



**NEXT GENERATION NYCHA**  
**A COMMUNITY VISION FOR INGERSOLL HOUSES**

**ACKNOWLEDGMENTS**

- Resident Associations
- Elected Officials
- Community Partners
- Community Voices Heard
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# Executive Summary

Ingersoll Houses in Fort Greene, Brooklyn, is one of NYCHA's 334 communities. It was completed in 1944 and includes 1,826 apartments, which are home to 1,569 families.

Ingersoll Houses was selected to be part of NextGeneration NYCHA, an initiative aimed at organizing and convening residents to create a long-term vision for their communities.

NextGeneration NYCHA is a multi-faceted, long-term strategic planning process that will explore creative ways to sustain public housing for the next generation of New Yorkers. It is an inclusive process that will gather input from NYCHA residents, administrators and managers, and community partners and residents to address how NYCHA looks, operates, and is financed.

The initiative started with an organizing effort that included door-to-door canvassing, as well as building- and community-wide meetings. In all, over 540 residents were canvassed. The organizing effort identified six topics of importance to the community:

- Safety and Security
- Affordable Housing
- Repairs and Maintenance
- Job Training and Apprenticeship

- Community Services
- Playground Improvements

The six topics became the focus of three facilitated workshops held at the Ingersoll Community Center on September 23, 27, and 29, 2014. 211 residents attended multiple workshops along with 28 Fort Greene residents. Numerous elected officials as well as other key city stakeholders were invited as observers.

At the workshops, participants were asked to envision how to improve Ingersoll, map places in the neighborhood that worked and that did not, express ideas and concerns in open mike sessions, and vote on community priorities. Those ideas were gathered and used to establish vision statements, goals and next steps.

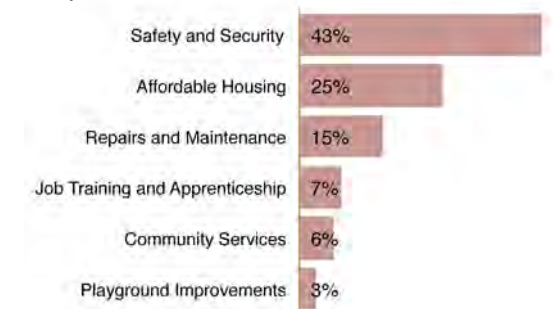
When asked to prioritize the six topics, participants gave Safety and Security the largest share of the votes, 43%. Affordable Housing followed with 25%, while Repairs and Maintenance received 17% of the votes. Job Training and Apprenticeship received 7% of the votes, Community Services 6%, and Playground Improvements 3%.

**Safety and Security:** Comments focused on individual building security, poor lighting, and lack of enforcement of existing safety regulations. They also focused on drug

related criminal activities in the neighborhood, and the relationship between Ingersoll and nearby Tillary Street Homeless Shelter.

**Affordable Housing:** Residents recognized the magnitude of change occurring in their neighborhood. They also pointed out to the limited availability of truly affordable apartments and senior housing amid the area's gentrification. They were open to building additional affordable housing within Ingersoll Houses and in Fort Greene, and saw affordable housing as a tool to incorporate places for shopping, services, and programs in the neighborhood.

Which of the following goals is more important to the future of Ingersoll?



\*This chart shows preferences expressed by meeting participants. The report includes results for all six topics, independently of their ranking.

## PROFILE OF INGERSOLL

### PLACE

Located in Fort Greene, Brooklyn, Ingersoll Houses consists of two large superblocks bound by Myrtle Avenue, Prince Street, Tillary Street, Park Avenue and St. Edwards Street and bisected by Navy Street, the access to the Brooklyn-Queens Expressway. Built in 1944, the community contains 21 buildings with 1,826 apartments and a freestanding newly constructed community center at the intersection of Myrtle Avenue and Prince Street. Commodore John Barry Park is immediately north and Fort Greene Park is across the street, southeast of the community boundary.

### NEIGHBORHOOD CONTEXT

In the last fifteen years, downtown Brooklyn real estate activities have increased dramatically with expansion of educational facilities, cultural institutions, tech companies, new high-rise market rate housing, and resurgence of the Brooklyn Navy Yard. Myrtle Avenue is now lined with recently opened apartment towers and others under construction.

