

Designing a Home Share Program for Asylum Seeking Migrants in New York City

by

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ABSTRACT

Throughout 2022, 2023, and 2024 increasing numbers of asylum-seeking migrants have sought shelter in New York City through the city's shelter system. To provide shelter to asylum-seekers, New York City expended shelter capacity by expanding services at congregate shelters, contracting with hotels to provide emergency shelter, and by opening Humanitarian Emergency Response and Relief Centers.

In late 2022, Enterprise Community Partners was contracted to evaluate the feasibility of operating a home share program for asylum-seeking migrants as an alternative to New York City's shelter system. By early 2024 Enterprise completed the design of a home share program for asylum-seeking migrants. In their analysis, Enterprise found that difficulties recruiting hosts was one of the biggest challenges to operating the home share program.

Enterprise's program design focuses on minimizing the level of engagement and effort required of hosts, to lower the bar to entry for participation in the program. This thesis explores Enterprise's research process, and proposes a program structure oriented on making hosting a more substantive experience and to build on the strengths of a potential program operator. Similarly, during the earlier phases of Enterprise's research, Enterprise considered focusing the program on specific neighborhoods in New York City, but Enterprise ultimately moved on from a neighborhood specific strategy. This thesis identifies which neighborhoods would be most suitable for a home share program, based on Enterprise's initial criteria.

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Introduction

This thesis is conducted as an extension of my ongoing work with Enterprise Community Partners, who were contracted to conduct a feasibility study on the feasibility of a home share program for asylum seeking migrants in New York City. The determination of the feasibility of the program would be dependent on Enterprise's ability to provide discrete program design recommendations to govern the program, and for the program to be impactful, scalable, and legal.

Enterprise Community Partners is one of the largest nonprofit affordable housing developers in the United States, and over time they have branched out into other parts of the economic development ecosystem. Founded in 1982, Enterprise operates over 23,000 units of housing. As a nonprofit developer, Enterprise specializes in Low Income Housing Tax Credit (LIHTC) projects. However, internal to Enterprise are the other kinds of entities most closely related to LIHTC deals. One arm of Enterprise operates as a Community Development Financial Institution, and among other responsibilities that department syndicates tax credits for LIHTC deals. Enterprise also has what it terms its Solutions team, which focuses on providing capacity building programs, such as providing community development organizations with funding and technical assistance.

During my time at Enterprise, I have worked within their Solutions Team. Enterprise's work on this project was almost entirely carried out by the Solutions Team, and was privately funded. I was present for both working group meetings and attended five of the six focus group meetings. I was an active party to program design and research discussions from June 2023 onwards.

This thesis explores one housing policy program which could be utilized to provide housing to asylum-seekers, while providing them a higher quality of life than the current congregate shelter system does.

Chapter One: The Conditions of the Asylum-Seeker Crisis

Throughout 2022, 2023, and now 2024, cities across the United States have struggled to house asylum-seeking migrants who have come to their communities. During Joe Biden's presidency, significantly more people have sought asylum at the border than in the previous decade. 2022 saw more asylum claims resulting in a credible fear interview, a prerequisite for parole for asylum seekers, processed than any prior year, with 2020, and 2019 respectively having previously set the benchmark.¹

The federal government has offered little direct support to migrants once they are in the United States, instead relying on individual cities and nonprofits to provide migrants with shelter, food, and legal aid. In many places, providing aid to migrants has become an enormous financial challenge because of the scale of the migrant crisis. The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) provided \$363.8 million in funding in fiscal year 2023 to entities providing services to asylum seekers awaiting their immigration proceedings.² While substantial, this level of financing does little to address the scale of funding necessary to adequately support social services programs for asylum seekers.

Providing basic services to asylum seeking migrants has become a more intensive process in the past few years because slow immigration processing timelines have kept many migrants in an indefinite legal limbo, and more migrants coming to the United States do not have kin or community networks to turn to for support once they are in the United States. These two factors, combined with the significant increase in the number of people requesting asylum at the border has

¹ "Immigration Judge Decisions Overturning Asylum Officer Findings in Credible Fear Cases."

² "Shelter and Services Program | FEMA.Gov."

led to multifold increase in the caseload for nonprofits and government agencies providing services to asylum seekers.

The asylum process and the growth of the court backlog

The process of seeking asylum in the United States is a multi-step multi-year process which culminates in asylum-seekers going through court proceedings which result in a determination on their asylum claim. The most common distinction between different kinds of asylum claims is between affirmative asylum claims, made by someone who has a legal status in the United States, and defensive asylum claims, which are made by individuals who have been entered into deportation proceedings. Individuals seeking affirmative asylum already have legal status in the United States, and are allowed to remain in the United States until the completion of their immigration proceedings. For someone seeking defensive asylum to remain in the United States through the completion of their immigration proceedings, they must be paroled. Individuals seeking defensive asylum are complete deportation proceedings if their asylum claim is denied. For individuals who are turned away at the border, they are placed into expedited deportation proceedings.

Individuals who seek asylum at a Port of Entry into the United States must turn themselves over to immigration officials, and seek parole to enter into the United States. Whether a family is given parole is determined by a credible fear interview which evaluates whether the asylee has a credible fear of persecution in their country of origin. If individuals are found to have a credible fear of persecution in their country of origin and are not in bad standing with the United States, they are released into the United States to go through a subsequent immigration trial which will determine if they are granted asylum or not. Individuals have the right to remain in the United States on their parole until the completion of their trial. If individuals are not found to have a credible fear of persecution in their home country or they are in bad standing with the United States, for instance

they were deported in the previous five years, they are not allowed to enter into the United States and instead enter into expedited removal processes.³

The credible fear interview is typically completed within ten days of a migrant requesting asylum.⁴ For those who pass the credible fear interview and are let into the United States, they are in a legal limbo awaiting the conclusion to their proceedings in immigration court, which will determine whether or not they can stay in the United States. Most who are deemed eligible to stay in the United States are granted citizenship. As immigration court delays have grown, migrants are spending more time than ever in this legal limbo.

The two graphs below, created by Syracuse University's Transactional Records Clearinghouse, illustrate the growth in the immigration court backlog. The first figure represents the growth in the backlog of immigration court cases from 2012 to 2021, while the second figure depicts the quarterly growth in the backlog from December of 2016 to December 2023. Together they show that the immigration court backlog has increased substantially since 2012, and that the rate of increase has grown considerably since 2016.

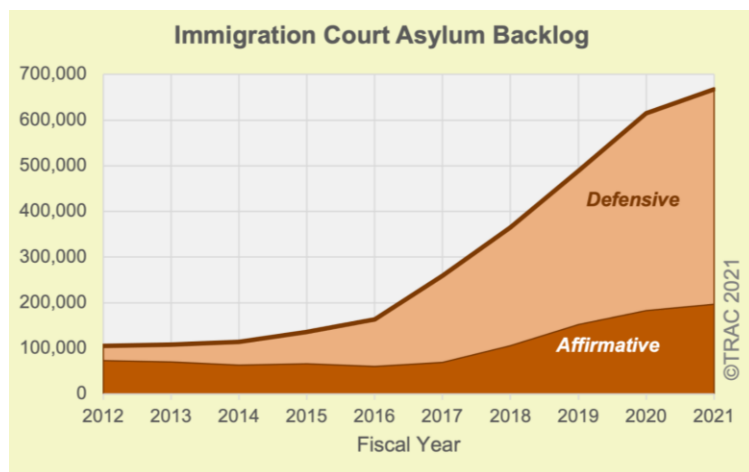


Figure 1 Immigration Court Asylum Backlog 2012-2021⁵

³ Bush-Joseph, "U.S. Border Asylum Policy Enters New Territory Post-Title 42."

⁴ "Immigration Judge Decisions Overturning Asylum Officer Findings in Credible Fear Cases."

⁵ "A Mounting Asylum Backlog and Growing Wait Times."

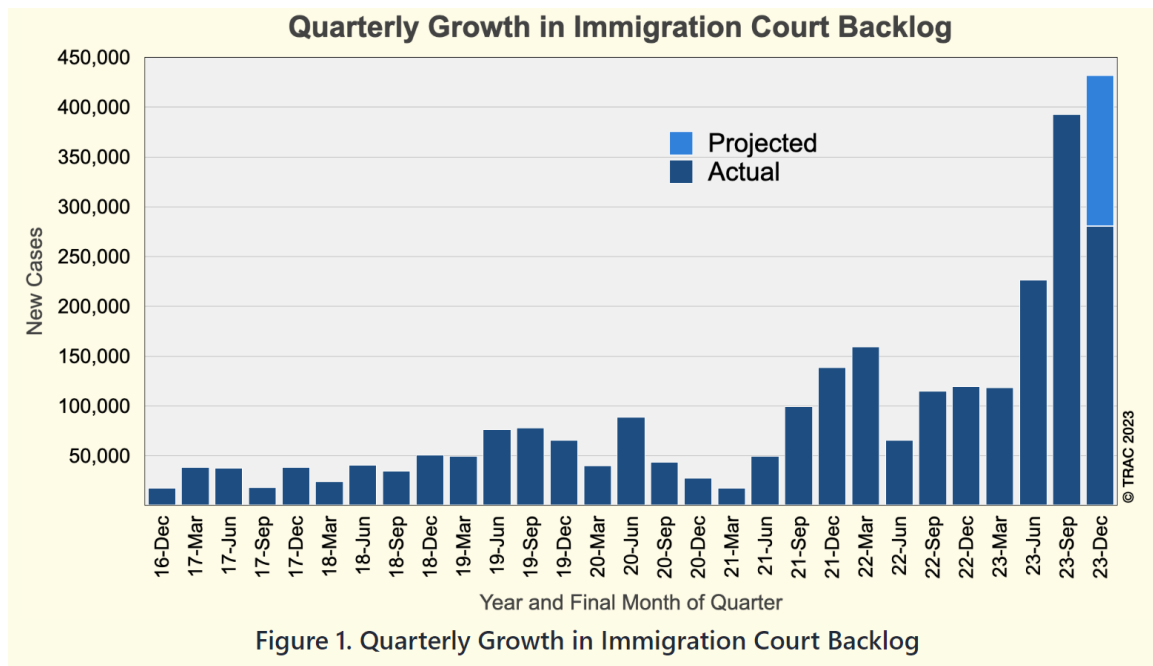


Figure 2 Quarterly Growth in Immigration Court Backlog Dec. 2016 - Dec. 2023⁶

A quick glance at these graphs belies the explosive growth of the immigration court backlog. Despite the fact that Figure One represents the total backlog, and Figure Two represents quarterly growth to the backlog, their y axes are set to a similar scale. The bulk of the growth in the backlog has stemmed from increases in the number of defensive asylum court cases. Between 2012 and 2021 the backlog of affirmative asylum cases increased 2.7 times from 73,676 to 196,994 cases, while the backlog of defensive asylum cases increased 14.6 times from 32,243 to 470,235 cases.⁷

At the end of 2021 the backlog of immigration cases was 667,229, in November of 2022 it hit 2 million cases, and in November of 2023 it his 3 million.⁸ This has been exponential growth, which has burdened the immigration system. As of December 2023, there are 4,500 pending cases for every immigration judge in the United States.⁹ The growth in caseload for judges has led to

⁶ "A Ten-Year Look at Inadmissible Migrants and Paroled Migrants at Ports of Entry."

⁷ "A Mounting Asylum Backlog and Growing Wait Times."

⁸ "Immigration Court Backlog Tops 3 Million; Each Judge Assigned 4,500 Cases."

⁹ "Immigration Court Backlog Tops 3 Million; Each Judge Assigned 4,500 Cases."

increases in wait times for migrants to have their case heard in court. As of 2021, the average wait time between a migrant filing for asylum and their summons in court is 1,621 days, which amounts to four and a half years.¹⁰

To address the growing backlog of asylum cases, the Biden Administration has increased its staffing of immigration judges, and has augmented its' expectations of judges. Back in 2016 Trump had 278 immigration judges who saw an average of 750 cases each per year. The latest records from late 2023 indicate that the Biden Administration has 682 judges hired who are processing on average 975 cases a year.¹¹ Despite increases to staffing, the backlog is growing because of the tremendous number of new asylum seekers in the United States. If the backlog continues to grow at its current pace, asylum seekers will continue to experience longer wait times for their immigration proceedings, absent extraordinary growth in the number of immigration judges.

While the number of new asylum cases and the immigration court backlog grew during the pandemic, it did so despite beefed up pandemic-related immigration restrictions. In March of 2020, the Trump Administration put into effect rule 42, which prevented single adults from soliciting asylum at the border.¹² These limitations did not apply to unaccompanied minors or families. Rule 42 expired in May of 2023, and between March of 2020 and May of 2023 it resulted in 2.8 million instances of individuals who were likely seeking asylum being turned away at the border.¹³ Because individuals could try to enter into the United States numerous times and be expelled multiple times, this figure is not seen as a record of the number of individuals who attempted to enter into the United States at that time.

¹⁰ "A Mounting Asylum Backlog and Growing Wait Times."

¹¹ "Immigration Court Backlog Tops 3 Million; Each Judge Assigned 4,500 Cases."

¹² "Title 42 Has Ended. Here's What It Did, and How US Immigration Policy Is Changing," 42.

¹³ "Title 42 Has Ended. Here's What It Did, and How US Immigration Policy Is Changing," 42.

One immigration policy decision which will have no impact on the case backlog, but which will have strong impacts on the experiences of asylum seekers and entities who provide them assistance are current work authorization timelines. As of January 2024, most asylum seekers cannot receive work authorization until six-months after they have filed for asylum. That used to be the case for everyone, but in September of 2023 the Federal Government struck down that wait time for Venezuelan asylum seekers.¹⁴ Until they have work authorization, asylum seekers are not legally allowed to work in the United States, making them incredibly dependent on aid, whether that comes from the government, non-profits, community members, or relatives. Many asylum seekers are still able to find employment despite their lack of work authorization.

Throughout 2022 and early 2023, migrants were regularly waiting multiple months to have their work authorizations processed. However, by late 2023 the Biden administration was successful in shortening processing timelines, such that most asylum seekers have their employment authorization request filed within a month of their submittal.

At a time when there are more asylum seekers in the United States going through immigration proceedings than ever, the population level characteristics of asylum seekers are also changing. The most significant change is that increasingly asylum seekers are coming to the United States without relatives or loved ones who will host them or help them find a place to live. In the past most asylum seekers would stay with relatives after being paroled into the United States.¹⁵ Absent existing networks which will assist them in their transition to the United States, they are instead having to turn to community organizations, nonprofits, and governmental entities for aid.

The second difference in the makeup of the asylum-seeking population is that in the past most asylum seekers were single adults, whereas now most asylum seekers are families with

¹⁴ "U.S. Allowing Hundreds of Thousands of Venezuelans in the Country to Work Legally."

¹⁵ "What's behind the Influx of Migrants Crossing the U.S. Southern Border?"

children.¹⁶ Families have quite different needs than single adults. In working groups with congregate shelter providers, shelter providers indicated that most single adult asylum seekers have the intention of bringing their families over in the near future. Children have significantly greater needs than adults, such that an increase in the number of families seeking asylum in the United States drastically increases the level of services required.

One reason for the changing demographic characteristics of asylum-seeking migrants is that a higher proportion of asylum seekers are coming from countries that used to produce few asylum seekers to the United States. When there are elements of the community who are well established in the United States, those members are frequently able to support newcomers. In the absence of those connections, there is less support available to newcomers.

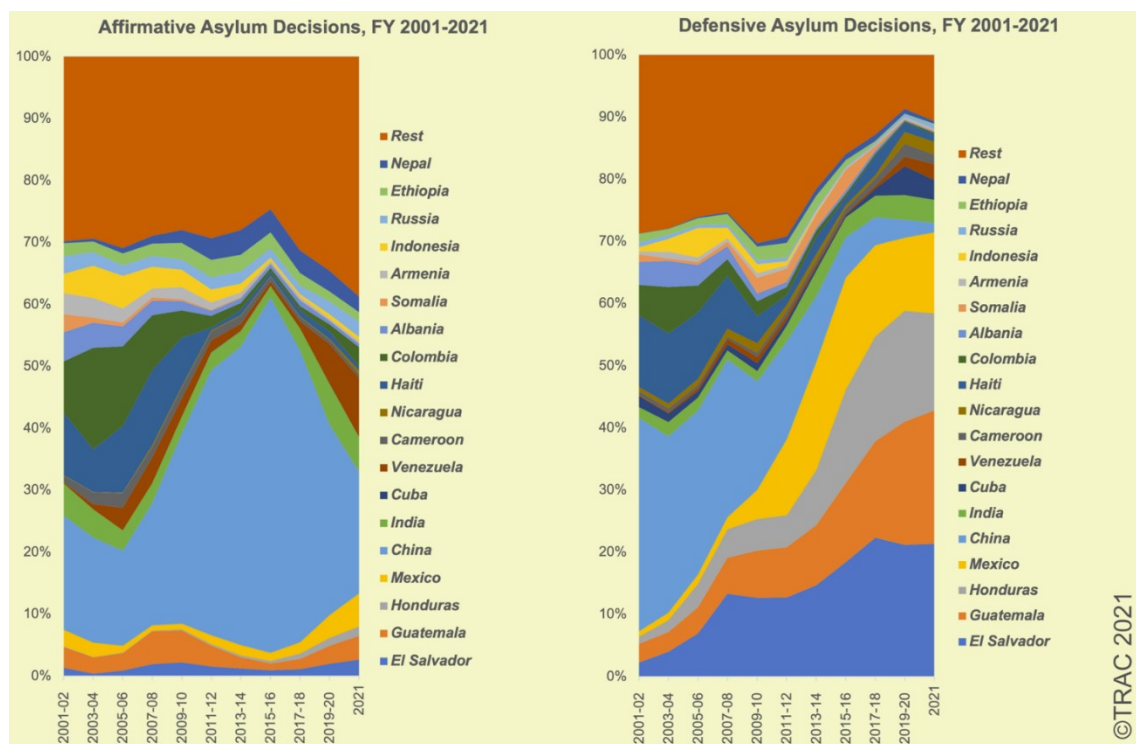


Figure 3 Asylum Decisions, FY 2001-2021

¹⁶ "What's behind the Influx of Migrants Crossing the U.S. Southern Border?"

