

Cypress Hills

Local Development Corporation

Annual Report

**Fiscal
Year
2021**

My Community

MEAT FARM
ENNICH ST.

CYPRESS HILLS LOCAL DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION

What We Do

With community residents leading the way, the mission of CHLDC is to build a strong, equitable East New York, where youth and adults achieve educational and economic success, secure and preserve affordable housing, and develop leadership skills to transform their lives and community. We actively promote policies that advance racial equity.

Our Programs

- Career & Education**
- Youth & Family Services**
- Housing Counseling**
- College Success**
- Community Organizing**
- Community Development**

11,000

People served by our organization

4,383

People served through youth development services

254

SYEP Participants

549

High School graduates

82

Members apart of the Merchant Association

116

Youth Leaders



A Letter from Our Director

Dear Friends,

It's been another tough year for East New York. Thousands of residents battled new variants of Covid-19 and tried to deal with long term side effects of the virus and the mental health trauma caused by the pandemic. Simultaneously, other community members struggled to return to work - - some, in sectors hit hard by the pandemic - - or to train for new careers. Our young people grappled with tough decisions around pursuing higher education or supporting their families by going to work or caring for siblings. Food and housing insecurity remained high. Throughout it all, Cypress Hills Local Development Corporation (CHLDC) and our dedicated Board of Directors and staff have been here for East New Yorkers!



We continued our Emergency Relief Fund to help families make bill payments, access food, and attain essential resources. We also distributed thousands of pounds of healthy food through partnering food pantries and enrolled residents in SNAP benefits. CHLDC educated residents about Covid-19 vaccines and boosters and created greater access to vaccinations with local health care organizations. We also assisted scores of tenants in securing Emergency Rental Assistance Program payments and other housing benefits, worked with homeowners to obtain forbearance agreements and loan modifications and helped small businesses to access loans and grants to keep their doors open.

Through our programs we've transformed the lives of young people and families. Our college success programs provided expert advice to high school students to gain admission to college and line up the financial aid to afford higher education and we also supported current college students in persisting through to graduation. Our students also continue to flourish in regards to graduation rates, school acceptance, and leadership activities. CHLDC's high quality job training in the fields of construction, healthcare, and transportation have enabled residents to attain industry recognized credentials and gain employment.. Working alongside administrators, teachers and guidance staff at neighborhood public schools, we offered after-school and Beacon programs and Community School services to thousands of East New York children and families. As always, we have been persistent in advocating and organizing to prevent displacement and gentrification, dismantle the school to prison pipelines and win the public investments that the neighborhood needs to advance and prosper.

Our organization is set to open up our long dreamed of community center at Chestnut Commons during the summer of 2022, and are excited for our local community to enjoy all the resources it has to offer. For the first time, members of the community will find a "one stop" shop of educational programs, job training, college access services and Kingsborough Community College, recreational activities, health & wellness facilities, and youth development programs, all under one roof . Chestnut Commons is not just a new space, but a new beginning for the Cypress Hills/ East New York community!

We appreciate all of your support and welcome any time, advocacy, guidance and financial help that you can give to the Cypress Hills Local Development Corporation.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Michelle Neugebauer".

Michelle Neugebauer
Executive Director

Harold Green, President | Michael Lawes, Vice President | Marisol Quiñones, Secretary | Gladys DeSantiago, Treasurer | Dr. Sylvia Stovall, President of Housing Subsidiaries | Melody Andino | Florence Charles | R.D. Gentzler | Ivelisse Gonzalez | Melodye Harvey | Aiden Lanigan | Mirian Rodriguez | Nicholas Russo | Alexis Sanchez | Amory Sanchez | George Torres

Career & Education

Our Career and Education services ensure that members of the community are connected to job training and employment for economic success and leadership opportunities. We offer a series of programs that give young adults the chance to earn work credentials, practice trades through sector specific skills training and gain experience through internships. We also support local businesses through our merchant association Cypress Hills Business Partners, which is intended to strengthen the local economy and expand work opportunities within the community.

Our construction skills training program, **Building East New York**, offered both in person and remote courses to help the local community attain entry level industry credentials and find employment on local construction sites, including on our Chestnut Commons project, building affordable housing in their own neighborhood. Most Building ENY participants have landed full time positions within a few weeks of starting the program. We continue to work with **Building Works** and the Carpenter's Union to access city-wide opportunities as well.

We also pivoted to an additional employment sector and launched **Careers that Care**, a new initiative training young people to start careers in the healthcare field by beginning with the Certified Nurse Assistant license.

