East New York
PRIMARY SOURCE PACKET

Student Name
Adaptation

The area that is today East New York was once called Ostwout (east woods). In the 1670s farmers from Flatbush moved east seeking new land and renamed the area New Lots, to contrast with a part of Flatbush near the village center, which was then called Old Lots. Village streets were laid out in 1677. Just before the American Revolution’s Battle of Brooklyn began, colonial forces were posted throughout the eastern farmlands.

After the Battle of Brooklyn, the area continued to be farmed by the Dutch. The New Lots Reformed Dutch Church, which is also called the New Lots Community Church, was built in 1824, and this landmarked building still stands on New Lots Avenue.

New Lots remained mostly rural until 1835, when John Pitkin, a wealthy Connecticut merchant, bought land north of New Lots Avenue and named the area East New York because it was at the eastern end of metropolitan New York City. In 1852 New Lots was incorporated as a town, and its land included what is today East New York, Cypress Hills, and parts of Brownsville.
1. Where is this map focusing on? What is the name of this map?

2. Find and circle East New York on DOCUMENT 1. What year does this map represent?

3. List three Brooklyn towns that are near East New York, and then list three landmarks.

4. Based on your observations of the map can you describe how East New York has changed since 1841?
Eastern Section of East New York—1873
(Courtesy New York Historical Society, New York City)
1. Describe what you see in Document two? What year is it from?

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2. Based on Document 2, what do you think life was like in East New York in 1873?
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3. What is the small building in front of the picture? What do you think it was used for?
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4. How many families do you think lived in each building? What do you think that? How do you think people got around town in 1873?
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OLD DAYS AND OLD WAYS IN EAST NEW YORK

Among the German population of old East New York there were many interesting characters who, though not famous in any sense, were more or less prominent in the community by virtue of their occupations. One of the most colorful of these was the barber. He usually was a jack-of-all-trades. If you had stepped into his shop and in the vernacular of today said, “Let’s have the works,” you might have been in for a surprise; for the barber I am telling you of not only cut his customer’s hair and shaved his face but was equipped and ready to apply leeches to bleed you; to pull your teeth; to act as a chiropodist or a quasi-surgeon. I know, for I suffered some of these ministrations at his hands—and I use the word “suffered” advisedly.

In the painless category, and an object of fascination for the youngsters was the town lamplighter. With the coming of dusk he could be seen hurrying from lamppost to lamppost carrying his portable ladder which he set against the post; running nimbly up the rungs; opening the globe and lighting the oil wick; running down again and on to the next corner. These lampposts, incidentally, had another use. When police protection was sought the post was hammered loudly and vigorously. It usually brought a policeman on the run.
1. According to DOCUMENT 3, what TWO things might a barber do to you if you asked for “the works?”

2. What did the town lamplighter do? How do you know?

3. What else was the lamp post used for?

4. What population of people lived in East New York during this time?
Brooklyn Connections

1. What is document three showing? What year is it from?

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The quaint scene on Blake Ave. where hundreds of pushcarts line the streets to display their wares to transient shoppers. Although this area of East New York has a predominantly Jewish population, the section as a whole is populated by 40 racial and religious groups.
1. Describe what is happening in Document 5.

2. Where is the scene of this photo located? When was it taken?

3. What are stallholders selling? Why do you think that?

4. What population of people lived in East New York at this time, according to the photo?
THEY WANT ACTION AGAINST HOODLUMS—Women and children in East New York swarm along stairway to Atlantic Ave. overpass, carry slogans calling for police protection against rowdies. In foreground Mrs. Marian Ingeardi of 1493 St. Mark’s Ave.—her sign reads “My Son Was Knifed on This Crossing”—stops an approaching pedestrian to explain the reason for the demonstration: Need for cops on the beat.

AUG 9 1953
1. Describe what you see in this document.

2. What happened at the Atlantic Ave overpass that upset local residents?

3. What do you think these residents hoped to accomplish?

4. Do you know of other examples where residents have come together for the sake of a good cause? List them here:
Somebody's operating a private dump ... and it's getting larger and larger ... Motorists and residents curse its odors and occasional fires and blame the Sanitation Department. It has already extended to water which flows into Jamaica Bay below Howard Beach. Above is a general view of the situation.
1. What do you see in Document 7? Make four observations:

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2. According to the caption, where was this photo taken?

