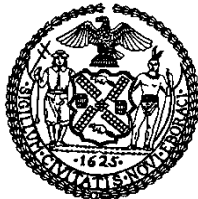


Carroll Gardens: A Portrait of Neighborhood Issues

**Report prepared by the District Office of
Brooklyn Community Board 6 for the
Carroll Gardens Neighborhood Association**



November 2006

Introduction

“Charming...Wonderful...Stable...Brownstone...Close-knit...Above the rest...A “real” neighborhood...Home.”

These are the words used by members of the Carroll Gardens Neighborhood Association’s (CGNA) Executive Committee when asked to describe their neighborhood in just one word. Collectively, they convey a set of important community values – a strong and proud sense of place and being. Residents of Carroll Gardens have been increasingly expressing concern over recent trends in the neighborhood, some of which could ultimately threaten their essential neighborhood character. Not being content to simply share observations from stoop-to-stoop, leadership at the CGNA decided it was must pro-actively address some of the more common neighborhood concerns. It was the preservation of these community values that prompted CGNA to approach Brooklyn Community Board 6 (CB6) for assistance in late 2005.

Brooklyn CB6 is the most local municipal branch of City government as defined by the City Charter in Chapters 69 and 70. The Community Board is primarily responsible for advocating for individual projects, programs and services in the City’s budget, for monitoring the delivery of municipal services, and for making recommendations on land use and zoning matters. The Community Boards are the only locally-based government entities responsible for pro-active planning for all matters affecting the social welfare of its district. According to the 2000 Federal Census, Brooklyn CB6 has a population of 104,054 and includes the neighborhoods of Carroll Gardens/South Brooklyn, Cobble Hill, Columbia Street District, Gowanus, Park Slope and Red Hook.

The Carroll Gardens Neighborhood Association is the local civic organization that represents the Carroll Gardens/South Brooklyn portion of Brooklyn CB6. It meets monthly, except during the summer, and offers a forum for local residents to share concerns, exchange information, and discuss relevant and timely topics of interest. In late 2005, CGNA President Maria Pagano approached CB6 District Manager Craig Hammerman to ask for the Community Board’s assistance in developing a more formalized neighborhood agenda and structured way to approach the many challenges faced by the neighborhood and its civic organization. In early 2006 Hammerman recruited Matthew Jaffe Roe, a graduate planning student and local resident, as a Volunteer Planner to work with CB6 and CGNA on this project.

An *ad hoc* steering committee shepherded the process along and convened periodically to oversee the development of the report product. The committee was comprised of representatives for the CGNA including its President Maria Pagano, along with Executive Committee members Frank Verderame, Glenn Kelly and Mary Mattner; for CB6 it was District Manager Craig Hammerman and Volunteer Planner Matthew Jaffe Roe. The committee was responsible for developing a survey instrument, overseeing the administration of the survey, collecting, entering and tabulating the survey data, and reviewing and analyzing the data.

Without the active participation of each of these individuals, and so many more, this report could not have been written. Special thanks to CGNA President Maria Pagano who got the process started, Volunteer Planner Matthew Jaffe Roe who gave selflessly his professional time, Mary Mattner who along with Matthew did the majority of the data entry, and the Office of Assemblywoman Joan Millman at 341 Smith Street, Brooklyn which was used as a drop-off point for collected surveys.

Developing the Survey

Hammerman and Roe facilitated discussions with the CGNA representatives in January and February 2006 designed to elicit what was on these neighbor's minds and what they were hearing from other neighbors. The CGNA list server had been buzzing with messages from neighbors with a common theme – concern for what many felt was a steady erosion of their neighborhood character. These concerns mostly revolved around two sub-themes, namely, the built form of the neighborhood and changes in local commerce. Economic pressure to overdevelop the built form of the neighborhood was resulting in the construction of out-of-character buildings which sought to maximize the allowable bulk that current zoning would permit. The loss of several neighborhood “Mom and Pop” specialty stores, predominantly food suppliers, and their subsequent replacement with non-equivalent national corporate chain stores and banks forced a change in personal shopping habits. It was the collective feeling of the CGNA representatives that the civic organization must be more pro-actively involved in setting the course for the neighborhood's destiny.