Since 2006, Ingersoll, along with the adjacent Whitman Houses (built in 1944, 1,652 units), has undergone major renovations including: elevator replacement completed at Ingersoll in 2009 at a cost of \$37 million; apartment renovations at Ingersoll and Whitman at a cost of \$50 million; and upgrade of kitchens, floors, metal stairs, and electrical work at Ingersoll and Whitman at a cost of \$140 million. In addition, boiler replacement and heating upgrades are currently in design for Ingersoll with federal funding of \$7.78 million.

### AT-A-GLANCE (FALL 2014)

#### Apartments

- 1,826 apartments
- 137 vacant units currently under renovation and expected to be completed by fall of 2014 (14% of the total)



Above, an aerial view of the Ingersoll Houses.

#### Residents

- 3,965 residents
- 557 residents 62 years plus (14% as a percentage of population)
- 448 families with household head 62 years and over; 28.6% as a percentage of all families
- 237 persons 62 years and over living alone
- 1,157 minors under 18; 29.8% as a percentage of population
- 20.3 years, average tenure in public housing

#### Income

- 912 families with one or more employed; 58.1% of all

families (8.5% unemployment in Brooklyn Community District 2)

- 216 families on public assistance; 13.8% as a percentage of population
- \$24,511 average gross income
- \$470 average gross rent

#### Building Needs

- \$77 Million, 5-Year Physical Needs Assessment
- \$8.48 Million, 5-Year Capital Plan

**Repairs and Maintenance:** Comments focused on the timeliness and quality of how apartments, buildings, and the community's grounds are serviced and kept in good repair. It also discussed ways that residents could help maintaining buildings and keep the grounds clean.

There are 29 recommended steps to bring Ingersoll's vision to fruition. Some of the steps represent longer-term initiatives that will require time to be implemented. Others will have a more immediate impact on the community's quality of life.

Implementing the vision is nonetheless complex undertaking that will require an unprecedented collaborative effort involving NYCHA, the public sector, community partners, and residents.

# 1. Introduction

This report summarizes the results of the Ingersoll Houses' community vision. It identifies critical needs and desirable solutions for that community. As a community driven process it is entirely built upon the ideas, desires, and expectations presented by participants.

## Structure of the Report

The Ingersoll Houses' vision report is divided in three sections.

Following this introduction, section **2: The Community Vision** describes goals, issues, solutions, and preferences for each of the six resident chosen topics addressed by the vision sessions.

Section **3: Implementation** provides an overview of how the vision can be implemented.

## Background on NextGeneration NYCHA

The Ingersoll Houses' vision is one of three pilot community vision programs developed as part of NextGeneration NYCHA, a citywide effort to ensure the sustainability of the New York City Housing Authority's 334 communities for the next generation. The three communities are the Van Dyke Houses and the Ingersoll Houses in Brooklyn, and the Mill Brook Houses in the Bronx.

## Organizing and Facilitation

NYCHA partnered with Gianni Longo and Associates (GLA) to design and facilitate the vision sessions, and identify the long-term goals and short-term actions that reflect the community's vision. NYCHA also partnered with New York Communities for Change (NYCC) and Community Voices Heard (CVH) to canvass the three communities, organize residents, and recruit participants to the vision sessions. Robin Hood Foundation's Housing Advisory Board provided philanthropic support for the initiative.

*NYCHA's mission is to increase opportunities for low- and moderate-income New Yorkers by providing safe, affordable housing and facilitating access to social and community services.*

FROM [WWW.NYCHA.GOV/NYCHA](http://WWW.NYCHA.GOV/NYCHA)





*“These same problems have been occurring since Ingersoll was built probably. At least over 25 years of the same exact problems. Rather than continue complaining, residents should brainstorm solutions to present to NYCHA on how to fix problems. Alternatives are needed.”*

OPEN MIKE MEETING PARTICIPANT



## 2. The Community Vision

The goals and actions listed below provide a snapshot of what Ingersoll has the potential of becoming. They reveal residents' commitment to improve the quality of their lives and of their community, despite day-to-day hardships and pressing needs.