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3. List three problems that this dump is causing:

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4. Does the dumping have a positive or negative impact on Jamaica Bay? How so?

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Comprehensive development of the Spring Creek area and creation of a Linear City along the Bay Ridge line of the Penn Central Railroad were originally proposed as a radical solution to some of the massive problems of central Brooklyn. The idea for a Linear City evolved from two specific proposals: one for a much-needed Cross-Brooklyn Expressway; the other to create an educational park to fill the desperate need for adequate, integrated schooling. The proposal to develop the Spring Creek area for residential, industrial and recreational uses was stimulated by the fact that this region, which extends north from Jamaica Bay to Linden Boulevard, contains 1,800 acres of vacant and undeveloped land, most of it owned by the City.

The objectives are to provide housing for a socially, economically and racially balanced community; new industry which would meet City objectives in terms of job stability, job yield and wage levels, and regional recreation facilities which would provide a variety of activities throughout the year. The basic elements in the plan are:

- 17,500 new housing units to accommodate an estimated 60,000 persons.
- 10,000 to 17,000 new jobs in light industry, distribution and warehousing. Some 225 acres are to be set aside for this development.
- A new regional recreation and open space facility on Jamaica Bay.
- A full range of educational services, coordinated with facilities in surrounding communities.
- A pattern of ample local and community open space and recreational facilities.
- Improved local and regional public transportation.
DEPARTMENT OF PARKS

JAMAICA BAY IMPROVEMENTS
EXISTING AND PROPOSED

JAMAICA BAY BIRD SANCTUARY
THE RESTORATION OF THE BAY TO BOATING, FISHING,
SWIMMING AND NATURAL WILD LIFE

DOCUMENT 8B: Jamaica Bay Bird Sanctuary. 195-. Brooklyn Collection, Brooklyn Public Library.
1. According to Document 8A, why do you think the City wanted to build a new community in Spring Creek?

2. Locate the red star on Document 8B. What does this document propose building at this site?

3. List at least THREE things in DOCUMENT 8B that you recognize from the present day:

4. These plans were proposed in the 1950s and 60s. Why do you think it took so long for Spring Creek’s development to take place?
**Youth Takes City Aide on Tour of East New York**

By RALPH BLUMENTHAL

Bryce Murray, an 18-year-old high school senior, led the city's top planner yesterday on a tour of Bryce Murray's East New York section of Brooklyn. At the first sightseeing stop, a cannibalized automobile on its wheels at Georgia Avenue near New Lots Avenue, the youth told Donald H. Elliott, chairman of the Planning Commission: "You'll see a lot of these. We call them abandoned cars."

Having set the tone, young Murray, an outspoken and cheerful black community worker at the WAY Youth Center at 337 New Lots Avenue, went on to lead Mr. Elliott through twisted, charred ruins, past debris-strewn lots, and into a vandalized park the community calls "Ghost Town." The tour grew out of the Planning Commission's public hearing in East New York Jan. 24 on the city's proposed master plan. Noting that Mr. Elliott had been shown around the area last Dec. 31 by Representative Frank J. Braico, the youth publicly challenged Mr. Elliott to see the neighborhood through the eyes of some of its less fortunate youths.

To the surprise of the youth and his friends, a press aide to Mr. Elliott called back a week later to say the chairman was accepting the invitation for a tour guided by the youth. "You understand this is a walking tour," the youth, who attends Thomas Jefferson High School, told the chairman when he arrived at the youth center shortly after 3 P.M. "We've been walking all our lives," he added. Mr. Elliott grinned and nodded.

At a former fish market and pizzeria parlor, now a wrecked corner of Livonia and Georgia Avenues, the youth told the chairman: "This is what the city did to us three years ago," he said. At the end of the hour-long tour, Mr. Elliott said he saw improvement in the form of 1,000 units of new Model Cities housing, planned or under construction, and cleaner streets. But mostly, he said, he was impressed by young Murray and his friends. "They're really going to change things," Mr. Elliott said.

