

A MORE JUST NYC

NYC Detention Facilities:
Crime Rate and Property
Value Analysis

May 2019

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Rikers Island jails must be closed. Two years ago, in April 2017, the Independent Commission on New York City Criminal Justice and Incarceration Reform recommended deep changes to the criminal justice system in New York City, including the permanent closure of the massive and dysfunctional jail complex on Rikers Island.¹ We called for the number of people in jail to be reduced by half or more and for the smaller number of people who are detained to be held in safer, more humane, redesigned facilities that are closer to the courts and more accessible to family and visitors.

As we released our recommendations, Mayor Bill de Blasio announced that New York City would shut down the Rikers jails. In March 2019, the Uniform Land Use Review Procedure (ULURP) commenced for four proposed jail facilities, three of which are on the site of current jail facilities and a fourth on the site of an NYPD tow pound in the Bronx.

As New York City works to close the Rikers jails, some people are understandably concerned about the effect that rebuilding or opening detention facilities might have on property values and crime rates in their neighborhoods. We undertook this study to analyze the historical impact that detention facilities have had on neighborhoods in New York City.

We analyzed five existing or recently closed adult detention facilities in the city, parsing tens of thousands of real estate transactions, NYPD criminal complaints, and other data to isolate impacts of these facilities on their surroundings. We concluded:

- **These detention facilities have not had an observable impact on property values.** There is no observable trend indicating that property values near operating detention facilities are lower than property values in comparable neighborhoods. In addition, the re-opening of the Brooklyn Detention Complex in 2012 did not result in a decline in property values, and the closing of the Queens Detention Complex in 2002 was not correlated with an increase in property values in surrounding areas beyond borough-wide trends.
- **These detention facilities have not had an observable impact on crime rates.** Areas near current detention facilities have similar crime rates as surrounding areas. In addition, crime rates did not increase after the re-opening of the Brooklyn Detention Complex, nor did they deviate from local trends following the closure of the Queens Detention Complex.

As the City seeks to close Rikers and shift to a smaller borough detention system, it must engage neighbors and respond to their concerns. Our study indicates, however, that detention centers in New York City historically have not harmed property values or heightened crime rates in surrounding areas, which is consistent with national studies and qualitative reporting from New York City.

INTRODUCTION

The City has pledged to close the Rikers Island jail complex. To accomplish this goal, the City plans to (1) reduce the jail population from approximately 7,800 today to 4,000 and (2) shift to a permanently smaller borough detention system by redeveloping existing facilities in Manhattan, Brooklyn, and Queens and developing a new facility in the Bronx.² Under the current proposal, these four sites would have capacity for fewer than 5,000 adults, a significant decrease from the current system capacity of 13,800.³

The City's plan reflects many of the principles set forth by the Independent Commission on New York City Criminal Justice and Incarceration Reform in our 2017 report, *A More Just New York City*. However, we call on the City to seek out alternative, non-jail locations for populations with discrete needs, including people with serious mental health diagnoses and people in need of drug and alcohol treatment.⁴

Some people are understandably concerned with the opening or expansion of a jail in their neighborhood. As with many major City projects, some residents who live near the City's proposed sites have questioned whether a rebuilt or new facility could bring decreased property values and increased crime. Outside of the eight operating jails on Rikers Island, there are 11 operating adult detention facilities in New York City, which provide an objective basis to evaluate the historical impact of detention facilities on surrounding areas.

This study assesses that impact. We examined four operating detention facilities across New York City: the Brooklyn Detention Complex, the Manhattan Detention Complex, the Metropolitan Detention Center – Brooklyn, and the Lincoln Correctional Facility. For each of these facilities, we analyzed nearby property values and crime rates and compared them to larger surrounding areas. We also analyzed what happened in the years after Brooklyn Detention Complex was re-opened in 2012 and the Queens Detention Complex was closed in 2002.

METHODOLOGY

Using data from over 10,000 real estate transactions from the NYC Department of Finance and 500,000 criminal complaints from the NYPD over the past decade, we compared property values and crime rates for areas near detention facilities – defined as a $\frac{1}{4}$ mile-radius or a 5-minute walk – with larger comparison neighborhoods.