### Structure of this Section

This section is divided in 6 parts, one for each of the vision topics:

- Safety And Security
- Affordable Housing
- Repairs and Maintenance
- Job Training And Apprenticeship
- Community Services
- Playground Improvements

The topics had been identified during the organizing and canvassing activities conducted throughout the summer. They represent priority issues for residents of Ingersoll.

The topics are listed in the priority order identified by vision participants. Each topic includes a summary of issues identified by participants, a vision statement, and goals and priorities suggested by participants.

### Topic 1: Safety and Security

*“Many of the front doors are not locked and residents, especially the elderly, don’t feel safe.”*

MEETING PARTICIPANT

#### ISSUES

Participants identified three critical issues affecting safety and security in the community: poor building and grounds security, the proximity of Ingersoll to the Tillary Street Homeless Shelter and disregard of rules and regulations. Locks to lobby door are often broken and building doors are left open. The grounds are poorly lit and patrolled. Homeless people from the Tillary Street Homeless Shelter go in and out buildings, and sleep in stairs and elevators. There are drug activities throughout the community grounds, and shooting inside and outside buildings. Rules and regulations are ignored and not enforced both by NYCHA and by residents

#### VISION

Ingersoll buildings and grounds are safe, secure, and free of violence, guns, and drugs.

#### GOALS IDENTIFIED BY PARTICIPANTS

- Secure Ingersoll buildings
- Improve lighting conditions
- Increase police presence in and around the community
- Enforce and enhance existing rules and regulations

#### IMPLEMENTATION STEPS

- Quantify cost of installing layered access in every building and pursue available funding sources
- Upgrade lighting conditions where necessary
- Identify areas where crime most occurs
- Work with NYPD to identify steps to increase safety in Ingersoll
- Adopt and implement existing anti-violence programs provided through community partners that are suitable to Ingersoll conditions
- Work with neighboring Homeless Shelter to minimize crime and quality of life concerns
- Organize buildings to address safety and quality of life issues

#### PRIORITIES

## A COMMUNITY DRIVEN PROCESS

Ingersoll's goals and actions stem from a variety of sources. The six topics were identified during the canvassing phase conducted by New York Communities for Change (NYCC). The actions resulted from ideas collected from brainstorming sessions, mapping of strong and weak places, open mike sessions, questionnaires, and polling using keypad technology. See below for a description of the canvassing and vision process.

### CANVASSING THE COMMUNITY

The Ingersoll Houses NextGeneration NYCHA vision started in the summer of 2014 with a program of extensive canvassing of the community's residents by NYCC. They spoke and surveyed residents in individual buildings, conducted community-wide meetings, and identified major topics of importance for the community and a cadre of resident-leaders willing to advocate for them. They also met with elected and community leaders representing the larger Fort Greene area.

### THE VISION PROCESS

The vision process consisted of three sessions held at the Ingersoll Community Center on September 22, 27, and 29, 2014.

The sessions were structured as follows:

- In the first session, participants were randomly assigned to one of the topics identified during the canvassing phase: safety and security, affordable housing, repairs and maintenance, job training and apprenticeship, community services, and playground improvements. They were asked to imagine how the community would change for the better if their assigned topics were addressed. They were also asked to suggest short-term actions to improve the quality of life in the community. These long-term visions and short-term actions were later summarized and presented back to residents at the second session.

- In the second session, participants were asked to define the characteristics of the top strong and weak places in Ingersoll and its surroundings, and to suggest how to transform weak places into strong places.
- In the third and final session, participants reviewed and prioritized the results of the first two.

All three sessions included an open-mike session to provide residents with an opportunity to voice additional concerns and opinions, and to reflect on the vision itself.

A total of 221 Ingersoll residents and an additional 28 Fort Greene residents attended the three vision sessions. Of those, several came to more than one session.

The majority of participants were older residents. 87% were over the age of 45. 37% were seniors over the age of 64. 76% were female. Of all the participants, the majority, 59%, had lived in the Ingersoll and Fort Greene area for a minimum of 30 years. 21% had lived in the area for 50 years or more. Just 16% had lived in the area for less than 4 years. They knew their community well, and had seen the changes it has gone through.

