

Study Area History

While much of the dialogue during the planning process emphasized current issues and future goals, it is important to reflect on the history of the study area and key events that shaped what it is today. Below are critical points in the history of the area, though they are not meant to be a comprehensive history.

Critical Points in History

Pre-1900s - From Native land to New York City

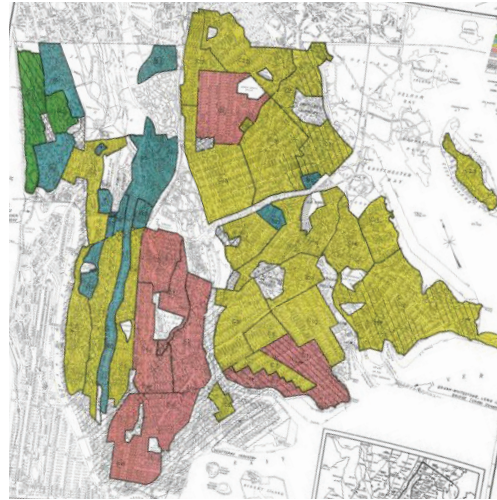
The land of the study area was originally inhabited by the Lenape. The Dutch acquired this land through a treaty in 1642¹. While this area became part of New York City in 1874, it was largely considered vacant or undeveloped at the time.² Land was mostly used for large estates and farms.

1904 - Construction of the Interborough Rapid Transit (IRT) line

Mass transit spurs a development boom of apartment buildings to the area. This allows those living in unhealthy, cramped tenant conditions in Manhattan to move to this area of the Bronx and still have cheap, easy access to the city.

In 1905, the population of Hunts Point-Crotona Park East (*this geography does not correspond to the community districts today*) was just 19,527 people.

By 1915, it had exploded to 119,691, an increase of 512% and grew to 192,144 people by 1940.³



The Bronx HOLC Map
<https://dsl.richmond.edu/panorama/redlining/#loc=12/40.838/-74.03&city=bronx-ny>

1930s - Redlining

In the 1930s, the area was redlined as part of the Home Owners Loan Corporation or HOLC. Redlining was a practice adopted by the federal government, making it impossible for area residents and property owners to secure federally-backed mortgages. This leads to a long period of private and government disinvestment.

1963 - the Cross Bronx Expressway opens

The South Bronx was impacted by the urban highway construction facilitated by Robert Moses, displacing thousands of residents, physically separating communities, and contributing to poor air quality and further disinvestment. Construction of the Bruckner, Major Deegan, and Sheridan Expressways only furthered these impacts, the effects of which are still felt today.



The Building of the Cross Bronx Expressway
Source: Lehman College Library (CUNY)



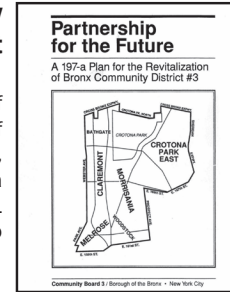
Charlotte Street Cleanup (Museum of the City of New York <http://activistnewyork.mcnyc.org/exhibition/economic-rights/Bronx>)

1970s - Fires and Disinvestment

Between 1970 and 1980, Community Districts 2 and 3 lost 65% of their population during a devastating period marred by the combined and compounded effects of disinvestment, fires, white flight, highway construction, and abandonment.⁵

1992 - Bronx Community Board 3 adopts the first 197-a plan

This plan had a goal of returning to a population of 100,000 residents. Today, Community District 3 has a population of around 91,601 people and continues to grow.⁶



Partnership for the Future
A 197-a Plan for the Revitalization of Bronx Community District #3

1970s - 1990s - Community Organizes

Many residents stayed and worked to stabilize and rebuild the community, forming new community groups like Banana Kelly, Nos Quedamos, Mid Bronx Desperadoes, SEBCO, and others. They worked to fix up deteriorating buildings and advocated to government partners at all levels to build new, smaller homes and provide homeownership opportunities to the community. Through their work and effort, developments like Charlotte Gardens and the Partnership Homes on the surrounding streets began to be built on lots that had been abandoned, burned down, or demolished.



Charlotte Gardens, 1987 (Source: Kahane, Lisa, Do Not Give Way to Evil: Photographs of the South Bronx, 1979-1987)

1990s - today Return to the River

Community groups continue to organize around environmental justice issues. Organizations like YMPJ, the Point CDC, and the Bronx River Alliance have worked to clean up the Bronx River. The Southern Bronx River Watershed Alliance created a plan calling for the removal of the Sheridan Expressway in the early 2000s.

In 2009, Concrete Plant Park opens. In 2013, Starlight Park reopens.



1 Bronx Historical Society
2 Gonzalez, Evelyn Diaz. The Bronx, 2004, pg 67.
3 Gonzalez, pg 69
4 Gonzalez, pg. 70-71
5 US Census Bureau, 1970-2010 Census, SF1: Population Division - New York City Department of City Planning
6 Population: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2012-2016



Boulevard Theater (Source: cinematreaasures.org)