Manhattan Community Board 4
Community Needs Assessment
March 2020

Introduction

In January 2020, Manhattan Community Board 4 (MCB4) set out to determine the district's most vulnerable populations to inform its policy and funding recommendations.

Manhattan Community District 4 (MCD4) is home to 120,000 residents across the neighborhoods of Chelsea and Clinton/Hell's Kitchen. MCD4 is bounded by 14th Street in the south, west 59th Street in the north, Sixth Avenue south of West 26th Street and Eighth Avenue north of 26th Street as its eastern border, and the Hudson River to the west.[1] MCD4 borders Greenwich Village, the Flatiron District, the Upper West Side, and the Midtown central business district. MCD4 is diverse in every way possible, from race and ethnicity to income to prevalent industries in the community, with the Garment District, Flower District, Theater District, and other neighborhoods represented here.

With this immense diversity comes challenges to identifying and assessing community needs. For example, average household income in MCD4 is approximately $100,000, but this number masks over 14,000 families with average incomes under $35,000.[2] To build a deep understanding of the community's needs, this assessment includes a wide range of data and posits additional areas of exploration to build a nuanced understanding of MCD4.

Research Questions and Methodology

This needs assessment is rooted in three key questions:
- What vulnerable populations are there in MCD4?
- What gaps in service do stakeholders perceive in the district? In other words, who isn't receiving the services they need?
- What additional information might MCB4 need to understand the community and address its needs?

To begin answering these questions, a team from Change Impact deployed the following research methods:
- Review and synthesis of existing public data, including the following sources:
  - 311 and City Council complaint logs
  - MCB4 Affordable Housing Plan
  - MCB4 meeting minutes

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[1] US Census Bureau, 2016, www.census.gov; MCB4 FY 2021 Statement of District Needs and Budget Request, https://www1.nyc.gov/html/mancb4/html/budget/budget.shtml
[2] Keeping Track Online, https://data.cccnewyork.org#any

- ○ MCB4 Statement of District needs and Budget Requests
  - ○ Class Divide documentary
  - ○ Keeping Track Online (youth database)
  - ○ NYC Administration for Children Services Preventive Service Directory
  - ○ NYC Department of Health and Mental Health Community Health Profile
  - ○ NYC Department of Health and Mental Health Community Health Survey
  - ○ NYC Department of Planning, MCD4 Community Profiles
  - ○ NYC Department of Planning, Zoning for Coastal Flood Resiliency Plans
  - ○ NYC Department of Sanitation Community Board Report
  - ○ NYPD Crime Statistics
  - ○ NYS Department of Health Statewide Planning and Research Cooperative System
  - ○ U.S. Census and American Community Survey

- ● Conduct and analyze semi-structured interviews with key stakeholders, coding interview responses to analyze themes and using interviews to triangulate themes in the aforementioned data; interviewees included representatives from:
  - ○ Breaking Ground
  - ○ Councilmember Rosenthal's office
  - ○ Council Speaker Johnson's office
  - ○ Covenant House
  - ○ Fulton House
  - ○ Hartley House
  - ○ Hudson Guild
  - ○ Metro Baptist Church
  - ○ NYCHA
  - ○ Penn South

Interviewees were made aware of the project goals and asked to share their thoughts from a personal and/or professional lens. In addition to supporting various audiences within the district in a professional capacity, many of the individuals currently reside in MCD4, giving them a unique perspective regarding community engagement.

As with any research, there are limitations to the findings. In this effort, it is worth noting that the U.S. census data combines MCD4 and MCD5 in one data set, and the census itself suggests there is not a reliable way to disaggregate the data. Therefore, some demographic findings are representative of a larger area beyond MCD4. Secondly, some data sources are several years old, and the lag in data collection means there may be some shifts in the numbers that are not reflected in this analysis. Finally, any time interviews are part of a study, it is worth noting that the data may be influenced by the individuals' perceptions of how their responses will be used and who will review them. Furthermore, the interviews are interpreted by the research team, which leaves room for interviewer bias. However, the research team took steps to mitigate these risks. Interviewers assured interviewees that their responses would not be personally attributed

to them unless indicated, and they also used detailed notes and quotes from the data whenever possible to minimize misinterpretation. Ultimately, the research team feels confident that the following analysis is reflective of the community's needs.

