among the roots of high crime rates in the district. The rates of homicides, rapes, and robberies per 1,000 CD6 residents were each more than double the citywide rates in 2019.26 With such high levels of poverty and crime, district incarceration rates are also particularly high, with 1,015 individuals incarcerated for every 100,000 adults in 2016.27 To compare, the average incarceration rate across the Bronx as a whole during the same year was 670 people incarcerated per 100,000 adults, and the average rate across the entire city was 425, almost 2.4 times lower than the CD6 rate.28
Environment

In a district where only 6% of residents live in owner-occupied housing, the historical implications of redlining and generations of divestment are evident in the many intersecting facets of the lived environment. [FIGURE 5] While poorly maintained housing is associated with poor health outcomes, including worsened asthma and other respiratory illnesses, 73% of renter-occupied homes in the district reported at least one maintenance defect to landlords in 2014, such as water leaks, cracks or holes, inadequate heating, presence of mice or rats, toilet breakdowns or peeling paint. In the same year, 42% of district households reported cockroaches, almost twice the citywide rate that year. While most heat stroke deaths in NYC occur in homes which lack air conditioning, 26% of district households did not have air conditioning in 2014. Compounding these deficiencies, a majority of district households are either experiencing high housing burden (paying more than 30% of household income to rent) or extreme housing burden (paying more than 50% of household income to rent). Between 2014 and 2018, two-thirds of CD6 renters experienced high housing burden, and 39.5% of renters in the district experienced extreme housing burden.

With a population of over 175,456 residents, CD6 has only two NYC Subway stations less than half a mile away from each other, located on the far southeast corner of the district, through which two of the city’s 36 rail lines currently run. This leaves the district’s residents heavily reliant on the city’s bus network for public transportation, with seven MTA bus lines serving the district’s transportation hub at West Farms Square/East Tremont Avenue. The digital divide is also present in the district with 27.3% of residents lacking internet access at home.

“Systems continuously work to make sure that people don’t have access to the things we know they need to thrive. And if you don’t have the means to leave that kind of community, you stay stuck in that same cycle.”

> COMMUNITY SCHOOL DIRECTOR

FIGURE 5 Environment

| 73% of renter-occupied homes in Bronx CD6 reported at least one maintenance defect to landlords in 2014 |
| 42% reported cockroaches |
| 26% did not have A/C |

With a population of over 175,456 residents, Bronx CD6 has ONLY:

2 subway stops

The stations are an 8 min walk / 0.4 mi apart. Both run across the southeast corner and ONLY 1 is ADA accessible

27.3% Bronx CD6 residents lack internet access at home
Health Outcomes

Since 2009, the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation’s County Health Ranking Report has ranked the Bronx number 62 out of New York State’s 62 counties in health outcomes. At birth, life expectancy for CD6 residents is over 4 years shorter than the citywide average, at 76 years. More than one third of residents have obesity, and 22% have diabetes, the third highest rate among districts across the city. In 2016, 10% of district residents lacked health insurance, and over 67% of children were covered by Child Health Plus or Medicaid. Fourth lowest in the city, the American Human Development Index (AHDI) rating for the district for 2018 was 3.71, far below the citywide rating of 6.17. The CD6 AHDI rating is even lower than the statewide ratings across the country, with West Virginia, ranked 50th of all US states, receiving a score of 3.94 that same year.

The Bronx has the highest percentage of both children and adults diagnosed with asthma of all the city’s boroughs. While air quality is improving city-wide, levels of fine particulate matter (PM2.5) in CD6 measured 8 micrograms per cubic meter, .2 micrograms higher than the overall Bronx average, and .5 micrograms higher than the citywide average. In addition to causing asthma, other respiratory illnesses, and heart attack, research has found that low-income people exposed to air with even slightly elevated fine particulate matter levels have a 225% higher mortality risk than more affluent people, with mortality increasing “almost linearly” as air pollution increases. Additional research has found South Bronx students are twice as likely to attend a school near a highway as children in other parts of the city, with about one-fifth attending schools within 500 feet of a major highway. The same study found that the 5–10% of fine particulates in the air which come from diesel truck exhaust impact children’s asthma most heavily, with asthma symptoms doubling on days when truck traffic is highest. Further analysis by the backbone team found 15 schools within CD6 alone to be within 250 feet (the average length of one city block) of one or more major truck routes, as shown in the accompanying map.

[FIGURE 6] + [FIGURE 7]
**BRONX CD6 LIFE EXPECTANCY**

76 YEARS OLD

over 4 years shorter than the citywide average

**BRONX CD6 HEALTH RANKING REPORT**

#62 out of New York State’s 62 counties in health outcomes

**BRONX CD6 HEALTH ISSUES**

- **Obesity**: 36%
- **Hypertension**: 32%
- **Asthma**: 28%
- **Diabetes**: 22%

**BRONX CD6 ACCESS TO HEALTHCARE**

- **Lack Health Insurance**: 10%
- **Children Covered by Child Health Plus or Medicaid**: 67%

South Bronx students are twice as likely to attend a school near a highway as children in other parts of the city.

1/5

ATTENDING SCHOOLS WITHIN 500FT OF A MAJOR HIGHWAY

* see map on page 18
Food Access

The Bronx is impacted by numerous long-standing structural inequities which have repressed equitable access to nutritious food choices. The borough is home to the Hunts Point Food Distribution Center, including Hunts Point Cooperative Market and the Terminal Market, the largest meat and produce markets in the world, respectively. Despite proximity to this major food resource, borough residents have struggled for decades with a disproportionate lack of access to fresh and nutritious food. Supermarket access is relatively poor for Bronx residents, where 9 of 12 community districts fall short of the City Average Ratio for Local Grocery Stores to People. An average 17% of Bronx residents struggle to access at least one serving of fruits or vegetables per day. Research shows that people who eat 3 or more fruits or vegetables per day are 42% less likely to die of stroke and 24% less likely to die of heart disease than those who eat less than one per day. [FIGURE 8] In the 2015–2016 NYC Community Health Survey, 19% of CD6 residents reported consuming fewer than one serving of fruits or vegetables per day.

“Lack of food looks especially bad. I have a monthly food pantry, and they don’t give out much, and they’re on line from 6AM for a 10:30 start, and you can see it, they’re just shaking for the staples. People are so anxious, they really need that opportunity.”