Figure 3¹⁷, from Syracuse University's Transactional Records Clearinghouse depicts the changing proportions of the countries of origin of asylum seekers. Along the x-axis, asylum-seekers are registered with the year they received their decision in immigration court, rather than when they filed for asylum. As such, this graph reflects a multi-year delay from new asylum seekers as they file for asylum. Notably, since this graph separates affirmative and defensive asylum cases, we should direct most of our attention to defensive asylum claims, because affirmative asylum seekers are more likely to be well established in the United States and be less likely to require substantive housing assistance.

Between 2001 and 2021 the proportion of asylum seekers requesting defensive asylum from Central America and Mexico has skyrocketed. If this graph were updated with data for current outstanding defensive asylum requests, the graph would also register a spike in asylum requests from Venezuela and Haiti. In the past few decades, there has been a clear relationship between countries in Latin America experiencing instability and higher numbers of individuals from those countries coming to the United States and seeking asylum. The cycle of countries experiencing economic instability, and subsequently more individuals from those countries seeking asylum in the United States further increases the number of asylum seekers in the United States who need to turn to the government for significant support, because people from these countries do not have well established networks to receive them.

Dispersal of Asylum-Seekers Across the United States

After being released on parole, asylum seekers are able to move wherever they choose in the United States. While many remain close to where they crossed the border, the arrival of significant migrants to many mid-sized and large cities across the country has registered significant local and

¹⁷ "The Impact of Nationality, Language, Gender and Age on Asylum Success."

regional news coverage. The plight of asylum-seeking migrants has been most visible in New York City, where over 180,000 asylum seeking migrants have arrived since early 2022.¹⁸

One factor which drove immigration to New York City was NYC's Right to Shelter law, which was drastically limited in late 2023. New York City's Right to Shelter was a legal guarantee to provide shelter to all who requested it from the New York City shelters.¹⁹ The mechanisms by which New York City provided shelter changed with different mayoral administrations.²⁰ Massachusetts was the only other jurisdiction to have a Right to Shelter guarantee in the United States, but Governor Healey set a cap to the number of beds the state would provide in late 2023.²¹ In the absence of right to shelter laws or comparable policies, other jurisdictions within the United States do not have a responsibility to provide housing to asylum seeking migrants.

Asylum seekers are eligible for few social services programs, with some homelessness prevention programs being the solitary common exception. Aid to asylum seekers has primarily come from non-profits and community organizations conducting triage efforts.

Throughout 2023, the primary destinations for asylum seekers pursuing defensive asylum were prominent border states and New York. The initial destination of asylum seekers is of significance because asylum seekers file their Notice to Appear with a local immigration court where they are staying. With the multi-year backlog between filing and having immigration court proceedings, the place an asylum seeker files is most often where they spend the ensuing years. Syracuse University's TRAC program produced the following map of the states where defensive asylum seekers scheduled their immigration court appearances in 2023 from January through to August.

¹⁸ News, "NYC Mayor Pushes for National Migrant Strategy amid Asylum-Seeker Influx."

¹⁹ "How New York City's Right-to-Shelter Law Works."

²⁰ "Understanding New York City's 'Right to Shelter.'"

²¹ Sacchetti, "Mass. Gov. Sets Family Shelter Capacity Limit; What Comes Next?"

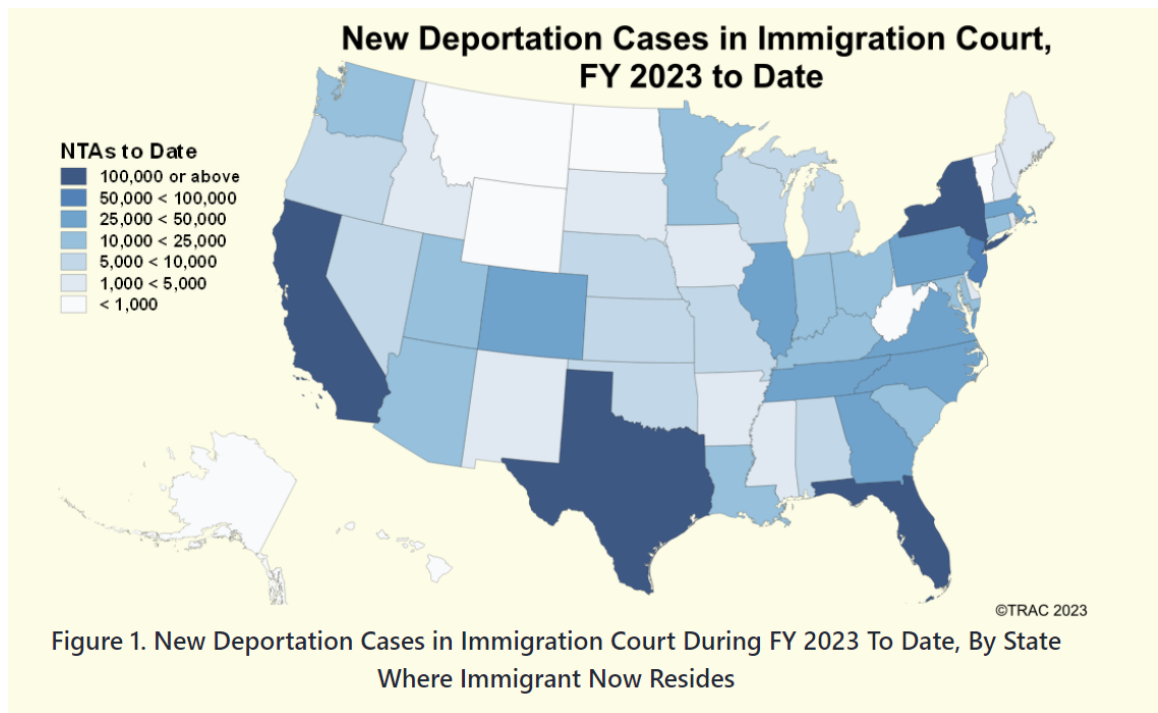


Figure 4 New Deportation Cases in Immigration Court FY 2023 to August 2023, By State Where Immigrant Now Resides²²

California, Texas, and Florida are the primary ports of entry for individuals entering the United States seeking defensive asylum. It makes sense that asylum seekers decide to stay nearby and register with immigration courts near the border. The State of New York is the only other state with over 100,000 Notices to Appear granted in the first eight months of 2023. Within New York state, almost all asylum seekers have submitted their paperwork in New York City. Because many asylum seekers are filing with local courts wherever they first become settled, there is significant local jockeying over where asylum seekers are eligible to stay. Asylum seekers have flocked to New York City in large part because of the city's guarantee to provide shelter to asylum seekers.

Throughout the rest of the country, asylum seekers are also tending to settle in more urban areas. As such, a proper reading of the above map should identify that within these states, asylum seekers are settling in the larger cities of the region. So, of the 50-100k Notices to Appear in Illinois,

²² "Record Number of New Immigration Court Cases Arrive in August; Destinations For Asylum Seekers Shifting."

most of those filings were in the greater Chicago area. Massachusetts, because of its' state level Right to Shelter policies, is an exception, wherein asylum-seeking migrants have spread across the state and are not concentrated in Boston.

Where migrants file in immigration court and settle as they are going through immigration proceedings has been much politicized. The Governor's of Texas and Florida have been raising significant concern about the increasing number of asylum seekers being paroled into the United States for some years. Republican leadership in both states have accused blue states of creating the political and policy conditions for so many asylum seekers to come to the United States, and since 2022 they have been sending asylum seekers to blue states on busses and flights.²³ This tactic, which is primarily political showmanship is ongoing in 2024.²⁴ Between 2022 and January of 2024, the state of Texas has bussed over 90,000 asylum seekers to prominent Democratic-Party-voting cities including New York, Chicago, Philadelphia, Denver, Los Angeles and Washington, DC.²⁵

Within greater metropolitan areas in the United States, there have been local political battles as local leaders have sought to resettle asylum seekers outside of their cities. Most notably, New York City and Chicago have fought with their suburbs and hinterlands in the hope that the rest of their states will take on more asylum seekers. In New York, tensions flared in May of 2023 when New York City mayor Eric Adams began sending busloads of migrants to other cities in the state.²⁶ More recently, the Adams administration has tried to slow down the arrival of new asylum seekers by requiring that buses register ahead of time that they are bringing asylum seekers.²⁷

²³ "Florida, Texas Escalate Flights, Buses to Move Migrants."

²⁴ Bellware, "Migrant Buses Sent to Chicago and New York Suburbs to Flout City Rules."

²⁵ Rose, "Several Chicago Suburbs Vote to Restrict Buses Dropping off Migrants with No Notice."

²⁶ "NYC Sends First Bus of Asylum-Seekers to Suburbs despite Backlash."

²⁷ Mays and Rubinstein, "As Migrant Arrivals Surge, Adams Sets Controls on Bus Arrivals."

Chicago has passed regulations requiring that buses of asylum seekers notify the city of their arrival ahead of time, and that asylum seekers are dropped off during daylight hours.²⁸ Chicago suburbs have also been receiving buses of asylum seekers from Texas and Florida, and some of those suburbs have banned the arrival of future buses.²⁹

The current state of immigration policy in the United States is detrimental to almost everyone involved. Lengthy immigration court backlogs mean that migrants are spending years of their lives in a stressful precarious legal limbo. At the same time, politicians on both sides of the aisle at all levels of government see the current state of affairs as a loss. Anti-immigration Republicans are angered that so much money is being spent providing services to asylum-seekers, many of whom will never have a pathway to citizenship in the United States. Progressives are finding that the financial cost of providing services to asylum-seekers is undercutting their financial ability to fund their progressive agenda.

Immigration policies will be one of the most divisive issues up and down the ballot in the 2024 General Election. Given how controversial existing aid for asylum seekers has been, it is unlikely that more aid will be coming before November. Expanding services and programs for asylum seekers could amount to political suicide for Democrats.

Meanwhile some Republicans are seeking to inflame tensions around immigration. Most notable has been SB 4 in Texas, a controversial law passed in Texas in late 2023 which would “empower state and local law enforcement agencies to enforce immigration law”.³⁰ What that means in practice is that the police would be able to arrest people suspected of being in the country illegally, and Texas judges can order their deportation. Because immigration is the sole authority of

²⁸ Johnson, “More Migrants Arriving in Chicago by Train after City Council’s Recent Bus Ordinance - CBS Chicago.”

²⁹ Rose, “Several Chicago Suburbs Vote to Restrict Buses Dropping off Migrants with No Notice.”

³⁰ Sullivan, “What to Know about SB 4, the Texas Immigration Law in the Courts Now.”

the Federal government, this should have never been implementable, but for a brief while in March of 2024 it was enforceable in Texas.

Chapter Two: Exploring Enterprise Community Partners'

Process for Designing a Home Share Program

For Enterprise, the first step of moving forward with their feasibility study was to establish feasibility criteria for evaluation. Feasibility criteria were established in early spring of 2023, with the intent to conduct preliminary research in the ensuing months, and to conduct focus groups with asylum-seeking migrants and working groups with local service providers in the early summer of 2023. The established feasibility criteria were as follows:

Criteria	Questions
Feasibility	1. Can this program be adopted by NYC? Can it be funded through the NYC government as currently conceived? 2. Have potential operators been identified and vetted? Have they given their opinions on feasibility? 3. Have any barriers to the program execution been identified (legal, financial, etc.)? If so, are there pathways to overcome them? 4. Have near-term or long-term funding sources been identified? 5. What is the timeline of sustainability for this program? 6. Has a framework for the program been established? (How clear is it?) 7. What data is required to be tracked for the program?
Legality	1. Does this program violate any existing laws? (Zoning, housing, criminal, etc.) 2. Will any waivers/ changes be needed to support this program? 3. Are there any policy initiatives needed to support this program?

Impact	1. Does this program already exist? If so, what differentiates this program? 2. How would this program create a greater (or new) impact for the target population or service providers? 3. In what ways would participants be better off because of this program? 4. Could there be any unintended consequences or negative impacts from the program? 5. Have we established a need for the program through data?
Other	1. Have we centered (prioritized) the voice of the target populations in the program design? 2. Have we incorporated an equity lens throughout our process? 3. Have we received feedback from current service providers and organizations? 4. Have we aligned with the goals highlighted by the funder and the city? 5. Is the program cost effective relative to alternatives?

Preliminary Conversations

With the feasibility criteria set, Enterprise began its research process in the spring of 2023. Rather than beginning with in-depth desk research, the Enterprise team began by having numerous conversations with organizations involved in the provision of services to asylum-seeking migrants in New York City. Enterprise had preliminary conversations with over 15 groups in April and May, ranging from community organizations supporting migrants in crisis, to the New York City Department of Social Services.

This project was led by staff at Enterprise’s New York City office, and many of the preliminary conversations grew out of existing relationships team members had with organizations within New York City. One existing relationship which was central to Enterprise’s outlook on this project, was their existing partnership with Impact Justice. Impact Justice is a community organization in the Bay Area which has a number of programs dedicated to the abolition of the carceral state, and to providing programs for individuals after they are released from prison. One of Impact Justice’s flagship programs is the Homecoming Project, a home share program for individuals recently released from prison, which Impact Justice has operated continually since its inception in 2018.

Enterprise’s approach to designing a home share program was to explore the adaptability of Impact Justice’s the Homecoming Project to this project’s target location and target population. The Homecoming Project operates as a fairly traditional non-profit home share program, where the staff belonging to the host organization oversee the program and coordinate referrals for access to services. The caseload and obligations of the program coordinator are the limiting factor in determining how many participants they can oversee in a program. Employing a program coordinator in the mold of Impact Justice’s model entails a significant limit on the number of program participants, due to capacity constraints.

Some of the biggest initial program design questions were:

- What would program participants want in a home share environment?
- What would a successful host recruitment strategy look like?
- How to best connect program participants to resources?
- What kinds of compensation would participating hosts receive?
- What is the appropriate duration for a home share program.?

The first round of preliminary conversations focused heavily on different policies that were being bandied about as a means for providing housing to asylum-seekers. Staff at the New York City Department of Social Services and the Mayor's Office identified that a home share program could be a particularly successful means of housing asylum-seekers, because it could be an efficient use for underutilized bedrooms in New York City.

While conversations with some organizations focused on policy considerations, others primarily focused on the existing housing and asylum-seeker conditions in New York City. Time and time again in preliminary conversations, service providers raised the issue that the current bunch of asylum-seekers were arriving in New York City without the social networks that prior migrants arrived with. Furthermore, that it was particularly new migrants from Latin America, from countries such as Venezuela, that were arriving with the fewest networks, while migrants from other countries, including Ukraine, had an existing network capable of receiving them.

Enterprise spoke to a number of operators of congregate shelters which were a part of the Department of Social Services network. Operators of congregate shelters shared that for migrants who moved to New York City without support networks, assistance acclimating to New York City was one of their biggest needs. Furthermore, that migrants were really struggling socially in the shelter environment, because families shared all aspects of their lives with one another and tensions would build. Enterprise also spoke to community organizations providing emergency services, who shared that migrants were returning to them to seek services after entering the shelter system, because they were still desperate for assistance.

One of the feasibility criteria which was fleshed out during preliminary conversations was "Does this program already exist? If so, what differentiates this program?". In conversations with other organizations, it became apparent that there were other home share programs for asylum seeking migrants across the United States, and even some in New York, but none of the ones in

New York City utilized Impact Justice’s non-profit model with an involved case manager. Enterprise partnered with one organization operating a home share program for asylum-seeking migrants in New York City, Artists-Athletes-Activists (AAA).

Artists-Athletes-Activists was a hugely beneficial partner organization in this process, and their partnership included helping Enterprise convene focus groups of migrants. AAA is a community organization who has received coverage in the New York Times³¹ and other mainstream press for their wide-ranging support to migrants. Most notably, they have garnered significant publicity for greeting buses of asylum-seeking migrants at the bus terminal and helping connect them to resources in New York City. In their dedication to helping migrants, they have also grown to provide a number of other programs including a home share program for migrants.

As of the fall of 2023, AAA’s home share program was focused on finding temporary accommodations for recently arrived migrants before they were able to enter into the New York City shelter system. This would regularly entail a multi-night stay. However, in some instances where participants clicked very well with their hosts, the migrants would stick around as roommates on a semi-permanent basis. AAA would recruit hosts via word of mouth, such that hosts were recruited by friends and through the communication channels of other community organizations. Through their host and volunteer network, AAA became a hub for organizing around migrants. While we never received clear figures on the number of migrants being hosted through AAA’s program, it was in the order of hundreds of migrants. Hosts participating in AAA’s program do not receive any compensation for their efforts and do so on a completely voluntary basis.

The success of AAA’s home share program demonstrated that a home share environment could improve the experience of migrants, and that it would be possible to recruit hosts for the program. However, AAA’s program model was pronouncedly different than what Enterprise was

³¹ Zraick, “How New Yorkers Are Stepping In to Help Asylum Seekers.”

considering. From the outset, Enterprise was evaluating the possibility of operating a fully licensed program that would connect participants to needed services, and would entail a robust case manager position. This kind of home share model would need to be hosted by a non-profit already in the business of providing shelter or referrals, or in partnership with a nonprofit in that role. Designing something akin to AAA's program would be out of the question. No doubt the un-bureaucratized nature of AAA's program is one driver of their organizational flexibility which supports them in placing asylum-seekers in home with such a quick turnaround.

From the outset, alongside preliminary conversations, Enterprise began conducting research to better understand the characteristics of the asylum-seeker crisis in New York City and New York City's housing landscape. One enormous challenge for this project has been that throughout 2023, arrivals of asylum-seekers without support networks to New York City were a constant. This produced a changing landscape in terms of the type and scale of services being provided to asylum-seekers in New York City, culminating with New York City mayor Eric Adams to suspend New York City's Right to Shelter policy in October of 2023.³²

Arrival rates varied throughout 2023, with a highpoint of 5,800 asylum seekers arriving in one week in May 2023. Then, June 26, 2023 marked the first day that asylum-seekers outnumbered local shelter residents in city-run shelters, reaching a total of 50,000 new arrivals receiving housing assistance at that point in time.³³ More recently, between 3,000 and 4,000 asylum seekers arrived per week in late September and early October.³⁴

As the political and service provision landscape for asylum-seeking migrants in New York City changed, this program continued to feel that it would occupy a valuable place in the housing ecosystem, as an opportunity to improve quality of life for migrants while providing services more

³² Fitzsimmons, "New York City Moves to Suspend Right-to-Shelter Mandate."

³³ Russo, "NYC Housing More Asylum Seekers than Homeless NYers in Migrant Crisis First."