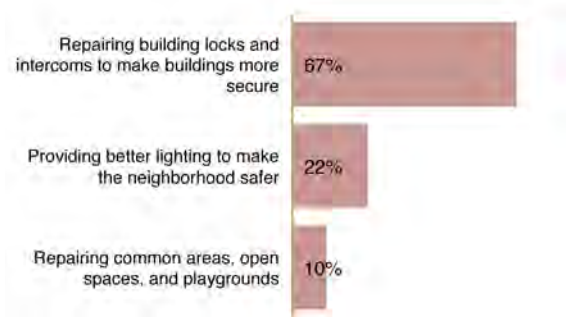




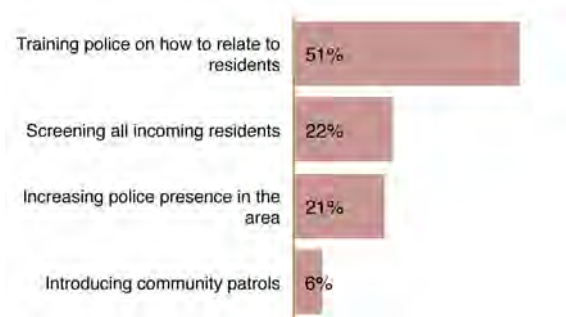
67% of participants rated repairing locks and intercoms as a priority to making buildings more secure. On a separate question, 51% of participants rated training police on how to relate to residents' to have the biggest impact. See charts below.

**Topic 2: Affordable Housing**

Given Funding Shortage from HUD, What's More Important...



To make Ingersoll safer, which of the following will have the biggest impact...



*“There are families that are doubling up and tripling up with their grown kids because they can’t find an affordable apartment.”*

MEETING PARTICIPANT

**ISSUES**

Ingersoll residents are acutely aware of the gentrification process affecting their neighborhood: not just the educational facilities, cultural institutions, and technology companies, but the new high-rise market rate housing being built across Myrtle Avenue and beyond. Rising rents in the Fort Greene area preclude families currently living in Ingersoll to find alternative accommodations, if they need to expand or wish to move outside of Ingersoll, while remaining in the neighborhood and address rightsizing. Concerns were also raised about increasing the availability of affordable senior housing that would enable elderly residents to remain in Fort Greene.

**VISION**

**Truly affordable new housing is created in Fort Greene and is available to Ingersoll residents, with a variety of apartment sizes, and affordable shops, businesses, and services.**

**GOALS IDENTIFIED BY PARTICIPANTS**

- Build new and preserve existing affordable and senior housing at Ingersoll and within the Fort Greene neighborhood
- Incorporate neighborhood services and commercial spaces into new affordable housing

**IMPLEMENTATION STEPS**

- Identify appropriate location, type of development, and mix of uses best suited to Ingersoll’s needs
- Identify funding sources and partners to build affordable and senior housing within Ingersoll
- Identify incentives and opportunities to encourage the development of affordable housing in the Fort Greene neighborhood
- Work with city agencies and community partners to attract affordable services and shops to the Fort Greene area

**PRIORITIES**

An overwhelming majority of residents (96%) support incorporating places for shopping, services and programs in new development.

## PLACE MATTERS: STRONG PLACES

Participants in the second visioning workshop engaged in a mapping exercise, which asked each individual to select strong and weak places within the Ingersoll Houses and Fort Greene neighborhood. Participants placed green dots representing strong places, and red dots representing weak places on a map of the neighborhood.

### STRONG PLACES

Strong places are attractive, desirable to visit, and unique in a positive way.

### OPEN AND GREEN SPACES

Open and green spaces within the Fort Greene neighborhood (including the Fort Greene Park and Commodore Barry Park, #1 on the map) are considered strong places for residents, as they serve as close, safe, and enjoyable places to visit. They are frequently patrolled, have good lighting, and are well maintained.

