

2019 Annual Report

Bronx Cooperative Development Initiative



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LETTER FROM THE BOARD PRESIDENT

Laying the Groundwork for Economic Democracy and the Next Bronx Economy



This past year, we did something powerful to set our path for 2020 and beyond. We came together and recommitted to our vision for the Bronx, which is rooted in our **community enterprise network model for economic democracy**, our role as **movement builders** and our shared struggle for **black liberation!**

2019 was a year of growth and transition for the Bronx Cooperative Development Initiative (BCDI). We have grown to a staff of seven full-time employees and a budget of 1.2 million dollars. We have strengthened our partnerships with community groups, small businesses, and anchor institutions, and advanced some incredible work through our core projects. All this despite the fact that the Bronx and other parts of NYC continued to deal with the consequences of ongoing development projects where the community's needs were not the priority, and immigrant raids and attacks escalated on low-income workers.

Through our work, we've been able to make strong connections between our local and transnational efforts to build democratic economies. In April, at the City University of New York, we co-sponsored "*Our Economy! Economic Democracy and System Change*," a conference that brought together labor, government, researchers, organizers, and activists working on cooperative and social ownership efforts with a variety of approaches and strategies. In December, we were finalists for the *Transformative Cities People's Choice Award*, an international showcase of local projects to steward collective ownership of basic human rights such as housing, energy, food, and water. We see these strategies as new pathways for liberation, strengthening our capacity to bring economic democracy to scale and lay the groundwork for economic and racial justice in our borough.

We built deeper partnerships with and increased our impact on small businesses. The **BronX-change** secured integrated pest management contracts that expanded local businesses in the Bronx by 80%, nearly doubling the workforce. We also laid the groundwork for an anchor council to coordinate some of the Bronx's most prestigious, long-standing, resource-rich institutions while preparing them to work with high-road local business.

Through our **Economic Democracy Learning Center**, we built the leadership of Bronx residents, especially young people, by working with and developing training for youth from powerful organizations like Sistas and Brothas United and The Point. We expanded the economic democracy curriculum by creating a reader handbook and several new case study examples.

Our **Bronx Innovation Factory** launched a community innovation afterschool program in digital fabrication, electronics, prototyping and economic democracy. We worked with schools like the Bronx Academy of Software Engineering to develop a more robust integrated strategy across these areas, and we are training workers to develop tools for greater productivity and quality in a broad range of skills. Check out our new video about the Bronx Innovation Factory at <https://bcdi.nyc/innovation>.

Our **Planning and Policy Lab** is redefining how we address issues of redlining, gentrification, and displacement in the borough through deep coordination and strategic planning. We partnered with the Northwest Bronx Community and Clergy Coalition (NWBCCC) and the Southern Boulevard Coalition, a partnership of groups fighting for development without displacement, to create a plan for permanent, affordable, community-controlled housing. We led a series of Community Land Trust 101 workshops for local Bronx groups and are beginning to shape a collaborative process for a long-term Bronx-wide plan.

We have a lot to look forward to in 2020! We are excited to bring aboard a new Executive Director and to emerge from our strategic planning process with a clear theory of change, priorities, and plan of coordinated action for the next five years. We will be welcoming a delegation from Mondragón, a corporation and federation of worker cooperatives based in the Basque region of Spain that has inspired the tenets of our work, to conspire together. We will continue to build the capacity of Bronx businesses led by people of color, convening powerful stakeholders to build relationships and broker partnerships, and moving them towards shared wealth. We're excited about the network of organizers, planners, entrepreneurs, activists, and thinkers we're building that we believe will create an equitable, democratic and sustainable Bronx.

As we continue our work in the new year, we are guided by a vision of a Bronx economy where public-community partnerships replace public-private partnerships, where we reimagine and democratize basic human needs and public services, and where we plan and organize the future of our Bronx.

We are ready to create and lead the Bronx of our dreams.
Join us.



Wendoly Marte



WHO WE ARE / WHAT WE DO

The **Bronx Cooperative Development Initiative (BCDI)** is a community-led planning and economic development organization based in the Bronx. We are growing a network of community and labor organizations, anchor institutions, and small businesses to build an equitable, sustainable, and democratic local economy that creates shared wealth and ownership for low-income people of color--what we call economic democracy. **Grounded in a vision of black liberation, a movement building approach to economic transformation, and a community enterprise network** model, we create people-centered planning and development processes; generate community solutions through innovation and digital fabrication technology; develop, grow, and connect local Bronx businesses to new opportunities; and train leaders from across sectors to advance a more democratic Bronx economy.



OUR VISION

We envision an economy in the Bronx that invests in human dignity where assets are democratically owned and governed by local residents. We believe Bronx residents should be free from exploitation and displacement pressures. Instead, we must build an economy that fosters community well-being, self-determination, and supports a larger movement to dismantle structural oppression based on race, class, gender, age, sexual orientation, immigration status, and ability. Given how asset-rich the Bronx is, we envision Bronx leaders coming together to leverage those local assets to bring about economic democracy instead of continuing the same patterns of scarcity thinking or excessive dependence on outside resources.