³⁴ "As Number Of Asylum Seekers In City's Care Tops 64,100, City Announces Additional Policies For Asylu."

cheaply than in hotels. In 2023, under coordination from the Department of Homeless Services, the city ran 210 emergency shelters, including 17 Humanitarian Emergency Response and Relief Centers (HERRCs), to meet the increasing need for housing and supportive services as a result of the influx of migrants.³⁵ By mid-October, the city housed 64,100 migrants in emergency hotel shelters or Humanitarian Emergency Response and Relief Centers (HERRCs).

In March of 2023, New York City's Comptroller released a report estimating that the cost per day for the newly contracted emergency hotels came to \$184 for single adults and \$339 for families, including rental payments.⁸ By contrast, longstanding DHS shelters spent \$135.83 per night for single adults and \$188.20 per night on families with children in FY 2022.⁹ With an average length of shelter stay of 509 days in FY22 for single adults,¹⁰ it can be estimated that the shelter system spent over \$69,000 for each adult at that time. For families with children, who averaged 534 days in shelter, that average total came to approximately \$100,000. The increasing cost of providing shelter through the DSS network, as more emergency shelters and hotels had to be brought online, was interpreted by Enterprise as an ongoing justification that there was a place for a home share program as a more financially efficient alternative which would improve the experiences of asylum-seekers.

In comparison to the state of the migrant housing crisis, which was everchanging, Enterprise's assessment of the housing landscape in New York City was relatively unchanged throughout the project. However, it was unclear how the assessment New York City's housing landscape would play a role in program design considerations. Initially it appeared that the home share program might target a particular part of the city to operate in, under the assumption that it would be easier to conduct targeted outreach to hosts within a specific area, and that the sponsoring organization could specialize in local referrals. However, as the program moved forward it became

³⁵ "As Number Of Asylum Seekers In City's Care Tops 64,100, City Announces Additional Policies For Asylu."

apparent that host recruitment strategies would likely be up to the expertise of a sponsoring organization, such that it was unnecessary to provide an identified regional focus during the assessment stage of the process.

To better understand the New York City housing landscape, Enterprise placed the New York City Housing and Vacancy Survey in conversation with Census data. Research on housing in New York City had four priorities (1) Determine the areas of the city with the largest number of underutilized bedrooms (2) Identify figures to benchmark host stipends to (3) Identify the ability to access services/employment (4) Identify ethnic/cultural enclaves where migrants would find it easiest to adapt to New York City.

Unfortunately, the New York City Housing and Vacancy Survey is only conducted every three years, and was last conducted in 2021, so the data was slightly out of date by 2023. Similarly, the Census Data we utilized for our analysis was ACS 5-year estimates 2017-2021. The Housing and Vacancy Survey conducts much of its analysis at the borough level and found that Manhattan was the borough with the highest vacancy rate at 10.01%, followed by Queens and Staten Island at 4.15%, which the Housing and Vacancy Survey grouped together into one measurement, then Brooklyn at 2.73%, and lastly the Bronx at 0.78%.³⁶

To further assess the vacancy rate, Enterprise gathered census data on the number of owner occupied units in each borough. The idea being that renters are much more likely to right-size to their housing, such that they would have few empty bedrooms in their apartments. In comparison, given the cost of housing in New York City, many property owners would remain in units with underutilized bedrooms because of lifestyle changes. For instance, a property owner might have purchased a home with the intent to raise a family there, but now their adult children have moved away and there are underutilized bedrooms. This thought had been elevated as a point of synergy

³⁶ US Census Bureau, "2023 New York City Housing and Vacancy Survey Selected Initial Findings," 26.

during conversations with community partners. One organization reported that they operated a foreclosure prevention program in New York City, and that many of their program participants were elderly couples living in larger units that they could not afford, and that had vacant bedrooms.

The census data is as follows:

Borough	Total Number of Units	Total Number of owner-occupied Units	Percentage of units that are owner- occupied
Brooklyn	1,085,993	303,368	30.3%
Queens	902,754	374,621	45.6%
Staten Island	184,154	119,237	69.8%
Bronx	552,421	104,431	19.6%
Manhattan	916,609	184,279	25.0%
New York City	3,641,931	1,085,936	33.3%

Two things that emerge from this analysis are (1) the sheer number of housing units in New York City and (2) that the Bronx is the borough with the tightest housing market. However, it was indeterminate what either of these data points would mean for our program design. New York City has so many underutilized housing units, just because of the sheer number of units, that with a successful host recruitment strategy, a home share program could theoretically be operated in any part of the city. To that effect, despite the fact that it had the tightest housing market, many asylum-seekers involved with AAA were living in the Bronx.

Enterprise expected from the beginning that a successful home share program would require providing compensation to hosts. As such, the purpose to identifying the average per-bedroom rental costs in New York City by borough was to figure out what parts of the city it would be most

affordable to operate a home share program, if host stipend were proportional to rental costs.

Manhattan leads with the highest per-bedroom average market rate rent of all five boroughs in the City (\$1,884.58), followed by Brooklyn (\$1,427.39), Queens (\$1,152.52), Bronx (\$1,061.29), and finally, Staten Island (\$838.87).

Another figure Enterprise turned to in an effort to evaluate potential host compensation were CityFHEPS figures. CityFHEPS is a rental assistance supplement offered by New York City's Department of Social Services to individuals in poverty who are not on other housing assistance programs. As of January 2023, CityFHEPs allowed up to \$1,751 in subsidy (including utilities) for a Single Room Occupancy Unit, \$2,335 for a Studio, \$2,387 for a One-Bedroom, and \$2,696 for a Two-Bedroom.³⁷

However, as with the assessment of available bedroom capacity across the city, it was inconclusive the relationship per unit rental costs would have to host compensation. Host compensation would need to be something fine-tuned iteratively within an existing program.

To study the importance of location for access to jobs and services, Enterprise placed Transit Center's Equity Dashboard "Job's Reachable" map of New York City in conversation with Homebase and GetFood locations. Transit Center's map demonstrates that the ability to access more jobs in New York City is most closely associated with proximity to Lower Manhattan, and proximity to subway lines that feed into Manhattan.³⁸ In Transit Center's model, the user can adjust the length of commute which is utilized to determine job access. The attached map reflects job access with a commute length of 45 minutes. As you increase commute time, access to transportation becomes increasingly visible in the trends of the graph, as access to jobs becomes

³⁷ NYC Department of Social Services, "DSS CityFHEPS Payment Standards Effective 01/01/2024."

³⁸ TransitCenter, "New York Map - TransitCenter Equity Dashboard."

more stratified by proximity to train lines. Notably, even with significant increases in commute time, Staten Island continues to have significantly worse job access than the other boroughs.

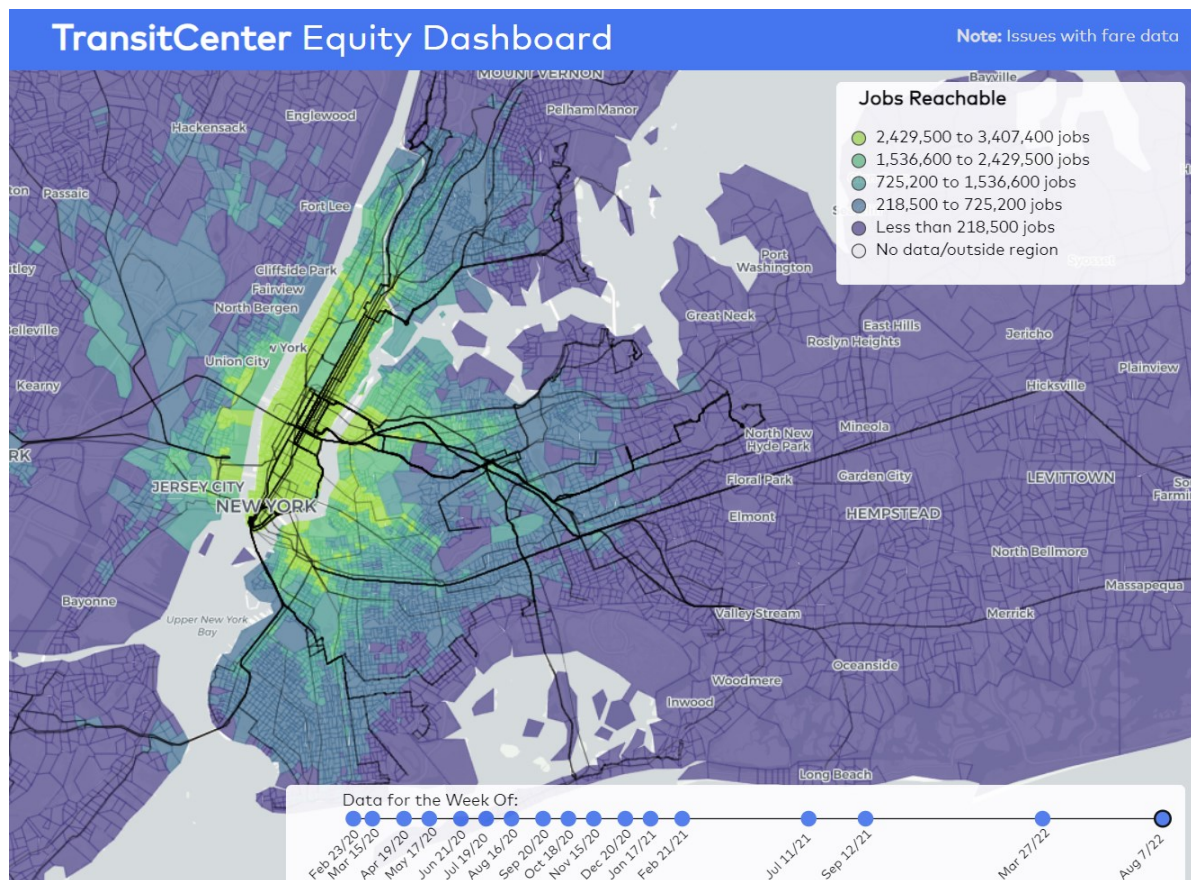


Figure 5 TransitCenter Equity Dashboard: Jobs Accessible Within a 45 Minute Commute³⁹

Asylum-seeking migrants are not eligible for many benefits, including SNAP, however in New York City they are eligible for most anti-homelessness programs. Two food assistance programs with many locations around New York City are Homebase and Grab & Go meals. Homebase locations are most common in the Brooklyn and the Bronx with each borough having ten locations each, followed by Manhattan, Queens, and Staten Island which are all served by two

³⁹ TransitCenter.

locations each.⁴⁰ Grab & Go meals is most concentrated in Brooklyn, Manhattan, and the Bronx, with well over a hundred total locations.⁴¹

The location of anti-homeless supportive services and the implications of the access to jobs map, which is also effectively a map of transit interconnectivity to Lower Manhattan, demonstrates that Staten Island is more isolated than the other boroughs on both fronts. On those grounds Enterprise decided to recommend that a home share program prioritize the boroughs other than Staten Island.

The last question Enterprise sought to examine with their desk research was to identify ethnic/cultural enclaves where migrants would find it easiest to adapt to New York City. Enterprise's analysis focused on identifying which parts of the city had the highest percentage of Spanish-speakers and foreign-born individuals. Throughout NYC there are many predominantly Latino neighborhoods particularly along the Brooklyn-Queens border, in Northwestern Queens, and in the southern Bronx. However, given the interconnectivity of New York City within the four inner boroughs, it was unclear what role this analysis would have in Enterprise's recommendations.

Enterprise wrapped up its preliminary conversations and background research by the beginning of June 2023. The following phase of the project was to explore program design considerations with asylum-seeking migrants in focus groups, and organizations providing services to asylum-seekers in working groups. The focus groups and working groups took place during July and August.

Preliminary conversations with organizations across New York City demonstrated that there was interest in a home-share program from the public sector, both non-profits and governmental entities in New York City, and that there were standard procedures for how a non-profit home share

⁴⁰ NYC Department of Social Services, "Homebase Locations."

⁴¹ Marchand, "New York City Homelessness + Possible Affordable Housing."

program would operate. Furthermore, the success of AAA's program demonstrated that there was the potential to recruit hosts to participate across New York City. However, AAA's position as a community organization means that participating hosts did so because they were mission aligned, such that it was unclear if their success recruiting hosts would be replicable. In contrast, the background research on housing conditions in New York City, other than deciding that it would be unideal to operate a program with a focus on Staten Island, was largely indeterminate.

Focus Groups and Working Groups

Enterprise convened many of the organizations it held preliminary conversations with in two working groups, which took place in June and July respectively. The goal of these meetings was to begin to narrow in on program design specifics, and to identify points of agreement across organizations as well as points of disagreement. Organizations represented in the Working Group meetings included: Acacia; Artists-Athletes-Activists; CAMBA; Community Housing Innovations, Inc. (CHI); HELP USA; Legal Aid Society; Project Hospitality; RiseBoro; Samaritan Daytop Village; VIP Community Services; Volunteers of America Greater New York; and representatives from DSS.

Separately, Enterprise convened groups of asylum-seeking migrants, asking them to speak to their experiences and preferences, as a core input to the program design process. These meetings happened the week of July 31st and across all of the meetings Enterprise engaged 63 migrants. Additionally, Enterprise also spoke with participants in AAA's home share program, both hosts and participants, to learn more about their experiences sharing a unit.

The first Working Group meeting took place on June 23rd over Zoom. The meeting began with a presentation by Impact Justice providing an overview of how their home share program, the Homecoming Project operates. Much of Impact Justice's operations were accepted as standard operating procedure by those participating in the meeting. In their presentation, Impact Justice reported that the biggest challenge for them in operating their home share program has been host

recruitment. Many of their hosts chose to participate in the program because they already have experience interacting with justice involved individuals. Furthermore, if a host and participant find themselves in a quality roommate relationship, frequently the participant will remain in that unit as a roommate, and the program loses a host.

In the discussion following Impact Justice's presentation, the largest points of conversation were how to set expectations with program participants, the need to decide on the target population of the home share program, and discussions about ideal program length. All of these were topics for future discussion, rather than answers produced in the working group. Many of the concerns would be additional oversight responsibilities for the case manager.

Two concerns which would be best addressed through the closer scrutiny of a case manager would be to protect program participants from additional unallowed obligations placed on them by hosts, and concerns about how to best clarify expectations to participants. Members of the working group were quite concerned that hosts would take advantage of program participants, and charge them an additional rent or task them with household responsibilities. At the same time, some of the organizations providing shelter to migrants reported that once migrants felt a bit settled, they sent for their families who would come and join them in shelter. The home share program would either need to accommodate this trend, or make explicitly clear that participants could not be joined by their family in their unit.

The other two points of program design which were elevated in the first working group meeting were program length, and whether or not the program should include families. On the first matter, working group participants indicated that any program length shorter than six-months would be significantly less efficient to administer, and would likely have worse outcomes for participants. Concerning the target population, shelter providers indicated that families and single adults have very different needs, such that operating a program for both individuals and families would be akin

to running two separate programs. Indeed, it was suggested that if the home share program went forward serving both families and single adults, it might be better to have the two sides of the program administered by different organizations.

The second working group meeting took place on July 6th over Zoom, with the goal of further fleshing out program design, feasibility, and implementation considerations. Entering this meeting, Enterprise had still not decided whether the program would prioritize single adults or families, and the conversation continued in this meeting addressing both sets of possibilities. The conversation built off of the first working group by seeking to adapt Impact Justice's model, rather than starting from scratch.

Participating organizations felt that asylum-seeking migrants would have more difficulty adapting to life in New York City than recently released prisoners would in the Bay Area, because of a lack of experience in the United States, and in New York City specifically. As a result, participants argued that migrants would need additional supports to acclimate them to the United States. One way to provide more support to migrants would be to extend the program length, for a longer home share duration. Furthermore, because migrants are not eligible for most standard services, case management would be more difficult as well. While it wasn't exactly working well, operators of congregate shelters reported that through the shelter system migrants were able to access case managers, even if those case managers were well over capacity.

One of the outcomes of the meeting was to identify a list of the services a case manager would need to provide to migrants. That list was as follows:

- Language translation services and support navigating application processes and technology barriers.
- Legal support or representation to guide through migration process
- Work authorization/ support

- Nonprofit/cultural/social/ services and benefits connections including:
 - Housing navigator with targeted services for these migrants - e.g., w language access
 - Access to healthcare
 - Childcare
- Recreation and community activities (especially for families with children)
- Citizenship education (information about the test/ civic information)

The biggest concern raised in this meeting was the relationship this program would have to stability for migrants, in particular housing stability. Would migrants be able to secure stable housing when exiting from the program? Shelter operators in the DSS system shared that one of the metrics they are evaluated on is the recidivism rate of individuals leaving shelter. If individuals return to shelter within a year after exiting shelter, that is interpreted as a negative. If an asylum-seeker graduated from the program in six-months and returned to a shelter, not only would that be a bad outcome for them, but it would appear as a failure within DSS's tracking system.

One takeaway about the program structure that emerged from the second working group meeting is that the home share program would most likely need to be operated in partnership with multiple different organizations, because of the narrowness of expertise. While non-profits in the shelter network would be quite capable of providing case management services and referrals to service providers, they would not have existing relationships to leverage for host recruitment. Participants agreed that at the very least, it would be important to partner with an organization who would focus on host recruitment. In particular it would be important to find an organization to recruit hosts who would access hosts who would participate because of the mission of the program. One idea would be to partner with an organization who runs programs supporting migrants through religious organizations.

Another prominent point of discussion during the meeting were the different needs of single adults as opposed to families. Not only would families require more and different services than single adults, but they would also utilize space differently. It would be difficult for families to take up minimal space in a home, merely occupying a vacant bedroom. After this focus group meeting, Enterprise staff learned towards designing a home share program exclusively for single adults and not families. However, the decision was not locked in.

The week of July 31st, 2023 Enterprise staff convened six focus groups with migrants to learn more about their experiences and housing preferences. Five of the focus groups were with migrants seeking asylum status, and the final focus group was with migrants from the Caribbean about their immigrant experience, and their interest in being hosts in a home share program for asylum seeking migrants.

Two focus groups took place each on July 31st, August 1st, and August 2nd. The focus groups on the 31st were convened by AAA, the focus groups on the 1st by the Neighborhood Association for Inter-Cultural Affairs (NAICA), and those on the 2nd by RiseBoro Community Partnership.