> FAMILY CASE MANAGER
Research shows →

PEOPLE WHO EAT 3 OR MORE fruits or vegetables per day → 42% LESS LIKELY to die of stroke*

19% of Bronx CD6 residents consume fewer than 1 serving of fruits or vegetables per day

* than those who eat less than one per day

24% LESS LIKELY to die of heart disease*
Foodscape

It is easier to include healthy choices like fruits and vegetables in daily consumption when nutritious, affordable options are geographically available. Access to nutritious food is particularly limited in CD6, where supermarket square footage per capita is the lowest of any district in the city. The district also exhibits one of the city’s highest ratios of bodegas—with limited healthy food choices—to supermarkets, with 37 bodegas to each supermarket, more than twice the citywide average of 16 to 1.46 [FIGURE 9]

GrowNYC’s Food Access and Agriculture program works to ensure both regional farm viability and equitable access to the fresh food grown on those farms for all NYC residents by managing greenmarkets, farm stands, and fresh food boxes across the city. With over 50 greenmarkets and farm stands in operation, the Bronx is home to only a single of GrowNYC’s market resources—the Norwood Farmstand, located in CD6 northwest at the border of CD7.46 Manhattan, with a 2018 population of just over 1.6 million residents, slightly more than the Bronx population of 1.4 million, currently features greenmarkets or farm stands at 13 separate locations.47 CD6 is home

FIGURE 9 Foodscape

Bronx CD6 is home to...

NYC Community District

Bronx CD6

CD6 Retail Food Stores

8 Supermarkets

16 Fast Food Establishments

296 Bodegas

Percent Below Poverty Line

0%–24.6%
24.6%–36.4%
36.4%–43.8%
43.8%–51.3%

Source: NYS Agriculture + Markets, American Community Survey 2018, and NYC Open Data

Bronx CD6 has 37 Bodegas for every 1 Supermarket More than twice the citywide average of 16 to 1
to 8 supermarkets, 16 fast food establishments, and over 296 food retail stores categorized as deli, grocery, discount, or convenience. **[FIGURE 9]** Fast food establishments are located within and around the district’s areas of highest poverty, where 43.8% or more of households are living below the poverty line.

“Poverty has a particular brand in each place you see it. The brand in our community looks like homelessness, it looks like hunger—where families fight over our leftover school food when there is any.”

> DIRECTOR OF EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION PROGRAM

**Community Assets**

Bronx CD6 has 50 public schools, 3 public libraries, 27 hospitals and clinics, and 13 public parks. In fact, 99% of CD6 residents live within walking distance of a park or open space, far above the citywide target. According to My.BronxImpact.Org, the zip codes 10457, 10458 and 10460 which comprise CD6 feature at least 640 community-based organizations offering over 790 programs and social support resources, from food pantries to job training programs, to shelters, legal services, benefits navigation, and more.

**Community Needs**

Annual Statements of Community District Needs and Community Board Budget Requests are mandated by the New York City Charter, and are submitted by local Community Board staff each year as part of the City’s budget process. These are intended to promote each community’s ability to influence more informed decision making on local planning and budget priorities at the city level. In each Annual Statement of Community District Needs from 2018 to 2021, Bronx Community Board 6 has identified schools, crime, and unemployment as the three most pressing issues facing the district.
COLLECTIVE IMPACT FOR FOOD JUSTICE

LISTENING TOUR FINDINGS
In February 2020, the backbone team analyzed the outcomes of the data review process and launched a community listening tour. The team conducted semi-structured interviews with community stakeholders, including community board leaders, community school staff, social service providers, and local parents. Interviews focused on identifying and characterizing community needs, assets, and underlying causes of these circumstances.

**COMMON THEMES**

Preliminary analysis of findings from the listening tour surfaced several common themes which resonated deeply with the analysis of the team’s data review.

**Securing the Basics**

Listening tour interviewees identified multiple barriers to the cultivation of optimal wellbeing in the district, from the lack of quality education and career opportunities, to low availability of affordable nutritious food and inaccessible services and resources. Interviewees proposed numerous underlying factors contributing to and perpetuating the obstruction of individual and community wellbeing evident in the data review. **Interviewees almost uniformly characterized wellbeing as a state where an individual or family’s most basic needs are routinely adequately accounted for. “Their basics are secure,” summarized one interviewee.**

Securing the basics was identified by all interviewees as a major barrier to wellbeing for CD6 residents, particularly the overwhelming amount of time and energy that it takes many residents to obtain their essential necessities. Some interviewees suggested that the community lacks access to the services and resources which promote wellbeing. Similarly, some interviewees proposed that such services may exist, but that community members find it difficult to learn about or connect to them. **“We don’t have the right resources, and if we do, we don’t even know that we do,” remarked one interviewee.** Others reported that resources do exist in the district, but that accessing them can be particularly challenging: **“Any time you have to go somewhere to get something, there’s hoops to jump through,” observed another respondent.** One major reason suggested for this disconnect is a lack of cultural competence on the part of service providers, who may not be reaching their target community members in the most relevant manners. **“Marketing of services to our communities is appalling, there is zero cultural knowledge, so we lose out on the opportunities,” explained one social services program director.**

Still, some interviewees felt there is infrastructure from which to build towards more optimal wellbeing. **“It’s a long process to get the right things in place, but it’s not as hard as other places, where the things just don’t exist at all.”**

In addition to secure basic needs, a majority of interviewees characterized optimal wellbeing as a state where one has a sense of consistency around those basics. Further, interviewees suggested that such stability also includes a sense of control over one’s own life trajectory. **“Peace, serenity, choice, control over something, whatever it is, even your kid’s meal—having something inside your locus of control,” represents a major component of wellbeing to many listening tour participants.** One major impediment to residents’ peace of mind that was highlighted by a majority of interviewees was the perverse nature of entitlements eligibility restrictions, particularly for housing subsidies. **“It makes people scared that if they do better they will have nowhere to live,” remarked one interviewee regarding income-based housing eligibility.** This lack of control, particularly resulting from perverse means-testing, perpetuates cycles of instability, where any level of wellbeing beyond secure basics can seem unattainable. **“Especially for families with perverse incentives on their income, [homelessness] can be a repetitive cycle,”** one interviewee underscored. Interviewees acknowledged the systemic roots of these contrary incentives. **“I’m restrained by the rules the system has. I have to stay as a poor old woman forever,”** remarked one participant.