OUR MODEL

COMMUNITY ENTERPRISE NETWORK



We have drawn inspiration from histories of black freedom movements and shared wealth initiatives near and far, from Mondragón in Spain to Market Creek Plaza and Evergreen Cooperatives in the US. In order to build shared vision, power, and ownership for people of color in the Bronx, we are building a network of organizations and institutions to steward the shared vision and shared wealth across generations of Bronxites. We call this a **Community Enterprise Network**. Our current work entails building out the core of the Community Enterprise Network, which is vital to fostering economic democracy at scale in the Bronx. We are working on these projects simultaneously to maximize their integration and mutually reinforcing capacities. Active projects include: BronXchange, the Economic Democracy Learning Center, the Policy and Planning Lab, and the Bronx Innovation Factory. Projects in development include: the Civic Action Hub and the Bronx Fund.



BCDI BY THE NUMBERS 2019

BRONXCHANGE



Connected Bronx businesses to new contracts including nearly **\$600,000** in construction and over **\$170,000** in Integrated Pest Management from RiverSpring Health, St. Barnabas Hospital, and landlords of multifamily residential buildings.

Supported **6** Bronx small businesses with critical back office resources and development assistance in order to take on new larger institutional contracts.

Secured **7** integrated pest management contracts expanding local businesses by **80%**, nearly doubling the employee roster.

Provided Business Development and Tech Assistance to **41** Bronx-based businesses.



ECONOMIC DEMOCRACY LEARNING CENTER

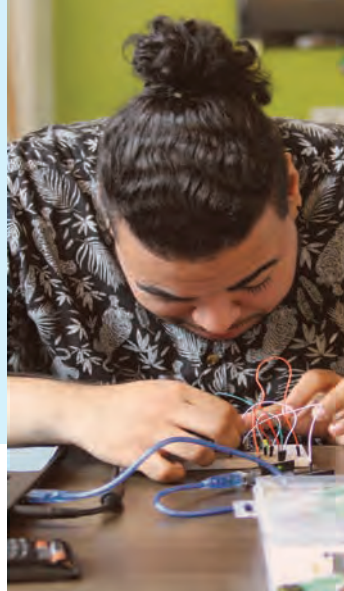


Provided orientation and introductory training on economic democracy frameworks to over **100** community and labor leaders, entrepreneurs, and youth.

BRONX INNOVATION FACTORY

Held **12** public workshops and introduced **30** adult community members to laser cutting, electronics, 3D printing, CNC machining, and other making techniques, while highlighting their uses in community innovation and wealth creation.

Trained a total of **50** young people from across the Bronx with our newly launched comprehensive community innovation curriculum (<https://github.com/bxif>) that integrates STEM digital fabrication through a framework of community wealth, shared ownership, and economic democracy.

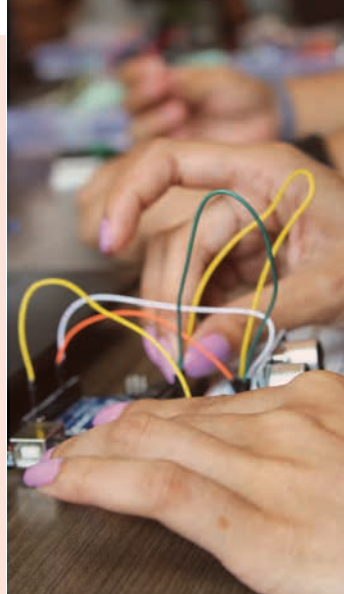


POLICY & PLANNING LAB

Created and disseminated **10** volumes of the Bronx Development Digest to community partners, tracking and synthesizing relevant development news in NYC and the borough.

Held 7 workshops with **50** participants, training young people, students, local residents, staff, and community partners in web mapping, community land trusts, surveying, real estate finance, and property research.

Designed and led **4** walking tours across the Bronx with **48** participants, covering the borough's (planning) history, local examples of community ownership and control, and neighborhood change driven by gentrification pressures and displacement.





BCDI NEWSFEED

March 5, 2019

Fixing the Accessibility Gap in Municipal Procurement

This article was authored by the staff of MIT CoLab; BCDI contributed to the research. This research sheds light on inequities in procurement in NYC and the Bronx. The Bronx is home to 29% of New York City's Black and 55% of its Latinx populations, and Central Brooklyn hosts a population that is 59% Black and 22% Latino. Both sub areas are sites of historic disinvestment, segregation, and poverty. Only 0.023% of procurement dollars were awarded to businesses in these areas in 2017, out of a total procurement spend of \$19.3 billion.

Metropolitics.org

Metropolitics.org <https://www.metropolitiques.eu/Fixing-the-Accessibility-Gap-in-Municipal-Procurement.html>

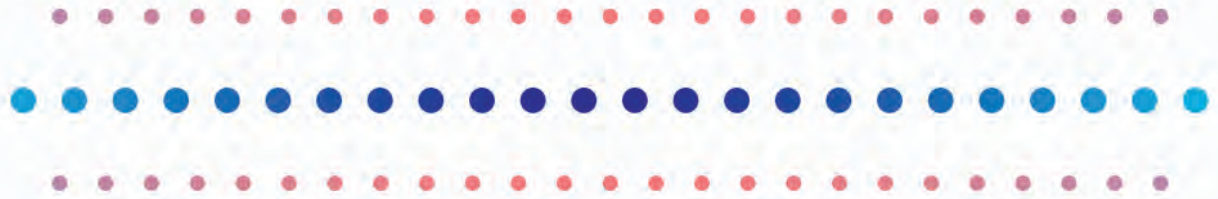
April 23, 2019

What Happens After No?