### COMMUNITY SPACES

Community spaces within the neighborhood (including the Ingersoll Community Center (#2 on the map) and the Walt Whitman Branch of the NY Public Library, (#3 on the map) are also perceived as being safe and secure locations for residents, and especially beneficial for children. They provide educational and after-school programs, cultural and motivational events, they are attractive, and reflect positively on the community.



This map shows the totality of strong places identified for the Ingersoll Houses and the neighborhood immediately surrounding it. The areas highlighted in yellow and numbered identify the top three strong places in the neighborhood.

### Topic 3: Repairs and Maintenance

*“It shouldn’t take six months to one year to complete repairs.”*

MEETING PARTICIPANT

#### ISSUES

Participants identified that repairs at Ingersoll Houses take a long time, are often left incomplete, lack follow-up inspections to measure the quality of the work performed, and are scheduled in a seemingly random way. They also complained that buildings and grounds are dirty and neglected with insufficient maintenance personnel. They recognize that tenants themselves contribute to poor maintenance and vandalism.

#### VISION

Ingersoll’s buildings and community grounds are well maintained.

#### GOALS IDENTIFIED BY PARTICIPANTS

- Improve the quality and timely delivery of repairs
- Engage residents in keeping buildings and grounds clean

#### IMPLEMENTATION STEPS

- Provide information on how repairs are currently scheduled and conducted and recommend improvements
- Provide recommendations for improving quality control standards for repairs

- Organize residents to assist in keeping the community clean
- Identify specific problem areas to keep clean and well maintained
- Review and improve maintenance and cleaning procedures
- Explore developing a program that provides resident training for basic repair and maintenance

#### PRIORITIES

The majority of participants (78%) agree that NYCHA should train residents to conduct their own repairs in Ingersoll. Additionally, when asked what will have the biggest impact to the NYCHA repairs system, 33% notified that inspecting completed work to ensure quality of repairs is imperative.

To improve the way repairs are done, which of the following will have the biggest impact...



### Topic 4: Job Training and Apprenticeship

*“Jobs that you can raise your family and children with are hard to find for public housing residents.”*

MEETING PARTICIPANT

#### ISSUES

Many residents who have good jobs today benefited from training and apprenticeship programs, which are no longer available. Residents identified the need for programs that focus on skilled professions (construction, computer-related, nursing, etc.), education support (such as GED and college preparation), small business and entrepreneurship, and resume writing and interview skills. They also emphasized the need to support residents with past criminal records with skills training and job placement.

#### VISION

Ingersoll residents have the skills and training to qualify for jobs in the neighborhood and the city.

#### GOALS IDENTIFIED BY PARTICIPANTS

- Expand residents’ access to available existing training and apprenticeship programs
- Work with area’s businesses and shop owners to increase resident access to jobs