Transportation Education At Cypress Hills (TE@CH) was paused during the pandemic but has recently begun Commercial Drivers License Training for the paratransit industry once again.

As a result of our sector-based training, 71 participants received their necessary vocational credentials and 51 were hired during the year. We are proud to announce that this year we achieved placements with an average wage of \$17.20/hour, our highest average ever. Some of the training requires at least a high school diploma or an equivalent certification, so we offer High School Equivalency (HSE) prep courses. In FY20 we had 10 participants earn alternative high school credentials, but in FY21 we achieved more than triple that amount with 45 young adults attaining their High School Equivalency diploma through our educational classes and support.

During the height of the pandemic our **Summer Youth Employment Program (SYEP)** went fully remote and we were still able to provide paid training and work experiences for 254 young people aged 14 to 24 for six weeks. Our youth benefited from the program by gaining professional experience, exploring future career options, and practicing responsibility while earning an income. Due to the remote nature of the work, we were able to pull in a broader pool of professionals to interact with our youth through project-based assignments. In FY21 we returned to our full capacity, serving 840 teenagers at 100 worksites.

Cypress Hills Business Partners is a merchants association of 82 members. It was created to support and strengthen local businesses within Cypress Hills/East New York. Our staff distributed PPE and provided guidance regarding the changing landscape of regulations during the pandemic. We were able to assist in accessing Paycheck Protection Program loans and other relief grants to 65 merchants, held 31 meetings, and launched a campaign to create a Business Improvement District (BID) within our community. The BID Steering Committee designed and implemented several strategies to help the neighborhood emerge from the pandemic including graffiti removal, trash pick-up, and community safety efforts. They gave out magnets highlighting the alternatives to over-policing, highlighting the power of the community to support each other.



676

People served
in total

84.3%

Of participants retain
employment for longer
than 3 months

\$17.27/hr

Average wage

College Success

At CHLDC we work hard to ensure that our students who have aspirations of furthering their education in college are not only able to reach their destination, but also achieve success during and after their studies. We support our students' educational pursuits by offering them services that include tutoring, counseling, and leadership development opportunities.

One of the ways we have helped our students on the path to college success is through our **Student Success Centers (SSC)** located on the campuses of Franklin K Lane and Thomas Jefferson, that provide students with early college awareness, college access counseling, advice on financial aid, and career exploration. Our SSCs also train students to become Youth Leaders who serve as peer educators for college access. Youth Leaders play a crucial role in the SSCs and this year 16 high school students participated in the leadership program. Once our students enter their college journey, we still support them through our **College Steps and Persistence Programs (STEPS)** that



provides summer college preparation programming, group workshops on navigating college campuses, academic assistance, transfer advice, financial literacy, and job readiness. Thanks to the work of the College STEPS team, 40.5% of our students that enrolled in college graduated within six years. Historically, this number continues to increase as we continue to improve our structures, strategies, and expertise in college success.

During the 2020-2021 school year, we provided college access services to 2,360 students across our Student Success Centers and College STEPS storefront office. We provided individual admissions counseling, guidance for completing the FAFSA and taking on any student loans, group workshops, SAT prep classes, college trips, academic enrichment, and parent engagement to help young people plan for and enter college. Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, we continued to provide services to high school students, including tutoring, virtual workshops on college exploration, and assisted 12th graders through the college application process. Each spring, our college persistence team partners with our college access team to support the college matriculation process for high school seniors.

This current school year (2021-2022) we have transitioned back onto our high school campuses and have resumed providing workshops, individual counseling, and events in person. This has drastically improved student engagement. We have also exposed the Class of 2022 to more competitive scholarships and application processes this year, which includes an increase of early applications to CUNY's Macaulay Honors College. Due to the support of our team, we also had several Posse and Questbridge finalists this fall. The College STEPS team has continued to support the college caseload in navigating online classes, accessing academic and financial resources available through their college or community. The persistence counselors continue to keep students informed of any changes to college policies and initiatives due to the pandemic, namely campus requirements regarding vaccinations.

2,458

Students served in total

357

Students have plans of attending college after high school

40.5%

College graduates within 6 years

Youth & Family Services

CHLDC remains dedicated to supporting young people and their families. Throughout the year, the division of Youth and Family Services (YFS) continued to provide summer and after-school programming to 1,242 young people, grades K-8 at 13 schools in Cypress Hills - East New York. After-school participants enjoyed theme based activities, Arts and Culture activities as well as had the opportunity to participate in After School Community-wide events such as Lights on Afterschool, Culture Awareness Days and Family Care Projects. As part of our commitment to building young people up and helping them establish the foundational skills they need to be lifelong learners and active community members, our participants received academic support and enrichment opportunities to help them develop the skills they need to be successful. Participants were exposed to Social Emotional skill building activities, Literacy Skill Development through our researched based and professional approved Ready Readers and Rising Readers program, Leadership Skill building through Service-Learning, STEAM related activities that promoted interest in the Technological and Science Fields, and Fitness, Health and Wellness programming to support their physical development.