Katherine Mella, BCDI moderated a panel called "Fighting forward for Economic Democracy," at CUNY's Our Economy Conference with BCDI Board President Wendoly Marte, NWBCCC Lead Organizer for Community Development, Edward Garcia, and Coalition to Transform Interfaith member, Bruce Richard. This article highlights lessons learned by community leaders and shared on the panel at the conference.

MIT CoLab Blog

<https://www.colab.mit.edu/news-blog/2019/4/whathappensafterno>



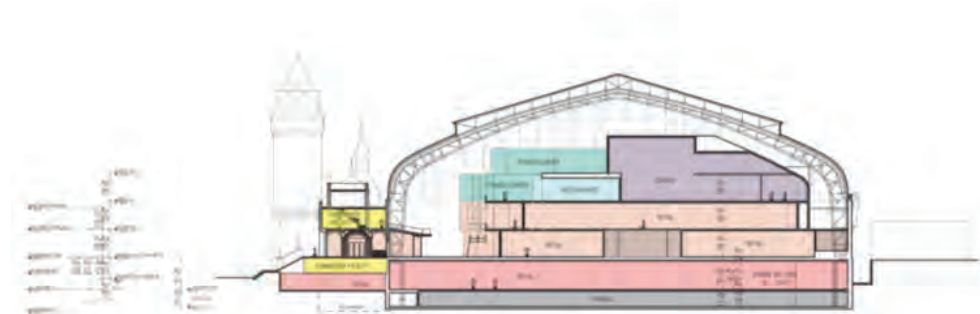
Co-Op City

The Bronx is frequently associated with a decades-old history of disinvestment; less familiar to outsiders is a rich tradition of cooperative development and a deep contemporary network of community organizations. BCDI is bringing these organizations and big spending institutions alike to further a vision of economic democracy, based on the idea that money made in the borough should work for borough residents.

Urban Omnibus

<https://urbanomnibus.net/2019/05/co-op-city/>

May 02, 2019



"Shops at the Armory," the original proposal for the Kingsbridge Armory Site, dedicated less than five percent of the square footage to community use. Image from Shops at the Armory DEIS, via Mayor's Office of Environmental Coordination

October 2, 2019

Fighting Forward with Cooperative Power in the Bronx

As part of the Transformative Cities People's Choice Award, BCDI was featured in the Independent alongside Cooperation Jackson in Jackson, Mississippi representing groundbreaking housing planning initiatives for urban communities. Creating a viable alternative is what BCDI calls "fighting forward." "We are not going to directly develop housing," says MIT CoLab Learning Manager Nick Shatan, but BCDI wants to work with "mission-aligned developers" and community groups willing to construct "really deeply affordable" housing for people with lower incomes. "That will require planning outside the real-estate profit model," says BCDI board member Yorman Nuñez.

Independent

<https://independent.org/2019/10/fighting-forward-with-cooperative-power-in-the-bronx/>

October 2019



Bronx Innovators Workshop

This video features the work and participants of our Bronx Innovation Factory.

Tomorrow Lab

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=o-tUBQNTy580>



Transformative Cities People's Choice Award Finalist in Amsterdam

Economic Democracy Learning Center Director Evan Casper-Futterman spoke on a panel at an international conference in Amsterdam hosted by Laura Flanders of the Laura Flanders show. Evan spoke about the history of redlining in the Bronx and BCDI's work on people-centered planning and development for the borough.

Transformative Cities

<https://transformativecities.org/transformative-cities-2019-peoples-choice-award-finale/>

TRANSFORMATIVE CITIES PEOPLE'S CHOICE AWARD 2019 FINALE



December 4th, 2019

The Right Investment Model When Big Business Comes To Town

Co-founder and board member Yorman Nuñez reflected on the events surrounding Amazon's decision to not locate their HQ2 in Long Island City, and what it means for where we are now and the future of equitable economic development.

MIT CoLab

<https://www.colab.mit.edu/news-blog/amazon>

October 23, 2019

High School Teams Receive Lemelson-MIT InvenTeam® Grant for Invention Projects

Students from the Bronx Innovation Factory won a \$10,000 grant in the category of solving problems in health and community. Specifically, they are creating a wearable device to monitor physical surroundings and alert to danger.

Lemelson-MIT

<https://lemelson.mit.edu/news/high-school-teams-receive-lemelson-mit-inventeam%C2%AE-grant-invention-projects>



December 23, 2019

Our Programs





BCDI is transforming the way business is done in the Bronx. We are committed to helping Bronx anchor institutions localize their procurement, while building the capacity of Bronx-based minority-owned businesses and moving them toward democratic governance.