## PLACE MATTERS: WEAK PLACES

### WEAK PLACES

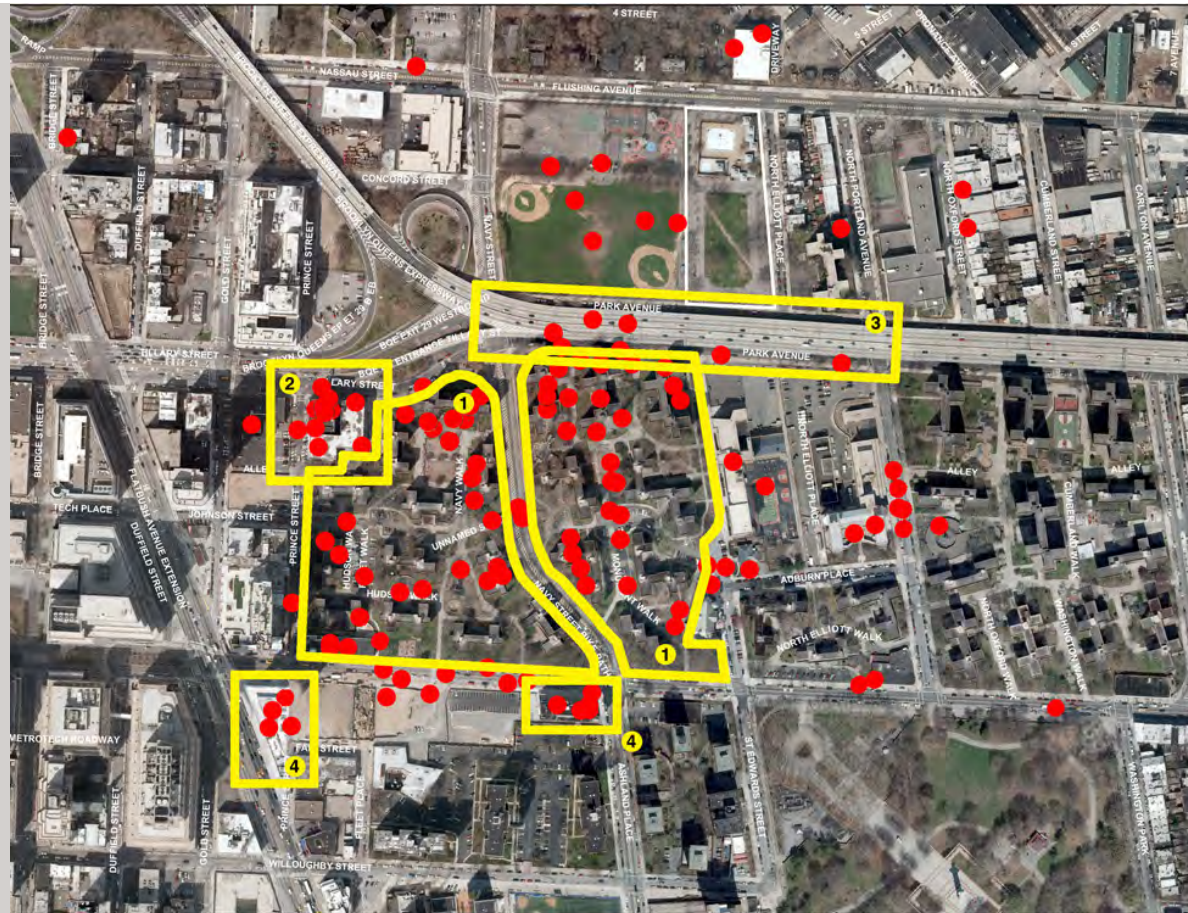
Weak places are blighted and unsafe places that are undesirable to visit, and reflect poorly on the community.

### INSIDE INGERSOLL

Ingersoll's grounds (#1 on the map) are problematic for many residents, as the campus is perceived to have high rates of violence and criminal activity. Poor infrastructure including broken security systems, broken doors, and broken lights contribute to make the grounds dangerous. Additionally, poor drainage and waste management further deteriorate the grounds.

### OUTSIDE INGERSOLL

The Tillary Street Homeless Shelter, (#2 on the map), is seen as a problem as homeless populations can freely access the Ingersoll grounds. Additionally, poorly maintained spaces such as the Brooklyn-Queens Expressway Underpass (#3 on the map) are perceived as dangerous and prone to flooding. Retail options outside of Ingersoll (#4 on the map) do not truly offer what residents desire, nor are they affordable to the incomes of Ingersoll's residents.



This map shows the totality of weak places identified for the Ingersoll Houses and the neighborhood immediately surrounding it. The areas highlighted in yellow and numbered identify the top four weak places in the neighborhood. Notice that there is some overlap between strong places (previous map) and weak places.



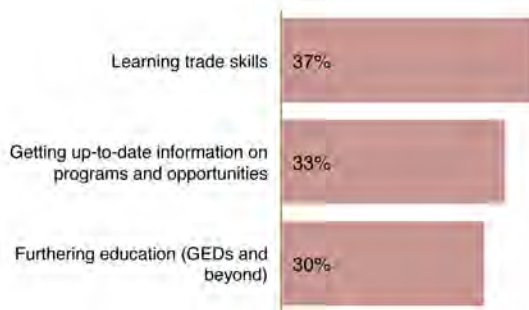
## IMPLEMENTATION STEPS

- Identify and prioritize Ingersoll's residents job training needs
- Match those needs with available job training programs provided by community partners
- Expand job training and placement opportunities for residents with past criminal records
- Initiate a mentoring program to support young residents to succeed

## PRIORITIES

When asked what would have the biggest impact on improving access to jobs, participants were nearly equally divided. They prioritized learning trade skills (37%) over getting up-to-date information on programs and opportunities (33%) over furthering education (30%). The majority of participants (96%) confirmed the importance of parents, businesses and educators in helping young people succeed.