Our staff and volunteer AmeriCorps service members worked tirelessly throughout the year to ensure that our families had their basic needs met by conducting weekly wellness check-ins with each family, making note of their needs and offering connections to services through our other divisions. Our AmeriCorps members did a CARE drive to collect donations of household products, Sanitization Supplies, Self-Care products and hard to find items to help families continue to stay safe. Our program teams delivered Food Care Packages to families in need and helped to connect them to our Emergency Response Team for further assistance with Food Insecurity, which included Supermarket Cards that allowed them to purchase food as they struggled to deal with the overwhelming crisis the pandemic had caused. We helped to care for and feed over 200 of our neediest families.

Our **Beacon Programs** served 742 early elementary through adult-aged community members with educational and recreational activities at a time when they needed community engagement the most. During this year, our Beacon Family Place counseling program saw an increase in need and pushed to provide 47 families with the mental health supports and resources they needed by conducting home visits, providing individual and family counseling sessions, and connecting them to additional support resources and services as needed. Our Beacon Program also helped develop youth leadership skills through the **Counselor In Training (CIT) Program**. This program gave young people the opportunity to grow as leaders by learning how to effectively communicate, manage their time, and collaborate with each other. To practice these skills, program participants brainstormed and developed lesson plans to teach and instruct younger students throughout various activities. In addition, CIT Program participants attended workshops focused on acting, business, and financial education. Program participants believe their experience not only made them better leaders but grew their confidence, responsibility, and enthusiasm.

YFS also continues its work in assisting middle school students' transition to high school through their **Middle School Student Success Center (MSSSC)**. MSSSC trained 9 youth leaders and served 517 Middle school students, increasing their knowledge of the High School Choice process, providing individual counseling sessions and family counseling and informational sessions helping youth to make the best High School Choice decisions possible. 80% of our participants we matched to a high school that averaged a graduation rate of above 75%.

1,242

Youth from grades K-8 served in total

742

Early elementary through adult-aged participants in Beacon Community Center Programming

80%

Of students accepted into high schools with a graduation rate of 75% and above

Community Development

Chestnut Commons development that will hold 274 units of deeply and permanently affordable housing. 40% of the apartments will be occupied by families of three or more that earn less than \$39,479 which is less than the area median income. An additional 20% of the units will be reserved for formerly homeless families who will also be supported through extensive services provided by us and partner organizations. Chestnut Commons will also feature a rooftop garden, commercial kitchen incubator, a social enterprise cafe, retail storefronts (including the Brooklyn Cooperative Credit Union), a computer lab, and a health and fitness center. The center will also be home to a satellite campus for Kingsborough Community College, thanks to our secured partnership with CUNY. Furthermore, 34,000 square feet of community center space will enable CHLDC to expand our youth development programs, college access and workforce development programs at one location! In all, we plan for Chestnut Commons to be a safe space where youth can enjoy educational and recreational activities, local and aspiring business owners can grow, and community members can live comfortably. Chestnut Commons is still on track to open the summer of 2022!



CHLDC is also working with our joint venture partners, MHANY Management on the development and construction of 110 affordable units and a new child care center on vacant land parcels that were awarded through the New In-Fill Homeownership Opportunities Program (NIHOP) and Neighborhood Construction Program (NCP.) We anticipate closing in December 2022 with completion two years later. The Cypress Hills Child Care Corporation will establish a 5 classroom new child care facility in one of the new buildings at 3285/87 Fulton Street.

Furthermore, CHLDC is preserving affordable housing. Since March 2019, we have been working to stabilize and conduct pre-development activities related to rehabilitating five apartment buildings, containing 46 units, through the City's Third Party Transfer Program. We have carried out numerous emergency repairs on the buildings and are overseeing all testing, surveying and architectural/design development activities. One building in the project was approved under the NYC Department of Housing preservation and Development's HPD's ShareNYC program for affordable shared housing. At that building, we will adapt a 9-unit single room occupancy townhome into an 11-unit SRO building with new communal living areas, kitchens, and bathrooms. The other buildings will undergo moderate rehabilitation. We are also working on lining up financing for the renovation of 16 properties in our portfolio that are sorely in need of systems upgrades and other repairs thereby ensuring long-term safe and healthy living conditions for residents.

