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**HC 4: Affordable Housing**

Rising rent prices have caused many NYC residents to expand their housing search outside of Manhattan’s most desirable neighborhoods. Historically, Brooklyn was a go-to region for residents searching for more affordable housing while maintaining easy access to Manhattan. However, Brooklyn has seen a sharp increase in renting costs in recent years—becoming an equally competitive and expensive market as Manhattan. Owners of unsubsidized apartments in Brooklyn can implement abrupt rent hikes if they believe they can get paid more for the unit on the open market, which accelerates gentrification by making units largely unaffordable for current residents. Rents across NYC increased by 33% from January 2021 to 2022 ([City Limits](https://citylimits.org/2022/03/15/for-lower-income-new-yorkers-covid-rents-never-really-went-down/)).

Prospect Heights: With Brooklyn’s rent prices increasing and a simultaneous shortage of available apartments, landlords are offering fewer concessions in 2022 than they have in previous years. Based on this trend, current renters can expect to be presented with lease renewals with major price increases. Specifically, [StreetEasy](https://streeteasy.com/blog/pandemic-deals-expiring-Q1-2022-market-reports/) revealed the average one bedroom, one bathroom apartment in Prospect Heights to cost between $3,412 to $4,000 per month, indicating a 24% increase from the previous year. Moreover, only 21,863 units were available for rent in Brooklyn at the start of 2022, whereas the first quarter of 2021 offered 42,055 rentals ([Patch](https://patch.com/new-york/prospectheights/prospect-crown-heights-rents-reach-record-highs-pandemic-deals-end)). For context, in 2021, rent prices significantly decreased and units had high availability because of a shift in market dynamics during the pandemic ([StreetEasy](https://streeteasy.com/blog/pandemic-deals-expiring-Q1-2022-market-reports/)). With 68% of Prospect Heights being occupied by renter households, residents should consider how they will be negatively affected by these rent increases, in addition to paying utility expenses, maintenance costs, and upholding amenities.

Sunset Park: Since last year, StreetEasy searches for Sunset Park have shot up by 44% as the median rent has also increased, going from $2,000, to $2,400 ([Chan](https://www.curbed.com/2022/09/outer-borough-bidding-wars-queens-harlem.html)). Sunset Park is a neighborhood composed mostly of immigrant families, yet as gentrification continues, rising housing prices are displacing these natives. The Hispanic population of neighborhoods identified as gentrified have decreased from 2,574 to 1,822 as the median home value increased from $242,000 to $744,000 ([Quinn](https://patch.com/new-york/sunset-park/sunset-park-primed-gentrification-new-map-shows)). Landlords are partly responsible for this phenomenon. Despite rent-control policies, landlords can abuse loopholes to find other ways to drive away tenants ([Maani](https://www.weavenews.org/stories/2020/03/31/2020-3-30-setting-the-foundation-for-gentrification-in-sunset-park-brooklyn)). New York law even encourages this, by allowing landlords to automatically raise rent by up to 20% once a rent stabilized tenant has left ([Barker](https://www.nytimes.com/2018/05/24/insider/rent-stabilized-apartment-landlord-control.html)). However, it’s equally if not more important to acknowledge the role corporations have played in gentrification. For example, Industry City owns a large chunk of Sunset Park’s waterfront, and is working with Amazon and investors to develop that land, resulting in an increase in property values and rent that will force immigrant families out ([Maani](https://www.weavenews.org/stories/2020/03/31/2020-3-30-setting-the-foundation-for-gentrification-in-sunset-park-brooklyn)). Applicants have even begun offering more than the asking price in hopes of securing property ([Chan](https://www.weavenews.org/stories/2020/03/31/2020-3-30-setting-the-foundation-for-gentrification-in-sunset-park-brooklyn)). It is clear that Sunset Park is in a housing crisis.

Sheepshead Bay: Even in 2021, Sheepshead Bay was considered to be an ideal place for families and young people to live in New York City, having dodged gentrification and significant rent increases that plague most other neighborhoods ([Bklynr](https://bklyner.com/brooklyn-gentrification-highs-and-lows-sheepshead-bay/)). Housing was affordable, and the region featured high-quality schools and low rates of property and violent crime ([Furman Center](https://furmancenter.org/neighborhoods/view/sheepshead-bay)). However, since the beginning of the COVID pandemic in 2020, rent prices have shot up to be on par with the rest of the city. Median rent for two bedroom apartments is now $2,850, up 30% since last year ([Zumper](https://www.zumper.com/rent-research/new-york-ny/sheepshead-bay)). The majority of people looking to move into Sheepshead Bay are middle and working-class immigrants from Eastern Europe and Asia who intend on starting families ([Furman Center](https://furmancenter.org/neighborhoods/view/sheepshead-bay)). Rapidly rising rent prices makes it a lot more difficult for these immigrants and young people to find housing they can afford, which causes affordable housing programs to become a lot more appealing. Still, Sheepshead Bay has not been not affected by rising rent prices more than any other neighborhood and remains a reasonably good place to rent in New York City.

Brownsville: Brownsville is another Brooklyn neighborhood that has seen a significant rise in search interest on StreetEasy—increasing by 49% in the past year ([Bloomberg](https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2022-08-22/nyc-renters-facing-expensive-prices-search-in-brooklyn-queens?leadSource=uverify%20wall)). Gentrification has hit the Brownsville-Crown Heights border, with rent nearly doubling in certain regions despite little change in its residents’ salaries ([Patch](https://patch.com/new-york/brownsville/brownsville-primed-gentrification-new-map-shows)). Few current residents have been displaced by rising rent prices thus far. Rent prices in Brownsville (for unsubsidized units) are currently rising to match inflation rates and market trends—though they have decreased a bit in recent months, currently sitting at a median price of $2,200 as of July 2022 ([Patch](https://patch.com/new-york/brownsville/brownsville-rental-searches-surge-tenants-skip-manhattan-study)). For Brownsville’s primarily low-income residents, even a minor increase in rent can make finding affordable housing—especially on the government’s fixed-rate housing vouchers and stipends—nearly impossible. Furthermore, a survey by the Community Service Society reported that 43% of respondents living below the federal poverty line in NYC (including those in Brownsville) reported a rent increase in 2021 ([City Limits](https://citylimits.org/2022/03/15/for-lower-income-new-yorkers-covid-rents-never-really-went-down/)), despite widespread pandemic rent deals on mid-level and luxury apartments. Though residents living in public housing or rent-stabilized units in Brownsville are protected from major rent hikes, rising maintenance costs combined with stable rent prices can lead to diminished apartment quality and amenities.