Artists-Athletes-Activists is a community organization that prior to the pandemic operated food assistance and youth programs in New York City. As the asylum-seeker situation in New York City has intensified, they have stepped up to provide a number of triage services to migrants, greeting them at the bus terminal, operating an informal home share program, and more. AAA hosted their meetings from a community space where they were offering legal assistance earlier in the day. In addition to interfacing with Spanish speaking migrants from Latin America, AAA also had strong inroads with migrants from Africa. The legal aid AAA had been offering earlier in the day was staffed by interpreters who spoke French and Arabic. For their focus groups, AAA convened one group of men, many of whom were Arabic speakers, and a group of Spanish speaking

women. AAA also convened a number of separate virtual interviews with home share hosts and queer asylum seekers.

NAICA is a Bronx-based non-profit that has operated housing programs since 1974, including homeless services and stabilization, eviction prevention, supportive housing, and tenant advocacy. They participated in the Enterprise research process, providing input from their experience as a congregate shelter provider. NAICA is a relatively large congregate shelter provider, with multiple offices and housing units across the Bronx. NAICA convened their focus groups at one of their offices in the Bronx. The focus groups consisted of one focus group of single men, and another of families and women. All of the individuals convened by NAICA's preferred language was Spanish.

RiseBoro Community Partnership, based in Brooklyn, is a longstanding nonprofit running housing and community focused programs, including operating multiple shelters. RiseBoro hosted their two focus groups in two separate buildings they operate in Brooklyn. One focus group consisted of longstanding black migrants from the Caribbean, and the other group consisted of Spanish-speaking mixed adults. The meeting with older Caribbean migrants focused on their experiences seeking housing in New York City, and recommendations for how to cater to hosts in a home share program.

During preparation for the focus groups, Enterprise looked to segregate most of the focus groups by gender out of a concern that women, and in particular Spanish-speaking women, would not participate in the same ways if there were men present in the group, due to cultural mores. Moreover, given the need to determine whether the program would focus on single adults and/or families with children, the gendered split was useful in that respect as well, because most adult women who participated in our process were also mothers.

In each focus group, participants were provided with an introductory questionnaire, of which an English version can be found in **Appendix A**. The results of the questionnaire indicated that over 60 percent of individuals who had previously shared a home with people outside of their family found that to have been a positive experience, and over 80 percent who had not previously shared a home with nonrelatives would be interested in participating in a home share program.

The main agenda items for discussion with asylum-seeking migrants were:

- Preferred host-participant relationship
- Preferred housing agreements/norms
- Housing location preferences
- Most significant concerns about a home share experience

Enterprise created the following matrix to visualize thematically the points of conversation during the focus groups:

Emergency Services	Housing Stability	Economic Stability	Social Services	Migratory Status	Emotional Stability
Food	Housing (apartment/house)	Employment /Income	Child Care	Legal Aid	Psychologist
Shelter	Access to a kitchen		Transportation Aid		Peace
Health Insurance	Rent/Security Deposit Assistance		Educational Opportunities	Work Authorization	Freedom/Liberty
Baby supplies (diapers, formula, bottled water)	Privacy	Vocational Training	English Language Classes		Privacy

Figure 6 Themes from Enterprise's Focus Groups with Asylum Seeking Migrants

Asylum-seeking migrants across the groups were very eager to leave the congregate shelter system, and indicated that they would be happy to accept almost any rules in a roommate situation, as long as there was mutual respect. Enterprise staff found this feedback complicating, because it spoke to a latent possibility for exploitation from potential participants, but it was also encouraging

about the ability to place individuals in homes. Within the framework of mutual respect, many of the norms individuals brought up were more so individual preferences than population level preferences. Participants consistently indicated that they would be happy to follow whatever agreements they would consent to when joining the program.

One consistent preference asylum-seekers had across groups was a preference to live in a home share environment where drunkenness or use of drugs is not present. Many participants indicated that they would feel comfortable living with someone who drank, but they would not want them to bring that energy back into the home. This preference was clearly the outcome of having little personal space since they began their journey to the United States, such that they were in situations where they could not disengage from people abusing drugs and alcohol. Another preference that arose during the focus groups was a preference to live in a home without pets.

Discussions around preferences were put forward with an understanding that the home share program would include a robust matching process to match participants and hosts. Within this context, participant preferences would be captured as another item within the matching process.

There was an enormous split between different populations in terms of how they felt about living with children. For parents, the wellbeing of their child was their top priority, and they were very concerned about the interactions other roommates might have with their children. At the same time, single men were concerned that when living with children, there would be no best way to engage with the children, such that they were afraid to befriend the children of roommates. Families also indicated that in a home share environment they were concerned about roommates being frustrated with the inflexible routines of children (going to school in the morning, bedtime routines). In contrast, the most equivalent concern brought up by single-men was that many of them found employment in night jobs, such that they would need to live in a housing unit where they could

shower and prepare some food for themselves whenever they get home from work in the early morning.

Asylum-seekers spoke to a general need to live proximate to transit, otherwise expressing few preferences about the location of their housing, although some migrants did express a preference to remain in their current neighborhood to remain in community with their current social circles.

In addition to desiring a respectful roommate environment, migrants also expressed a hope to be friends with their host. Another prominent desire was assistance learning how to navigate New York City, because acclimating had been a slow difficult process.

During the RiseBoro focus group with longtime Caribbean residents, participants expressed mixed feelings about participating in a home share program. Much of the conversation was devoted to horrible roommate experiences.

In the preceding and consecutive weeks to the in-person focus groups in New York City, Enterprise staff conducted virtual interviews with hosts in AAA's home share program and queer migrants connected to AAA. Enterprise met with these groups individually because of difficulty convening focus groups of AAA hosts, and out of a belief that queer migrants would not feel comfortable speaking to that experience in a group of peers from their country of origin.

The individuals we spoke with who are participating hosts in AAA's home share program indicated that they participate due to a desire to make a difference amidst the current crisis. They participate as hosts without compensation, and frequently support migrants in acquiring clothing and other basics upon entry arrival in their home. They reported having some issues with participants in AAA's program, but all of those individuals were moved to other places by AAA. However, the biggest challenge they brought up for the program is ideal program length. Some of the hosts we spoke to indicated that they are happy to share their home with others as much as

possible, but that their children return home for the holidays each year. Such that it would be difficult for them to take on new housemates for a long tenancy, because they need the flexibility to host family members.

Hosts participating in AAA's program brought up multiple program design ideas to improve the matching process for hosts and asylum seekers. For instance, one host recommended having a trial period of a few days to a week as a part of the matching process. Another host brought up that some home share arrangements will simply not work out, so it would be important to have temporary alternative accommodations for participants while they are directed to another host or as they exit the program. In the interviews with queer asylum-seeking migrants, migrants expressed the same willingness to agree to specific rules as long as there was mutual respect between the host and the participant.

Chapter Three: Enterprise's Program Design and Strategies for Altering the Host and Host Organization Experience

This chapter begins by providing further context on the timeline of Enterprise's research, then it provides Enterprise's working program model, and it finishes by providing commentary to the working model. Rather than providing the program model line by line, this chapter illustrates the main components of the program design in the form of separate illustrations depicting the experiences of hosts and participants navigating the program.

Enterprise produced an initial program design model as an output from the focus groups and working groups. To solicit more feedback, in particular on host recruitment strategies and host stipend amounts, Enterprise engaged in a research sprint with Community Housing Innovations, which wrapped up in December of 2023. At the end of December, Enterprise held an internal feasibility determination conversation, to evaluate whether the project was on track to produce an operable home share program model. The team's consensus was a resounding yes!

Throughout the first few months of 2024 the Enterprise team has further refined the program design, and has sought funding for a pilot program. As of the writing of this document, Enterprise has been unable to obtain funding for a pilot program. A pilot program would be most beneficial for testing host recruitment strategies and host compensation mechanisms, while participant preferences have been well documented from the focus groups and working groups.

In the absence of a pilot program, Enterprise staff have been having conversations with operators of successful home share programs for asylum seeking migrants across the United States. This is a significant departure from the kinds of conversations Enterprise was having in earlier phases of the project, in that much of Enterprise's initial analysis was explicitly New York City focused, whereas current conversations are with organizations across the country. Two

organizations Enterprise met with in February are Quality Housing Coalition in Portland, Maine and Home is Here NOLA.

One significant challenge for Enterprise when interpolating from the successes of other programs, is the reality that Enterprise will not be the operator of the program it designs. Frequently the people spearheading small organizations and programs are the reason for their success, more so than some unique program design element they are employing. The best place for Enterprise to input these considerations into their program design model is when developing the criteria for a host organization.

The Quality Housing Coalition's Project Home is a home share program that has been operating since 2018. Since the pandemic began, most participants in the home share program have been asylum seeking migrants. Project Home requires that hosts commit to a year-long lease, during which time they are paid a rent of \$750-900 per month for participating in the home share program. The Quality Housing Coalition identified that staff capacity, specifically because of all of the supplemental work required to assist asylum seekers, is a real challenge; so too is placing asylum seekers in locations with quality access to services. Project Home has maintained consistent financing due to its excellent ability to raise funds locally throughout Maine.

Home is Here NOLA operates on a volunteer model wherein hosts are uncompensated volunteers and participants stay with hosts on average 2-4 months, rather than committing to a six-month or year-long term. Most participants are single adults, and Home is Here NOLA reports they are able to save enough during their time in the home share to pay rent on an apartment after graduating from the program. Interestingly enough, many of their hosts are landlords who are turning their units over from short term rentals to long term rentals.

The divergent offerings of Home is Here NOLA and Project Home speaks to the importance of consistent funding sources for a successful home share program. In the absence of

more significant funding, Home is Here NOLA is reliant on volunteers. While this can be a core piece of the business model for a community-based organization, it would be difficult for Enterprise to ask a host organization to galvanize such consistent community support. Similarly, Project Home speaks to the financial flexibility offered by having a successful fundraising team. There are few funds out there, not directly overseen by governmental entities themselves, to support asylum seekers. So, a more ambitious program would require a commensurate fundraising strategy.

Tracking Outcomes: Coming up with a methodology for the program

Enterprise staff believe that participation in the home share program would provide benefits to both participants and hosts. One of the challenges in designing an operable program model is in defining those benefits such that they can be measured for funders. The logic model included below, produced for the feasibility assessment in December, identifies the criteria Enterprise plan on tracking to evaluate the success of the program.

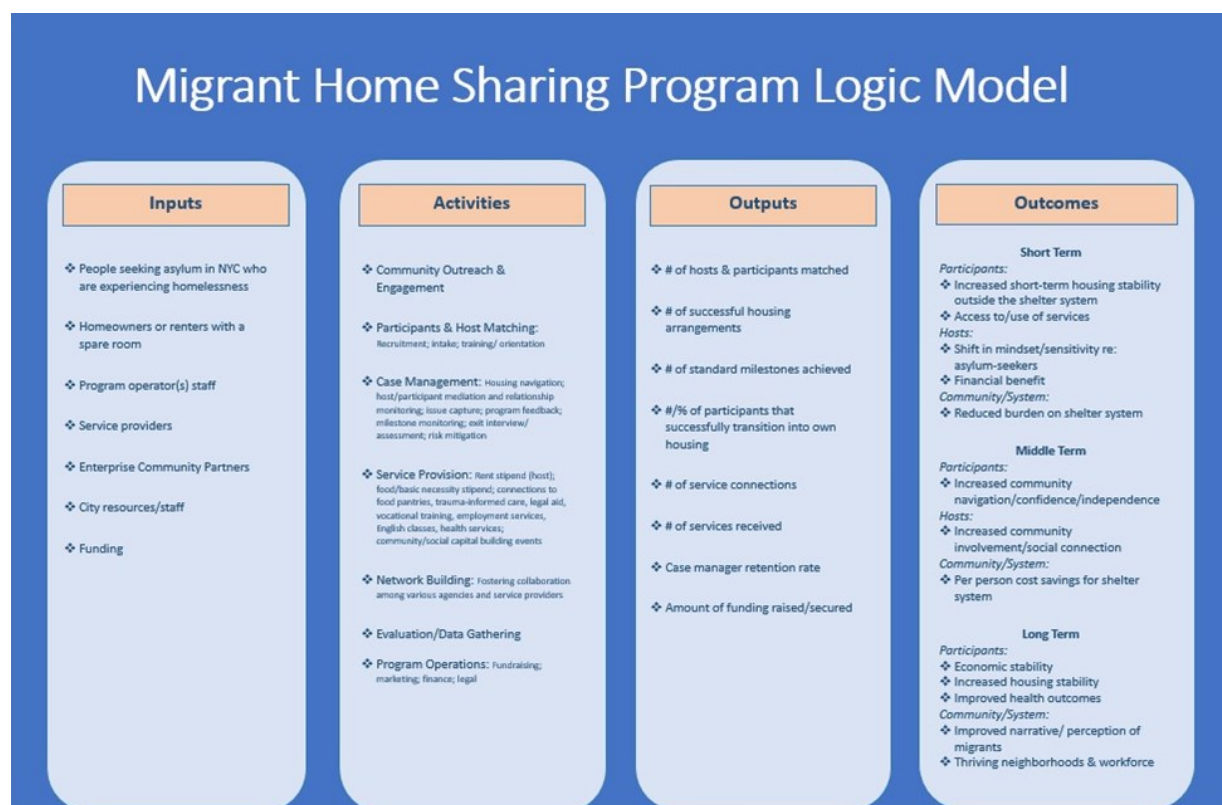


Figure 7 Enterprise Logic Model for Feasibility Determination

Absent the long-term outcomes, the program's logic model primarily focuses on proving that the program is operating efficiently, rather than proving positive results for migrants. Because the program requires significant case management from an operator, it is only financially efficient in comparison with the kinds of emergency shelters which New York City has operated during the pandemic, but it is still significantly more financially inefficient, on a per-night-basis, than traditional congregate shelter programs.

One significant challenge when quantifying results is the program's ability to measure the long-term outcomes which operate at a larger scale. In the focus groups with asylum seeking migrants, the migrants eagerly sought an introduction to the rules of New York City. No doubt learning those rules makes a tremendous difference in a migrant's quality of life, which would likely translate into improved job earnings, and other related measures. But, do most migrants invariably

learn how to navigate New York City? If so, how do you measure the benefits to learning how to navigate New York City more quickly? Additionally, most long-term measures would almost require some sort of longitudinal study, which would be beyond the timespan the program would have to communicate out results to funders.

Furthermore, in terms of long-term outcomes, the program must decide how it will measure the outcomes of migrants who are not granted asylum and the changing landscape of services being provided to migrants. Given the current multi-year wait for immigration proceedings, it is likely that migrants recruited from the shelter system will remain in New York City for multiple years, awaiting their immigration proceedings. Absent other supports, it is likely that participants will struggle after exiting from the program.

If immigration timelines accelerate, participants would either become eligible for other assistance, or would be deported. In such an instance, the outcomes from other processes would play a much bigger role in participant outcomes than participation in the program.

Program Pathways for participants and hosts

To best capture program design considerations, this chapter puts forward two graphics of the experience for hosts and participants from intake to graduation. Afterwards, this chapter highlights other relevant program design criteria.

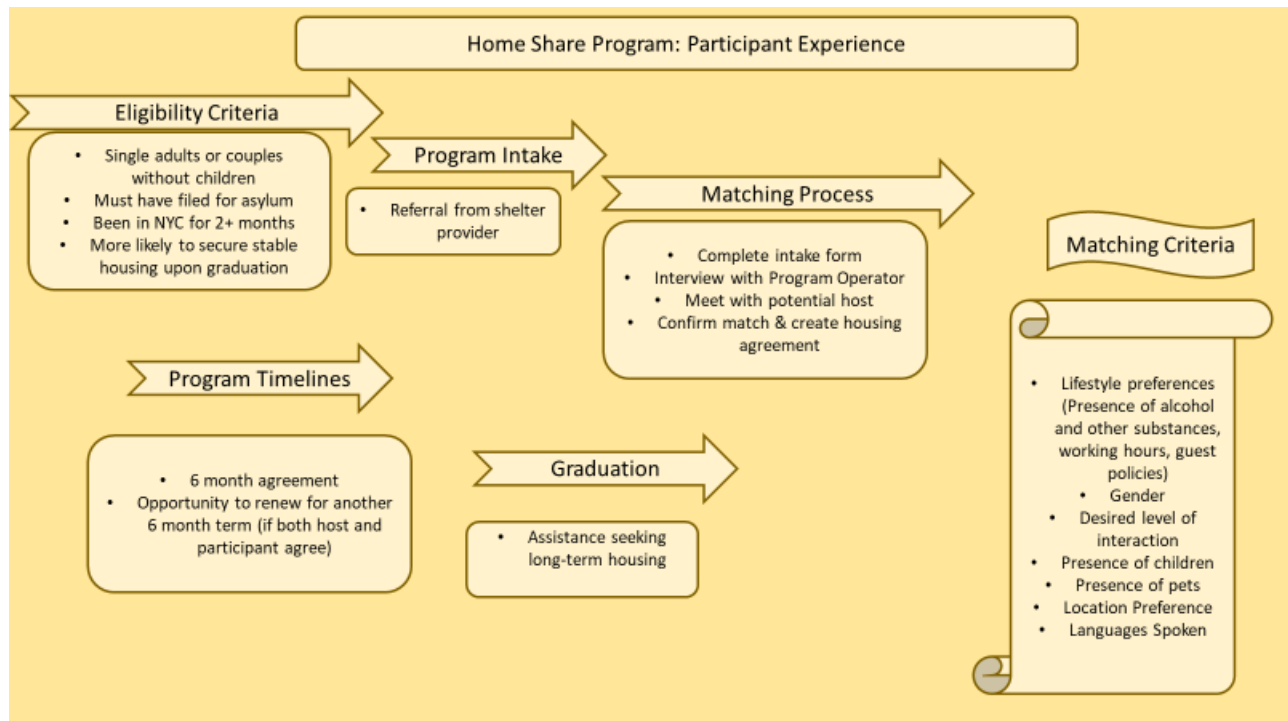


Figure 8 Home Share Program: Participant Experience

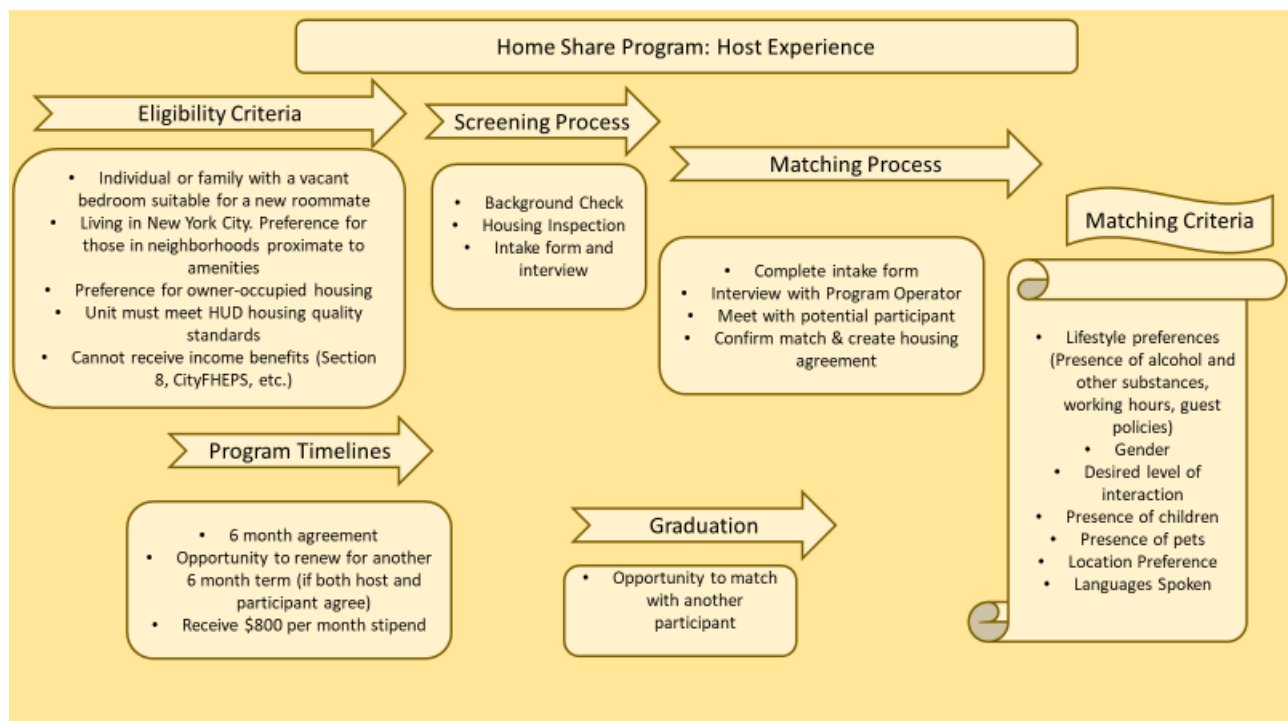


Figure 9 Home Share Program: Host Experience

The program design puts hosts and participants on a shared trajectory, from intake to program graduation. Few materials or processes are exclusively designed for hosts or participants. In fact, the matching process is the same for hosts and participants. The most significant difference is between how hosts and participants enter the program, and of course, that hosts receive compensation for their participation.