Through our emergency relief program we distributed 345 emergency food gift cards to food insecure families. CHLDC has also partnered with grassroots food pantries (Celestial Church of Christ, Blessed Sacrament Church, New Hope Church, and Cypress Hills/East New York Coalition) to distribute over 10,000 grocery bags of groceries to food-insecure families. In addition, we donated food to 54 residents in our senior housing building. We more than doubled the number of residents we were able to help secure Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program SNAP benefits. We assisted 282 low income working people, senior citizens, and the disabled access healthy foods through SNAP. We also held our seasonal farmstand in partnership with GrowNYC for residents to purchase fresh and healthy foods using benefits including SNAP, WIC, seniors farmers' market nutrition program, and health bucks. Furthermore we have continued our efforts to ensure that community residents are provided with the necessary education and resources to stay safe during the pandemic.

We continue to educate local residents on the importance of vaccination, locate free testing and vaccine sites, and distribute safety supplies (hand sanitizer, masks, and gloves.)

Lastly, our organization is incubating and providing support to the East New York Community Land Trust which is a start-up nonprofit that will ensure the long-term affordability of housing in the neighborhood for generations to come. Despite the pandemic, the CLT had an amazing year, recruiting members, developing its leadership structure and operating procedures, identifying future housing development sites, raising funds, and advocating



1,242

Community members accessed healthy foods

354

Emergency supplies given to local residents

282

Residents enrolled for SNAP benefits

Housing Counseling

Our organization understands the economic, housing, and real estate market pressures that Cypress Hills/East New York homeowners and renters endured in the wake of New York City's 2016 rezoning of the neighborhood for greater density. To ensure that community residents remain in their homes, CHLDC's Housing Counseling team works to assist community residents by providing counseling programs and services related to foreclosure prevention, tenant counseling and organizing, home repairs, refinancing pros and cons, senior citizens housing challenges, as well as financial literacy coaching.



During fiscal year 2021, still in the throes of the Covid-19 pandemic, our team provided services to 386 community residents, aiding owners with defaulted mortgage accounts to obtain favorable and sustainable loss mitigation terms, including fifteen Covid related forbearance agreements, linking owners to subsidized resources that assured home repair completion of ten homes, the removal of four owners' property tax liens, securing three property tax exemptions for seniors, and facilitating nine home repair application approvals. In addition, we counseled over one hundred twenty tenants. As the fiscal year concluded, NYS Emergency Rental Assistance Program launched in early June 2021 and we were ready to educate renters about this critical benefit and help them apply to avert eviction. During this brief span, we helped at least twenty two applicants to submit their applications.

Further, through virtual webinar workshops, the housing team informed more than one hundred attendees on beneficial government programs for tenants and homeowners, especially those who were dealing with the pandemic. The workshops covered application assistance and details on various topics including the Emergency Rental Assistance Program (ERAP) and Home Energy Assistance Program (HEAP), legal services practices, subsidized home repair programs, NYC property tax exemption guidelines, homeowner resources, tenants' rights, mortgage refinancing, financial literacy basics, extended foreclosure and eviction moratoria, NYC tax lien sales options, etc. Our assistance has helped struggling homeowners and renters to access vital information and services for managing and/or surmounting the pandemic's housing and financial challenges. In fact, we awarded special grants that eligible residents needed for rent payments, mortgage bills, food-shopping, funeral costs, home repairs and so forth.

A moment that highlighted this year's success occurred when counselors assisted a senior couple who bought their home in 2015. After the senior's spouse became disabled, the other spouse became the head of household. Their financial hardship began when their tenant suffered a Covid 19 related job loss. The reduced income posed a burdensome financial hardship. However, staff advocacy for the client and the renter led to applications to NYS Emergency Rental Assistance Program (ERAP), which was approved, eventually. With the approval of ERAP, the homeowners were on improved financial footing, then counselors submitted the uniform mortgage assistance application on behalf of the seniors. As a result, the servicer offered the following accepted workout terms: extension of the maturity date to 2051, a new principal balance of approximately \$406,000, fixed 3.5% interest rate, resulting in the PITI payment of \$2637.30. The seniors are now able to focus on their well-being and keeping their home.

386

People served through Housing Counseling Services

50

Evictions prevented or postponed

62

New small homeowners assisted with home repairs

Community Organizing

We have used community organizing to advocate for residents to have the rights to safe affordable housing, protection against displacement, economic opportunities, and beneficial services within our community.