**Cycles of Divestment**

This undercurrent of instability and constraint of personal control reinforces the realities made evident by data regarding the district. Some interviewees suggested that the permeation of such conditions of instability throughout the collective psyche may diminish community members’ ability to take advantage of available opportunities in the district. **“We are so undernourished physically, and spiritually, it can make people so despondent that they can’t grab onto the few opportunities to be educated and make a good life,” explained one participant.** Whether emphasizing issues in healthcare, education,
or means-tested benefits, such instability and lack of control around secure basics was identified by many participants as a persistent and pervasive detriment to community wellbeing.

Many participants also noted the importance of personal choice plays in individual and community wellbeing. One interviewee suggested that individual and community wellbeing are evident in neighborhoods where there are “good things around for you—and not just access to the things you need, but to things you want, too.” Participants proposed that such lack of choice contributes to the limited nature of wellbeing in the district. “People are kept from flourishing because of a lack of choice—whether to go to college, of activities, of restaurants even!” commented one interviewee. “The more stuff you have in your community, the more different things you can do, the more things you can explore,” noted one interviewee, who lamented that a lack of such choices can be seen impacting life for residents from childhood, remarking that “[m]ost of our kids don’t go past this corner.” Many interviewees pointed out the systemic roots of this lack of choice, with some identifying it as one of many visible conditions of systemic oppression in the district. “I don’t need a gate to keep me inside my hood, if you oppress me enough,” summarized one participant.

With a majority of time being devoted to stabilizing basic needs, and with such tangible impacts of historic and perpetual cycles of divestment, it can seem like there is little energy left to participate in the creation of new choices, the cultivation of new opportunities, and the systems which channel resources towards these ends. “We have great ideas, but too many obligations to stand them up. We’re juggling too much,” offered one local parent. Multiple participants noted that this sentiment ultimately perpetuates these cycles of divestment by effectively disenfranchising residents. “[Residents] try to add their voice but it’s not reflected in what happens next, so what’s the point?” summarized one interviewee. As voter turnout and civic engagement in the district decrease, so too does investment on the part of the district’s representatives and anchor institutions. Many participants could identify specific resources that were once accessible to the community that are no longer available. “There’s a lack of afterschool, Saturday, and night programs—they existed when I was a kid growing up, but they’re lacking now,” remembered one interviewee who grew up and now works in CD6. “There’s less programs available now,” remembered another who grew up and is now raising their own family in CD6, “gyms to play basketball or have step practice in, there used to be more choices of things to do.” This sentiment of divestment is reflected in more widely available data. For example, a 2017 study by the Citizens Budget Commission found that only 19.6% of CD6 residents agreed that the city “spends tax dollars wisely.”

Even those residents who are civically engaged may feel this disempowerment, further discouraging participation and ultimately disenfranchising the community. “We’re disenfranchised, and because of that we feel disempowered,” offered one interviewee. Even those residents who are civically engaged may feel this disempowerment, further discouraging participation and ultimately disenfranchising the community. “[Residents] try to add their voice but it’s not reflected in what happens next, so what’s the point?” summarized one interviewee. As voter turnout and civic engagement in the district decrease, so too does investment on the part of the district’s representatives and anchor institutions. Many participants could identify specific resources that were once accessible to the community that are no longer available. “There’s a lack of afterschool, Saturday, and night programs—they existed when I was a kid growing up, but they’re lacking now,” remembered one interviewee who grew up and now works in CD6. “There’s less programs available now,” remembered another who grew up and is now raising their own family in CD6, “gyms to play basketball or have step practice in, there used to be more choices of things to do.” This sentiment of divestment is reflected in more widely available data. For example, a 2017 study by the Citizens Budget Commission found that only 19.6% of CD6 residents agreed that the city “spends tax dollars wisely.”

**FIGURE 11** Voter Turnout

In the three years preceding September 2019...

**29.5%** of eligible voters in Bronx CD6 had voted at least once compared to **43.5%** of eligible voters on average citywide.

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Social Fabric

Many of the listening tour participants who underscored this sense of divestment further connected this to the character of the social fabric in neighborhoods throughout the district: “It was unsafe here in the 80s, but we felt more safe because we had things to do,” reflected one interviewee. Notably, multiple interviewees suggested that community wellbeing may have declined over recent decades because “[t]he young people don’t have older support these days,” relayed one respondent. “Involved parents, volunteers, elders, people around investing in the next generation—you have to prepare the community for success,” explained another. This sentiment is also reflected in the data where strength of community connection is correlated with collective and individual wellbeing. In 2016, 62% of adult CD6 residents surveyed reported that they felt that their neighbors are willing to help one another, compared to the citywide average of 72%.44 [FIGURE 12] This data point resonates particularly with the input of one lifelong CD6 resident in particular: “[T]here is still some of the sentiment left from ‘it takes a village’, where you step up for your neighbors. There’s even a ‘nosy’ mentality still, but it’s not the majority anymore, that’s shrinking... there’s no more aunties around, watching out for the kids and telling them what’s up.”

While multiple participants suggested that the social fabric of the community had diminished over time, many went on to propose that this reality is the result of more intentional systematic destruction. For example, some participants connected high rates of crime, incarceration, and substance abuse issues directly to this overall disinvestment and the disempowerment and oppression it causes. “The authorities and powers that be aren’t here to be firemen, they’re arsonists running around with fire extinguishers,” summarized one interviewee. Ultimately, interviewees identified this institutionalized cycle of divestment, disempowerment, and disenfranchisement as a major deterrent to individual and community wellbeing, preventing the stable accumulation of basic necessities as well as the ideal of self-actualization. “It’s like we have this reputation, so we’re treated like second class citizens. And that’s screwed up, because there’s so much potential here, they just don’t invest in it.”