But young Murray was more cautious. He called Mr. Elliott's attitude "very negative" because the official was so quiet. Told that Mr. Elliott was normally quiet, the youth brightened and said: "Well, then he took the tour pretty well. When he did speak he spoke as a concerned person."

Elliott shown streets strewn with debris and abandoned cars on walk-in area.

Alabama Avenue, the youth pointed out a vacant lot strewn with leftover construction debris. "This is what the city did to us three years ago," he said. An own it. Mr. Elliott: "The city owns this. You own it."

If anyone here is Jewish," he added, "I'm sorry. But when the Jewish people moved out this is what they left us."

Next to his own house at 511

Youth Takes City Aide on Tour of East New York

By Ralph Blumenthal

Bryce Murray, an 18-year-old high school senior, led the city top planner yesterday on a tour of Bryce Murray’s East New York section of Brooklyn.

At the first sightseeing stop, a cannibalized automobile on its wheel rims on Georgia Avenue near New Lots Avenue, the youth told Donald H. Elliott, chairman of the City Planning Commission: “You’ll see a lot of these. We call them abandoned cars.” Having set the tone, young Murray, an outspoken and cheerful black community worker at the WAY Youth Center at 337 New Lots Avenue, went on to lead Mr. Elliott through twisted, charred ruins, past debris-strewn lots, and tinned-up abandoned housing and into a vandalized park the community calls “Ghost Town.”

The tour grew out of the Planning Commission’s public hearing in East New York Jan. 24 on the city’s proposed master plan. Nothing that Mr. Elliott had been shown around the area last Dec. 31 by Representative Frank J. Brasco, the youth publically challenged Mr. Elliott to see the neighborhood through the eyes of some of its less fortunate youths.

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At a former fish market and pizza parlor, now a wreck on the corner of Livonia and Georgia Avenues, the youth told Mr. Elliott: “The city owns this. You own it.”

“If anyone here is Jewish,” he added, “I’m sorry. But when the Jewish people moved out this is what they left us.”

Next to his own house at 511 Alabama Avenue, the youth pointed out a vacant lot strewn with leftover construction debris. “This is what the city did to us three years ago,” he said.

At the end of the hour-long tour, Mr. Elliott said he saw anew that the largely black neighborhood “does not have one main problem, but a network of problems all feeding off each other.”

He said he saw considerable improvement in the form of 1,000 units of new Model Cities housing, planned or under construction, and cleaner streets. But mostly, he said, he was impressed by young Murray and his friends. “They’re really going to change things,” Mr. Elliott said.

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1. Why did local youth Bryce Murray ask Chairman of the City Planning Commission, Donald Elliott, to take a tour of his neighborhood?

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2. What did Bryce show the Chairman?

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3. Why do you think Bryce chose to show the areas of East New York that he did? Would you say these were a good or bad choice? Why

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4. What do you think the Chairman took away from his tour with Bryce?

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Adaptation:

Linda Boyce says it often happens all the time. People turn off Flatlands Ave. in East New York and slowly cruise Linwood, Vandalia, and Egan Streets. They look around, admiring multi-colored boxy houses with big backyards, private driveways, and patches of front gardens.

“Someone always asks ‘How can I live here?’” says Boyce, a member of the first Homeowner Association at Nehemiah Spring Creek, one of the city’s largest affordable home owning developments and a national model for affordable housing programs.

“That makes us proud. We work hard to keep this neighborhood clean and safe. Sometimes I forget I’m in Brooklyn.”

Spring Creek is home to 233 first-time homeowners who won the right to live at Nehemiah in a lottery sponsored by the city. They applied to the lottery more than five years ago, some as many as 17 years back. Soon 50 new owners will move in. Five parks, a supermarket and EMS station will be finished.

When completed by 2016, over 1,525 new homes and apartments will be built on these streets tucked in behind Gateway Plaza Mall, Belt Parkway, and two state parks opening by 2014. In September, three new schools will open.

As you enter the area, it has the feel of newness. People on the streets say hello to one another. They stop to talk about meetings, fairs, the new school and construction phases.

Grant Lindsay, an organizer for East Brooklyn Congregations (EBC), knows a tight-knit neighborhood has more power combating local problems. Block by block, Lindsay works with homeowners to set up monthly meetings. Already have rallied to make crossing Flatlands Ave. safer for seniors and worked to establish a relationship with the Academy for Young Writers, the high school moving from Williamsburg to East New York this fall.

Dawn Brown lives across the street from a football field that serves as a practice and game-day facility for Thomas Jefferson High School. Brown cuts the grass alongside the practice field fence herself. “It just looks better,” she says. “We want this to be an inspiration for the entire area. You won’t see spray paint here. You don’t hear loud music. People respect each other here.”

Set to open in September, the educational structure will house three schools: the Academy for Young Writers, where 60-80% of the students live in East New York and Brownsville, the Spring Creek Community School, which starts at sixth grade, and P53K for special-needs students. The high school’s principal, Courtney Winkfield, sees a link between the neighborhood and the school.

“We chose to be in this neighborhood,” says Winkfield. “Not only is it where our students live, it’s a place with strong spirit. We’re discussing mentorship programs to stay connected to our neighbors. The people at Nehemiah are pioneering a new area.”

For EBC, the drive for quality housing and empowered community is constant. “The homes we build are named after the Old Testament figure Nehemiah, who helped rebuild Jerusalem after it had been destroyed,” says Lindsay. “With each home, we try to embody that same spirit of hope in the face of despair.”

1. What did homeowners have to do in order to buy a Nehemiah House? How long did some people wait?

2. List three examples of what makes residents of Spring Creek proud to live in Nehemiah Houses:

3. Why did the Academy for Young Writers move to Spring Creek? Where did it used to be located?

4. DOCUMENT 10 describes the good community Spring Creek’s Nehemiah Houses has established. Based on your experience in the neighborhood, share whether you agree or disagree with the article and WHY.

GLOSSARY

Abandon: give up completely (a course of action, a practice, or a way of thinking).
Accommodate: provide lodging or sufficient space for
Adequate: satisfactory
Admire: regard (an object, quality, or person) with respect or warm approval.
Anew: in a new or different, typically more positive, way.
Cannibalized: use (a machine) as a source of spare parts for another, similar machine.
Char: To burn or reduce to charcoal
Chiropodist: a doctor specializing in feet
Combat: take action to reduce, destroy, or prevent something undesirable.
Comprehensive: complete; including all or nearly all elements or aspects of something.
Debris: the remains of anything broken down or destroyed; ruins
Decay: to rot or decompose
Dense – crowding together, having a high mass per unit volume
Deteriorate: to become increasingly worse
EMS: Emergency Medical Service station
Hoodlum: a person who engages in crime and violence
Improve: to bring into a more desirable or excellent condition
Influx: an arrival or entry of large numbers of people or things
Incorporate: combined in one body; made part of
Integration: to unite with something else
Jack-of-all-trades: a person who has many skills
Jerusalem: capital of the state of Israel
Landmark: an object or feature of a landscape or town that is easily seen and recognized from a distance, especially one that enables someone to establish their location.
Lottery: drawing in which prizes are given to the winning names or numbers
Mentor: an experienced and trusted adviser.
Merchant: a person who buys and sells goods for profit
Metropolitan: large city, its surrounding suburbs, and other neighboring communities
Ministrations: services of a minister of religion
Nimble: a quick movement
Objective: a thing aimed at or sought; a goal.
Pedestrian: a person who goes or travels on foot

Pioneer – one of the first to settle in an area

Predominant: having power, authority, or influence over others.

Propose: to offer or suggest

Quaint: attractively unusual or old-fashioned.

Quasi-surgeon: having certain qualities of a surgeon

Radical: something that is extreme

Recreation: activity done for enjoyment when one is not working.

Representative: a person chosen or appointed to act or speak for another or others

Residential: designed for people to live in.

Ruin: the physical destruction or disintegration of something or the state of disintegrating or being destroyed.

Rural: an area outside of cities, scarcely populated area

Slogan: a short and striking or memorable phrase used in advertising.

Station: a place or position in which a person or thing is normally located

Stimulate: encourage development

Strew: to scatter or sprinkle something

Tight-Knit: closely integrated and bound in love or friendship

Tone: attitude of a place, piece of writing, situation

Transient: lasting only for a short time

Undeveloped: not having been developed

Vernacular: the language spoken by ordinary people

Wreck: The destruction of something