BCDI is committed to helping Bronx anchor institutions localize their procurement, while building the capacity of Bronx-based minority-owned businesses and moving them toward democratic governance. This year, BCDI developed critical relationships with the largest anchor institutions in the Bronx, specifically Montefiore Medical Center, Wildlife Conservation Society (the Bronx Zoo), Fordham University, and NY Botanical Gardens, in order to launch a Bronx Anchor Council focused on shifting their procurement practices. BCDI secured institutional commitments to local procurement along with several major contracts for Bronx-based businesses through our contracting platform the BronXchange.

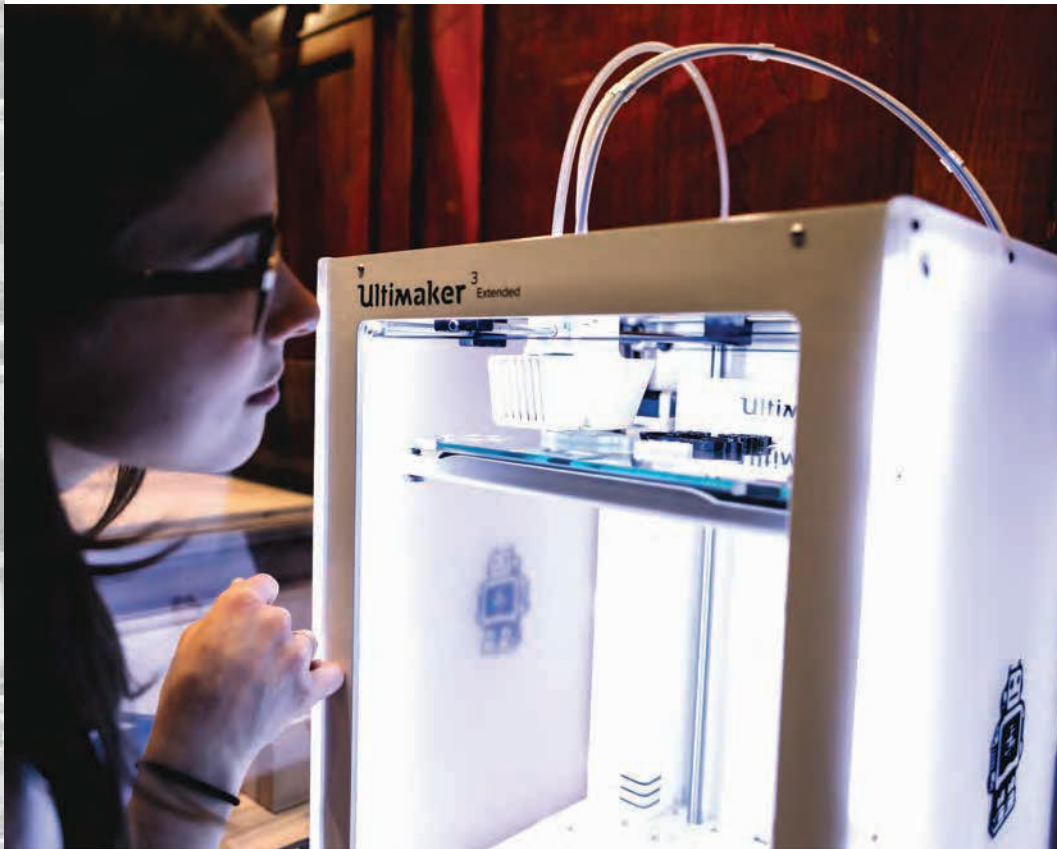
In 2019 we:

- ✕ We secured four critical integrated pest management (IPM) contracts between local Bronx contractors and St. Barnabas Hospital, RiverSpring Health System;
- ✕ Began negotiations with Montefiore Medical System for key contracts for 2020;
- ✕ Worked with NWBCCC to secure ongoing IPM contracts with six multi-family buildings, with an opportunity to grow to 30 buildings in the coming year.
- ✕ Acquired five additional catering and construction contracts for local businesses;
- ✕ Supported a half-dozen local small businesses with critical back office resources and business development in order to take on larger institutional contracts;
- ✕ Met with the Government Affairs and Procurement Officers across the Four Bronx Institutional Alliance to lay the groundwork for 2020 Anchor Council Launch.



In January, BronXchange planned, coordinated and hosted the Bronx Business Peer Exchange Celebration at Fordham University, through a collaboration between BXC, BOCNet, NYC Mayor's Office of Workforce Development with financial support by Chase. We recognized 12 Bronx businesses that completed the second cohort of the Peer Exchange program and are now BronXchange vendors. The event was catered by Bascom and several craft food vendors shared their products with the 80 people in attendance, which included other BronXchange business owners, nonprofit leaders, financial institutions, Ernst Valery, Bronx Chamber of Commerce, the Mayor's office, and other supporters. Jonnel Doris, Senior Advisor for the City's Minority and Women-Owned Business Enterprise (MWBE) program, conveyed the city's support to drive more business to MWBEs.