PROPOSED AREAS OF FOCUS

Further analysis of listening tour interviews showed that a majority of stakeholders engaged identified the following topics for the initiative to consider as the focal points of collective impact work:

Healthy, Affordable Food Access

Access to affordable healthy food was almost unanimously identified as a major issue by listening tour participants. From personal experience with issues of affordability or proximity to professional experience regarding available emergency food and nutrition support resources, in residential, educational, and social service settings, most interviewees agreed that in CD6, “poverty looks like hunger.” Many interviewees noted the common problem of choosing between housing stability and food security: “Food stamps go down, food prices go up, and income is so low to begin with, sometimes people fall behind on their rent,” explained one participant. Interviews showed that participants widely agreed that food security is not merely about a minimum quantity of food, but about personal choice and nutritional value of that food as well. “Available food choices especially, they’re not healthy. Not having those healthy choices is what poverty looks like,” reported one respondent. Finally, interviewees highlighted the link between such a lack of healthy food access and health outcomes prevalent in the district, noting that “what we put in our bodies trickles down to the medical issues we have like diabetes and obesity.”
Resources and Pathways to Upward Mobility

Participants also almost unanimously suggested that BIA-CD6 work on increasing, fortifying, improving opportunities for education and employment, and better connecting those opportunities into attainable pathways to upward mobility. In the simplest terms, many interviewees’ input underscored the need for access to “quality education and skills that are useful for real jobs where people can make a secure life for their families.” Further, participants suggested that education should include more social-emotional exploration and other components which promote lifelong learning and the skills for long term success. “Teaching kids how to be real leaders, ask questions, be innovative, express their feelings in positive ways, to be confident in themselves—that’s how you build a successful human.” Participants suggested that the funding of public schools mainly through local income taxes in NYC further undermines the low-income community’s ability to pave pathways to upward mobility from within. Some even pointed out that the very nature of the public school experience can undermine such foundations from the start. “There’s a low value placed on education for our community—the schools are not clean, there’s not even tissue for the kids to use, everyone has to scramble to put uniforms together… [it] really drives the mindset of scarcity in our community.”

Improvements in Public Safety and Criminal Justice

Almost every interviewee recommended that BIA-CD6 also focus on making improvements in public safety, criminal justice, and the relationship between the police and the community. Many participants commented on their own individual concerns for their personal safety or that of their community members, whether from violence at home, in public, or at the hands of powerful systems. Others highlighted the prevalence of drug use, sales, and associated crime in neighborhoods across the district. Many of the educators interviewed remarked on the toll such a pervasive undercurrent of violence has on the community, particularly their young students. “It’s so violent in this neighborhood—there are shootings outside all the time, right outside the school, and the kids aren’t even phased by it,” remarked one educator. While they may appear unphased, countless studies have proven that students exposed to neighborhood violence and trauma experience more stressors and challenges in school and with learning. Some parents interviewed identified visible negative impacts of this atmosphere of violence in their own families. “Anxiety has set in with my 15 year old, he never wants to go to the store after dark anymore—you know, the Junior thing,” remarked one parent from the community, referring to the June 2018 murder of 15 year old Lesandro “Junior” Guzman-Feliz outside a bodega in the district’s Belmont neighborhood. Finally, many interviewees commented on the toll that local, citywide, and even national police brutality and inequities in the criminal justice system take on the community. “Trayvon Martin really hit me, I couldn’t let my sons wear hoodies for years,” one local parent remembered. Other participants echoed with similar fears on behalf of themselves and their loved ones. “They’re afraid of the cops. I have conversations with my Black sons that I have to have, or it could get them killed.” This fear, anxiety, and vigilance further perpetuate cycles which fray social fabric and cause overall divestment from the community, which suppress the connection to resources with which to work toward optimal wellbeing.

FIGURE 13 Exposure to Violent Crime Reduces Academic Performance

The effect of exposure to violent crime is most pronounced among African Americans & REDUCES THE PASSING RATES of Black students by approximately 3 PERCENTAGE POINTS
LISTENING TOUR

Local stakeholders were interviewed and asked to answer two primary questions:

WHAT DOES WELLBEING MEAN TO YOU?

“Food to eat, shelter over your head, community—space to grow as people.”

“Involved parents, volunteers, elders, people around investing in the next generation—you have to prepare the community for success.”

“A person is healthy, has secure shelter and food.”

“Self-care, being OK, being OK with not being OK.”

“Being able to flourish—health, quality food, and not just because new people have moved in—I can’t even afford that stuff!”

“Having peace of mind—not being worried on a daily basis about something detrimental happening to you or your people.”

WHAT DOES WELLBEING LOOK LIKE IN/FOR OUR NEIGHBORHOOD/COMMUNITY?

(How do you see it?)

“Activities, opportunities for interactions, parks, museums, kids interacting with other kids.”

“Investment in the community by elected officials.”

“It looks like having choices. There’s access to healthy meals, it’s safe, there’s access to quality education, resources, when there’s good things around for you. And not just access to the things you need, but things you want, too.”

“Strong family bond feeling in this school, deep sense of loyalty to this school community.”

“The more stuff you have in your community, the more different things you can do, the more things you can explore. Most of our kids here don’t go past this corner.”
IMPACT ON NEW YORK

On March 1, 2020, one of the worst public health crises in over a century detonated across New York State when the first case of COVID-19 in the state was confirmed. On March 7, Governor Andrew Cuomo declared a state of emergency across New York State. As the first epicenter of COVID-19 in the country, New York State reported more confirmed cases than any country outside the United States by April 10, 2020. All New York City public schools closed on March 16, and the next day, all bars and restaurants across the city closed for operations except delivery. A state-wide executive stay-at-home order was signed into law by Governor Cuomo on March 20, 2020. The order stayed in full effect across the state until May 15, when the first regions across the state officially met requirements to enter the phased reopening process. New York City, which witnessed 1,000 deaths by March 31, 2020, remained under the full effects of the order until June 8, when it entered Phase 1 of reopening. The city’s public schools remained closed through the summer and into the 2020–2021 school year, which was further disrupted by additional all-remote orders throughout the fall and winter. To date, Brooklyn, Queens, and the Bronx have suffered the highest number of COVID-19 related deaths, respectively, of all counties across New York State.

Disproportionate Impacts

As of October 2021, NYC has reported 1,108,692 total COVID-19 cases and 34,460 cumulative deaths. While these numbers are staggering, the disproportionate impact of the disease on low-income communities of color is particularly overwhelming. Comprising 29% of the city’s population, deaths of Hispanic New Yorkers made up 34% of the city’s overall death toll. Similarly, Black New Yorkers represent 22% of the city population, but accounted for 28% of overall fatalities. In the simplest terms, Black and Hispanic New Yorkers were found to be twice as likely to die of COVID-19 as their white counterparts.