To improve access to jobs, which will have the biggest impact...



## Topic 5: Community Services

*“Elderly residents that have been here for years now have to travel blocks and blocks by walking or spending cab fare money on top of their grocery bill just to get some food.”*

MEETING PARTICIPANT

## ISSUES

According to participants, Ingersoll used to be a complete neighborhood. In the words of a resident, it had everything. First, shops moved away to different parts of Brooklyn. More recently, as the area has gentrified, some shops have come back. They are, however, too expensive for Ingersoll's residents, do not accept EBT cards (food stamps), and do not offer what residents need (a laundromat, an affordable supermarket, and neighborhood services, and shops).

## VISION

Ingersoll and the Fort Greene community provide accessible and affordable services and shops in the neighborhood.

## GOALS IDENTIFIED BY PARTICIPANTS

- Attract affordable shops and services to Ingersoll and the surrounding community
- Help seniors and people with limited mobility to

access shops and services

## IMPLEMENTATION STEPS

- Explore the location of neighborhood affordable retail services serving the vicinity of Ingersoll
- Work with community partners and city agencies to address the lack of affordable stores within an easy reach of Ingersoll
- Identify incentives and programs to attract affordable retail, small businesses, and services
- Work with transportation agencies and community partners to address mobility needs of elderly residents

## Topic 6: Playground Improvements

*“Children have been hurt in play areas because of poor conditions of equipment.”*

MEETING PARTICIPANT

## ISSUES

Ingersoll and the Fort Greene community benefit from a variety of parks, recreational facilities, and playgrounds. The playgrounds within the Ingersoll Houses, however, are old and do not meet current play and safety standards, and residents complain that rules and regulations for playgrounds are not enforced.

## VISION

Ingersoll and the Fort Greene community share well maintained playgrounds, parks, and recreational facilities.

## GOALS IDENTIFIED BY PARTICIPANTS

- Develop a plan to improve the availability and quality of open space and playgrounds in Fort Greene

## IMPLEMENTATION STEPS

- Conduct an inventory for park conditions, recreational facilities and playgrounds within a walking distance of Ingersoll
- Coordinate physical improvements to existing facilities based on the plan's recommendations and funding availability
- Publicize and enforce rules that regulate the use of playgrounds

# 3. Implementation

The Ingersoll Houses' community vision is far reaching. It recommends 29 implementation steps. Some of the steps can be implemented right away and will have an immediate impact on the community's quality of life. Others will take longer to be realized. All will require a cooperative effort engaging NYCHA, community partners, and residents. The role of key implementation players is briefly described below.

## NYCHA

As the landlord of Ingersoll Houses, NYCHA is responsible for implementing those elements of the vision that focus on the physical conditions of individual apartments, buildings, and grounds including: streamlining repairs, improving maintenance, installing security cameras, fixing locks and intercoms, and improving lighting throughout the community. As a landowner, NYCHA can also create additional affordable housing within the Ingersoll campus.

## Community Partners

Community partners can help with implementation steps that go beyond NYCHA's responsibilities. Partners can include agencies such as the New York City Police Department, the Department of City Planning, the Department of Housing Preservation and Development, and the Department of Small Businesses Services. These agencies can play a role improving security, building new affordable housing, and attracting small businesses to Fort Greene. Community partners also in-

clude community-based organizations that can oversee job training and placement programs for residents.

## Residents

Residents have perhaps the most important role in ensuring implementation of the vision. They are motivated, understand best what works and what does not work in the community, and have expressed readiness to champion the vision. Residents can engage NYCHA, identify and work with the appropriate community partners, and set priorities. They can also address area-wide issues by reaching out to residents of Fort Greene and other nearby NYCHA communities. Residents can also address compliance with safety rules and quality of life issues by organizing within buildings.