The Bronx is a wellspring of creativity. The Bronx Innovation Factory (BXIF) promotes women, people of color and the LGBTQI community at the center of our innovation economy and through the Bronx Innovation Factory. Through Innovation Factory our participants address real community challenges in the Bronx. In 2019, Bronx Innovation Factory continued to offer digital fabrication and prototyping workshops and programs for young people, entrepreneurs, local businesses, and community organizations, garner recognition and awards and develop its groundbreaking vision into 2020.

The Bronx Innovation Factory launched a Community Innovation Afterschool Program in digital fabrication and electronics, prototyping and economic democracy. BXIF worked with schools like Bronx Academy of Software Engineering (BASE) to integrate a more robust strategy to integrate digital fabrication and economic democracy into the curriculum. We are also training workers as well, to create tools for greater productivity and quality. [Check out the video on our website to see the excellent progress of this work.](#)

In 2019 we:

- ✘ Developed a curriculum that integrates concrete skills in digital fabrication and electronics with economic democracy and racial justice, which is now publicly available online at <https://github.com/bxif>;
- ✘ Launched our Intro to Community Innovation afterschool youth program which taught 40 high school students the fundamentals of digital fabrication and electronics, prototyping, and economic democracy and also included a trip to MIT;
- ✘ Were selected by the **NYC Department of Education to lead a 6-week program** in which 7 youth built an aquaponics system — exemplifying technology as a resource to create meaningful innovations for Bronx residents like the lack of access to fresh food in many parts of the Bronx;
- ✘ Led an 8-week summer program in which Bronx youth designed and built their own prototypes of ergonomic hand tools, **culminating in a presentation to a panel of professional designers and the NYC Economic Development Corporation**;
- ✘ Worked with another five youth from Sistat and Brothas United (NWBCCC's youth program) to build Bluetooth-enabled air quality monitors that capture and upload various data to a crowdsourced map created by [Habitat Map](#);

- ✂ Launched two series of public workshops that have introduced 30 adult community members to laser cutting, electronics, 3D printing, CNC machining, and other making techniques, while highlighting their uses in community innovation and wealth creation;
- ✂ Working with NWBCCC and the worker-owned cooperative Skedaddle Pest Management, held a series of workshops with IPM workers to prototype a new device that will house mouse traps and bait stations in crowded environments while keeping children and pets safe;
- ✂ **Were selected as one of 14 Lemelson-MIT InvenTeams nationally** to work with students to design and build a wearable device that monitors safety and alerts trusted contacts in the event of an incident in order to protect Bronxites;
- ✂ We concluded the first phase of a planning process for a full-scale center for advanced manufacturing. We worked with Mondragón LKS, the strategic consulting arm of the Mondragón cooperative network, to better understand several key pillars of their innovation and entrepreneurship ecosystem, and have released a Vision document on our website, that communicates their major findings as well as our vision for a center for advanced manufacturing and a Bronx-wide ecosystem that supports cooperative entrepreneurship and innovation by people of color. design and build a wearable device that monitors safety and alerts trusted contacts in the event of an incident in order to protect Bronxites.



Above: Led a field trip of 23 young people to MIT and the South End Technology Center in Boston. Students learned about new technologies, the global Fab Lab network, and connected with current students of color.

Right: We also led a field trip of 21 young people to Tomorrow Lab, a hardware innovation studio in downtown Manhattan. They heard from a Bronx born and raised industrial designer Joe Gonzalez about Tomorrow Lab's innovation process.

Last we completed one of our youth programs with 8 rising high-school sophomores and held a final event with City officials. Students learned advanced manufacturing skills and economic democracy, and programmed two circuits to support an aquaponics system.



THE BRONX PLANNING & POLICY LAB



Through our Planning and Policy Lab (PPL), BCDI continues to manifest people-centered development and is taking the necessary steps to create a community-led Bronx wide plan. Partnering with the Northwest Bronx Community and Clergy Coalition (NWBCCC) and the Southern Boulevard Coalition (made up of eight community and labor neighborhood organizations in the South Bronx).

BCDI has helped these organizations expand their strategies from simply “fighting back” against bad development to “fighting forward” for equitable economic development and community ownership and affordability. We are redefining how we address historic legacies and current issues of redlining, gentrification, disinvestment and top-down planning processes in the borough.

In 2019 we:

Partnered with NWBCCC to develop a plan for a locally controlled community land trust (CLT) that would provide affordable housing, and manufacturing, community and commercial spaces. We provided research, data analysis, and community engagement support to develop land acquisition strategies;



NEW YORK CITY, USA

Community-led effort creates wealth and ownership for low-income people of colour



PEOPLES CHOICE AWARD 2019
TransformativeCities.org/2019award

VOTE!

- ✘ Completed in-depth research on over 40 potential properties for the CLT;
- ✘ Led workshops for young people, community members, and partner organizations including The POINT Community Development Corporation, (The POINT CDC) and NWBCCC on property research, real estate finance, web-mapping, and community land trusts 101;
- ✘ Co-wrote an affordable housing development proposal for three Bronx sites for CLT acquisition submitted to the City of New York, and developed a database tool for analysis of over 9,000 Bronx parcels;
- ✘ The PPL also joined the Southern Boulevard Coalition, which began convening in response to the City’s announcement that they were conducting a planning study for Southern Boulevard in the South Bronx. Through this process, we have provided land use and data analysis, strategy development, capacity building, and participatory planning support rooted in an economic democracy framework and asset based approach.