In an effort to protect our residents from gentrification the **Coalition for Community Advancement (CCA)** hosted CCA meetings where they educated over 424 people on housing and economic policies. Our meeting participation rate of 48 percent surpassed our initial yearly target of 35 percent. In addition, the Coalition won a Cease and Desist Zone in East New York. This was a



major accomplishment, because for years real estate agents have used tactics that involve harassment to scam affordable homeowners into selling their homes, thus resulting in displacement and homelessness. The Cease and Desist Zone created a "do not solicit" registry at the New York State Department of State, which means real estate agents have to check before they solicit East New York homeowners to sell their homes. Local residents will have more protection, because mortgage brokers can face penalties and even lose their licenses if they continue to solicit these homeowners. We were proud of this achievement because Coalition members worked hard during their campaign to inform community members on the zone as well as encourage people to register their homes in order to receive protection.

The CCA has continued to defend residents, like steering Steering Committee Member Linda Singleton, against gentrification through education on the law's that impact housing within her neighborhood. Singleton noted that the Coalition, "offers sub advocacy groups that serve to protect and preserve the community for Black and Brown people." In addition, the Coalition has worked with government officials to pass the Covid Community Protection Act, a bill that will also protect Black and Brown families from private investors looking to take advantage of the housing market and further displace these families. Through a series of social media campaigns, virtual town halls, and information sessions, the community support for the Protection Act grew.

El Comite Hispano-Hablante, an extension of the Coalition for Community Advancement, formed in October, is fully committed to breaking all the language barriers that our hispanic community face everyday. This committee of East New York tenants and homeowners that are primarily fluent in the Spanish Language is bringing language access to the Latinx community of East New York. They are advocating for housing and economic justice in East New York. We believe that together we are stronger and that everyone has a strong voice.

The Coalition also formed the "Economic Justice for East New York" Committee bringing together small businesses, residents and local organizations that include: UniverseCity, Just Hauling, BOCnet, Local Development Corporation of East New York to launch a campaign to bring good jobs into the Community. This was a huge step forward in regards to establishing economic equity within the neighborhood.

Furthermore, our youth-led organization **Future of Tomorrow (FOT)**, worked towards improving the educational experience for all of the students that attend the five schools on the Franklin K. Lane Campus. FOT has made efforts to end the harassment of students by school safety agents and reduce the amount of unfair school suspensions by teachers. New York City's Department of Education disciplinary code allows students to be suspended for disobeying the authority of either school personnel or a



safety security agent, which can be considered a minor infraction. The issue is that New York City public school students received harsh suspensions for these minor infractions, and 90% of the students who were suspended for these matters were students of color. Our young leaders realized that these types of suspensions contributed to the school-to-prison pipeline, and have also impeded Black and Brown students from achieving academic success. In response to this, FOT campaigned with citywide partners to change the city's discipline code to prevent students from being suspended under this infraction and helped to secure an oversight of the disciplinary policy, which resulted in an 80% decrease citywide of these types of suspensions. FOT has also led the way in leading community-wide conversations about safety and alternatives to policing. CHLDC is proud to support these young people in their organizing work!



424

Meeting participants

80%

Decrease of citywide suspensions

48%

Members attended meetings. 13% more than expected 35%

Innovation and Recovery Fund

In January 2020 we embarked on a capital campaign for our community center at Chestnut Commons. We successfully filled the gap and raised the \$4.2MM. In September of 2021, we launched the capstone to capital “The Innovation and Recovery Fund” with a goal to raise \$1MM. This three-year campaign will directly support program expansion and startup programming critical to support the community’s recovery from the pandemic. It will also create a reserve to hedge against unforeseen downturns and allow us to respond to new opportunities and community needs.



The Innovation and Recovery Fund will benefit the community because we will be able to expand many of our youth development, college access and workforce development programs.

These services will further provide young people with enrichment programs, counseling services to families in the community, and activities that keep community members occupied, safe, and productive. This campaign will also allow for increased programs centered around health including providing robust public benefit programs, health screenings, and emergency relief. We will also provide arts, health, and fitness classes. More art programs will give people the chance to learn about different ways to creatively express themselves, while health and fitness programs can help establish healthier lifestyle habits, prevent chronic illnesses prevalent in the neighborhood (e.g. diabetes, heart disease, high blood pressure), and increase life expectancy. Equally important, the fund will give us more ways to strengthen the Cypress Hills Verde, which increases access to healthy foods, exposure to careers within agriculture, and community service opportunities.

In regards to new opportunities, this campaign will increase the possibilities for community members to achieve both educational and career success. In all, the Innovation and Recovery Fund will bring about more resources, opportunities, sustainable living, and equity to Cypress Hills/East New York.



Thank You to Our Supporters

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