District Overview

MCD4 has seen a significant population increase since 2000, growing by approximately 40% from 87,500 residents to just over 122,000 in 2016.[3,4] Using 2016 data, the population breaks down as follows:

	MCD4	Manhattan	All NYC
Age			
0-17	9%	14%	21%
18-24	8%	9%	9%
25-44	45%	37%	32%
45-64	26%	23%	25%
65+	13%	17%	14%
Race/Ethnicity			
White (Non-Hispanic)	59%	47%	32%
Black (Non-Hispanic)	6%	12%	22%
Asian (Non-Hispanic)	17%	12%	15%
Other Race (Non-Hispanic)	3%	3%	2%
Hispanic/Latinx	15%	26%	29%
National Origin			
Born Outside the	28%	29.2%	37%

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[3] US Census Bureau, 2016, www.census.gov; NYC Department of Planning, https://communityprofiles.planning.nyc.gov/manhattan/4; NYC Department of Health and Mental Health Community Health Profile, https://www1.nyc.gov/assets/doh/downloads/pdf/data/2018chp-mn4.pdf
[4] Though the population grew, demographics stayed largely the same from 2000-2010. The 2020 census results will reveal more about how the population may have changed since then.

U.S.			
English Language Proficiency			
Limited English Proficiency	10%	39.8%	23%
Income and Economics			
Poverty Rate	11%	14%	20%
Unemployment Rate	5%	7%	9%
Rent Burdened Residents	41%	45%	51%

At $101,080, MCD4 has the 6th highest median income of NYC's 59 communities. For families with children, the median income jumps to $192,068. MCD4 household income breaks down as follows:

	MCD4	Manhattan	NYC
Under $15,000	12%	13%	15%
$15,000 to $24,999	7%	8%	9%
$25,000 to $34,999	5%	5%	8%
$35,000 to $49,999	4%	8%	10%
$50,000 to $74,999	10%	11%	15%
$75,000 to $99,999	9%	10%	11%
$100,000 to $199,999	27%	22%	21%
$200,000 or more	25%	23%	10%

It is noteworthy that, since 2016, households earning $25,000 to $49,999 have declined and groups at both ends of the income spectrum have grown, suggesting income inequality has increased in just three years.

In summary, MCD4 differs from citywide trends in several ways, highlighting its unique demographic. The district represents a higher population of white residents (59%), fewer children, and a larger concentration of 25 - 44 year olds. The district is also home to considerable wealth, with 52% of residents earning $100,000 or more, though there is also

extreme income inequality in the district with families mostly falling at either end of the income spectrum.

Research Findings

Although there are a range of needs in MCD4, as there are in any community, four core populations emerged from the data collected: teenagers and young adults experiencing unemployment; older adults, with a focus on non-native English speakers; families in affordable housing; and people experiencing homelessness and/or mental illness. None of these themes rose to the top as a leading priority, but future research will present an opportunity for deeper exploration as described in the conclusion.

Teenagers and Young Adults Experiencing Unemployment
There are just over 10,000 young adults in MCD4. While the unemployment rate for young adults ages 20-24 is a low 8% (compared to 16% citywide), the unemployment rate for teenagers ages 16-19 seeking work is 59%, the second highest rate across NYC and significantly higher than the citywide rate of 29%.[5] These figures include only those teenagers seeking employment. The high school dropout rate in MCD4 increased by half a percent to 6.9% in 2018, which is significant as the citywide rate (7.5%) decreased by 3% in the same time frame.[6] It appears that young adults, particularly those ages 16-19, are in need of more opportunities to connect to work.

Many interviewees who work with youth and teens voiced their concerns for what Yesenia Zuniga of Hartley House referred to as "a delicate audience". As a lifelong resident of the community, Ms. Zuniga has a strong connection to the area and a desire to support the teens growing up there. Through her interactions with youth coming to Hartley House, she sees a need for expanded learning and engagement opportunities for this age group. While she doesn't have the capacity to offer many paid work opportunities (instead providing frequent volunteer roles), she feels that teens need additional resources for job readiness. Ms. Zuniga reported that teens are lacking important skills such as interview preparation, resume building, and networking.