ECONOMIC DEMOCRACY LEARNING CENTER



In 2019, we built the leadership of Bronx young people by working with and developing training with youth from powerful organizations like Sistas and Brothas United and the Point. We expanded our offerings of learning materials by creating an economic democracy reader handbook and several case study examples for community-led shared wealth strategies, community enterprise networks, and movements for freedom. Through our **Economic Democracy Learning Center**, BCDI is helping the next generation of Bronx leaders understand how the economy works (and doesn't) and their role in securing shared wealth and ownership for their community.



In 2019 we:

- ✔ Supported youth from Sistas and Brothas United to facilitate a conference workshop on economic democracy for 20 teachers and educators at a Bronx Academy for Software Engineering (BASE) conference;
- ✔ Led a 3 session series on economic democracy for ACTION – a youth program led by The POINT CDC, with a specific focus on community land ownership and food justice. This led to the creation of a template yearlong curriculum for ACTION programming to center economic democracy and cooperative community economic development in this flagship program of The Point CDC;
- ✔ Created and piloted a 6 session intensive learning series on economic democracy and economic development for graduate students in planning and public policy;
- ✔ Consulted on a pilot training series on worker ownership and economic democracy with the Long-Term Care division of SEIU 1199 Healthcare Workers East;
- ✔ Created an “economic democracy business model canvas” template for entrepreneurs to center community wealth and economic democracy in their business planning stages, which we plan to roll out with several partners in 2020;
- ✔ Facilitated two multi-session introductory trainings on economic democracy and community-led economic development for the Southern Boulevard Coalition, and will continue to offer additional group training opportunities in 2020;
- ✔ Created an Economic Democracy Reader Handbook for staff, board and partners which has been shared with local and national organizations such as the New Economy Coalition and Center for Economic Democracy to advance their own learning and capacity building work with their constituents and members;
- ✔ Created 18 case study examples of movements and initiatives for economic democracy centering people of color from the US and around the world to serve as the base layer of our curriculum work across all stakeholder groups.



Spotlights on
the Changemakers



KWABENA (DAMIAN COARD)

"I see myself as a life mentor."

Kojo's Pest Elimination

Connecting with: BronXchange

Kwabena of Kojo's Pest Elimination says their organization always wanted to uplift and service the community. "As a minority owned business, we wanted to improve the quality of life and eliminate disease and discomfort."

Improving the quality of life was not simply a mission for the customers, but also for the workers of the company. "We hire folks that are in the re-entry program and young people that want to obtain a trade."

The personal and professional mission of Kojo's fits very well with BCDI's BronXchange. Kwabena was particularly grateful for the role BronXchange played in creating a business relationship with Riverspring Nursing Home. One of the most prestigious nursing homes in the nation, RiverSpring Health services over 12,000 members, patients, and residents in their homes, on their campus, in residential communities, and in their community centers.

Riverspring Health was interested in the benefits of working with a local Bronx minority owned business because of the intimate knowledge of the history of the Bronx community and a commitment to detail, high quality and performance. "The value add to Riverspring is that they are creating opportunities for small business. Small business is a lifeline for employment for people in the community and helping us grow will have an impact and a way for us to invest in generational wealth."

"Riverspring is a historic institution that is on the Hudson and is absolutely beautiful. They were pleased with having a local business create solutions that allowed them to be able to share their institution more with the world."

Kojo's Pest Elimination has a commitment to integrated pest management, which means they find the source of the points of entry of pests and create a way to prevent them from coming into the facility. It is also a commitment to using products that are not harmful to people or to the environment thereby ensuring that the patients in the nursing home feel safe.

"We appreciate relationships with seniors in the nursing home who feel really grateful for our work."

BronXchange is continuing to work with Kojo's and other small businesses to expand new contracts into 2020. "We are in the process of developing relationships with Montefiore and improving the quality of life for the patients and institutions there as well."



JESSICA CLEMENTE

“Coordination is the key to leverage our power.”

Nos Quedamos

Connecting with: Planning and Policy Lab,
Economic Democracy Learning Center

Jessica Clemente, Executive Director of Nos Quedamos, is excited about developing a roadmap for the Bronx with community centered principles for development via the Southern Boulevard Coalition.

Jessica became interested in urban planning and environmental justice because she, like many children in the Bronx, suffered from asthma. Nos Quedamos was a local organization that was doing work on community air quality. “The high incidents of asthma and cases of cancer are all related to the quality of life. And so that experience pretty much opened me to the world of urban planning and how urban planning and land use decisions really determine the way we live in this society. As a result, I pursued a graduate degree at NYU for urban planning to really help unpack what was happening in our communities.”

Jessica was part of training and strategic meetings led by the BCDI Planning and Policy Lab that led to the creation of a Bronxwide Development Without Displacement toolkit.

“Primarily, our commitment to be a part of the development without displacement coalition was to work with our colleagues and partner organizations throughout the Bronx.”