To expand host eligibility as much as possible, Enterprise sets an incredibly reasonable standard for what accommodations a host must provide. The HUD housing quality standards specify that there must be (1) a bed for the participant (2) closet or dresser for personal belongings (3) access to a bedroom (4) access to a kitchen or cooking appliances (5) space has electricity and heat (6) space is free of pests, mold and other harmful conditions/substances. Participants will have the opportunity to visit the accommodations as a part of the matching process, so they could ensure that the space is to their liking.

One thing to note is that hosts undergo a separate background check while participants do not. The participants do not undergo a separate background check as a part of their intake process, because that is already a part of the referral process from the shelter provider.

The two charts included below flesh out the other most relevant program design characteristics.

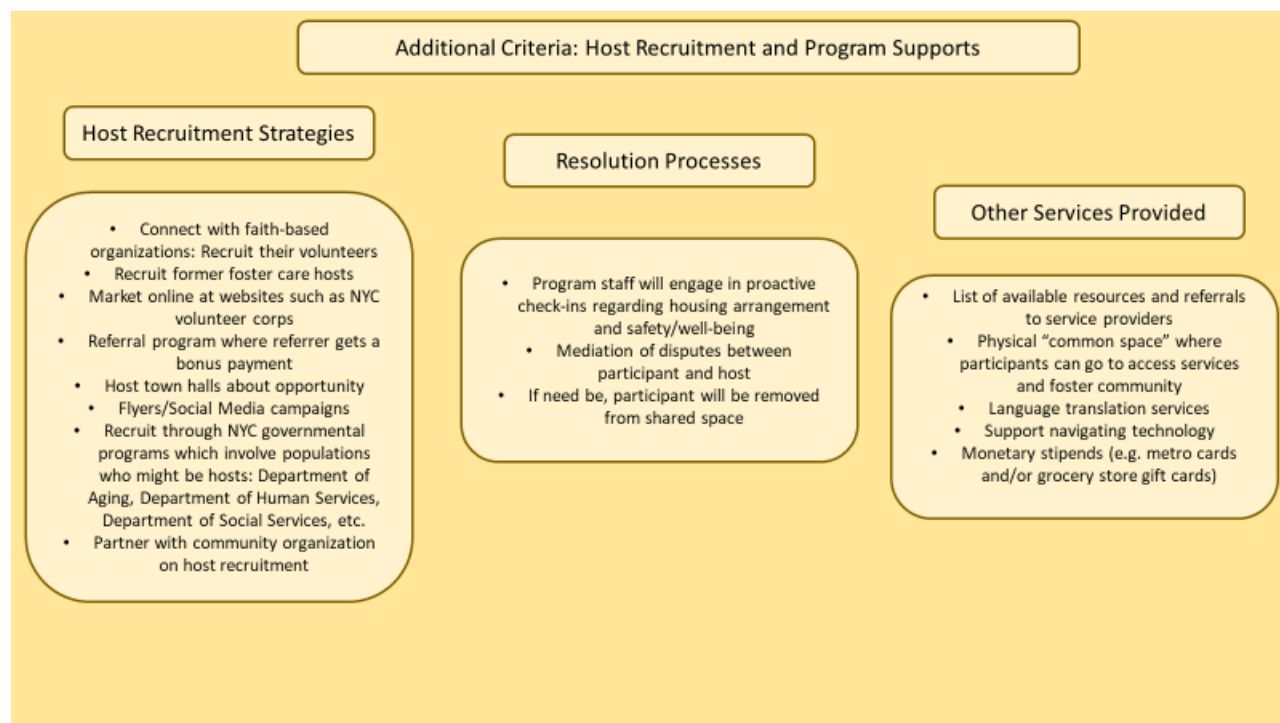


Figure 10 Additional Criteria: Host Recruitment and Program Supports

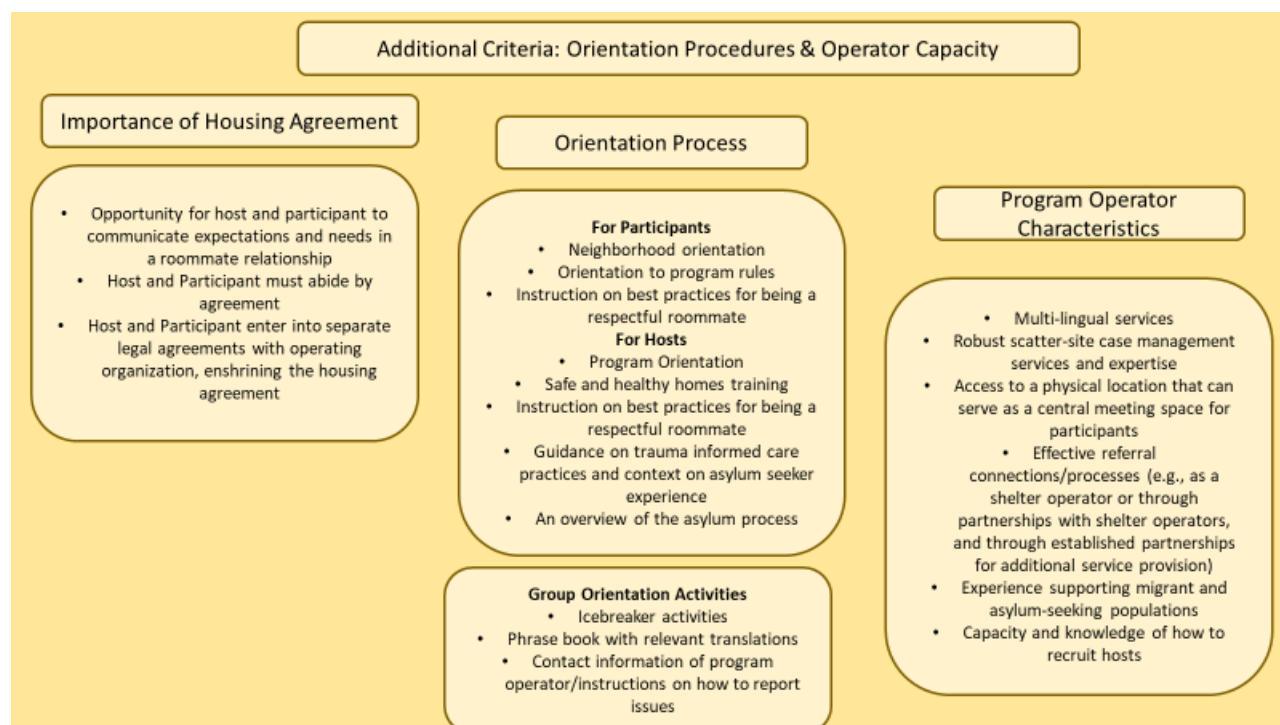


Figure 11 Additional Criteria: Orientation Procedures & Operator Capacity

The most important step of the home share program is the matching process, which culminates in the housing agreement. Throughout the focus groups with asylum seeking migrants, there were few shared preferences, other than a desire to not live with an alcoholic or habitual drug user. This shared preference is no doubt shaped by the grueling experience of traversing hundreds if not thousands of miles in rough conditions to make it to the United States, and the lack of privacy in the congregate shelter system. Migrants are worn down, and are desperate for a change to their situation, and see being someone's roommate as enormously preferential to their shelter experience.

Two concerns raised by migrants were finding a living arrangement that accommodated their work schedules, and single men were concerned about how their interactions with children would be scrutinized.

The housing agreement can be as wide ranging as desired, but will certainly cover guest policies, quiet hours, cleanliness standards, and presence of substances in the home. The housing agreement will be the touchpoint for future mediation, so the more it can cover, and the more nuance it contains, the better. It is important that the preferences of both migrants and hosts are coaxed out of them, rather than having either side attempt to play it cool, and in doing so agree to terms which are unsuitable to them.

Three other important program design elements to further discuss are host recruitment strategies, the orientation process, and program operator characteristics. For host recruitment strategies, the plan is to try everything possible. There is a not insignificant likelihood that a limiting factor on the size of the program will be the program's ability to recruit hosts. As such, Enterprise's list is a somewhat exhaustive list of options. Another additional one, which is an option rather than being a part of the ongoing program design, is to contract with another organization who is responsible for assisting with host recruitment.

The orientation process is an opportunity for hosts and participants to get to know each other further, and to welcome both the host and participant to their new conditions. As it currently stands, the instructions on how to be a respectful roommate, the guidance on trauma informed care, and the overview of the asylum process, will be shared as written materials rather than in some other form.

Lastly, the Program Operator Characteristics are by and large the knowledge base that a scattered site shelter provider accumulates through running a shelter. The big exception being host recruitment. As written, the intent is for a shelter provider to expand their operations to oversee this program, in addition to their existing commitments.

In addition to the complete program design, Enterprise put forward three additional program design options to consider. Those options are

- **“Transition-in-Place” Scaled Up Participant Payment** – Inspired by a program model serving veterans, the program would slowly shift from covering 100 percent of the monthly housing stipend, to having the program participant contribute some sum or a sum tied to their income. This gives the participant an opportunity to acclimate to paying monthly rent, at a small scale and with supports.
- **Scaled-down Support and Financial Assistance** – The program operator would support the program participant after they transition out of the shared housing arrangement, including by supporting with moving costs. Less intensive case management would continue with regular check-ins, and the program would contribute some sum of funds to support with the participants monthly rent for a set period of time, with the financial assistance scaling down over time and as the individual establishes independence.
- **Participant Roommate Matching** – Program participants may benefit from splitting housing costs with roommates after their participation in the home share program ends.

Community navigators from the program can be intentional about seeking to make “roommate matches” from within the program participant pool based on living style compatibility.

Alternative Program Design Options

Nothing in Enterprise’s program model is a lightning rod. Adapting from Impact Justice’s the Homecoming Project, Enterprise’s model is built upon the kinds of referrals and capacity a program operator can be expected to possess. For me, focusing so much on the expected capacity and functions of the program operator could make the program less attractive to a program operator or staff who are prepared to go above and beyond to ensure positive outcomes for program participants.

To improve the program, I recommend moving forward with a (1) specific target population of individuals from one or more related countries, (2) focusing the program in the neighborhood the program operator is based, (3) recharacterizing expectations for hosts such that hosting is a more intensive and transformative experience.

Overall, the purpose of these changes is to place the program operator in a position to greatly improve the lives of participating migrants. I am concerned that many potential program operators would see this program as an extension of their congregate shelter services, and would not be particularly excited about the program, and would be afraid to embark on more ambitious programming. At the same time, a common characteristic of the successful home share programs Enterprise has spoken with is that they have transformative leaders who are willing their programs into existence.

Employing a program design wherein the program is exclusively operated in the program operator’s neighborhood goes a long way towards answering one of the biggest questions that shelter providers had during the Working Group process: What does a successful host recruitment

strategy look like? Absent a hyper-local focus, shelter providers didn't know where to begin. At the same time, most shelter providers have longstanding relationships in their community that they leverage to promote programs and initiatives.

To establish a stronger connection between the program operator and the participants, Enterprise should narrow the scope of the target population. Throughout their program design process, Enterprise avoided focusing in on a particular population of asylum seekers as the target population, other than deciding a home share program would be unsuitable for families. I believe that it would be helpful for the program to identify a particular target population of asylum seekers, potentially down to one country of origin, so that the staff and resources of the organization can cater to their background. For instance, if the program focused on Spanish speaking asylum seekers from South America, then it would be possible to hire multilingual English/Spanish staff to operate the program without needing to contract with other groups for a translator. Moreover, I believe that if the staff involved in overseeing the program do so because they have a connection for a particular group of people, they will do a much better job in their work.

One example of how improved connection and organizational cultural fluency could transform the home share experience is in terms of establishing the Housing Agreement, and ongoing dispute mediation processes. There are many things that asylum seekers will likely have difficulty asking for, that someone with cultural fluency would know to bring up, that relying on clear communication would not bring up. Similarly, participant ability to preemptively raise concerns about their home share experience is mediated by their relationship with program staff. Having a close relationship between participants and program staff will make a big difference in terms of putting out embers before they become fires.

Having one specific target population is made possible by the sheer number of asylum seekers in New York City's shelter system. As the program is designed right now, participating

asylum seekers are chosen via referral from a shelter in the NYC Department of Social Services system. Of the tens of thousands of asylum seekers in New York City, the most vulnerable are those who must turn to the shelter system for support. Communities of asylum seekers with more resources or community do not populate the shelter system in the same way. In that way, it would be possible to select one micro community within the shelter population, and fine tune this program for them, without the possibility of running out of participants. The best-case scenario this program is likely that it scales up to provide housing to hundreds of asylum seekers at one time within a few years. Given that there are thousands of individuals and families from the most common countries of origin in the NYC shelter system, this program could maximize its capacity without exhausting its participant pool.

Another benefit to focusing in on one micro population for the program would be that it would be easier to build community among program participants. Asylum seekers tend to stick together with people from their country of origin, playing into rather than avoiding that could be a step towards developing a tightly knit participant base. One of the top desires participants expressed in focus groups was to experience community and belonging in New York City. Structuring the home share environment so that less of that desire is placed on the shoulders of the host, and more on the program structure of the home share environment could be an enormous success.

If focusing on one country would be too difficult of a decision, much of these benefits could be accomplished by targeting participants from a particular region, such as Central America, or northern South America. Establishing too expansive of a target region for the country of origin of participants could undermine the ability of the operator to have cultural fluency with all participants.

My second program design recommendation is to localize the program to neighborhoods the program operator is already serving. This would benefit host recruitment, improve opportunities for community within the program, and efficiency of most other program operations.

Localizing the program would improve host recruitment by enabling the program operator to use strategies they are familiar with for host recruitment. No doubt the program operator has strategies for recruiting participants for their programs, such as afterschool programs for kids, in which they leverage local partnerships to drum up interest in the program. By limiting the program to the program operator's neighborhood, they would be able to leverage those same relationships for host recruitment for the home share program.

Operating on a local level would also transform the opportunities for connection within the program, such that it would be significantly easier to create community within the cohort. Potential program operators should have access to community spaces they could make available for cohort activities. If all participants are proximate to those spaces, it would increase their impact on the cohort experience. Similarly, operating within one neighborhood would mean that place-based referrals could operate through the same few organizations, thereby improving the efficiency of the case management responsibilities of the program operator.

My third program design recommendation is to make hosting a more intensive process, with the hope that a more intensive process would make participation more attractive to mission based hosts, and improve outcomes for participants. One straightforward way to expand the responsibilities of hosts is to expand the orientation process. The current orientation process is quite minimal. Whether this is because of concerns about operating staff capacity, or the idea that it will be easier to recruit hosts if there are fewer obligations, the current orientation process is little more than the initial matching meetings, and some sensitivity trainings.

To improve Enterprise's program orientation for new hosts and participants, I would recommend that the program operator host group sessions, so that participants and hosts can meet the other people participating in the program. In doing so, the orientation would work towards building a sense of community in the program. Artists-Athletes-Activists reports that one of the

most successful components of their home share program is that the organization hosts a monthly potluck event for their wider community, and that these events build a sense of camaraderie.

Furthermore, if group sessions took place prior to hosts and participants being locked into their matches, and instead occurred as a part of the matching process, it could help participants and hosts have the distinct experience that they chose each other. This could improve pair satisfaction. As it stands right now, participants and hosts are matched based on an intake form in which they identified their preferences, then they meet each other and visit the home to evaluate whether they are a match, and finally they create a Housing Agreement to parse through their differences in opinion and establish common rules. The matching process involves feeling each other out, and then immediately having a difficult conversation about expectations. If hosts and participants are given more space to connect prior to creating the housing agreement, it will likely translate to more goodwill, which could manifest in changes to the Housing Agreement, because both sides communicate more vulnerably.

All three of my recommendations are an attempt to improve operation of the program in its early stages, with an eye towards long term scalability. One of the biggest questions is, is there enough interest from hosts for this program to be a success? There is certainly interest from asylum seekers, who expressed in focus groups that they want to stay within New York City. A recent New York City program, which offered asylum seekers free apartments for a year in the suburbs has been unsuccessful because asylum seekers don't want to leave the denser part of the city.⁴² The success of Artists-Athletes-Activists demonstrates that there are at least some people willing to open up their home to others. However, those individuals joined AAA's program in part because of value alignment with the host organization, which will be less of a draw under the nonprofit program operator model.