In 2019, the Bronx was home to a population of about 1.4 million residents, while Manhattan had about 13% more residents as home to over 1.6 million people. Despite its higher population, by May 26, 2020, Manhattan reported about 35% fewer deaths and 45% fewer cases of the disease than the Bronx. One year into the pandemic, Manhattan had a positive case rate of 6,226 diagnoses per 100,000 people and a mortality rate of 218 deaths per 100,000 residents. At the same milestone, the Bronx had a case rate of 9,996 positive diagnoses per 100,000 residents, and a mortality rate of 376 deaths per 100,000 people. [FIGURE 14]

Rates in Bronx CD6

The case and death rates of the zip codes comprising Bronx CD6 exemplify the inordinate impact of the pandemic on the borough. In each of these zip codes (10457, 10458, and 10460), one in 10 people were diagnosed with COVID-19. As of March 2021, zip code 10457, home to almost 74,000 residents of the Tremont neighborhood, lost one of every 297 residents
to COVID-19. The Belmont and Fordham neighborhoods comprising zip code 10458 are home to almost 83,000 residents, one of every 459 of which died from the disease. Zip code 10460, which covers the West Farms neighborhood that about 59,000 people call home, has lost one out of every 301 residents to the virus. [FIGURE 15] In comparison, the Manhattan neighborhoods of the Upper East Side and Yorkville which comprise zip code 10128, just 6 miles from the center of Bronx CD6, showed one out of every 874 residents succumbing to the disease.

**Underlying Inequities**

Levels of income inequality and poverty, far predating the onset of the pandemic, induce some of the greatest underlying contributors to the disproportionate morbidity and mortality rates suffered in the Bronx. The 2010 census found the congressional districts which include the South Bronx to have the highest poverty rate of all districts across the nation, with 38% of residents living below the poverty line, and even slightly higher in CD6, currently hovering around 40%. Such a degree of poverty leads to numerous conditions which exacerbated the rate at which the virus spread throughout and killed members of the Bronx community.

**Housing**

New York City is home to the biggest public housing system in the country, with over 176,000 apartments in 2,418 buildings under the jurisdiction of the New York City Housing Authority (NYCHA). Almost one-quarter of all 400,000 NYC public housing residents live in the Bronx, and over one-fifth of public housing residents are over the age of 62, the age group most gravely affected by the virus. Routinely named “New York City’s worst landlord,” NYCHA has been plagued with issues regarding lead paint, mold, raw sewage leaks, elevator dysfunction, extended heating failures, drinking water contamination, and rodent infestations. Just weeks before the onset of the pandemic in January 2020, it was reported that NYCHA residents submitted 200,000 complaints of bed bug and roach infestations in 2018 and 2019 alone. In 2018, almost 60% of NYCHA residents surveyed reported issues with mold, which can lead to lung and respiratory problems.
In 2014, 68% of renter-occupied homes across the Bronx had maintenance defects compared to 56% of renter-occupied homes citywide. The Bronx has the highest percentage of homes with maintenance defects of all the boroughs, making it more difficult for Bronx residents to safely shelter in place. Poverty, housing deficiency, and stock availability also intertwine to cause the Bronx to have more people living together on average per unit than in Manhattan. More people living in close quarters may mean a higher likelihood of virus transmission between residents. In 2019, an average of 2.8 individuals inhabited each occupied housing unit in the Bronx, whereas an average of 2 people lived in each unit in Manhattan. The Bronx has the highest percentage of units considered to be crowded, with more than one person per room living in the unit.

Healthcare

The Bronx entered the pandemic with higher overall rates of pre-existing conditions such as asthma, obesity, hypertension, cardiovascular disease, and a lower life expectancy than NYC residents on average. Asthma and other respiratory illnesses, in particular, raise one’s risk of COVID-19 hospitalization. Further, Bronx community members have less access to quality, affordable healthcare than members of comparable communities citywide. As of 2019, 45% of employed Bronx residents aged 18 and over did not receive health coverage through their employer. In contrast, less than one-quarter of Manhattan residents lacked access to health insurance through their employer. [FIGURE 17] In January 2021, 22% of all workers across New York City who lost jobs or income due to the pandemic also reported losing access to health insurance coverage. Yet 32% of Latinx New Yorkers suffering pandemic-related job or wage loss reported that they or a member of their household were without health insurance since the start of the pandemic.

Access to medical professionals is disproportionately distributed between Manhattan and the Bronx, with one physician for every 754 Manhattan residents, and only one doctor for every 1,770 Bronx residents. With only 13% more people comprising its population, Manhattan has almost twice the number of hospitals as the Bronx, and significantly more hospital beds per capita, with 6.4 beds per 1,000 residents in Manhattan, compared to 2.6 per 1,000 residents in the Bronx. The quality of such hospital care in the Bronx is also subpar to that available in Manhattan, with Manhattan hospitals receiving an average rating of 3 stars out of 5, to the Bronx hospital average rating of 1.2 stars, with Jacobi Medical Center considered one of the five worst hospitals in the entire country.

FIGURE 16 Housing Impacts

60% NYCHA residents surveyed reported issues with mold which can lead to lung and respiratory problems

Asthma and other respiratory illnesses, in particular, raise one’s risk of COVID-19 hospitalization.
Occupation

In the summer of 2020, New York City’s overall unemployment rate approached 20%, a level not seen since the Great Depression. The Bronx reported a July 2020 unemployment rate just shy of 25%, due in large part to the concentration of residents employed in industries such as hospitality and accommodations, recreation and food services. Such widespread unemployment further intensified the impacts of the pandemic, adding an economic crisis to the existing public health emergency. About 17% of NYC’s essential workforce resides in the Bronx, while around 12% of essential workers live in Manhattan. Over 39% of CD6 workers were employed in service occupations in 2018. Almost 31% of employed adults aged 16 and over worked in educational services, healthcare, and social assistance occupations in 2018. Another 8.4% of residents worked in transportation and utilities jobs such as garbage collection, and 12.6% worked in retail trades, including grocery store and pharmacy workers. [FIGURE 17]

CD6 residents commuted further than other New Yorkers on average, with almost 38% of workers traveling 60 minutes or more each way compared to the citywide rate of 27% of residents on average spending over an hour in transport to and from work. While the majority of workers across the city, state and country worked from home for months, such essential workers could not perform their vital functions which keep society running without emerging from their homes. Rates of decline in subway ridership paint this disparity quite clearly. About 55% of essential workers take public transportation to work in New York City, and all boroughs saw declines in public transit ridership amidst the pandemic, however, it was not proportional to the city’s population distribution. Subway ridership decreased by 75% in Manhattan at the height of the pandemic, but the Bronx only saw a 55% decrease during that time.

Food Security Crisis

The dual public health and economic crises stemming from the COVID-19 pandemic have further exacerbated wealth, income, and food security divides between communities. In New York City, increased disparities have been noted across racial and ethnic lines, with 62% of Black households and 73% of Latinx households reporting serious problems paying major bills and/or buying food since March 2020.