“A lot of times, organizations focus on their neighborhood and their niches and as a result we are not cross-communicating by cross-planning and therefore the assault on our communities happens a lot easier because we are not banded together.”

Jessica also stressed that creating common community principles that were drafted and created collectively, created alignment on how Bronx groups felt with respect to economic development, housing development, social justice, and policy.

“We came together to develop key principles that we feel are important for what would make our borough and our communities sustainable, just and community driven.”

Jessica uses the Development Without Displacement toolkit to guide her choices in her work and with the coalition. “I use it in decision making, it sets a standard and a framework for the projects we engage in, not just an intellectual exercise, but the standard, the goal.”

In the future, Jessica wants to ensure that there is a greater investment in intergenerational leadership. She believes as people move on from the community they don't always effectively pass along the lessons in movement building; the history, the connection to principles and core values that were being discussed in the Southern Boulevard Coalition's economic democracy training in the fall.

“We are paving the road and the map, both strategizing, planning and doing the labor to create the community we want.”



GILAISY HERRAD

“If the next generation can see the Bronx as a place of opportunity, then that’s where the success starts coming in.”

Bronx Collaborative High School

Connecting with: Bronx Innovation Factory

Gilaisy envisions a Bronx “where everyone is equal in all aspects of life.” She imagines a Bronx where the development of co-ops and permanent affordable housing can prevent displacement. “I would love to see every apartment building in the Bronx owned by tenants for tenants. Simultaneously, supermarkets, clothing stores, everything can be owned by Bronxites for Bronxites to pave a better future for the Bronx.”

Born in the Dominican Republic, Gilaisy traveled to the US when she was three years old. Her childhood career dream was to become an epidemiologist. She is particularly interested in doing research on a cure for the Zika virus and other diseases affecting her home country and the islands in the Caribbean.

She loves tinkering and making new tools to help her community. When Gilaisy witnessed a demo of how to make arduinos at her school by the Bronx Innovation Factory, she became excited and joined the program.

“It was the best decision I have made in my life. I learned and experienced things I would have never thought I would see or do.”

Through the Bronx Innovation Factory she became involved in the after school program and now the Lemelson grant. She is part of the Lemelson InvenTeam through BCDI’s Bronx Innovation Factory. The Bronx students are building a wearable device to monitor physical surroundings and alert to danger. The project grew out of a concern the youth had about assault and gender based violence.

Gilaisy believes that the most important role that the next generation will bear, is a changed perspective of the Bronx. “The youth in our community need to advocate for the Bronx. There are many Bronxites who think the Bronx will never thrive, and this way of thinking gets passed on through generations. Unfortunately, it is because of this same mindset that the Bronx or any community suffers. “If the next generation can see the Bronx as a place of opportunity, then that’s where the success starts coming in.”

“Future Bronxites cannot rely on outside sources to fix their problems, because they do not know the Bronx like a Bronxite would. It takes a person from the community to help the community thrive. That’s the best way for a community to change, and keep that same change for generations to come.”



NACEO GILES

“Innovation usually comes slowly but it could come fast.”

Skedaddle Cooperative

Connecting with: BronxChange, Bronx Innovation Factory

The worker-owned cooperative, Skedaddle, has been a partner with BCDI for several years now. “I became interested in worker cooperatives when I read about the large network of cooperatives in Spain, Mondragon. I wanted to get involved with something like that in NY. I found out about the BronxChange and how they supported cooperatives and small businesses like mine.”

Recently Skedaddle has been working on developing a literal “better mouse trap.” through the Bronx Innovation Factory. They were excited to see what kinds of technology they could create to better service their customers and constituents.

One issue they identified in their work was that when they worked in NYC apartment buildings, people often had to move a lot of their personal belongings in order for the company to detect mouse holes or other points of entry for pests.

This problem led to an insight. What if they created a device that would enable them to have a clearer vision of a space crowded with people’s personal possessions in their often tight apartments?

“This mechanism will allow us to make the inspection and treatments of our work more thorough.”

“Innovation usually comes slowly but it could come fast. And, it’s important to try to get any innovation into a higher density environment, to see the results that could come from it. For instance, if you came up with a device that could prevent bed bugs in school - the results would travel fast.”

Naceo wants to see innovation coupled with economic democracy. “One of the things that worker cooperatives should do is help people find dignity in their work and in the work of others. People look down on the maintenance worker, but that is who is keeping our neighborhoods clean. Work at every level is honorable and should be respected.”

Naceo wants this type of access to innovation to become part of a larger vision of how the youth in the Bronx interact with their environment. “I would like kids growing up in our neighborhoods to become informed experts about their environment—a 10 year old should be able to detect what kinds of pests exist in their community, what effect they have on people and what they can do.”

Naceo believes BCDI is planting the seeds for both innovation and economic democracy to have broad impact in the Bronx and beyond.



SHANIQUE SANTANA

"I know that if more individuals could participate in a class of this sort, more eyes would open, more lessons would be learned and more community partnerships would develop."