⁴² Rubinstein et al., "Why a \$25 Million Plan to Relocate N.Y.C. Migrant Families Is Struggling."

Enterprise's limit of 15 participants per Community Navigator/Housing Liaison is adapted from Impact Justice's model on the assumption that supporting asylum seekers will demand more staff capacity to help participants navigate systems than formerly incarcerated folks would need. However, at this scale, once you factor in staff salaries and stipends for hosts, operating this program is much more expensive than congregate shelters, but less expensive than emergency shelters. Because you need to add another staff person for each additional 15 participants, costs rise somewhat proportionately, such that there are no significant cost savings for running this at scale.

Geographic Prioritization for Host Recruitment

In the early stages of this project the Enterprise team planned on identifying particular neighborhoods in New York City to target for host recruitment. However, in light of the need to unlock as many beds as possible for the program, and the likely failure of a location specific program to recruit enough hosts, Enterprise moved away from such a policy. The following chapter explores which neighborhoods in New York City would be most suitable to target for host recruitment. The following chapter explores and compares how different selection criteria changes which neighborhoods in New York City the program would target.

Chapter Four: Methodology and Outcomes for Location-Dependent Host Recruitment

One of the core decisions to make when designing a home share program is the program's geographic boundaries. When designing their home share program, Enterprise was focused on providing housing within New York City, as a release valve for asylum seekers who would otherwise be housed in New York City shelters. Throughout the feasibility study, there was a question as to whether it would be better to target particular neighborhoods for the home share program, or whether the program should operate at the city or borough level.

Bounding the program to a more limited geography would make it easier for the program operator to interact with participants, and would most likely improve attendance at program events and utilization of program operator spaces. The expectation is that the program operator will be a congregate shelter provider who has physical space they can devote to the program. If it is more convenient for participants and hosts to access the shelter provider's offices, it would be easier to meet with case workers, or host program events there. In regards to host recruitment, limiting the program to a smaller area increases the program operator's ability to host targeted recruitment events, such as in-person town halls or a physical advertising campaign.

The most significant downsides to drawing the program geographies too narrowly is if doing so infringes on the ability to recruit enough suitable hosts to operate the program, lowers the quality of hosts participating in the program, poses a challenge to the target population of the program, or hinders the ability to contract a competent program operator. Enterprise felt that it was unable to make a determination as to how the program's geography would impact host recruitment and host quality without engaging in a pilot study. In fact, the feasibility study found that, alongside the need

to identify and maintain consistent funding, difficulties recruiting enough suitable hosts was the likeliest barrier to the success of the program.

Through the focus groups, Enterprise was able to make determinations concerning participant preferences. The focus groups found that participants had a shared preference for being proximate to transit, but that other location preferences were not uniform.

Data Sources

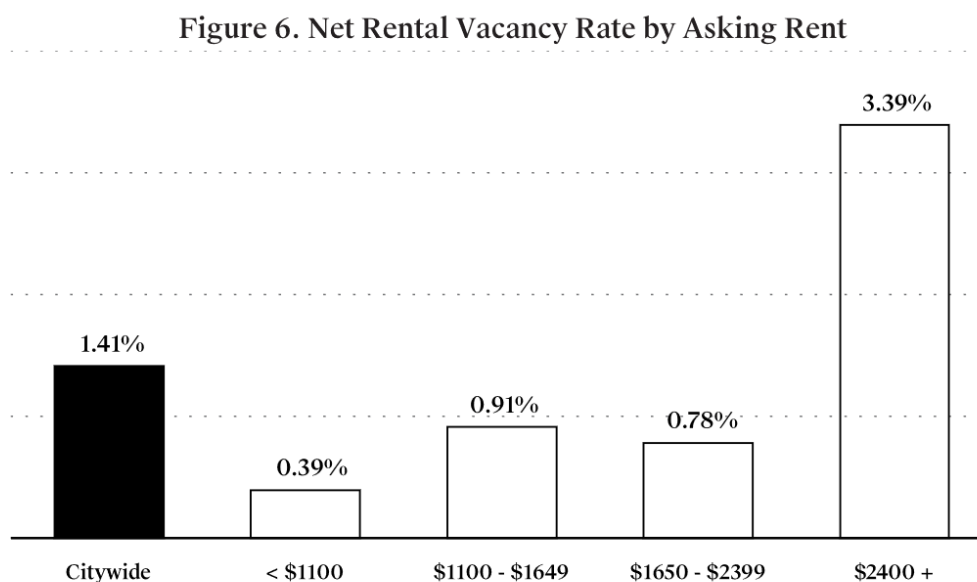
When Enterprise was evaluating the impact different program considerations would have on eligible populations, they turned to two different Census Data Sources: The American Community Survey (ACS) and the New York City Housing and Vacancy Survey (NYCHVS) to evaluate the demographic and housing landscapes of New York City. Unfortunately, 2023 was a uniquely unhelpful time to employ ACS data to better understand current conditions because of the disruption of COVID – 19. By 2023 post COVID - 19 lockout trends were emerging in New York City, as the city returned to a new normal. Luckily for this work, the 2023 New York City Housing and Vacancy Survey's Selected Initial Findings were released at the end of 2023.

This chapter employs 2018-2022 ACS 5-Year estimates to evaluate and illustrate how different program criteria Enterprise considered would lead to targeting different neighborhoods and census tracts in New York City. However, prior to conducting that geospatial analysis, it is important to provide the high-level takeaways of 2023 New York City Housing and Vacancy Survey Selected Initial Findings, to foreground current housing trends in New York City. Unfortunately, the NYCHVS findings are only published at the borough level, which makes it difficult to place NYCHVS findings in conversation with granular ACS data.

The NYCHVS found that the housing market in New York City is historically tight, despite the creation of 61,000 new units of housing between 2021 and 2023, which were proportionately distributed across New York City, consistent with the size of housing markets in each borough. This

was the largest increase in housing stock between two NYCHVS surveys in the 58 years of the survey.⁴³ So too, net rental vacancy rates dropped precipitously between 2021 and 2023, and the drop was consistent across the different parts of the city, and between different kinds of housing, with an exception for the Bronx which already had a very tight housing market.

The graph and table below illustrate current vacancy rates for different classes of apartment, sorted based on rental price, and changes in net vacancy rate between 2021 and 2023.



Source: New York City Housing and Vacancy Survey (NYCHVS), 2023.
Please refer to the technical appendices at the end of this report for details on the NYCHVS design, definitions, and methodology.

Figure 12 NYCHVS Net Rental Vacancy Rate by Asking Rent⁴⁴

⁴³ US Census Bureau, “2023 New York City Housing and Vacancy Survey Selected Initial Findings,” 2.

⁴⁴ US Census Bureau, 21.

Table 9. Net Rental Vacancy Rate by Borough, Asking Rent, and Type of Housing

	2021			2023		
	Net Rental Vacancy Rate	90% Confidence Interval		Net Rental Vacancy Rate	90% Confidence Interval	
		Lower Bound	Upper Bound		Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Citywide	4.54%	[4.10% , 4.98%]		1.41%	[1.15% , 1.67%]	
Borough						
Bronx	0.78%	[0.32% , 1.24%] ***		0.82%	[0.34% , 1.30%] ***	
Brooklyn	2.73%	[2.14% , 3.32%]		1.27%	[0.76% , 1.78%] **	
Manhattan	10.01%	[8.81% , 11.21%]		2.33%	[1.72% , 2.94%]	
Queens	4.48%	[3.52% , 5.44%]		0.88%	[0.47% , 1.29%] **	
Staten Island	**	**		**	**	
Monthly Asking Rent						
<\$1,650	0.90%	[0.60% , 1.19%]		0.65%	[0.44% , 0.85%]	
\$1,650+	7.57%	[6.83% , 8.30%]		2.16%	[1.79% , 2.53%]	
Type of Rental Housing						
Rent Stabilized	4.57%	[3.86% , 5.28%]		0.98%	[0.67% , 1.29%]	
Market Rental	5.29%	[4.60% , 5.98%]		1.84%	[1.41% , 2.27%]	
Public Housing and Other Rentals	1.36%	[0.78% , 1.94%] **		1.21%	[0.67% , 1.75%] **	

Each net rental vacancy is calculated for the subset of these units following the methodology in Appendix B.

Source: New York City Housing and Vacancy Survey (NYCHVS), 2023.

Please refer to the technical appendices at the end of this report for details on the NYCHVS design, definitions, and methodology.

*** Due to the small number of units that were vacant and available for rent, estimate is subject to a large amount of sampling variation and is therefore either not reported or should be interpreted with caution.

Figure 13 NYCHVS Net Vacancy Rate by Borough, Asking Rent, and Type of Housing⁴⁵

A net rental vacancy rate below 5% constitutes a tight market. Having a net rental vacancy rate around 1% amounts to a stratospherically contested market. Table 9 demonstrates that the vacancy rate has dropped considerably across all boroughs, with the exception of the Bronx, where there was little room for the housing market to get any tighter. Together, Figure 6 and Table 9 demonstrate that the housing market is much tighter for more inexpensive apartments, as compared to more expensive apartments, but the market for rentals at \$2400+ a month is still prohibitively tight.

⁴⁵ US Census Bureau, 22.

One consistent challenge for rental affordability in New York City, is that the new units being produced enter the market at higher price points. The NYCHVS measures housing units that are not available for rent, and identifies the reason they are not being rented; in 2023 there were 41,270 units undergoing renovation, which was statistically similar to the 37,320 being renovated in 2021.⁴⁶ While the production of these new units contributes to a larger housing market overall, it does not provide new affordable units for individuals at lower ends of the income scale. Frequently the units that are renovated were previously the more affordable units, because in the United States market rate housing tends to become affordable overtime as the quality of the units diminishes.

In fact, one representation of how much tighter New York City's housing market has gotten is that the number of units "deemed dilapidated or otherwise uninhabitable...was significantly lower with just over 3,000 units in 2023 compared to about 11,500 in 2021".⁴⁷ Similarly, the prevalence of housing quality problems rose significantly between 2021 and 2023, with the percentage of housing units experiencing problems with rodents at a 30+ year high.⁴⁸ Housing quality issues are significantly higher in rent stabilized units as opposed to market rate units.⁴⁹

An interesting tidbit in the NYCHVS with implications for Enterprise's proposed neighborhood targeting strategies is that "Compared to market renters, rent stabilized households had a higher share of householders born outside the US (44 and 38 percent, respectively); this represents an increase from 40 percent of rent stabilized households in 2021 and no meaningful difference among market renters".⁵⁰ The prevalence of foreign born New Yorkers living in rent stabilized households could be beneficial to the program's idea that living in international communities could be beneficial for migrants. While being a host could mess with someone's

⁴⁶ US Census Bureau, 29.

⁴⁷ US Census Bureau, 29.

⁴⁸ US Census Bureau, 32.

⁴⁹ US Census Bureau, 34.

⁵⁰ US Census Bureau, 48.

eligibility for supportive programs such as Section 8, households living in rent-controlled housing would be a wonderful host population, and would be more likely than other New York renters to have underutilized bedrooms to devote to a home share participant. That said, even rent-controlled renters would be less likely to have underutilized bedrooms to devote to the program than home owners, due to challenges downsizing when the housing market is so expensive.

The NYCHVS identified that the level of overcrowding in New York City remained at the same level in 2023 as in 2021, when 8 percent of households lived with 2+ people per bedroom.⁵¹ The following table provides further information on the levels of overcrowding in New York City.

Table 17. Crowding by Household Composition and Income

Householder Characteristics	Households			
	Crowded			Total
	Estimate	MOE	%	
Race/Ethnicity				
White, Non-Hispanic	55,560	±8,164	4%	1,250,000
Black, Non-Hispanic	45,970	±8,279	7%	685,000
Hispanic	97,850	±8,932	11%	874,100
Asian, Non-Hispanic	57,910	±8,213	10%	574,500
Other	*	*	*	22,540
Two or More Races	*	*	*	26,650
Nativity				
Born Outside of US	168,300	±13,080	12%	1,410,000
Household Characteristics				
1 + Older Adult	61,970	±8,643	5%	1,191,000
1 + Child	202,700	±15,030	23%	887,300
1 + Person with a Disability	52,590	±6,865	7%	740,700
Household Income				
< \$25,000	32,960	±4,815	5%	695,800
\$25,000-\$49,999	44,410	±6,621	10%	461,500
\$50,000-\$99,999	75,070	±8,630	10%	789,500
\$100,000 +	107,400	±13,800	7%	1,486,000
Citywide	259,800	±15,820	8%	3,432,000

Percentages are calculated as percent of total.
Source: New York City Housing and Vacancy Survey (NYCHVS), 2023.
Please refer to the technical appendices at the end of this report for details on the NYCHVS design, definitions, and methodology.
* Estimate is suppressed following US Census Bureau disclosure avoidance practices.

Figure 14 NYCHVS Crowding by Household Composition and Income⁵²

⁵¹ US Census Bureau, 53.

⁵² US Census Bureau, 54.

NYCHVS data on overcrowding identifies non-Hispanic whites as the racial or ethnic group who experience the lowest levels of overcrowding, and that families with more than one child experience significantly higher levels of overcrowding than any of the other tranches prepared by the survey. Similarly, foreign born individuals experience higher overcrowding than domestic born New Yorkers.⁵³

The analysis provided herein reflects the limitations of the Selected Initial Findings of the 2023 New York City Housing and Vacancy Survey. Operating at the borough level prevents neighborhood, or sub-neighborhood level analysis, as would be necessary to decide which neighborhoods in New York City to target for program operations. To engage in such research, this chapter continues onwards by visualizing American Community Survey 2018-2022 data, for the same or similar metrics to what the NYCHVS addressed.

The biggest limitation of utilizing ACS data, as opposed to NYCHVS data, is that it is less current, and as a result does not successfully capture New York City's new normal as it rebounds from the pandemic. However, it is still a useful metric for differentiating between neighborhoods in New York city by demographic makeup, prevalence of overcrowding, housing unit size, and housing tenure.

When evaluating neighborhood viability for the program, it is important to remember that the most consistent geographic preference asylum-seeking migrants had about their housing was that they live proximate to public transportation. More specifically, that there was a significant preference to live proximate to a subway line. Rather than overlaying transit connectivity on top of our other variables, I think the best way to represent transit connectivity in New York City is to bring back TransitCenter's Equity Dashboard representing the number of jobs accessible within a 45-minute commute from Chapter 2.

⁵³ US Census Bureau, 54.

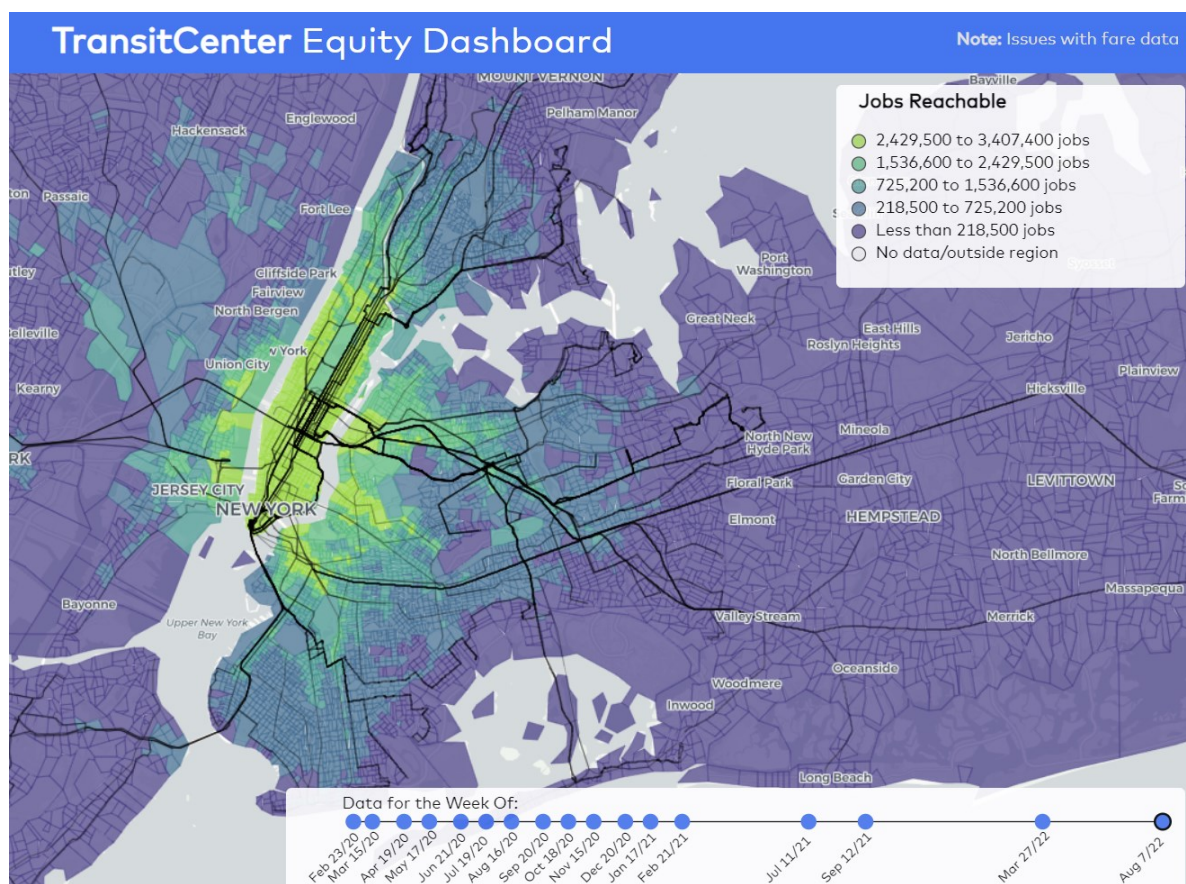


Figure 15 TransitCenter Equity Dashboard: Jobs Accessible within a 45 Minute Commute⁵⁴

Transit Center’s equity dashboard demonstrates that job access in New York City is most shaped by proximity to Lower Manhattan and subway lines, particularly subway lines with better connectivity to the rest of the subway system. The parts of the Bronx, Queens, and Brooklyn that are most proximate to Manhattan have significantly improved connectivity as opposed to outer lying parts of those same boroughs. Lower Manhattan has the best job access because of its considerable density, and its location at the nexus of the MTA’s transit systems.

It is important to note that, even at the lowest classification with an established lower bound, more than 218,500 jobs are accessible within a 45-minute commute from that area. This is quite a large number that is only rendered small by New York City’s massive labor market. That said, the

⁵⁴ TransitCenter, “New York Map - TransitCenter Equity Dashboard.”

outer reaches of Brooklyn, large parts of Queens, and the majority of Staten Island fall below that job access threshold. To the extent that far lying parts of those boroughs have improved job connectivity, it is because they are situated along a subway line.

The American Community Survey maps contained in this chapter utilize ACS data at the Census Tract level. Because of its relative inaccessibility via public transit, analysis in this chapter excludes Staten Island and only includes information on Brooklyn, the Bronx, Manhattan, and Queens. Analysis in this chapter places the following ACS variables in conversation with one another: Tenure by Occupants Per Room, Place of Birth for the Foreign-Born Population, Occupied Housing Units by Number of Bedrooms, and Race. The focus of the analysis is identifying neighborhoods where home owners are underutilizing the bedrooms in their unit, and the extent to which those neighborhoods have large Hispanic or Black populations, particularly when the preponderance of foreign-born individuals implicates that many of those residents are immigrants.

Characteristics of Housing Units and Overcrowding

The following maps depict the percentage of housing units per census tract with 3+ bedrooms per unit, and four maps of the average number of occupants per room. These five maps are presented together because of their common focus on the utilization of space. The U.S. Census defines overcrowding as a housing unit with 1.01 persons or more per room; units with 1.5 persons or more per room are considered severely overcrowded. This is a separate definition from the NYCHVS, which defined overcrowding as more than 2 people per bedroom. The ACS definition is more strict.

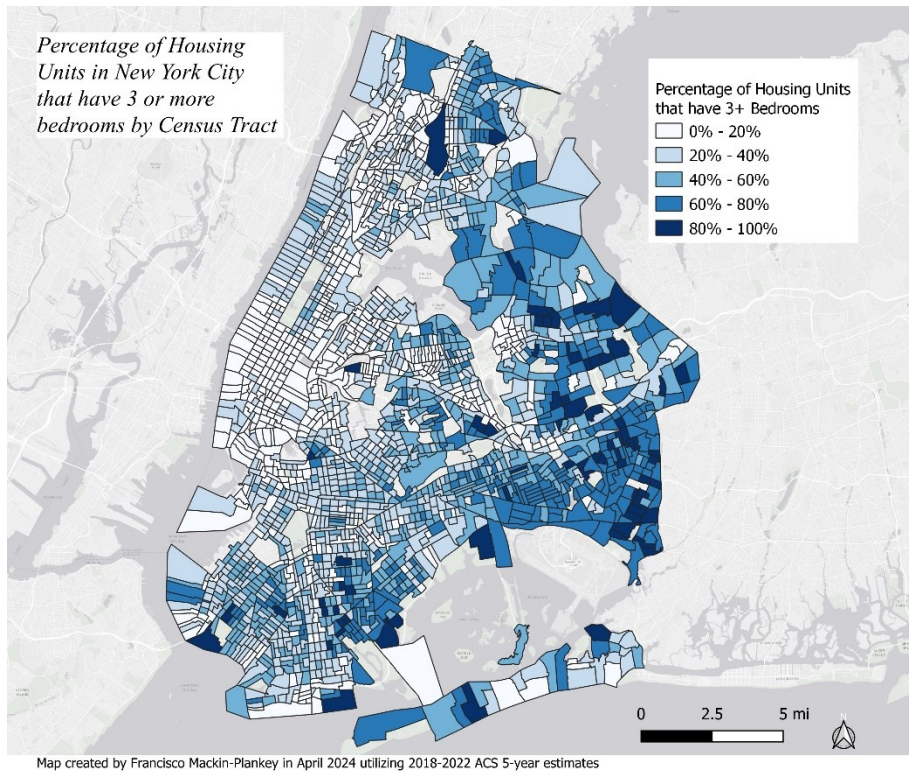


Figure 16 Percentage of Housing Units in New York City that have 3 or more bedrooms by Census Tract

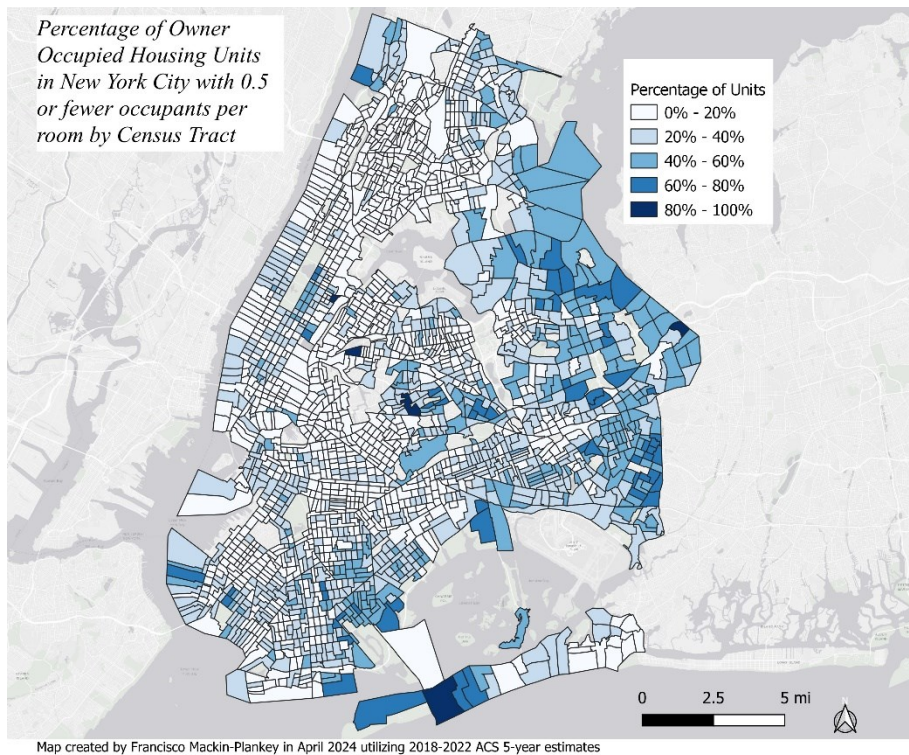


Figure 17 Percentage of Owner Occupied Housing Units in New York City with 0.5 or fewer occupants per room by Census Tract

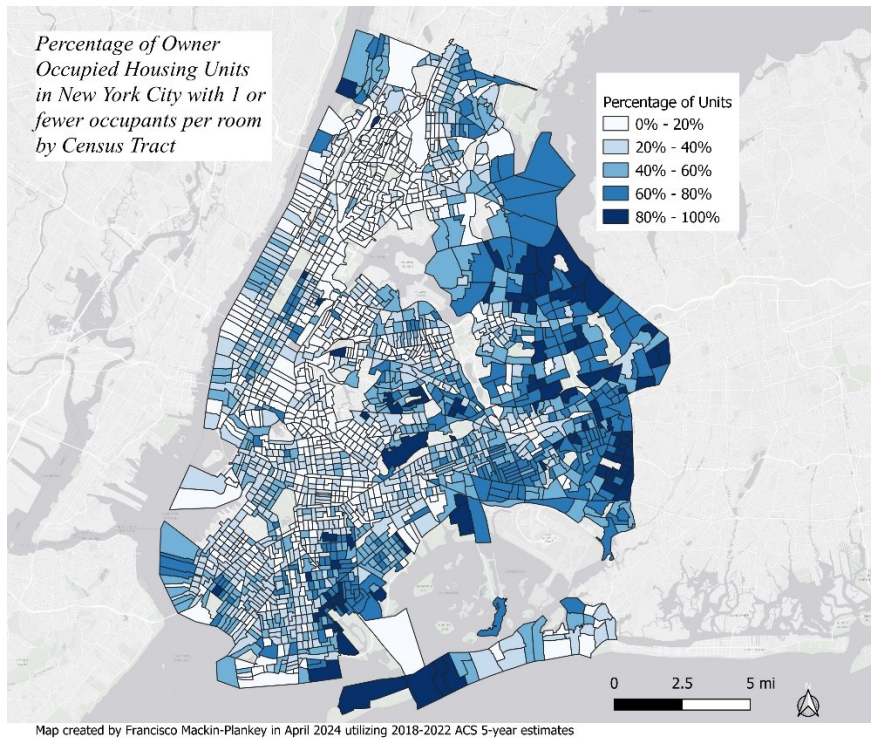


Figure 18 Percentage of Owner Occupied Housing Units in New York City with 1 or fewer occupants per room by Census Tract

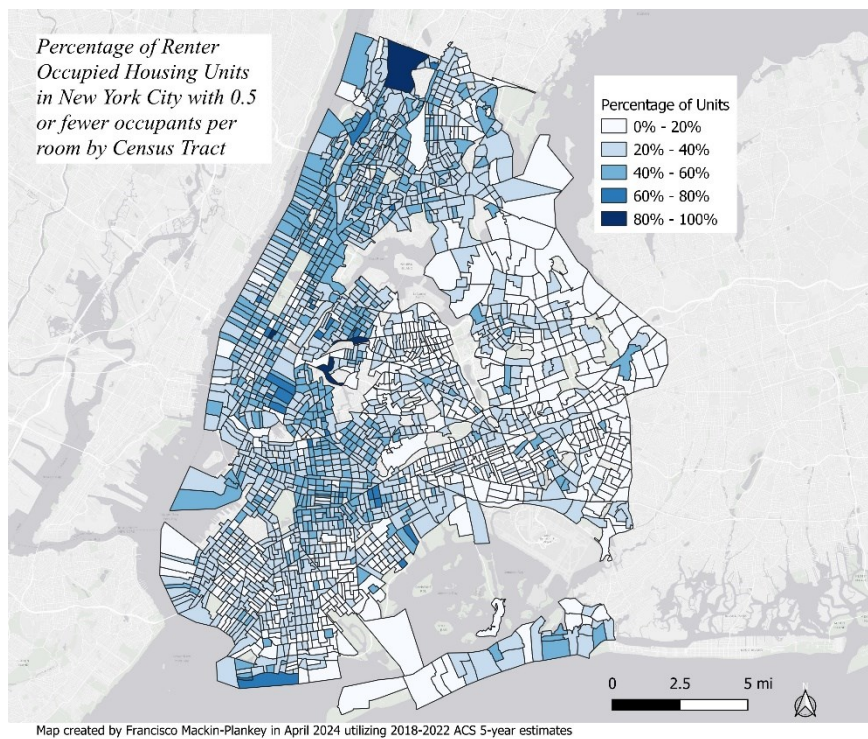


Figure 19 Percentage of Renter Occupied Housing Units in New York City with 0.5 or fewer occupants per room by Census Tract

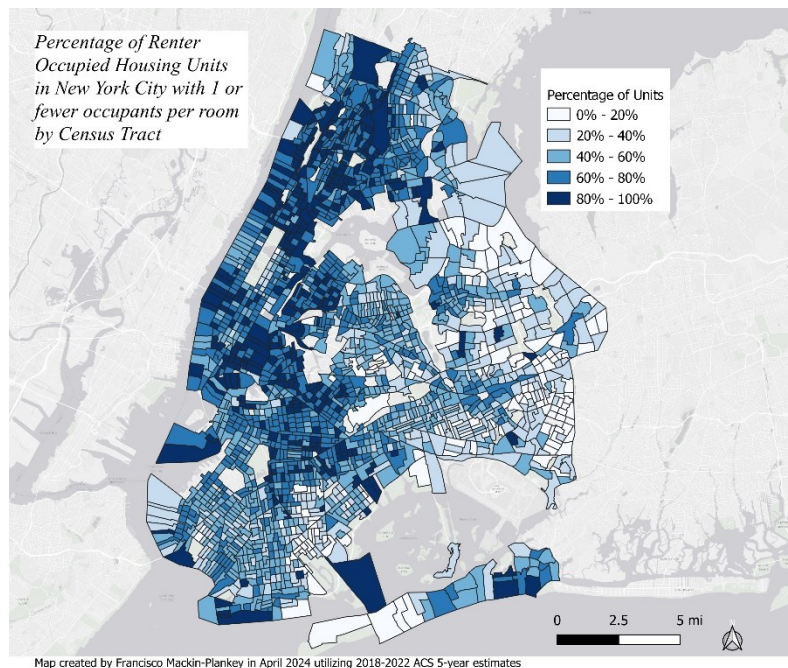


Figure 20 Percentage of Renter Occupied Housing Units in New York City with 1 or fewer occupants per room by Census Tract

The map of units with 3+ bedrooms indicates that the outer reaches of the Bronx, Brooklyn, and Queens have larger housing units than the other boroughs. The maps reflecting the percentage of owner-occupied units that are not experiencing overcrowding largely map onto the census tracts with larger housing units. This chapter separates occupants per room data into less than 0.5 occupants per room and less than 1 occupants per room to distinguish between units that are merely not overcrowded, and those that are likely underutilizing their space. There are many census tracts in the outer reaches of these boroughs where more than 40% of owner-occupied households have fewer than 0.5 occupants per room.

Rental overcrowding is almost an inversion of owner-occupied overcrowding. Whereas owner-occupied units are underutilizing space in the outer reaches of the boroughs in larger units, underutilization of space for renters tracks onto the wealth of neighborhoods. It seems that in wealthier neighborhoods, renters can afford to regularly live at levels of fewer than 1 occupant per

room, while that is not the case in less affluent areas. Clearly more affluent renters are choosing to pay more to live in less crowded conditions.

For the purposes of our home-share analysis, owner-occupied utilization of rooms is much more important than rental utilization of rooms, because for homeowners underutilization of space is more likely to be a result of difficulties right sizing in the housing market, whereas renters are expressing a preference to live in less crowded units. Moreover, units with fewer than 0.5 occupants per room are much more likely to be suitable for participation in the home-share program than units with fewer than 1 occupant per room, because an occupancy rate of fewer than 0.5 occupants per room likely indicates there are vacant bedrooms in the unit.

Demographic Maps

Throughout the home share feasibility study, Enterprise staff felt that it could be advantageous for migrants to live proximate to others of their culture. Many of the asylum seekers in New York City shelters are from South America, in particular from Venezuela, Ecuador, and Colombia. Other than South Americans, another large population in the shelter system are migrants of African descent.

It is important to note that the following graphs depict South American and African heritage differently. As an ethnic group, Hispanics have the option to report the source of their Hispanic heritage to the Census. The following maps of Hispanics include all who claim that heritage. In contrast, the map of those with African heritage is a map of first-generation migrants who were born in Africa. The Census records the country of birth for foreign born residents of the United States. This same foreign-born based analysis could have been conducted for Hispanics as well; however, since the effort is to capture cultural fluency and experience, I decided to base the Hispanic maps on heritage. Furthermore, it is important to identify when looking at these maps that their scales are different.

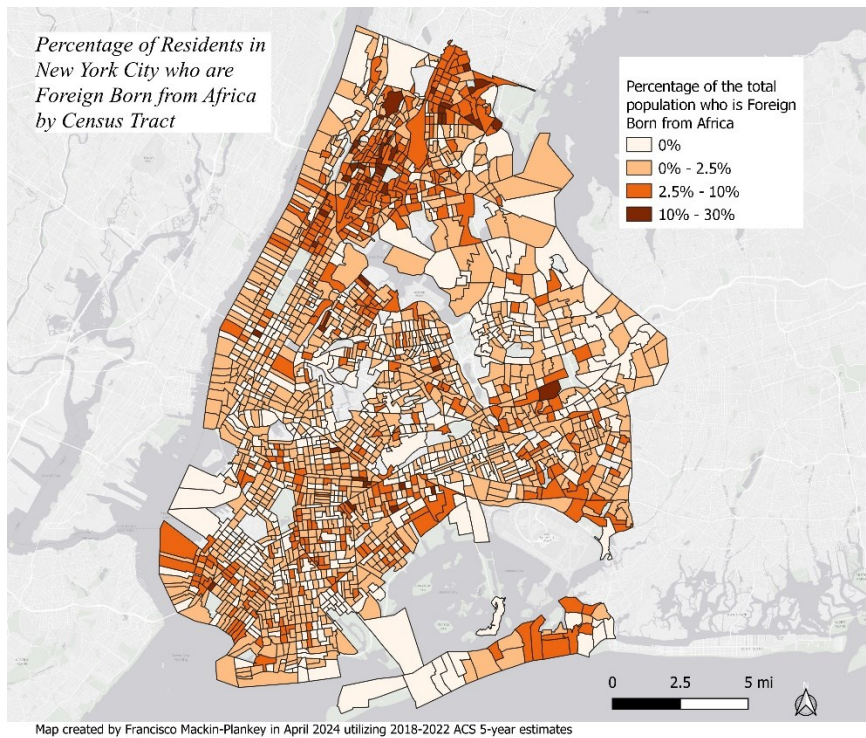


Figure 21 Percentage of Residents in New York City who are Foreign Born from Africa by Census Tract

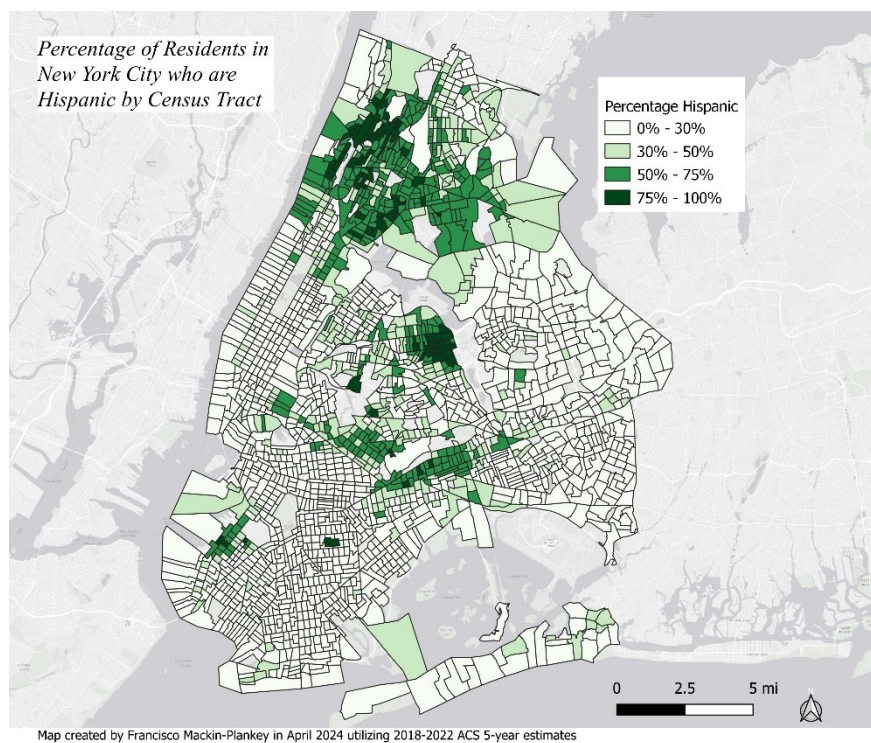


Figure 22 Percentage of Residents in New York City who are Hispanic by Census Tract