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**FIGURE 17 Healthcare and Occupational Impacts**

- **45%** of employed Bronx residents (18+) did not receive health coverage through their employer.
- **< 25%** of employed Manhattan residents (18+) did not receive health coverage through their employer.

+ **LOSS OF A JOB** - **LOSS OF HEALTH COVERAGE**
Impact on Food Security
While economic constraints have always suppressed access to affordable, nutritious food for Bronx residents, the impacts of these dual crises further amplified food access issues. Prior to the pandemic, an estimated 2.5 million New Yorkers were facing food insecurity, and at least another 800,000 more have since begun to face food challenges. The Bronx had a 17.5% borough-wide food insecurity rate for 2019, representing over 250,000 food insecure individuals, with 100% of food insecure individuals living at or below the SNAP eligibility threshold. Bronx neighborhoods, such as CD6, were already experiencing food insecurity rates as high as 24% prior to the pandemic. These numbers are expected to continue to climb, with food insecurity projected to grow by at least 38% compared to pre-pandemic levels. City Harvest, one of the largest emergency food distributors in the city, reported about 12 million visits to pantries in its network between March and August 2020, almost three million more than during the same period in 2019. [FIGURE 18]

“Food stamps go down, food prices go up, their income is so low to begin with, sometimes they fall behind on their rent.”
> FAMILY CASE MANAGER

Impact on Emergency Foodscape
Despite the increase in demand for emergency food access services associated with the economic impacts of the pandemic, nearly 40% of the city’s food pantries and community kitchens closed during the height of the crisis in April. The Bronx saw the highest proportion of service closures of all boroughs city-wide, with 50% of Bronx emergency food services shuttered, 90% of these being in the highest need areas. These closures, exacerbated by mass funding cuts and other economic hardships throughout the city, have resulted in an inadequate quantity of available emergency food resources to Bronx residents. Coupled with significantly decreased capacity for remaining services, this has negatively impacted the quality of available supports. This may be a contributing factor to the lengths people across the Bronx had to go to in order to access services. Bronx community members seeking emergency food spent much of the spring and summer of 2020 waiting for hours in lines stretching around multiple blocks or traveling inordinate distances to acquire resources. For example, BronxWorks, a local organization providing support resources, saw its monthly food pantry caseload skyrocket, from 500 households per month before the pandemic to over 4,000 per month by October 2020. A June 2020 report by Feeding America found that 67% of Manhattan emergency food organizations reported serving clients from the Bronx in addition to Manhattan residents, highlighting the geographic distance many Bronx residents traveled to access emergency food resources at the height of the pandemic.

Inequitable Recovery
While efforts have been made at the federal, state, and city levels to address food insecurity issues throughout the pandemic, resources are insufficient and have not been distributed in an equitable manner. For example, the federal Farmers to Families Food Box Program has provided scant relief to the New York State region, with organizations serving the Northeast receiving just 4% of program contract funds in both the first and second rounds of awards, while roughly 10% of the nation’s population resides in the area. With the FY2020 New York State budget upended by the economic impacts of the pandemic, the federal COVID-19 Relief Package passed by the Senate in July 2020 was only projected to cover less than half of New York State’s budget shortfall. With minimal forthcoming federal and state appropriations for food insecurity solutions, City Hall slated $25 million to support city food pantries and community kitchens in April 2020. This allocation was split between a total of 10 nonprofit organizations, which made funding and supplying smaller, more local community based organizations particularly difficult. While this funding was necessary and appreciated by the emergency food community, this model did not present a sustainable, equitable path to food security for all. Such shortcomings of government funding and systems propelled the growth of mutual aid networks and initiatives across the city, that includes a growing network of over 100 community refrigerators offering free, no-barrier access to food.

“There is a system that’s continuously working to make sure that people don’t have access to the things we know they need to thrive. And if you don’t have the means to leave that kind of community, you stay stuck in that same cycle.”
> COMMUNITY SCHOOL DIRECTOR
Bronx neighborhoods such as CD6 were already experiencing food insecurity, pre-pandemic.

\[ 17.5\% \] borough-wide food insecurity rate

\[ 250,000+ \] food insecure Bronx-based individuals

\[ 100\% \] food insecure individuals living at or below the SNAP eligibility threshold

\[ \star \] BronxWorks saw its monthly food pantry caseloads SKYROCKET.

\[ 4,000 \] households

\[ 500 \] households

Per month before the pandemic

October 2020, during the pandemic

50% of Bronx emergency food services SHUTTERED

90% of these in THE HIGHEST NEED AREAS
COLLECTIVE IMPACT FOR FOOD JUSTICE

IMPACT ON INITIATIVE
As New York City shut down in compliance with the Governor’s NY on PAUSE order in March 2020, the backbone team shifted from conducting in-person semi-structured interviews. Instead, the team sought out opportunities to provide backbone support to community organizations as they came together to assess and respond to the crisis at hand.

Throughout the spring and summer, the team joined a daily call with New York State Assemblymember Michael Blake and other Bronx advocates and service providers, developing nuanced insight into the emerging needs of the community. The team was able to identify numerous opportunities to provide backbone support to the community by building space and capacity for community-driven conversations, and which allowed the initiative to connect disparate players from across the community to fill gaps in resources. Over these months, Assemblymember Blake affirmed BIA-CD6’s successful establishment of the infrastructure to connect stakeholders, identify and elevate needs, and present actionable recommendations for solving problems to his team and others. With Assemblymember Blake, the backbone team was able to directly support initiatives which centered the areas of focus proposed by listening tour participants, including addressing public safety concerns for essential workers during the city’s 8pm curfews, and opportunities for economic mobility by coordinating a joint proposal for the reinstatement of the 2020 Summer Youth Employment Program.

