

LESSONS IN SHARING DISCRETION FROM WHEDCO IN THE BRONX

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The wide, straight boulevards in Crotona East in the Bronx encouraged speeding, and motorists frequently disobeyed traffic signals, creating dangerous conditions for pedestrians. Along Louis Niné Boulevard alone, there were an average of 1.8 injuries and 3.75 crashes each month during 2011 and 2012. Despite the high accident rate and the area's reputation as a site for drag racing and other infractions, the local police department did not enforce traffic laws effectively.

When Kerry McLean, Director of Community Development for the Women's Housing and Economic Development Corporation (WHEDco), began working with businesses in 2009 to invigorate Crotona East's commercial corridor, residents and businesses identified pedestrian hazards as hindering access to neighborhood businesses, amenities, and public transportation. Their negative impact on community well-being prompted Kerry to lead a cross-sector collaboration with the Department of Transportation and Crotona East's residential, business, and social service communities to redesign the streets to improve pedestrian safety and access, creating both public space and greenery.

In redesigning the streets, the collaboration employed joint decision-making processes based on the expertise and experience of each partner and stakeholder — government, community members, and businesses — employing a tactic The Intersector Project Toolkit refers to as Share Discretion. Sharing discretion is the deliberate allocation of decision-making authority according to area of expertise, which allows the collaboration to benefit from the varying expertise and experience of each partner and gives each partner a distinct stake in the collaboration. Entrenched in the reality of local needs and strengths, community residents and businesses collaborated with government officials to prioritize issues that could be addressed based on available resources. After initial input from the community and local non-profit service

providers, the Department of Transportation used its expertise in traffic patterns to develop an initial streetscaping plan. The plan was presented to WHEDco, the Community Board, local residents, and businesses for review, which resulted in the incorporation of green space and greater accessibility to bus platforms for elderly residents. Based on business input, parallel parking spaces were added in specific areas to ensure customer access. After review by all stakeholders, the DOT broke ground to execute the collaborative streetscaping plan.

Through collaboration, the construction of the streetscaping project began in spring of 2012. The shortened crosswalks, green medians, widened sidewalks, and reconfigured traffic patterns have improved pedestrian safety in the neighborhood, and have created an overall positive walking experience. The project was successful in reversing the image of Crotona East as an area of urban decay, and in repairing the relationship between a community which had long felt ignored by those in power. Since project completion in 2012, there has been a:

- 45 percent decrease in traffic related injuries.
- 65 percent decrease in the number of motorists speeding in either direction on Boulevard.
- 33 percent increase in pedestrian volume at main intersection.

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