

Healthy and Safe People and Places

Police

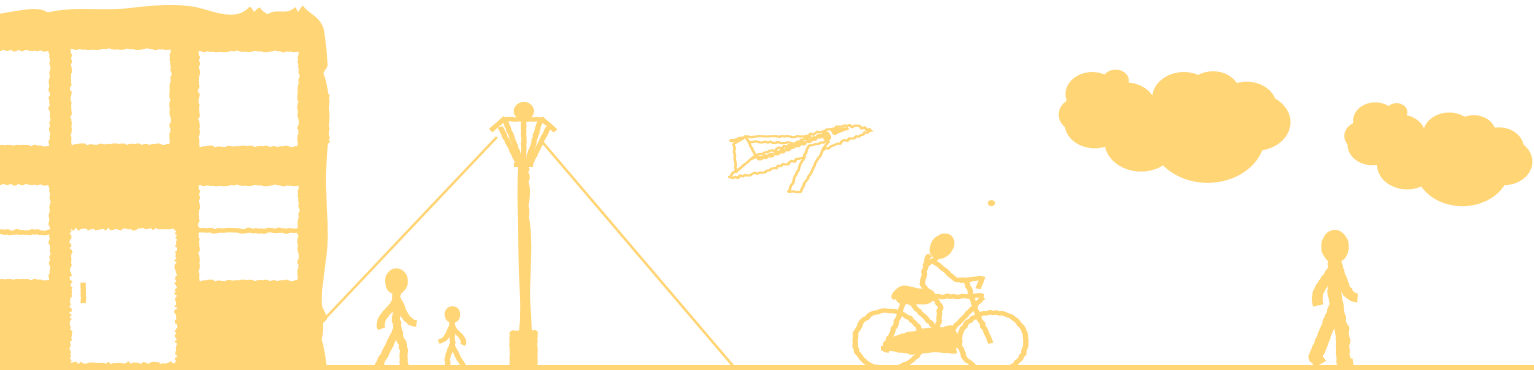


Toxic Products That Can Pose Safety Issues

Photo Credit: Steven Sunshine

GOAL:

Green toxic households, make housing healthy both inside and out, and increase security in the community during the day and night.



Childhood lead exposure rates in this health district in 2006 were 75 percent, the highest level in Queens and Brooklyn.

Jackson Heights has more than its share of health issues: the Brooklyn Queens Expressway, the Grand Central Parkway, LaGuardia Airport (one of the nation's 20 busiest), local traffic congestion, and fossil-fuel plants in Astoria all pose significant health risks.¹ Unhealthy food options, few recreational opportunities, and household toxins also pose health challenges. Most of all, the community's buildings and homes are degrading air quality, and endangering the community's children: there is a high concentration of buildings burning the least clean heating oil, and childhood lead exposure rates in 2006 were 75 percent, the highest level in Queens and Brooklyn.² Residents are extremely vulnerable to the effects of these toxic households—only 57 percent of residents had health insurance in 2007, the lowest rate in New York City.³

Safety is also an issue: crime in Jackson Heights is statistically lower than in other neighborhoods, but as we heard in the Green Agenda workshops, many residents do not feel safe.⁴

1 Environmental Defense Fund, 2009.
http://www.edf.org/documents/10085_EDF_Heating_Oil_Report.pdf; New York City Community Air Survey. Results from Winter Monitoring. 2008 to 2009

2 DOH Blood Lead Testing in 1 and 2 Year Olds by UHF Neighborhood, 2006

3 DOH Community Health Survey, 2007 (collected by UHF Neighborhood)/

These residents called attention to incidences of drinking and drug dealing in public, and felt particularly threatened at night in low-lit areas such as Travers Park and Bulova Park and on public transit. Improvements in community policing could help address some of these issues—in spite of large increases in population from 1990 to 2000, the number of police officers has remained the same.⁵ Truly increasing neighborhood security, however, requires a comprehensive approach that includes both good community-police relations, and other prevention strategies like increasing youth programs and planning community events. In order to both be and feel safer the whole community needs to get involved. A sense of community and strong relationships with neighbors is the most important step towards a safer environment for everyone.

Without meeting the basic needs of safety and health, progress on economic development and environmental improvement will be difficult. The following action items identify ways to improve air quality, reduce household toxins and ameliorate relationships between the community and police.

4 My Neighborhood Statistics, Police Precinct Statistics, 2009; Claritas, 2008

5 Community District Needs Statement, 2010

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31. Publicize Public Health Information.

Publicize data from air quality monitoring stations and other sources to increase awareness of public health risks such as asthma rates and air pollution caused by vehicles and burning heating oil.



Short Term



Inexpensive



Individuals



Community Groups

32. Clean Up Toxic Households.

Develop a household assessment program and toolkit to measure lead exposure, indoor air quality and household toxins on a house-by-house basis and recommend inexpensive strategies to increase the health and wellness of the home including non-toxic approaches to pest management.



Medium Term



Somewhat Expensive



Community Groups

33. Green Commercial Cleaning Practices.

Help local supermarkets and other businesses to source and use non-toxic commercial cleaners.



Short Term



Inexpensive



Local Businesses

34. Clean Local Air.

Encourage local building owners to switch polluting oil burning furnaces to natural gas. Work with car dealerships to reduce exhaust emissions into public gathering places.



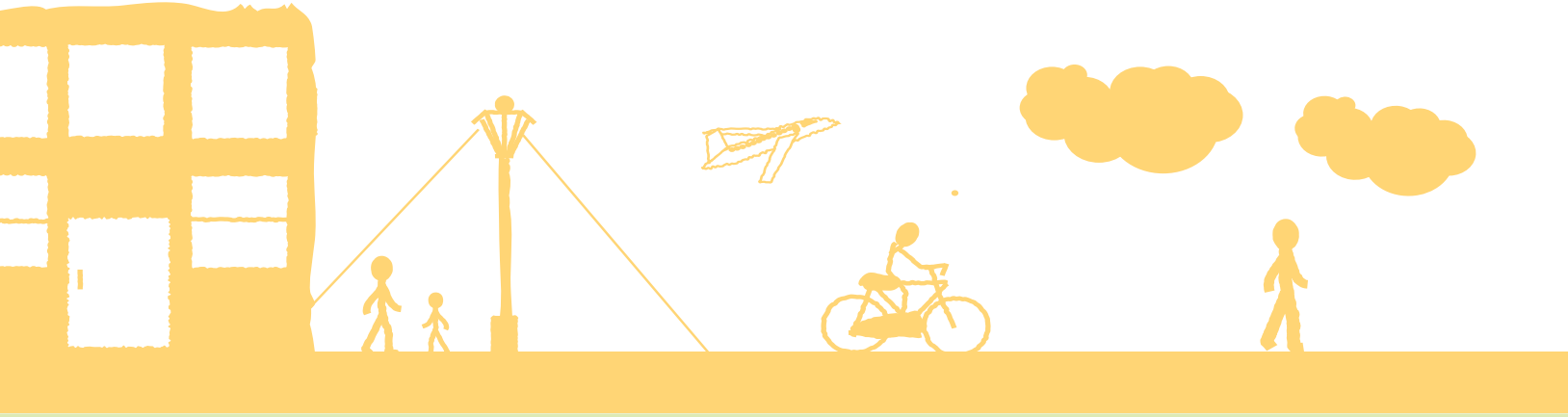
Medium Term



Somewhat Expensive



Community Groups



35. Enhance Night Time Safety
 Improve street and park lighting and program evening events to increase safety after dark.



Medium Term



Somewhat Expensive



Community Groups

36. Improve Community Policing.
 Improve community policing by requesting additional police presence and encouraging residents to communicate with police if they see suspicious activity. Organize “know your rights” training sessions to inform participants of their legal rights if they encounter police and communicate effective strategies for interaction between residents and police.



Short Term



Somewhat Expensive



Individuals



Government



Community Groups

Next Steps

Initiative	Milestones for 2011
31 Publicize Public Health Information	Work with schools and organizations to enable “citizen scientists” who will research and publish local environmental information periodically.
32 Clean Up Toxic Households	Promote awareness of the availability of free home lead-testing kits available through the Department of Environmental Protection.
33 Green Commercial Cleaning Practices	Create a list of greener cleaning products and their cost and availability and distribute to local businesses.
34 Clean Local Air	Identify buildings with polluting oil burning furnaces. Calculate costs and benefits of switching oil furnaces to natural gas or other fuel sources and distribute this information to co-op boards, building owners and tenants.
35 Enhance Night Time Safety	Work with NYC Department of Transportation and other agencies to include lighting improvement projects as part of their 2010 study of the streetscape in Jackson Heights.
36 Improve Community Policing	Designate a community-policing liaison to represent the community and begin exploring opportunities for increased community involvement in local policing.