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Throughout the spring and summer, the team joined a daily call with New York State Assemblymember Michael Blake and other Bronx advocates and service providers, developing nuanced insight into the emerging needs of the community. The team was able to identify numerous opportunities to provide backbone support to the community by building space and capacity for community-driven conversations, and which allowed the initiative to connect disparate players from across the community to fill gaps in resources. Over these months, Assemblymember Blake affirmed BIA-CD6’s successful establishment of the infrastructure to connect stakeholders, identify and elevate needs, and present actionable recommendations for solving problems to his team and others. With Assemblymember Blake, the backbone team was able to directly support initiatives which centered the areas of focus proposed by listening tour participants, including addressing public safety concerns for essential workers during the city’s 8pm curfews, and opportunities for economic mobility by coordinating a joint proposal for the reinstatement of the 2020 Summer Youth Employment Program.
Focus on Food Access

As food access emerged as a critical and ongoing need, and with the reinforcement of prior listening tour feedback and data analyzed, BIA-CD6 solidified food access as its central area of focus in May 2020. Once settled on the commitment to focus on Food Access, BIA-CD6 shifted to finding opportunities for collective impact in the Bronx Food Justice space. Beginning by reaching out to nutrition and food-based social service organizations in the South Bronx, BIA-CD6 garnered interest to participate in this advocacy work. In June, the backbone team launched and facilitated a Bronx Food Access Collective Convening to identify collective food access needs, and lift up community-driven solutions to address them. With input from stakeholders of this convening and other engagement efforts, BIA–CD6 identified the priority goal of achieving food justice in the Bronx. The team formed the Bronx Impact Food Access Collective (BIFAC), a collaborative action network focused on centering community-driven strategies for achieving this goal.

Bronx Impact Food Access Collective

To address the longstanding structural inequities which have exacerbated food insecurity in the borough, BIA-CD6 launched the Bronx Impact Food Access Collective (BIFAC) in 2020. This group, comprised of over 35 emergency food and nutrition support service providers, food system innovators, and advocates believes that all Bronx residents deserve equitable access to affordable, nutritious, culturally relevant food. BIFAC centers community voices, identifies barriers to wellbeing, and proposes innovative solutions. The group works to advance food justice by advocating for the redistribution of resources to sustain these solutions and fill persistent systemic gaps. Initial meetings brought stakeholders together to analyze gaps in food access systems for the community’s most marginalized residents. After analyzing data and discussing various perspectives, the collective came to a consensus on areas of focus within existing food access systems to target for impact. The group then co-created a collective vision statement, brainstormed potential solutions to pressing food access issues, and identified ideal strategy targets to advocate for change.
Collective Vision

**WE BELIEVE** that community stakeholders deserve the power and resources to realize and sustain the food system solutions they envision and to fill the systemic gaps which persist despite community innovation. We work to advance food justice by centering these solutions and interrogating systems, advocating for the redistribution of power and resources to sustain these solutions and fill systemic gaps that persist through and beyond the city’s pandemic recovery.

**Organization of Issue Areas**

The collective identified and organized a comprehensive list of the barriers Bronx residents face to accessing food and nutrition supports, preventing the realization of food justice for the Bronx. The group organized these issues into categories based on the populations they most directly impacted. The Bronx Impact Food Access Collective ultimately asserted an approach which promotes just, equitable food access for all Bronx residents, including and especially:

1. Those with information sharing sensitivities (like undocumented families, homeless individuals, and those who may be experiencing domestic/intimate partner violence)

2. Those relying on the cultural relevance and appropriateness of available services and items/meals (including dietary restrictions for religious, health, or personal preference reasons)

3. Those relying on school and/or emergency food/nutrition supports

4. Those who rely on delivery of items/meals (such as the elderly, immunocompromised, disabled, or geographically disconnected)
Collective Priorities

The group has identified multiple goals for collective action to overcome or break down each of these barriers, and has co-created this preliminary list of priority targets for collective action. The BIA-CD6 backbone team gathered additional feedback on the priorities from BIFAC members and their partners by completing a survey to evaluate the appropriateness, interest, and need for each prioritized goal. These priority targets represent the foundational strategy statement informing the collective’s initial platform:

1. Enhance Cultural Relevance and Appropriateness

   Problem
   Many prepared meals do not comply with health-related dietary needs (ex. salt, veganism, etc.)
   Goal
   Increase access to fresh, unprepared ingredients (so individuals can control the preparation within their needs)

   Problem
   People with religious dietary restrictions cannot eat a lot of the items that are SNAP/WIC eligible
   Goal
   Black/Brown/other culturally relevant businesses should be connected to accepting these benefits

2. Reconcile Information-sharing Sensitivities

   Problem
   General public cannot easily identify which services they can safely/adequately access without sharing personal information
   Goal
   Expand community knowledge of which programs request which information and for what reasons through trusted community members and organizations

3. Improve Reliance on Emergency Food/Nutrition Support

   Problem
   Accessible food supply, both individually purchased and distributed, frequently lacks fresh produce (and if available/included, it may be spoiled/unusable)
   Goals
   Have Health Bucks used as a SNAP incentive at food retail sites selling local food, Fresh Food Box sites, and other local purveyors of produce (in addition to Farmstands and Farmers Markets, the current acceptors—fresh food boxes would especially be relevant)
   Promote the availability of affordable produce within communities (impact the food system infrastructure)
Collective Action

The Bronx Impact Food Access Collective compiled their vision statement, a slate of priorities pertaining to their populations of focus, and other pertinent contextual statements into a platform with recommendations for policymakers to consider. The backbone team submitted this platform with an introductory letter on behalf of the collective to the NYC Mayor’s Office of Food Policy for consideration in their 10-Year Food Policy Plan. Legislation included in the NYC FY2020 budget requires the NYC Mayor’s Office of Food Policy (MOFP) to enact a 10-Year Food Policy Plan for NYC by January 2021, providing the Collective’s recommendations a direct target with high potential for impact. Over 20 community partners endorsed the platform submission, and the backbone team was invited to multiple follow-up engagement sessions with the Mayor’s Office of Food Policy and their advisors to represent the collective as MOFP finalized its 10-Year Plan.

In late February 2021, the NYC Mayor’s Office of Food Policy released Food Forward NYC: A 10-Year Food Policy Plan for the City of New York. The backbone team identified multiple plan components that align with the Collective’s platform of priorities submitted to the MOFP for consideration in November 2020. These include:

Alignment: BIFAC Recommendations & Food Forward NYC

1. An updated definition of food insecurity which more holistically reflects the concept, including affordability and nutrition. The plan calls on the City to “make sure all New Yorkers are food secure. Every New Yorker must have reliable access to enough affordable, nutritious food to sustain them.”

2. A commitment to implementing the plan through community participation. “As the City seeks to implement this plan, it will work with partners to make the policies and strategies in this document their own and to implement them in ways that reflect their vision for their communities.”

3. Affirmation of food access as integral to individual and community health outcomes. “Access to nutritious food is foundational to physical and mental health. Common chronic health conditions such as hypertension and diabetes are strongly associated with an unhealthy diet and with lack of access to healthy, affordable foods. The stresses of food insecurity also impair disease management.”