Questions for the survey naturally fell into four different categories, namely, Transportation, Land Use, Commerce and Housing. A fifth category of voluntary questions was added to capture identifying personal information from survey respondents. A copy of the survey used is attached as Appendix A. The area bounded by Degraw Street, Hicks Street, Hamilton Avenue and Bond Street was targeted as the Carroll Gardens neighborhood for purposes of report. The survey was officially launched on April 10, 2006 at the regular monthly meeting of the CGNA where volunteers were recruited to help. CGNA representatives organized the distribution and collection of surveys over the period of April through August 2006 in the targeted area through a combination of means primarily door-to-door or neighbor-to-neighbor peer administration. Additionally, surveys were promulgated by tabling at Carroll Park, the neighborhood's civic center, and at the Court Street Street Festival, the neighborhood's largest annual street event.

Profile of Survey Sample

In all, a total of 909 people responded to the survey as of August 2006. Based on the 2000 Federal Census Tract map, the Carroll Gardens target area includes all of Census

Tracts 63 and 65 and portions of Census Tracts 67, 75 and 77. Pro-rating the census information we estimate the base neighborhood population to be 12,796, of which 10,929 are adults age 18 or older. Therefore, the number of survey results represented 7.1% of the total neighborhood population, or 8.3% of the adult population of the neighborhood. While the survey was intended for people living within the target area, we know from the personal information collected that a handful of responses were submitted by non-residents. Rather than reject these responses we included them as representing data from interested parties – either owners of businesses in the target area or frequent visitors to the Eileen C. Dugan Senior Center on Court Street. The known number of non-resident respondents was extremely low and had a negligible impact on results. Overall, the responses exceeded the steering committee’s minimum goal which was to reach over 5% of the neighborhood adults, a statistically significant sampling of the population.

As shown in Table 1, most of the respondents were somewhat “new” to the neighborhood. A little less than one-half of the respondents had only been living in the neighborhood for 10 years or less, with one-third living in the neighborhood for 5 years or less. At the other end of the spectrum, roughly one-in-ten of the respondents had been living in the neighborhood for more than 50 years. Just under half of the respondents were homeowners as opposed to renters, which compares to the Census reporting a 26% homeownership rate for the neighborhood as a whole. While respondents overall were not good about self-reporting their ages, roughly three-quarters of the respondents who did report were in the 26 to 55 years old range. Race and ethnic data was not collected.

Table 1: Years Residing in Neighborhood

0-5 years	277 respondents	33.5%
5-10 years	114 respondents	13.8%
11-20 years	175 respondents	21.2%
21-30 years	81 respondents	9.8%
31-40 years	48 respondents	5.8%
41-50 years	51 respondents	6.2%
51+ years	80 respondents	9.7%

(T = 826 respondents = 100%)

Data Results: Transportation

The first category, Transportation, sought to collect information on vehicular ownership and use, and on travel modes for commuting to and from work. Data from the 2000 Census (Table H041) shows that in Kings County it is estimated that roughly 54.0% of all households (owners and renters) do not own vehicles, 36.1% own one vehicle, 8.2% own two vehicles, 1.5% own three vehicles and 0.2% own four vehicles. Table 2 demonstrates that respondents in Carroll Gardens are more likely to own/store a vehicle at their household than the typical Kings County household.

Table 2: Vehicles Stored At Household

0 vehicles	347 respondents	41.1%
1 vehicle	424 respondents	50.2%
2 vehicles	67 respondents	7.9%
3 vehicles	5 respondents	0.6%
4 vehicles	2 respondents	0.2%

(T = 845 respondents = 100%)

To anyone familiar with the neighborhood it should come as no surprise that 92% of vehicle owner respondents reported that they were concerned or very concerned about parking, while others mentioned that they did not own a vehicle because it was already too hard to find a parking space. Carroll Gardens relies almost exclusively on legal on-street parking capacity for the storage of vehicles as the neighborhood’s brownstone rowhouse architectural form does not provide for off-street storage of vehicles and there are few garages and parking lots. Such pressures have been a source of neighborhood conflict as some residents have reduced legal on-street parking capacity by installing curb cuts, some illegally, and converted front areaways to carports.

