

# Making Inroads to Health in Harlem and Brooklyn

New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene



The New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (NYC DOHMH) is working to eliminate obstacles to physical activity and increase safety, convenience, and mobility for all residents.

Complete Streets leads to better health outcomes by increasing physical activity and reducing air pollution; spurs economic growth by decreasing transportation costs and connecting people to places in their neighborhoods; and strengthens communities by improving the mobility of youth, the elderly, people with disabilities, and other marginalized groups.

## Providing Pedal Power to People

Historic divestment in East Harlem and North and Central Brooklyn has led to stark infrastructure and health inequities. Much of these neighborhoods are sparsely serviced by public transportation and streets lack infrastructure to walk and bike. Compared to individuals living in other Manhattan communities, East Harlem and North and Central Brooklyn residents have limited resources and a disproportionate burden of chronic disease, such as diabetes and obesity.

Bicycling is a great way to save limited resources and to increase daily physical activity, especially for people who are busy. The DOHMH is using Creating Healthy Schools and Communities (CHSC) funding to prioritize biking in some of these neighborhoods. In East Harlem, El Barrio Bikes and the Stanley Isaacs Neighborhood Center, gathered 200 community members, local organizations, and volunteers to kick off the 2018 biking season with the second-annual El Barrio Bike Bash. Attendees learned about biking resources in the community and signed up for spring and summer biking activities. Activities, sponsored by various public and private partners, included free bike lessons and helmets for more than 40 kids, a biking obstacle course, raffles, and prizes.

In Bedford-Stuyvesant, the Prescribe-a-Bike (PAB) program was created in collaboration with the Interfaith Medical Center and the Better Bike Share Partnership. With clinical provider approval, patients at the Interfaith Medical Center are eligible to receive a free 1-year Citi Bike membership, a street safety class, and a helmet. So far, the program has enrolled more than 100 participants and expanded to the Health+Hospitals /Woodhull Medical Center. With this endeavor, PAB hopes to set a precedent for health insurance reimbursement and other policy change.



Indoor bike practice for younger kids

## On the Right Road

According to Tim McDonough, PAB program coordinator, patients love the program and Interfaith is delighted to provide this opportunity to its patients and community-at-large. Not only have participants become more confident riding on the street, the focus on biking has helped advance support for infrastructure, policy, and community changes.

*“Our patients are thrilled about Prescribe-A-Bike. The excitement is palpable and our orientations have all been full of joy. We are so happy to be able to provide this opportunity to our patients and community.” Tim McDonough,  
Prescribe-A-Bike Program Coordinator*



to learn more...

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## **Creating Healthy Schools and Communities**

*The places where we live, learn, work, and play all contribute to our ability to become and stay healthy. Creating Healthy Schools and Communities (CHSC), a five-year (2015-2020) New York State Department of Health-funded initiative, is helping build stronger, healthier communities.*