O.U.R. Place Family Enrichment Center, Hunts Point

Connecting with: Economic Democracy Learning Center



Shanique is grateful for how economic democracy has supported her own approach in community work. As a member of the Family Enrichment Center, Shanique has hosted, participated in and recruited many for several trainings on an array of topics, from how to prepare meals on a budget, first aid and CPR, financial literacy courses, and a weekly coupon and budgeting group.

"When pertaining to community, most of my 'work' comes merely from community service. In that service is my attempt at addressing the common aspects of gentrification and economic development that is least understood to Bronxites. Without the knowledge of how to approach, address or prepare for these situations of displacement we suffer as an entire community."

When Shanique was offered the opportunity to attend an economic democracy training as part of the Southern Boulevard Coalition she didn't know exactly what to expect.

"I didn't know exactly what re-zoning meant or how exactly it affects the community. It was so informative, well explained and important. I was thoroughly excited to have attended. So much so that I offered O.U.R. Place for the weekend session!"

"I learned what a community land trust was and its value in building long term community wealth for current and future residents. I learned how it is possible to invest in our own communities for betterment than to merely relocate. And a ton more, I know that if more individuals could participate in a class of this sort, more eyes would open, more lessons would be learned and more community partnerships would develop."

"I would love to attend additional meetings, become part of the developing coalition for the current re-zoning initiative as well as host another series of economic democracy trainings so as to get more community members on board!"



2020 & BEYOND



We are very excited about the year ahead in 2020. As we welcome new partners, and staff and board members, we will continue to deepen our alignment and commitment to our core values and vision of economic democracy, black liberation, movement building, and the community enterprise network.

We will be hosting a delegation from Mondragón in New York City and in the Bronx to learn from their social enterprise and cooperative innovation ecosystem in Spain, and discuss and strategize on how we can grow our own shared wealth innovation ecosystem here in the Bronx. We will be launching a Bronx Anchor Council to advance local procurement, and leverage the resources of our borough's tremendous economic assets towards creating local and shared wealth in the borough. In order to expand understanding and develop a base of Bronxites committed to economic democracy across the borough, we will be releasing new toolkits, and curricula tailored to people in a variety of fields and sectors.

Through the BronXchange, we will be partnering with the Business Outreach Center on the Bronx site of the national Ascend program, which will strengthen Bronx minority and women owned (MWBE) businesses with access to management training, market access opportunities, and capital access.

The Bronx Innovation Factory (BXIF) will continue to build a community of innovators working more deeply with and through our partner organizations. We plan to work with schools, unions, and community-based organizations to convene their key constituencies (including skilled workers, organizers, artists, technologists, and youth) to build their technical skills, help them understand economic democracy, and prototype new innovations. We will also work with our partners at Mondragón LKS over the first half of 2020 to better understand the Bronx innovation and entrepreneurship ecosystem and the partnerships and programs we will need to create in order to support local innovation and new shared-wealth businesses.

Through our Planning and Policy Lab, we will continue our work providing technical assistance to the Bronx Community Land Trust, including supporting a resident-led campaign for land acquisition. We will also expand our engagement with the Southern Boulevard Coalition and formally step into the role of coordinator. In this new capacity, we will continue to provide research, data analysis, and planning support to co-create a comprehensive neighborhood-level plan for the Southern Boulevard area. We will also partner with NWBCCC, The Point CDC, and other community based organizations across the Bronx to develop a Bronx-wide platform in order to engage candidates in a borough-wide Candidates Forum focused on issues that are important to our borough. Through this process, we will prepare Bronx residents to hold those who get into elected office accountable to their commitments while also building long-term civic infrastructure to build community power beyond electoral politics.

We look forward to deepening relationships and creating new ones across the borough, the city, and globally.

Pa'lante!



"Several elements are very inspiring in this initiative, including key issues not usually addressed in other cases, such as racial justice and economic democracy. In terms of strategies, also remarkable is the clear consciousness about the need to move from resistance to proposals; from barrio to city scale; and from short-term needs and goals to long-term transformation."

- [Lorena Zárate](#), [President of Habitat International Coalition](#) (Transformative Cities Evaluator for BCDI)

X THE TEAM

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Our Board

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OUR PARTNERS

Community

Banana Kelly Community Improvement Association
The Laundromat Project
Northwest Bronx Community & Clergy Coalition
The Point Community Development Corporation
Mothers on the Move
Northern Manhattan Coalition for Immigrant Rights
Youth Ministries for Peace and Justice
We Stay/Nos Quedamos
The Women's Housing and Economic Development Corporation

Labor

1199 SEIU United Healthcare Workers East
Construction and General Building Laborers' Local 79
CUNY School of Labor and Urban Studies

Anchor Institutions

Bronx Zoo
Montefiore Medical Center
Fordham University
Hostos Community College
Bronx Community College
Lehman College School of Continuing and Professional Studies

Business

SAA / EVI
Mondragon Cooperative Corporation & LKS Next
The Working World
Spring Bank
B Lab / Best for NYC
Business Outreach Center Network
Futureworks NYC

Academia and Research

MIT Department of Urban Studies and Planning
Rutgers University Edward J. Bloustein School of Planning and Public Policy

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MIT Community Innovators Lab

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