In seeking to get a better understanding of commuting patterns, the survey asked respondents what zip code they predominantly worked in and how they traveled to work. All of the Carroll Gardens target area falls within the 11231 zip code. Over 200 respondents, roughly one-quarter of the total, worked within the 11231 zip code. The next largest group of responses, with 85 respondents, listed zip codes outside of New York City. The third group of responses with more than 50 respondents was 11201, which generally includes Downtown Brooklyn, Brooklyn’s seat of government and New York City’s third business center. Overwhelmingly, the remaining respondents were likely to work in Manhattan, from Lower Manhattan up through the Midtown area. A sprinkling of respondents reported working in 11215 and 11217, zip codes to the east of Carroll Gardens which generally include the adjacent neighborhoods of Park Slope, Gowanus and Boerum Hill.

Table 3: Modes of Commuter Travel

Subway	491 respondents
Walk	154 respondents
Car	111 respondents
Bus	40 respondents
Bicycle	29 respondents
Other	49 respondents

“Other” included taxi, commuter rail and air travel

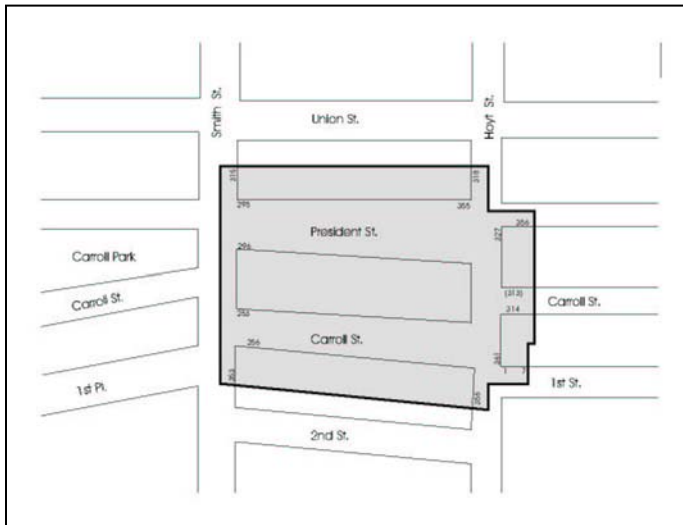
(T = 744 respondents = 100%; 127 respondents reported multimodal travel)

Lastly, the survey sought to capture other transportation-related general comments expressed by respondents. The single most popular concern expressed was that the F-line was too overcrowded, as were the subway stations at Carroll Street and Smith-9th Street. Still others added that the Smith-9th Street station was in dire need of a comprehensive rehabilitation. Other general comments included a need for traffic calming and

pedestrian safety enhancements on local streets, a general dislike of traffic volumes passing through the neighborhood, improvements in bus service quality, and a desire for more bicycle lanes and bicycle safety enhancements.

Data Results: Land Use

When asked if the respondent was concerned about the height or size of new buildings in the neighborhood 91% of those responding indicated they were either very concerned (60%) or concerned (31%), the majority being very concerned. These concerns were evident in that only 5% of the respondents did not favor stricter limits on the height, size and/or overall bulk of new buildings; 83% did favor stricter limits while 12% were unsure. It was clear that the neighborhood favors better land use controls to help ensure the preservation of the built form of the community. Results were not as clear on the subject of whether to expand the existing landmark historic district designation.



The Carroll Gardens Historic District was so designated on September 25, 1973 and is one of the smallest districts in New York City; it is notable for its atypical setbacks that create deep front yards for the Neo-Grec and Italianite style brownstone rowhouses. The district is roughly bounded on the west by Smith Street, on the north by the northside of President Street, on the east by Hoyt Street and on the south by the southside of Carroll Street.

When questioned if they lived within the Carroll Gardens Historic District, 26% of the respondents said they did, 61% said they did not, and 13% were not sure. Some respondents may not have been familiar with the exact parameters of the district, which is considerably smaller than the whole neighborhood and without address information from each respondent we cannot verify that respondents accurately self-reported this information. Nonetheless, on the question of whether the respondent supported an expansion of the district 43% said they did, 25% said they did not, and 32% were not sure. Unlike the definitive response on favoring stricter limits on the height, size and/or overall bulk of buildings, the neighborhood was not as definitive on the question of expanding the historic district.