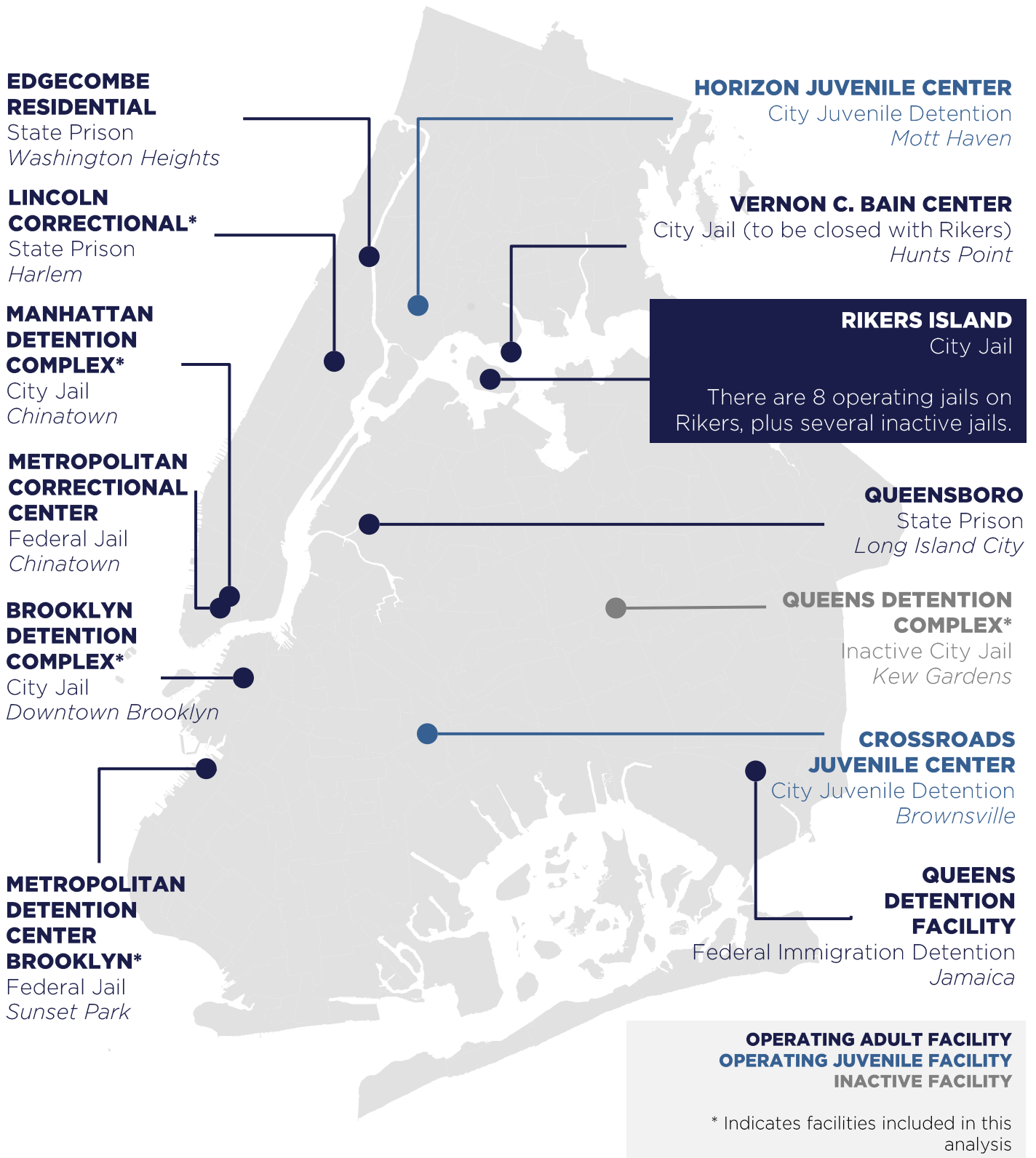
For comparison neighborhoods, we used adjacent neighborhoods defined by the NYC Department of City Planning's Neighborhood Tabulation Areas. For example, we compared the area near the Brooklyn Detention Complex with the larger Neighborhood Tabulation Areas of Downtown Brooklyn, Brooklyn Heights, and Carroll Gardens - Red Hook.

Additional details on data sources and methodology are included in the [Appendix](#).



DETENTION FACILITIES IN NEW YORK CITY

There are 11 operating city, state, and federal adult detention facilities across the five boroughs (not including the 8 currently operating jails on Rikers Island). More than 158,000 people currently live within a 5-minute walk from one of these operating facilities, and 430,000 people live within a 10-minute walk.⁵



Note: Adult detention facilities at Elmhurst and Bellevue hospitals are not shown on the map.

IMPACTS ON PROPERTY VALUES

Detention facilities are not associated with lower property values.

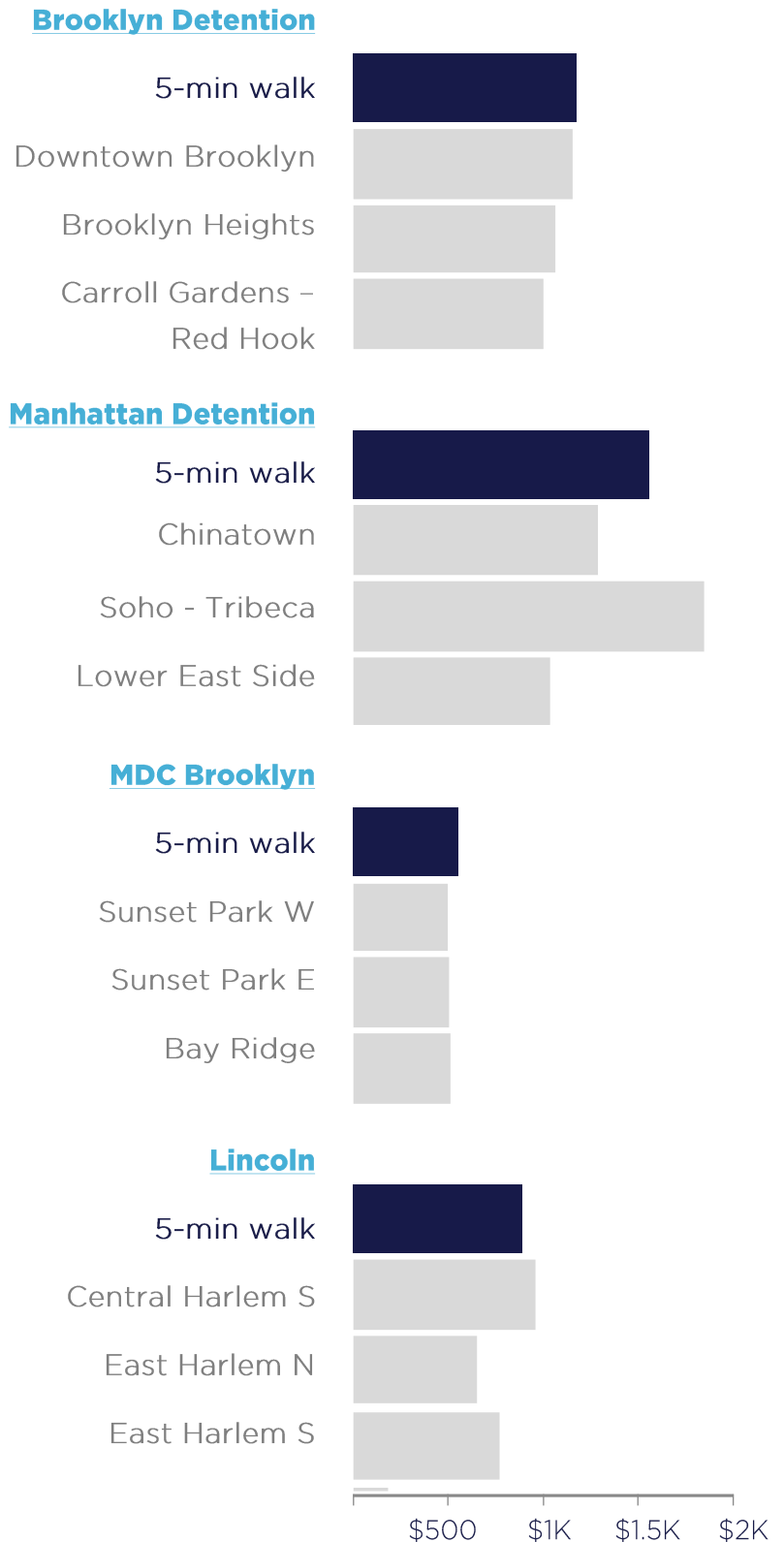
We studied residential sales prices from 2016 to 2018 around four operating detention facilities across the city, situated in the higher-density civic centers of downtown Manhattan and Brooklyn and in the lower-density areas of Sunset Park and Central Harlem.⁶

Property values near these detention facilities tend to match those in adjacent neighborhoods. For example, property values within a 5-minute walk of the Brooklyn Detention Complex were on par with or surpassed those in the adjacent areas of Downtown Brooklyn, Brooklyn Heights, and Carroll Gardens – Red Hook. When the Brooklyn Detention Center reopened in 2012, many were concerned that the jail would lower property values.⁷ However, current and historical trends indicate that the jail has not impacted property values (see page 7 for more analysis).

For three out of four sites, property values around the jail exceeded those of the larger neighborhood where they are located. The area around Manhattan Detention Complex had higher prices than in Chinatown overall, as did the area around MDC Brooklyn when compared to Sunset Park West, and the area around the Brooklyn Detention Complex to Downtown Brooklyn.

These findings are consistent with nationwide statistical research and qualitative reporting from New York City that have concluded that the presence of detention facilities has not had a negative impact on surrounding property values.⁸

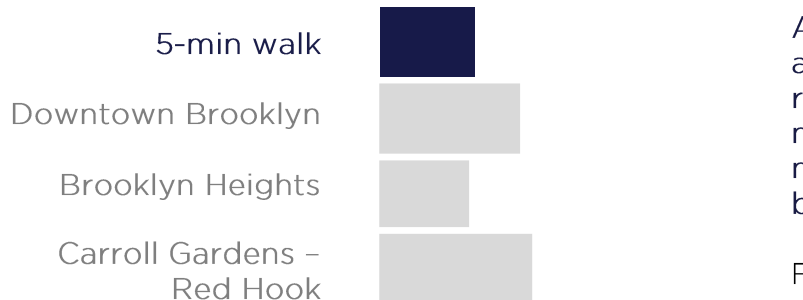
Median Residential Sale Price
Per Square Foot
Operating Detention Facilities
(2016-2018)



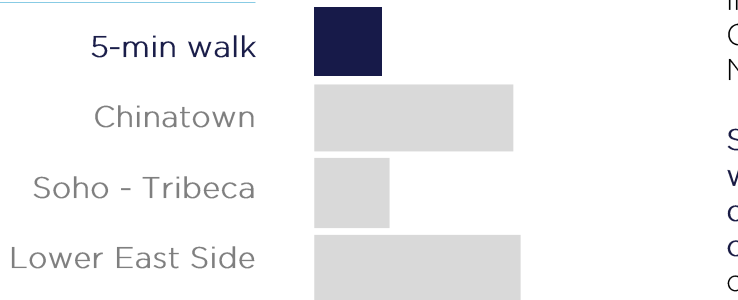
Note: Neighborhood names are derived from the City’s Neighborhood Tabulation Areas, displayed here in shortened form (see Appendix for full nomenclature).

NYPD Criminal Complaint Rate Per 1,000
Population of Residents and Workers
Operating Detention Facilities
(2018)

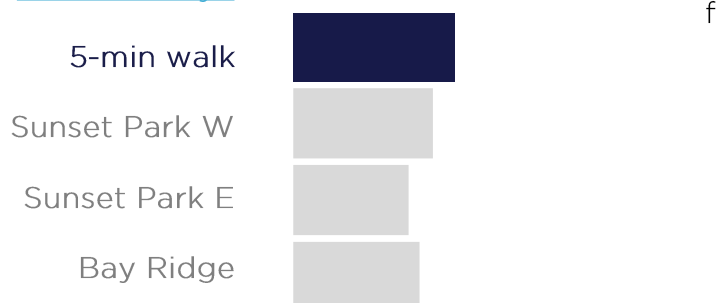
Brooklyn Detention



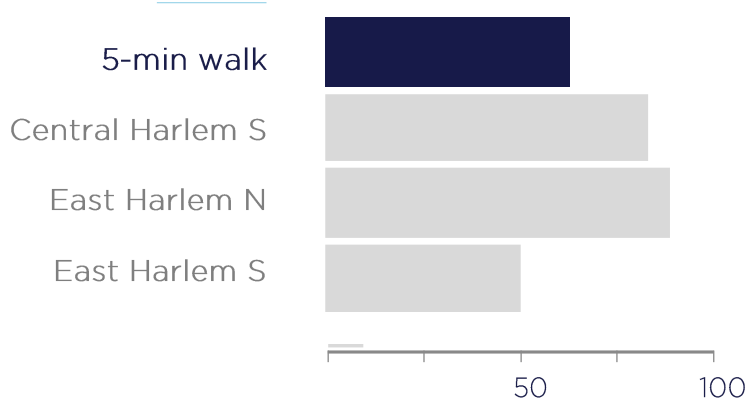
Manhattan Detention



MDC Brooklyn



Lincoln



IMPACTS ON CRIME RATES

Detention facilities are not associated with higher crime rates.

Areas near the detention facilities we analyzed generally have similar crime rates compared to surrounding neighborhoods, as measured by the number of criminal complaints reported by the NYPD.

For example, the area within a 5-minute walk of Lincoln Correctional Center saw 63 complaints per 1,000 residents and workers in 2018, compared to 83 complaints in Central Harlem South, 88 in East Harlem North, and 50 in East Harlem South.

Similarly, crime rates within a five-minute walk of the Brooklyn Detention Complex did not increase following the reopening of that facility in 2012. Likewise, the closing of the Queens Detention Complex in 2001 was not correlated with a decrease in crime beyond borough-wide trends (see page 7 for more analysis).

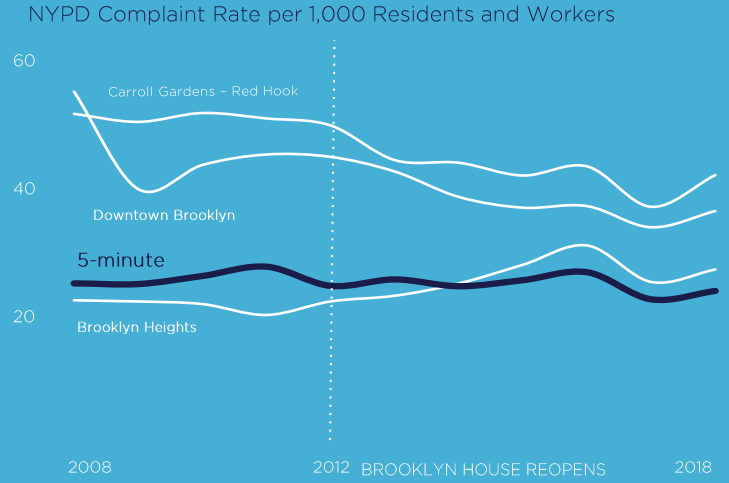
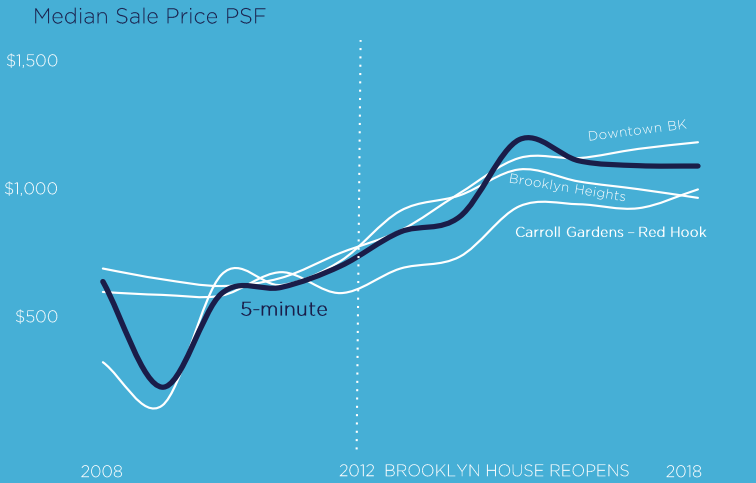
Note: To provide an accurate representation of the number of people in a given area, we accounted for both residents and workers.⁹

WHAT HAPPENS WHEN A DETENTION FACILITY OPENS?

The **Brooklyn Detention Complex** reopened in Downtown Brooklyn in 2012. Property value and crime rate trends show no discernable impact from the re-opening of the facility.

Property values increased by 55 percent in the five-minute radius around the jail since 2012, consistent with growth in surrounding Downtown Brooklyn (56%), Brooklyn Heights (34%), and Carroll Gardens – Red Hook (67%).

Crime rates did not increase in the five-minute radius around the jail from 2012-2018, consistent with trends in surrounding areas.

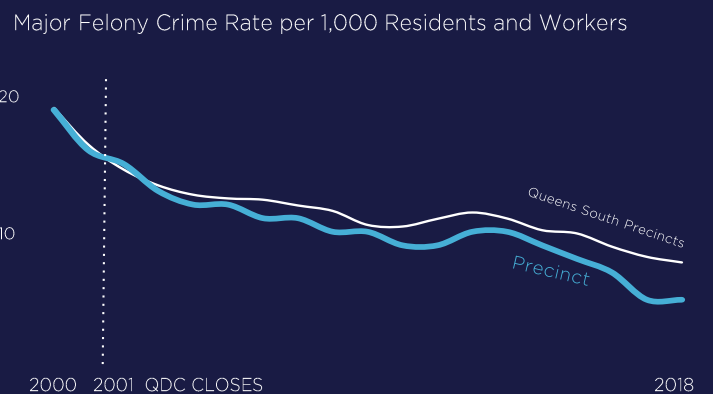
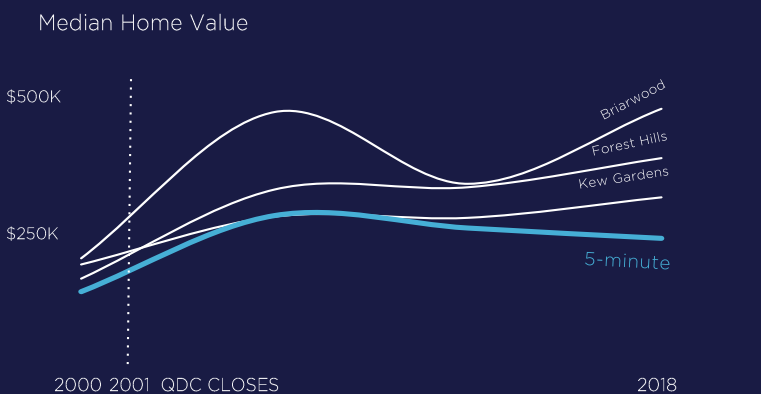


WHAT HAPPENS WHEN A DETENTION FACILITY CLOSURES?

If detention facilities had a negative impact on property values or crime rates, then we would expect to see a rise in value and drop in crime after the closure of a detention facility. However, when the **Queens Detention Complex** closed in 2001, there was no rise in value or decrease in crime outside overall trends in areas surrounding the jail.

Property values near the jail grew at the same rate as surrounding neighborhoods, with no observable sudden increases after 2001.

Crime rates in the precinct continued to fall at the same pace as the rest of central and southern Queens, but did not see a sharp drop after 2001.



Note: Because QDC closed in 2001, data was not available for PSF sales and crime rate at the 5-minute and neighborhood level. Instead, trends are based on census data for census-tract level median home values and precinct-level felony complaints.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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This report was prepared by Cathy Li, urban development consultant and former senior analyst at HR&A Advisors, with assistance from Tyler Nims, Zachary Katznelson, and Misaël Syldor at the Commission and Victoria Lawson at the CUNY Institute for State and Local Governance.

APPENDIX

DATA SOURCES

Property Value

Data on property values are derived from the NYC Department of Finance (DOF) database of rolling sales, which tracks property transactions in NYC.¹⁰ Sales figures consist of class 1 and class 2 properties, which include 1-3 family homes, condominiums, coops, and rentals, but exclude commercial office and other non-residential uses. Sales for less than \$10,000 were disregarded as likely non-arms length transactions. To calculate current property values around the operating facilities, median values per square foot (PSF) were taken from 2016-2018 sales. To calculate historical values around the recently opened or closed facilities, median sales PSF were taken from 2008 to 2018. For property values around the Queens Detention Complex (which closed prior to data availability from the DOF database), median home values were sourced from Census and American Community Surveys in 2000, 2009, and 2010.

Crime Rate

Historical crime complaints are sourced from the New York Police Department (NYPD) Open Data catalog of all valid criminal complaints to the NYPD from 2006 onwards.¹¹ To determine crime rates per 1,000 residents and workers, residential population figures over time were derived from Census and ACS in 2000, 2010, and 2016, and combined with worker population figures sourced from the Census Bureau's Longitudinal Employer-Household Dynamics database from 2002 to 2015. Historical worker population figures for Education and Public Administration sectors were excluded due to large fluctuations and likely data error. For historical crime rates for the Queens Detention Complex (which closed prior to data availability from the NYPD Open Data database), crime data was sourced from NYPD's *Historical New York City Crime Data* database at the precinct-level, and includes only major felony level data.¹²

COMPARISON NEIGHBORHOODS

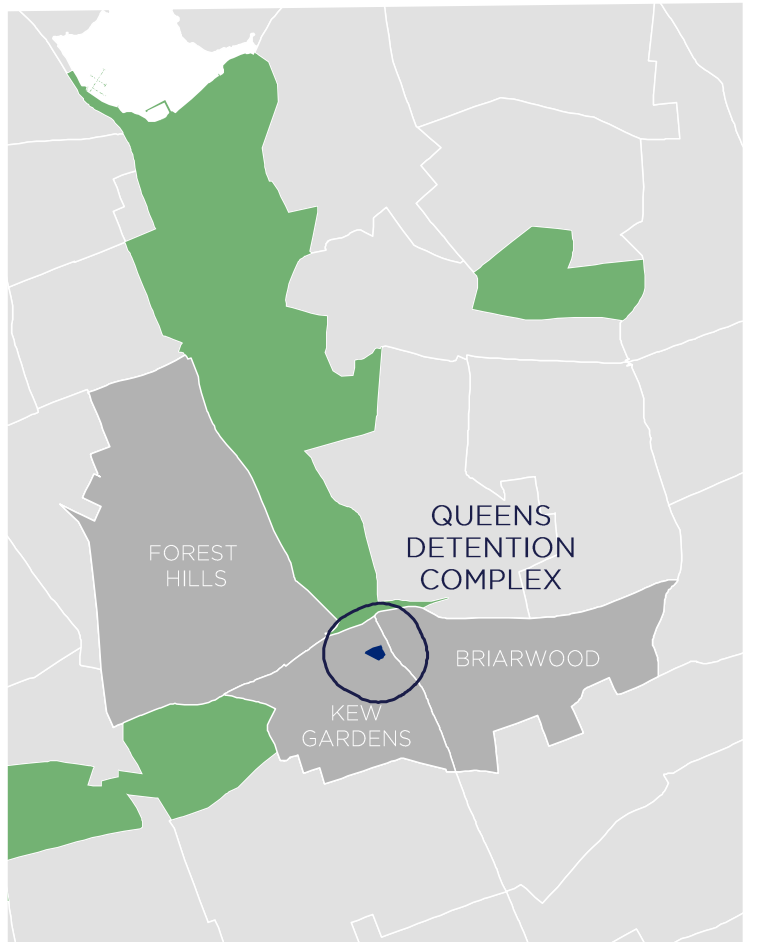
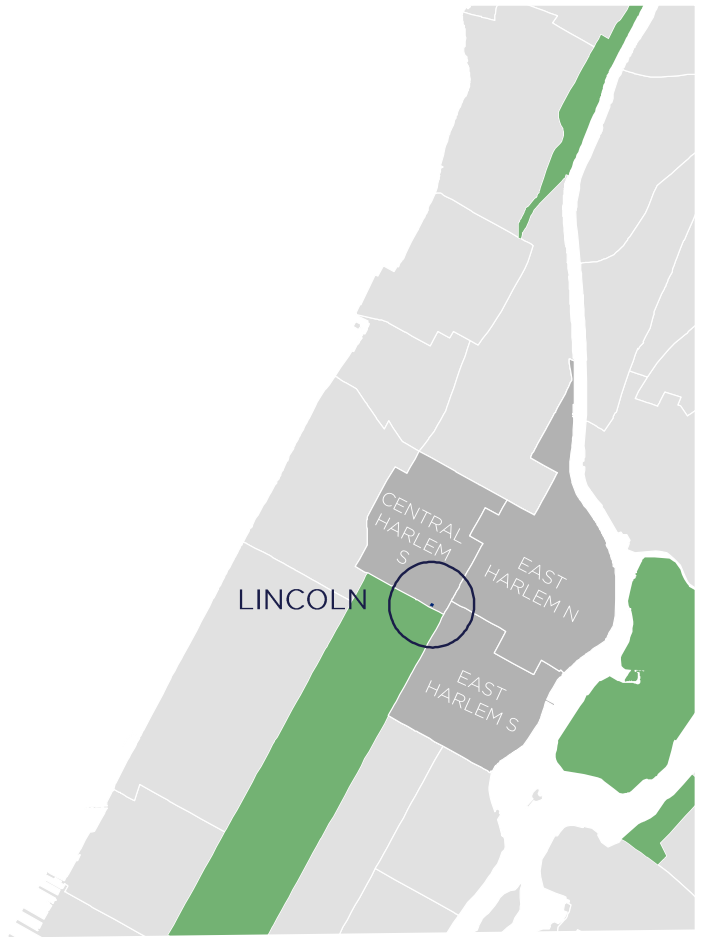
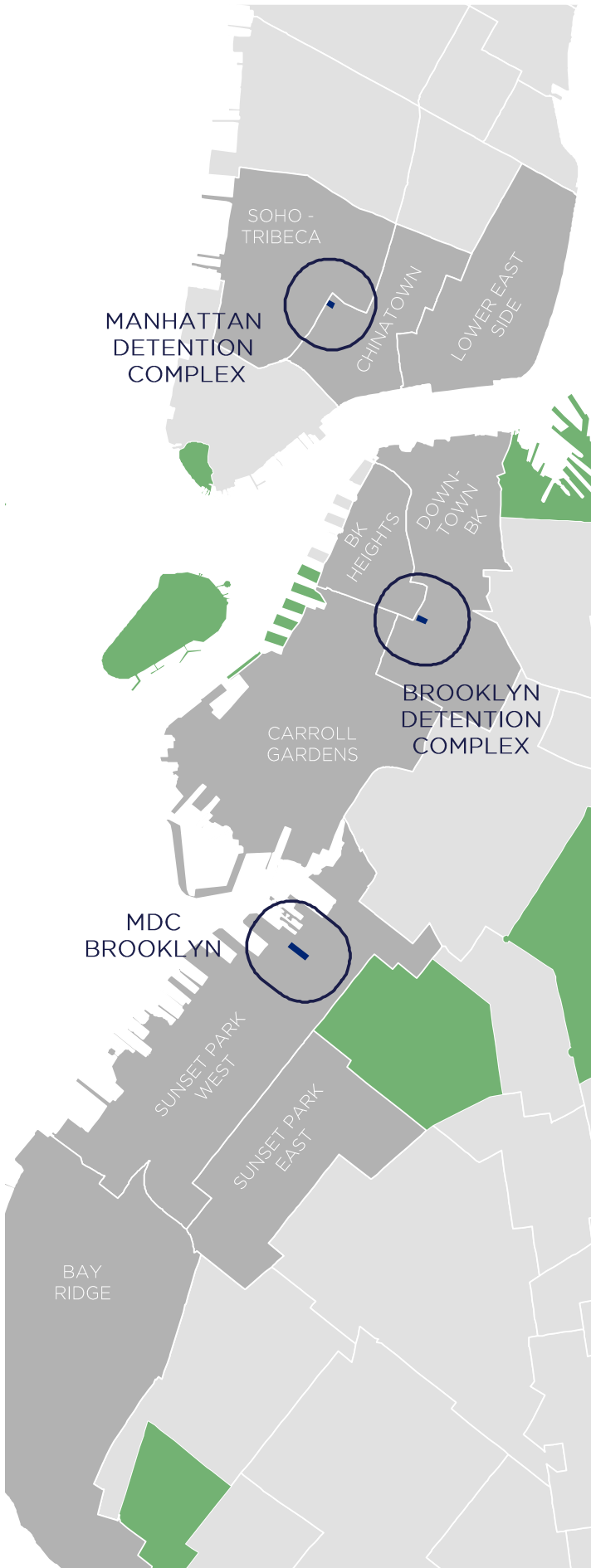
We selected comparison neighborhoods for the areas around each jail (within a 5-minute walk) among neighborhoods in the larger vicinity to limit differences in real estate submarkets. For example, the area immediately around Brooklyn MDC was compared to the larger Sunset Park West in which it is located, as well as the adjacent neighborhoods of Sunset Park East and Bay Ridge.

Geographical definitions for each neighborhood were based on the Department of City Planning's Neighborhood Tabulation Areas. Full names for referenced neighborhoods are: Chinatown, Lower East Side, Soho-TriBeCa-Civic Center-Little Italy, Central Harlem South, East Harlem North, East Harlem South, DUMBO-Vinegar Hill-Downtown Brooklyn-Boerum Hill, Brooklyn Heights-Cobble Hill, Carroll Gardens-Columbia Street-Red Hook, Sunset Park West, Sunset Park East, Bay Ridge, Kew Gardens, Briarwood-Jamaica Hills, Forest Hills.

Maps of neighborhoods are shown on the following page. Green areas denote public parks.

REFERENCES

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- 3 City of New York (March 2019). New York City Borough-Based Jail System Final Scope of Work to Prepare a Draft Environmental Impact Statement. Available at: https://a002-ceqraccess.nyc.gov/ceqr/ProjectInformation/GetFile?fileName=18DOC001Y_Final_Scope_of_Work_03222019&fileExt=.pdf&ceqrNum=18DOC001Y&latestMS=Final%20Scope%20of%20Work&token=f72d4833-e23d-4c16-8ed9-788c677bf88b
- 4 Independent Commission on New York City Criminal Justice and Incarceration Reform. (2018) A More Just New York City: Progress Report and Legislative Agenda. Available at: morejustnyc.org/reports
- 5 Esri Business Analyst Analysis of $\frac{1}{4}$ and $\frac{1}{2}$ mile radius from existing detention facilities.
- 6 We did not study the remaining City jail – Vernon C. Bain Center – as the facility is located in an industrial area with no nearby residential property for comparison.
- 7 Robbins, Liz. (2012) As Neighborhood Thrives, No Warm Welcome for a Reopened Jail. Available at: nytimes.com/2012/02/04/nyregion/reopening-of-brooklyn-house-of-detention-worries-neighbors
- 8 See, for example: DiPrinzio, Harry. (2018) The Jail Next Door: A Look at the 14 Correctional Facilities in New York’s Neighborhoods. Available at: citylimits.org/2018/07/17/the-jail-next-door-a-look-at-the-14-correctional-facilities-in-new-yorks-neighborhoods; Issues in Siting Correctional Facilities: An Informational Brief; McGeever, K. (2018). Correctional Facility Establishments and Neighborhood Housing Characteristics. Sociological Perspectives. Advance Online Publication; Bellafante, Ginia (2017) Without Rikers, Learning to Love the Jail Next Door. Available at: nytimes.com/2017/04/06/nyregion/rikers-island-bill-de-blasio; Abrams, K. S., Lyons, W., Cruz, R., Dahbura, A., deHaven-Smith, L., Johnson, P., ..., & Scher, R. (1992) Issues in siting correctional facilities. U.S. Department of Justice, National Institute of Corrections.
- 9 There is growing acknowledgement for incorporating measures of daytime/ambient populations in crime rate analysis. See, for example: Malleesen and Andresen (2016). Exploring the impact of ambient population measures on London crime hotspots. *Journal of Criminal Justice*; Boivin (2013). On the use of crime rates. *Canadian Journal of Criminology and Criminal Justice*; Jaffe, Eric (2013) Should We Be Zoning with Crime in Mind? Available at: citylab.com/equity/2013/04/should-we-be-zoning-crime-mind; Browning et. Al (2010), Commercial Density, Residential Concentration, and Crime: Land Use Patterns and Violence in Neighborhood Context. *Journal of Research in Crime and Delinquency*; Andresen and Jenion (2008). Ambient Populations and the Calculation of Crime Rates and Risk. *Security Journal*.
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