Ken Jockers, executive director of Hudson Guild, echoed similar sentiments, sharing that the youth he interacts with have a desire to work, but find themselves "underqualified or underdeveloped". He feels there is an urgent need to provide youth that are eligible to work with life skills training and employment support. According to Mr. Jockers, this population is lacking essential resources such as educational programming and connections to work opportunities that would help establish a positive "pathway to adulthood". Matt Green, Chief of Staff for Council Speaker Johnson, noted that while new buildings and companies are emerging, simply

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[5] Keeping Track Online, https://data.cccnewyork.org
[6] Keeping Track Online, https://data.cccnewyork.org

"because those opportunities are there, doesn't mean people have access to them or are prepared to apply". Having worked in the community for over a decade, Miguel Acevedo also acknowledges that there are not enough spaces or platforms for youth in MCD4. Stakeholders concur that existing programs (including Mr. Acevedo's Fulton Youth of the Future) are at capacity based on what their facility and staff can provide. Mr. Acevedo expressed the need for additional extracurricular activities, and highlights the employment gap as a key issue, urging "we need to try to find more programs for teenagers to work". Ms. Zuniga also feels local companies could be more proactive, developing additional incentives or systems to create alternative professional experiences for teens. There is a consensus that key players in the community (individuals and/or businesses) could be more involved in supporting youth engagement initiatives.

Summary of Needs for Youth and Teens:
- Job readiness programming, including resume development and interview skills
- Jobs and paid internships/apprenticeships
- Lack of connections to local employers

Possible Action Steps:
- Meet with the NYC Department of Youth and Community Development (DYCD) to assess the youth workforce programs available in MCD4 (e.g., Advance and Earn, Learn and Earn, Summer Youth Employment Program) and how to create stronger referral systems to such programs
- Request a meeting with Jobs First NYC, a youth employment intermediary, to discuss strategies that have worked in other communities
- Continue securing commitments from local businesses, housing developers, and other investors to hire from the local community whenever possible, and help community organizations to align job readiness programming with jobs anticipated from these relationships
- Explore learnings from the Lower East Side Employment Network (LESEN), which funnels jobs to local jobseekers in partnership with community-based organizations[7]

Older Adults
There are nearly 16,000 MCD4 residents ages 65 and over. Angela Howard of Covenant House referred to seniors as the "most fragile" community within the city. Several interviewees noted specific challenges in MCD4 that affect older residents, including lacking advocates to help them navigate housing and landlord situations and financial decisions, as well as systems that often require the use of technology. Difficulties also include transportation needs, specifically the lack of accessibility to medical appointments, stores, and service providers outside of their buildings.

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[7] For more information, visit http://www.jobsfirstnyc.org/projects-and-publications.php/jfnyc-publications/51

These issues are exacerbated by language barriers for many older residents. Many of the stakeholders noted that seniors in MCD4 with a primary language other than English are in need of assistance to manage many of the logistical situations affecting their quality of life. People are not receiving necessary services due to their lack of resources (e.g., the ability to get to or manage an appointment on their own), or because they are potentially discouraged by communication obstacles. The language barriers are not just prevalent in regard to basic care, but in community programming as well.

In addition to supporting seniors with their everyday needs, there is a demand for increased facility space and activities for this vulnerable age group. Miguel Acevedo, president of the Fulton Houses Tenant Association, shared his experience and limited capacity to serve residents, noting "we need more space… seniors use my office for bingo twice a week". Interviewees agreed that increasing activity offerings, ranging from educational opportunities to dance and exercise classes, is essential to enhance the well-being of older adults in MCD4. Convenience and potential safety factors should be considered in developing a plan to support this demographic. Residents are sometimes hesitant to leave their building or area, especially in the evening, which has a direct impact on overall neighborhood engagement.

When analyzed through the lens of community data, it is no surprise that transportation and space have emerged as concerns. MCD4 grew from 57,358 persons per square mile in 2010 to 67,899 persons per square mile in 2016, straining the community's infrastructure in terms of traffic, schools, and other community assets.[8] Larger numbers of seniors over the last two decades in the community are likely driving the need for additional services, staff, facilities, and modes of transportation to keep up with demand.

Summary of Needs for Older Adults:
- Advocates to help navigate housing, finances, and other aspects of daily life
- Access to bilingual service providers and translators
- Transportation to conduct daily activities and participate in community programs
- Additional safe spaces in the community

Possible Action Steps:
- Convene a work group of service providers working with older adults to assess programs available and gaps in services
- Partner with service providers to expand access to bilingual advocates for seniors
- Identify underutilized community spaces that can host activities for seniors
- Meet with the NYC Department for the Aging (DFTA) to assess resources available to MCD4 seniors that may be underutilized
- Work with DFTA home-delivered meals vendor for Manhattan Catchment Area 2 (new vendor to be named this summer) to equip them with information about community programs to facilitate referrals

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[8] NYC Department of Planning, https://communityprofiles.planning.nyc.gov/manhattan/4

Families Living in Affordable Housing (Public and Rent-Controlled Units)
There are 879 occupied public housing units in MCD4, which represents a loss of 627 units since 2014. Furthermore, there are 18,216 rent-regulated units, a loss of 3,609 units in the same timeframe. While recent state laws protect further erosion of affordable housing, this effort does not offset units already lost.

Almost all interviewees used the term "diverse" to describe the population of MCD4, and though the community's diversity was cited as an asset, the wide economic discrepancy among residents in the district was named as a vital concern. Stakeholders agreed that additional support is crucial for low income families and residents in affordable housing units. Matt Green shared the urgency of addressing the needs of public housing residents, referencing the "long history of disinvestment" that has created a critical situation in which residents struggle to "keep their homes in living condition".Reverend Tiffany Henkel of Metro Baptist Church noted the struggle for many people in the neighborhood with limited income who are "living in a community that's built for high-end [earners]". She expressed the need for aid to extend beyond housing, and tap into the services necessary to sustain an acceptable quality of life. With new development in the area, especially among retail stores, low-income residents are having trouble keeping up with basic needs such as groceries. Darlene Waters, president of the Elliot-Chelsea Houses Tenant Association, reiterated the point by stating that affordable housing is "not really affordable" once expenses and needs apart from monthly rent are considered. If residents do not have access to services and products within a reasonable price range, then they are not being set up for success.

Interviewees agreed that housing options are only a small piece of the puzzle, and that housing alone does not provide the opportunity for families to thrive in MCD4. "NYCHA residents need an enormous amount of support" says Marisa Maack, Chief of Staff for Council Member Rosenthal. She explains that based on her interactions with the community, residents' needs include but are not limited to social services, immigrant services, and pathways to affordable food programs. It is evident that although MCD4 is comprised of dynamic neighborhoods and considered a desirable place to reside, families given housing opportunities without additional assistance are unable to make ends meet.

Summary of Needs for Families in Affordable Housing:
● Affordable local retailers, including grocery stores
● Additional poverty relief and financial literacy services offered in public housing and/or to public housing residents

Possible Action Steps:
● Work with local businesses to offer a sliding scale or discount programs
● Mobilize service providers to expand poverty relief and financial literacy services

- Engage private foundations and corporate sponsors to subsidize the cost of food, clothes, and other basic supplies for low-income residents

People Experiencing Homelessness and/or Mental Illness

Homelessness has been on the rise in New York City over the last 30 years.[9] While it is not a *more* significant issue in MCD4 when compared to other districts, it still poses a significant challenge to the community. Most data on homelessness is reported by City Council District. City Council District 3 has approximately 17 shelters for single adults but no family shelters, only temporary hotels, even though it has a larger proportion of homeless students than 23 other districts (approximately 50 families are homeless in the district).[10] There is one family shelter in City Council District 6, and there are 10 shelters for single adults. Based on data collected by MCB4, there is only one shelter for single men and one shelter for single women in the district. Nick Urban of Breaking Ground, an organization advocating for the homeless population in New York, notes that in some places there are "plenty of shelter beds", but that programs need the necessary outreach and wrap-around services to bring people into the shelter to ensure beds are filled.

Often co-occurring with homelessness, though certainly not always, mental illness is also a prevalent issue in CD4. The rate of adult psychiatric hospitalization in MCD4 is higher than the citywide rate, 861 per 100,000 in MCD4 compared to 750 in Manhattan and 676 citywide.[11] The NYC Department of Health and Mental Hygiene explains that "high psychiatric hospitalization rates likely reflect the challenges residents in under resourced neighborhoods face, including difficulty accessing preventive services and early care, greater exposure to stressors and interruptions in health insurance coverage".[12]

MCD4 also reports a suicide rate of 9.2 per 100,000 people, higher than the citywide average of 5.1 per 100,000 people.[13] The United Health Foundation identifies mental health disorders and/or substance use disorders as the "most significant risk factors for suicidal behaviors".[14] However, 86% of Clinton and Chelsea residents ranked their health as "excellent", "very good" or "good" in 2018, suggesting a discrepancy between the data collected and the potential

[9] Coalition for the Homeless, https://www.coalitionforthehomeless.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/NYCHomelessShelterPopulation-Charts_12-2019_new.pdf