In soliciting other land use-related general comments, many comments reflected a desire for more control over the built form of the neighborhood's commercial corridor,

preservation of neighborhood’s architectural integrity, improvements to local parks and other amenities, affordability, quality of life impacts from construction (i.e., noise, dirt, other construction impacts), and concerns for the future development of the adjacent Gowanus neighborhood.

Data Results: Commerce

Virtually all of the respondents claim to shop in their local stores for a variety of reasons including a desire to support local merchants, convenience and quality/service/price. Within specific categories of stores respondents were most likely to support the following types of stores: pharmacies, prepared foods/take out stores, grocery stores, restaurants and hardware/houseware. They were less likely to support local postal services, medical services and other professional services. But when asked which of these types of stores they would like to see more of respondents overwhelmingly listed grocery stores and postal services at the tops of their list.

Anecdotally, on the CGNA list server neighbors have been expressing concern over the loss of several “Mom and Pop” stores, notably grocery stores and prepared foods/take out stores. At the same time the neighborhood has seen a rapid growth in the number of restaurants. In fact, one local restaurant (The Grocery at 288 Smith Street between Union and Sackett Streets) made it into the top ten of the 2004 Zagat Survey bolstering the neighborhood’s reputation for fine dining and a trend toward eating out and away from cooking in. Table 4 shows how frequently respondents ate in restaurants on a weekly basis, with more than half eating out once or twice a week.

Table 4: Frequency of Eating in Restaurants

Never	50 respondents	6.7%
Once a week	200 respondents	26.9%
Twice a week	244 respondents	32.8%
3 times a week	129 respondents	17.4%
4 times a week	70 respondents	9.4%
More than 4	50 respondents	6.7%

(T = 743 respondents = 100%)

While many celebrate the abundance of choice in local restaurants, the changing commercial climate has had a localized unintended consequence. New York City’s smoking ban has caused many patrons of bars and restaurants to use outdoor space to get around the law. In some instances backyards have been illegally converted to additional outdoor eating and drinking spaces which has had a local impact on some adjacent and nearby residents. Roughly one in ten of the surveys respondents have been affected by businesses using their backyards.

In addition to restaurants, another growing trend in new businesses seems to be an influx of national corporate chain stores and banks. Neighbors speculate that because of a

strong local economy that corporations which have been moving toward greater urban market penetration can lock in long-term leases even with the higher rents and that this has created a cycle of displacement of smaller “Mom and Pop” businesses. When asked whether they would like to see more or less chain stores in the neighborhood 90% of the respondents wanted fewer, while only 5% wanted to see more of them. Respondents were most opposed to more pharmacies, followed by coffee/doughnut stores, fast food stores then banks.

Included among the other general comments on local commerce was a strong theme that while respondents were very supportive of their local businesses, they were also very supportive of the need for better access to fresh produce, and concerned that rents and prices in the neighborhood were becoming too high. Many were quick to complain about the influx of chain stores, and a handful thought there were too many bars, restaurants and boutiques in the neighborhood. Historically, the neighborhood has been advocating for improved access to postal services as the area’s post office is actually located on Clinton Street south of Hamilton Avenue in Red Hook; the location proves to be a geographic barrier and a hardship for many people to get to.

Data Results: Housing

We have already seen in Table 1 that roughly half of the respondents have lived in the neighborhood for 10 years or less. When asked how they came to live in Carroll Gardens, respondents were most likely to say because of family, significant other, or they were born in the neighborhood. Still others came because of friends, word-of-mouth, or being drawn in by the neighborhood character. Fewer mentioned work, school, price, space and convenience. We also know that the Census reports 26% homeownership in the neighborhood, while the survey respondents were split almost evenly between owners and renters.