4. A commitment to supporting solutions identified by communities of color. “Many of the biggest innovations in food policy in New York City, from local farms to cooperative ownership models, have emerged from communities of color. NYC’s food policy can support these successes and turn the food system into a source of health, wealth, and sustainability.”

5. A commitment to implementing the plan with concerns for racial equity. “Communities of color in all five boroughs have less access to affordable, healthy food than white communities and they are disproportionately impacted by diet-related health diseases... Furthermore, many distribution hubs and waste facilities are located in communities of color, therefore placing additional disproportionate environmental and health burdens on them.”
A commitment to gathering and releasing more responsive data regarding food insecurity. “Existing data on food insecurity tends to be very high level, making it harder to design and evaluate policy interventions. To fill this gap, the City will work with community organizations and the academic sector to develop new publicly available measures of food insecurity that will be incorporated into the City’s annual Food Metrics Report and that will inform new policies.”

A commitment to “[e]xploring new ways to expand farmers’ markets and other programs that bring fresh fruits and vegetables to underserved communities”, including community gardens, and Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) programs.

A commitment to “[p]ursue federal and state action to expand and improve SNAP and other food benefits,” by strengthening the NYC Green Carts program, including expansion of EBT technology to mobile produce vendors and as payment for prepared foods, the Get the Good Stuff program, HealthBucks, and other nutrition support benefits.

A commitment to providing expanded supports to cooperative businesses and workforce development efforts, particularly those which promote access to fresh produce and/or sustainability in low-income communities.

Commitments to exploring a Citywide Food Policy Working Group “to develop a durable and effective long-term engagement strategy that promotes equity, the City will work with food advocates to launch a shared working group focused on engagement.” Advocates are hopeful that this commitment can be amplified into a citywide food policy council which reflects a sharing of power and accountability on behalf of the City more in line with recommendations such as those put forth by BIFAC.
Opportunities & Next Steps

The backbone team and BIFAC are thrilled to see extensive commonalities between Food Forward NYC and the submitted recommendation platform. However, advocates across the food justice space are concerned that the many points of exploration outlined in the plan may not result in concrete outcomes. With the end of the current administration drawing near, it is uncertain to what extent the forthcoming administration will implement Food Forward NYC. Further, the food policy community is pleased with the MOFP’s interest in exploring the formation of a community-engaged working group but wary of the City’s interest in implementing a model that affords the community a legitimate opportunity to hold the City accountable to their point of view.

However, analysis of the MOFP plan presents multiple opportunities for impactful collective action for BIFAC. The Collective will compile and submit a response to Food Forward NYC as they identify key partners, continue to incorporate community feedback, and take action to implement plan components. This response will include recommendations regarding metrics and indicators of food hardship and the impact of food insecurity for MOFP to use in future Food Metrics Reports. BIFAC will further develop and submit an Implementation Recommendations report with policy proposals. These policies include the expansion of EBT to mobile produce vendors and small specialty stores and modifications to the FRESH Zone program to improve supermarket access in the Bronx.

BIFAC continues to hold bimonthly convenings and has begun to gather data regarding the impacts on food access as in-person learning resumes. With a new change in City administration approaching, BIFAC will concentrate its efforts on developing policy and programming platforms to advocate for food justice in the Bronx with newly appointed officials. At convenings, the backbone team highlights and distills the impacts of policy updates from across the landscape to promote active participation and understanding for all BIFAC members. During this interim phase, the backbone team has further empowered BIFAC members with capacity-building resources, including advocacy training on meeting with elected officials, to best position all Collective members with the tools they need to bring food justice to fruition.
The Bronx Impact Food Access Collective has identified core indicators which its efforts could most profoundly improve. By July 2021, the Collective identified the following core indicators by which to measure the group’s impact:

Looking Ahead

Increase the number of produce points of sale in CD6

A. Increase percent of the population of CD6 which resides within a 10-minute walk of at least 1 produce point of sale
B. Increase percent of produce points of sale which accept SNAP/WIC/EBT or other food and nutrition support benefits such as HealthBucks

These indicators can be quantitatively measured and actively address a number of the major barriers to improving health outcomes in the Bronx. The increase of SNAP authorized produce vendors on a neighborhood level will not only bring increased accessibility but also bolster the local economy. BIFAC and Phipps Neighborhoods will gather data that reflects the current status of fresh food vendor accessibility, track changes to the foodscape in real-time, and envision a desired reality for healthy and vibrant food vendors in CD6. Through advocacy and collective efforts, the backbone team will approach elected officials to speak on behalf of BIFAC, making sure they understand the impacts these expansions will have on the public health of Bronx residents.

Bronx Impact’s mission is “to transform systems by working with community residents and cross-sector stakeholders to address long-standing, unjust inequities in the South Bronx so that residents can realize the community’s shared vision of vibrant neighborhoods with infinite opportunity, where people aspire to live, work, and raise families”. BIFAC’s ability to affect these metrics can demonstrate the power of collective impact to begin the work of realizing shared visions of opportunity, food security, and community wellbeing. As the Collective continues to refine its key targets and develop strategies for influencing these, it will continue to identify additional core indicators to be improved through collective efforts.
CONCLUSION

BIA-CD6 has produced this baseline report to share the wealth of knowledge and areas for intervention that have been collected and identified since its launch in December 2019. With the extraordinary situation of COVID-19, Bronx Impact conveners and partners have filled gaps in NYC food access programs acting as a critical line for resource distribution to residents across the South Bronx. Throughout this report, the careful work done by dedicated community members and local organizations can be appreciated for the consideration taken to center needs identified by residents and the activation of impactful solutions during a pandemic. This report also acts as a demonstration of BIA-CD6’s ability to convene crucial actors and build a policy platform that has been incorporated into city-wide policy plans. With this report, BIA-CD6 is ready to act as a key implementation partner to promote expanded access to nutrition supports and advance food security, as well as prepare for and respond to the next inevitable emergency situation that NYC will have to survive. Following this report, BIA-CD6 will release Implementation Recommendations which further address the priorities of BIFAC and the emerging needs, goals, and solutions identified by Bronx community members.
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WE ARE THANKFUL for the support that allowed for this baseline report to be possible. Meeting our contractual requirements, the baseline report includes population-level (disaggregated, as available) data on each of the core indicators identified to be improved via collective impact efforts.

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