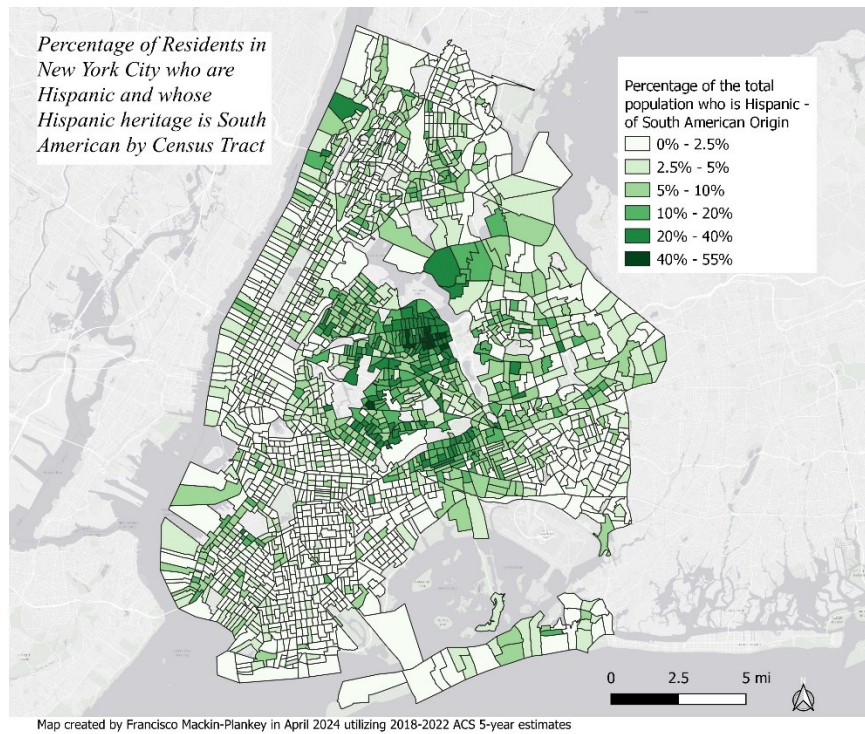


Figure 23 Percentage of Residents in New York City who are Hispanic and whose Hispanic heritage is South American by Census Tract

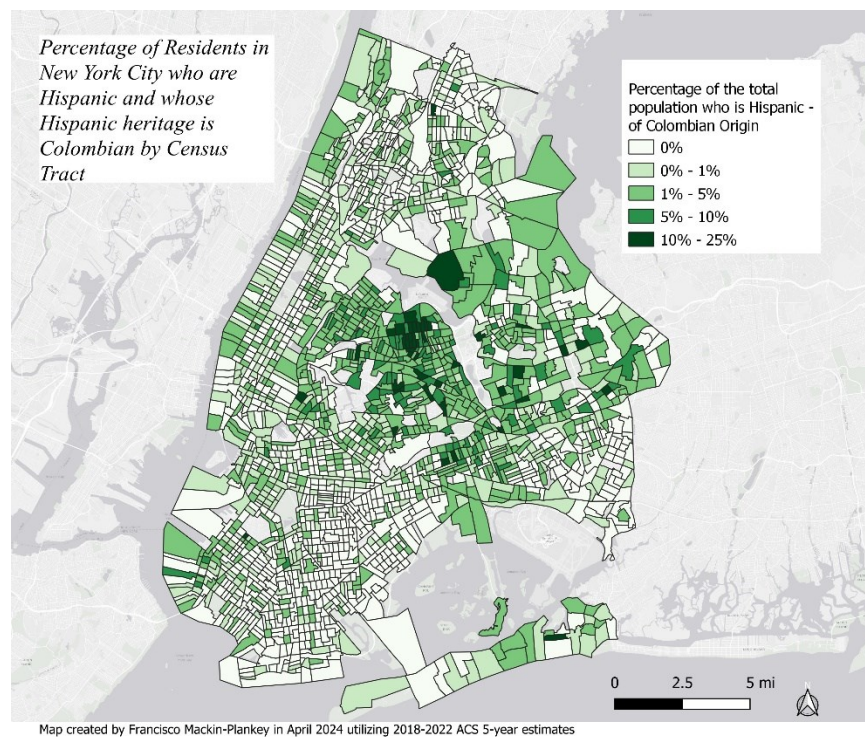


Figure 24 Percentage of Residents in New York City who are Hispanic and whose Hispanic heritage is Columbian by Census Tract

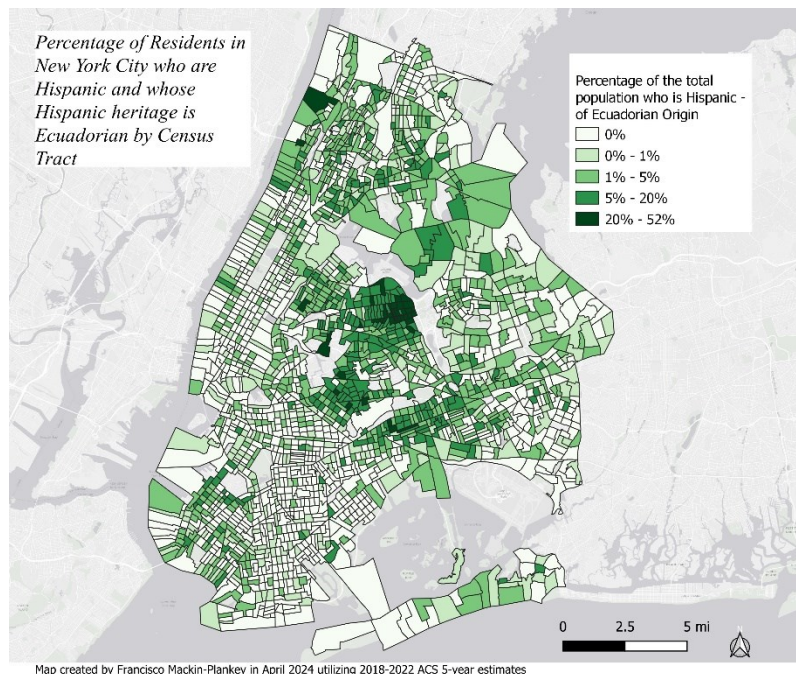


Figure 25 Percentage of Residents in New York City who are Hispanic and whose Hispanic heritage is Ecuadorian by Census Tract

There are a not insignificant number of foreign-born individuals from Africa living across the Bronx, Brooklyn, Manhattan, and Queens. The Bronx has the higher proportion of African born individuals of any of the boroughs, but there are neighborhoods in Upper Manhattan, Brooklyn and Queens that also have significant African communities.

When analyzing the maps of where individuals of Hispanic origin live in New York City, it is important to note that individuals of Mexican heritage constitute the largest Hispanic population in New York City by far. I decided against creating a map of the census tracts with the highest Venezuelan population, because there are only 7 census tracts in these four boroughs that are more than 5% Venezuelan.

While both the Bronx, and Queens have the largest Hispanic populations in the city, Hispanics of South American descent tend to live in Queens, while Hispanics of Mexican descent predominate in the Bronx. In Queens, the neighborhoods of Jackson Heights, Elmhurst, Corona, Middle Village, and Ridgewood have the largest populations of individuals of South American descent. Notably, there is considerable overlap between where New Yorkers of Colombian and

Ecuadorian descent live, but the census tracts with the highest proportions of each population are not shared.

When evaluating the suitability of different parts of New York City for the home share program, it is important to remember that participants in the focus groups had a clear preference for living proximate to transit. The following map details the subway lines in New York City, courtesy of NYC Open Data.

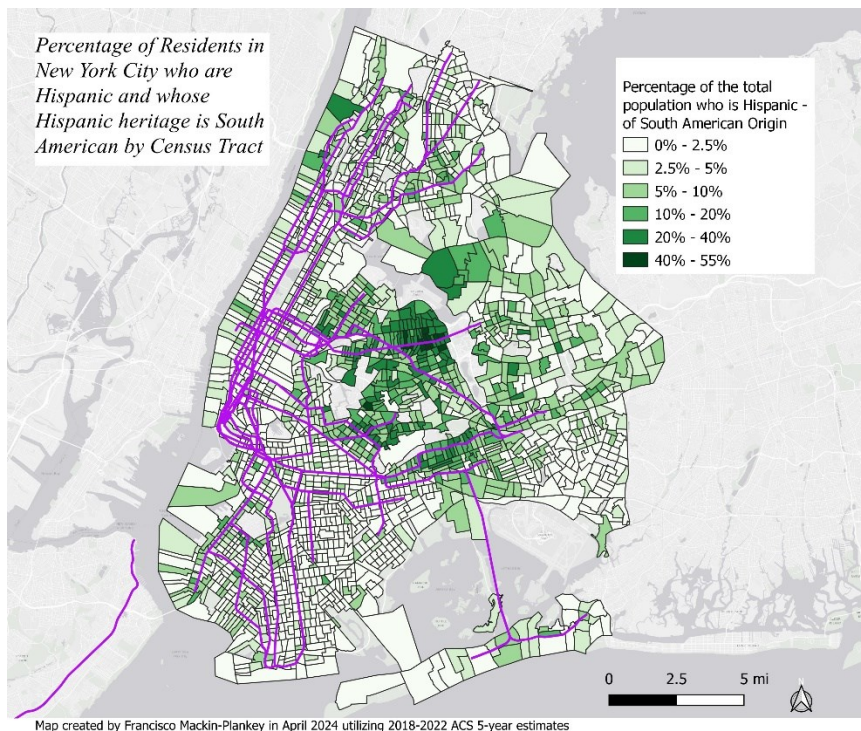


Figure 26 Percentage of Residents in New York City who are Hispanic and whose Hispanic heritage is South American by Census Tract with MTA Subway Lines

This map demonstrates that the parts of Queens which have the highest proportion of Hispanic individuals of South American descent are proximate to two subway lines. These parts of Queens are served by the tracks of the 7 and the tracks that serve the E, F, M, & R. The Bronx, where most migrants from Africa live, also has significant subway connectivity. The parts of the Bronx near Co-Op City have quality subway access and a high proportion of migrants from Africa.

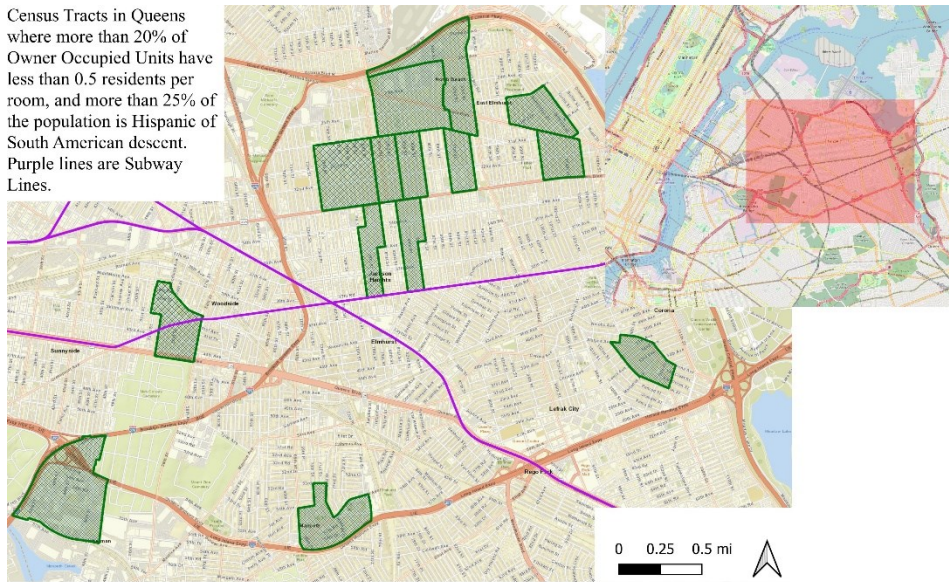
Suitability Analysis Outcomes

This chapter puts forward a suitability analysis to recommend which census tracts would be most suitable for a home share program, placing data on average number of occupants per room in owner occupied units with demographic data on the makeup of census tracts. Rather than conducting another level of analysis to differentiate different census tracts based on their distance to the nearest subway line, I have chosen to visualize subway lines on the map.

The following two maps both identify census tracts where more than 20% of owner-occupied units have fewer than 0.5 residents per room, but they differ on the demographic makeup of their census tracts. Because individuals born in Africa are proportionately a smaller portion of the census tracts where they are most populous, as compared to the proportion of individuals in census tracts who are Hispanic with a connection to South America, a lower threshold has been set for individuals of African origin.

The census tracts most suitable for a home share program focused on asylum seekers from Africa would target Northeastern Brooklyn, near Co-Op City and Pelham Parkway, whereas a home share program connecting South American migrants to South American communities would prioritize the parts of Jackson Heights, Elmhurst, & Corona in Queens that have the lowest owner-occupied utilization of space in their units.

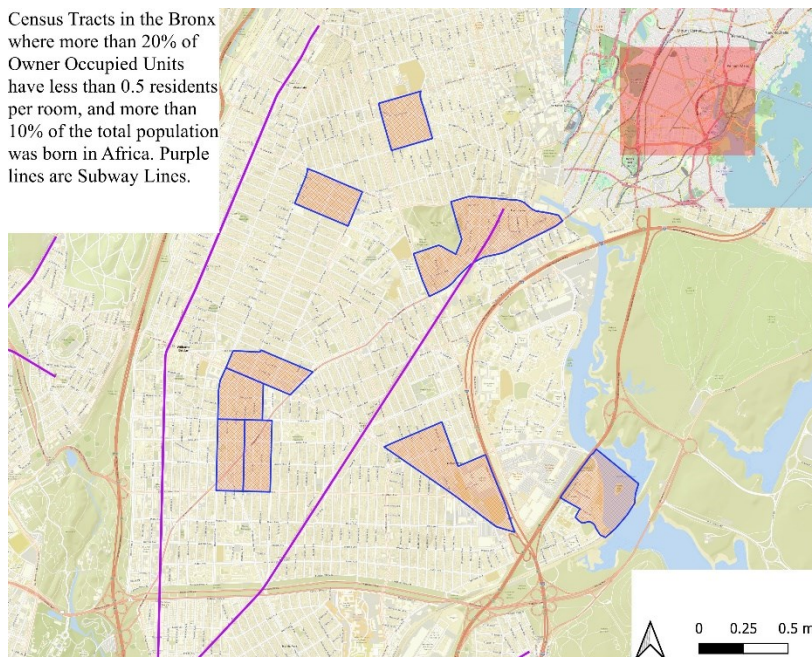
Census Tracts in Queens where more than 20% of Owner Occupied Units have less than 0.5 residents per room, and more than 25% of the population is Hispanic of South American descent. Purple lines are Subway Lines.



Map created by Francisco Mackin-Plankey in April 2024.

Figure 27 Census Tracts most suitable for a program serving South American Asylum Seekers

Census Tracts in the Bronx where more than 20% of Owner Occupied Units have less than 0.5 residents per room, and more than 10% of the total population was born in Africa. Purple lines are Subway Lines.



Map created by Francisco Mackin-Plankey in April 2024.

Figure 28 Census Tracts most suitable for a program serving African Asylum Seekers

Conclusion

Throughout their research process, Enterprise grounded their program design in the expertise of organizations operating home share programs, individuals providing services to asylum seekers, shelter providers, and asylum seekers. Enterprise's longstanding partnership with Impact Justice provided the foundational program design, which was reified by shelter providers with adjustments to better suit the needs of asylum-seekers as opposed to individuals leaving prison. The product of such a process is a very practical and functional program design rooted in a knowledge of the capacity demands of providing case management and referrals to home share participants.

This thesis adds further refinement to Enterprise's program design, and takes it in a new direction. How would you design a home share program to encourage transformational leadership on behalf of the host organization? If leadership is most likely to come from the program coordinator, how can you design the program to interest a program coordinator ready to go above and beyond in the role?

To inspire the host organization to go above and beyond, I think the home share program should focus in on a narrowly defined target population, so that the host organization and staff will be motivated to participate based on their connection to that specific population. Similarly, the program should operate within the program operator's neighborhood, to aid in the development of a cohort experience, and to experience the benefits of proximity. Finally, the program should expand host responsibilities and program activities to make the program a more significant experience for both participants and hosts.

There is little public funding available to support asylum seekers. Every organization providing quality services and support to asylum seekers is an example of transformative leadership. Because Enterprise has the responsibility of designing the home share program, but not operating it, it is in the unique situation of attempting to cultivate that leadership in another organization.

As Enterprise continues to look for funding to implement this program, they should prioritize program design alterations which would make the program more attractive for a high-quality host organization. Whether or not expanding the responsibilities of hosts and the matching process is the best avenue for captivating such an organization should be subject to more research.

Appendix A: Pre-Focus Group Questionnaire for Participants

CHECK IN QUESTIONNAIRE:

Welcome to this focus group session, please tell us about yourself:

1. How old are you?
2. Have you shared a home with others outside of your immediate family? [Please circle one]
 - a. Yes
 - b. No
- 2.2 How would you describe that experience? [Please circle one]
 - c. I would do it again
 - d. Good
 - e. Fine
 - f. I would not do it again
3. If you have not, how would you feel about sharing a home with somebody you are not related to? [Please circle one]
 - a. I would be interested
 - b. I am not sure
 - c. It depends on the situation
 - d. Probably not
4. Do you have any source of income? [Please circle one]
 - a. Yes
 - b. No
5. Did any family members or relatives join you in your journey to the United States? [Please circle one]
 - a. Yes
 - b. No
6. Please write down the 3 most important services/things/priorities you need now or have received so far.
 - a. _____
 - b. _____
 - c. _____
- 6.1 Are you working with organizations to achieve these services/things/priorities? [Please circle one]
 - a. Yes
 - b. No

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