In response to the question whether the respondent will be able to afford to stay in the neighborhood over the next five years 60% were sure they could, another 30% were not sure, and 10% were sure they would not be able to afford to stay. The group of people in the 18-25 years old range were the least confident they would be able to afford to stay in the neighborhood, with only 15% being sure, 70% unsure, and 15% certain they could not. The group of people in the 56-65 year old age range were the most confident they would be able to afford to stay with 74% being sure, 23% unsure, and 4% certain they could not. In looking at the same data based on whether the respondent was an owner or a renter, 81% of the respondents who were owners were confident they could afford to stay, while only 41% of the renters displayed such confidence.

While affordability can force a resident to move from their home, if given the freedom to choose whether a respondent would move away from the neighborhood within the next five years we found that 55% are not considering moving away, 9% might consider it, and 36% are seriously considering it. As shown in Table 5, those who were considering

moving away from the neighborhood were doing so overwhelmingly for economic reasons – either they were interested in purchasing property somewhere else or were having trouble affording to stay. Also, when asked what special needs or requirements would be necessary for someone to stay in the neighborhood, as shown in Table 6, affordable rent was by far the most popular response.

Table 5: Why Move From The Neighborhood?

Price/Purchase	126 respondents	54.5%
Conditions	33 respondents	14.4%
Schools/Kids	31 respondents	13.4%
Want to move	13 respondents	5.6%
Retirement	11 respondents	4.8%
Job/Higher Ed	11 respondents	4.8%
Other	6 respondents	2.6%

(T = 231 respondents = 100%)

Table 6: What Do You Need In Order To Stay?

Affordable rent	119 respondents	44.4%
Good Schools	54 respondents	20.1%
Intact Character	27 respondents	10.1%
Food Shopping	22 respondents	8.2%
Better Services	12 respondents	4.5%
Handicap Access	8 respondents	3.0%
Other	26 respondents	9.7%

(T = 268 respondents = 100%)

Reviewing the Data

Hammerman and Roe made a presentation on the preliminary tabulated results of the data at CGNA’s regular monthly meeting on June 12, 2006 at the St. Mary’s Star of the Sea Residence at 41 1st Street, Brooklyn. The data was presented in a PowerPoint format to an eager audience allowing ample opportunity for questions and answers at the end. Following the presentation the file was also posted on the CB6 website (where it can still be found) at www.BrooklynCB6.org, on the Carroll Gardens page of the Neighborhood section. Attendees were encouraged to digest the survey results and consider their implications.

On October 25, 2006 Hammerman attended a meeting of the CGNA Executive Committee at Scott’s Funeral Home at 106 1st Place, Brooklyn to reintroduce the survey data and facilitate the development of a prioritized list of actionable items. Of the 8 Executive Committee members, 5 of them ranked Land Use as the top category of neighborhood issues based on the survey’s original four categories. Through weighted ranking, the group prioritized the categories from the most important to least important as follows: 1) Land Use, 2) Transportation, 3) Housing, and 4) Commerce.

When asked what the single most important issue affecting the neighborhood today is, the Executive Committee members responded, in no particular order:

- Overbuilding
- Land Use, construction of “McBrownstones” on small lots
- Overdevelopment
- Development pressures
- Overdevelopment (commercial & residential), related: decrease of manufacturing
- Traffic
- Inappropriate alterations to the historic rowhouses, losing essential retail stores & services
- Need for supermarket

The individual responses of the Executive Committee members matched the prioritized ranking of the categorical concerns on the survey, further confirming that Land Use was the top neighborhood priority.

Within each category suggestions were made for various potential actions the CGNA could undertake to advance the neighborhood’s agenda. By consensus it was determined that the first item on each list (*italicized*) reflected the group’s highest priority. The other items are listed in no particular order.

Actionable Items: Land Use

- *Pursue the Contextual Rezoning (height limits, uniform street wall and curbcut prohibitions) of Carroll Gardens to preserve the built form of the neighborhood.*
- Expanding the Carroll Gardens Historic District to preserve the neighborhood’s architectural integrity.
- Preserve the open space in the backyard core of the built blocks.
- Work with P.S. 58 to make better use of the schoolyard as community recreation space.
- Develop additional open space and recreational uses in the community, particularly in the vicinity of the 9th Street Bridge at the Gowanus Canal.