[10] Institute for Children, Poverty, and Homelessness, https://www.icphusa.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/04/ICPH-On-the-Map-Family-Homelessness-Homelessness-by-City-Council-District-All-Districts.pdf

[11] NYC Department of Health and Mental Health Community Health Profile, https://www1.nyc.gov/assets/doh/downloads/pdf/data/2018chp-mn4.pdf

[12] NYC Department of Health and Mental Health Community Health Profile, https://www1.nyc.gov/assets/doh/downloads/pdf/data/2018chp-mn4.pdf

[13] NYC Department of Health and Mental Health Community Health Profile, https://www1.nyc.gov/assets/doh/downloads/pdf/data/2018chp-mn4.pdf

[14] United Health Organization, https://www.americashealthrankings.org/explore/annual/measure/Suicide/state/NY

number of community members recognizing and/or disclosing their mental health challenges.[15] While general data demonstrates a clear link between mental health issues and suicide rates, given the comparison to citywide numbers, it would be prudent to further explore why these problems might be particularly prevalent in MCD4.

Interviewees noted that the interconnected challenges of homelessness and mental illness are integral to community needs. Mario Mazzoni of Penn South feels that residents' mental health needs are not being fully addressed. He describes potential warning signs of issues being ignored, and missed opportunities for prevention and early treatment services lead to bigger hurdles to overcome. Mr. Mazzoni believes this is in part due to lack of information on services available. Reverend Henkel and Ms. Zuniga reiterated the point that members of the community don't have access to appropriate mental health services.

Many stakeholders also referenced their interactions with people experiencing homelessness in MCD4. They expressed their worry for vulnerable individuals on the street, as well as their experience from an organizational standpoint. Reverend Henkel mentioned the high frequency of people coming to the church "asking for different types of support" including clothing, food, and other basic needs. Others noted those without a home seeking shelter in their buildings, which are not designed to serve as shelters.

The need to address homelessness and mental health, as well as a potential connection between the two, was apparent in the interviews. While certain programs and locations provide temporary or somewhat permanent respite, Nick Urban feels that's not enough. Through his outreach work at Breaking Ground, he has seen that while there is always a need for beds, even the shelters that do have space are lacking sufficient mental health resources. He cited the need to provide elements such as psychiatric care, substance abuse support, and continuous on-site or outpatient services. Mr. Urban, who also lives in the district and has witnessed these needs firsthand, asserts that addressing an individual's specific needs and the appropriate care they require, would make a more significant impact for this "historically disenfranchised group". Given the travel hubs (Port Authority and Penn Station) in the district, it is understandable that MCD4 would have higher rates of incidents or people in need, however stakeholders say that additional care needs to be given to those on the street.

Summary of Needs for People Experiencing Homelessness and/or Mental Illness:
- Access to shelter beds in-district
- Access to counseling and prevention services

Possible Action Steps:
- Meet with the NYC Department of Homeless Services to discuss supply and demand of, and possible need for more, homeless shelters for individuals and families in MCD4

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[15] NYC Department of Health and Mental Health Community Health Profile, https://www1.nyc.gov/assets/doh/downloads/pdf/data/2018chp-mn4.pdf

- Conduct an inventory of programs that serve people living with mental illness to assess capacity to meet community needs

Conclusion

After synthesizing existing data and speaking with district stakeholders, several community needs emerged including services for older adults; employment for teenagers and young adults; affordability of basic needs for families; and programs and housing for people experiencing homelessness and/or mental illness. Each of these four groups were mentioned by several stakeholders, and none were prioritized more heavily than the others.

In the second phase of this research project, MCD4 might consider pursuing the following lines of inquiry:
- What are all the available programs for the four populations identified above?
- Are any of these programs underutilized, and if so, how can they be maximized?
- Do any of these programs have waitlists, and if so, how long are they? What does this data suggest about how to prioritize the four groups?
- How do our public agency partners (e.g., DFTA, DYCD, DHS) view the needs in MCD4? How would they recommend approaching service expansion?

It is important to note that all the stakeholders interviewed expressed sincere satisfaction with the outreach work being done by Community Board 4. There is a sense that the Board is invested in the well being of the district and is proactive in addressing community needs. Though there are numerous vulnerable groups identified within MCD4, stakeholders also described the tremendous contributions being made by community organizations and other local partners. They seemed hopeful about the expansion of current services and the addition of new programs to enhance service to continuously make MCD4 a great place to live.