Actionable Items: Transportation

- *Pursue the rehabilitation of the Smith-9th Street subway station.*
- Study the possibility of establishing a local jitney/trolley to improve local transportation access and mobility.
- Lobby for improved F-train service, particularly weekend service.

- Lobby for additional neighborhood bus service (B71, B75, and B77).
- Plan sidewalk and pedestrian improvements to enhance safety and open space aesthetics.
- Improve subway plaza maintenance at Smith Street and 2nd Place.
- Study the possibility of installing a bicycle lane on Court Street as a southbound pairing to the one on Clinton Street.

Actionable Items: Housing

- *Research community housing models to determine best way to balance ways to provide affordable housing within context of keeping built form and neighborhood scale.*
- Explore ways to expand affordable housing options, particularly to benefit existing residents by preventing displacement.
- Plan and support the construction of additional senior housing.
- Explore the provision of tax credits and other incentives for homeowners, particularly seniors, to maintain housing stock.

Actionable Items: Commerce

- *Promote and expand commercial corridor through more proactive planning (e.g., formation of a Business Improvement District).*
- Attract businesses to provide sought-after goods and essential services, particularly a supermarket.
- Expand neighborhood access to fresh produce.

Conclusion: Taking Action!

The Executive Committee considered that there were several general action items they could do to help advance the entire CGNA agenda, namely:

- Educate and inform the community (neighborhood and school communities)
- Lobby elected officials
- Advise government agencies
- Other civic action (to be determined)

It was noted that the CGNA has already been doing many of these general action items, but would refocus their emphasis on supporting their neighborhood agenda. At their regular monthly meeting of November 13, 2006, for example, they have invited a featured speaker to help educate and inform the community on the basics of zoning, and

how it can be used as a tool for preservation and growth. Taken together, the total list of actionable items that flowed from the Executive Committee discussion can appear to be daunting; however, the list is nowhere near complete.

This is a community that passionately believes in preserving their neighborhood's built form and way of life. It is also a well-organized and resourceful community that has a proven track record of accomplishment. It was the goal of this report to help the community by reflecting back to them what their neighbors are saying and thinking in order to tap into the strength and numbers that come from working together as a community.

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To get more involved in the Carroll Gardens/South Brooklyn community, contact CGNA President Maria Pagano at (718) 237-1862.

To join the CGNA list server, send an email to CGNA-subscribe@yahoogroups.com

For more information about Brooklyn Community Board 6, visit its website at www.BrooklynCB6.org, its District Office at 250 Baltic Street, Brooklyn during regular business hours or call (718) 643-3027.

Appendix A:

Carroll Gardens Neighborhood Association's Neighborhood Issues Survey

vii. Medical services	Yes	No	Sometimes
viii. Other professional services	Yes	No	Sometimes
ix. Other _____	Yes	No	Sometimes

- c. What types of stores or services would you like to see more of?
- i. Grocery stores
 - ii. Pharmacies
 - iii. Prepared foods/take out stores
 - iv. Restaurants
 - v. Hardware and housewares
 - vi. Postal services
 - vii. Medical services
 - viii. Other professional services
 - ix. Other _____
- d. Would you like to see more or fewer chain stores? Which ones?
- e. In a typical week, how often do you eat in restaurants?
- f. Have you been affected by businesses using their backyards?
- g. What other concerns do you have about the local businesses in the neighborhood?

4. **Housing**

- a. How long have you lived in the neighborhood? _____ years
- b. Do you _____ own or _____ rent?
- c. Did you have a choice of housing? If not, why not?
- d. How did you come to live in the neighborhood?
- e. Can you afford to stay here if you want to, over the next five years?
_____ Yes _____ No _____ not sure
- f. Do you have any special needs or requirements in order to stay in the neighborhood? If so, what?
- g. Are you seriously considering moving away from the neighborhood within the next five years? If so, why?
- h. What other concerns do you have about housing in the neighborhood?

Optional.

This information will help us keep in touch with you and tell us more about who you are. It is optional. You can answer as many of these questions as you like.

Name:

Address:

Phone Number:

Email:

Age: