

# OVEREXPOSED

## Big Tobacco's Advertising Saturation Around New York City Schools



A survey of tobacco marketing in the NYC neighborhoods of Flatbush,  
Brooklyn, Tremont, Bronx and Flushing, Queens



NEW YORK PUBLIC INTEREST RESEARCH GROUP/NYPIRG

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The Community Mapping Survey and pilot mentorship program were made possible by funding from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. For more information, contact Megan Ahearn at NYPIRG at [mahearn@nypirg.org](mailto:mahearn@nypirg.org) or visit [www.nycsmokefree.org](http://www.nycsmokefree.org).

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## INTRODUCTION AND EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Tobacco remains the number one leading cause of preventable death in the United States.<sup>1</sup> In New York City, tobacco use kills more people than AIDS, illegal drugs, homicide, and suicide combined.<sup>2</sup> In an attempt to distract the public from these staggering facts, the tobacco industry spends \$213.5 million each year in New York to market their products. Because of legal restrictions, cigarette ads have left billboards and TV commercials and now bombard customers in local corner stores, pharmacies, and other stores that the tobacco industry knows young people visit frequently. What's more, out of the nearly ten thousand licensed tobacco retailers in the city, 75% are within 1,000 feet of a school.<sup>3</sup> It would seem that Big Tobacco is crowding in on the places that our children frequent.

The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention ("CDC") has found that reducing exposure to tobacco advertisements and products during adolescence and teenage years will dramatically decrease the number of addicted adult smokers in New York City.<sup>4</sup> The less tobacco marketing youth see, the less likely they are to smoke.

NYPIRG has a long and successful history protecting New Yorkers of all ages from the negative effects of smoking, from targeted marketing to smoke-free spaces. This year, NYPIRG is continuing our work with the NYC Coalition for a Smoke-Free City (hereafter "the Coalition"), a health advocacy group that works throughout the five boroughs to increase awareness of tobacco control issues among community members and stakeholders to reach the following goals: reduce youth exposure and access to tobacco products; limit the effects of tobacco advertising and promotion on youth; and expand community awareness of the health effects of secondhand smoke.

As part of NYPIRG's work with the Coalition, a pilot mentorship project was launched at Bronx Community College, Brooklyn College, and Queens College. The program paired college and high school students who are interested in the public health arena, community-based service, or community education campaigns. Students completed a local mapping survey which plotted tobacco advertisements and displays they observed within a three to six block radius around their high school. The survey collected anecdotal evidence and is not a scientific report.

The mentorship program educated participants about the health effects of tobacco use and the industry's marketing, exposed them to Big Tobacco's advertising strategy, and empowered them to act in their com-

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<sup>1</sup>U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. How Tobacco Smoke Causes Disease: The Biology and Behavioral Basis for Smoking-Attributable Disease: A Report of the Surgeon General. Atlanta, GA: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion, Office on Smoking and Health, 2010. Available at [www.surgeongeneral.gov/library/tobaccosmoke/report/executivesummary.pdf](http://www.surgeongeneral.gov/library/tobaccosmoke/report/executivesummary.pdf).

<sup>2</sup>U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. \_The Health Consequences of Involuntary Exposure to Tobacco Smoke: A Report of the Surgeon General\_ Six Major Conclusions of the Surgeon General. \_Office on Smoking and Health, 2006.

<sup>3</sup>Luke, Douglas A., PhD, et. al. "Family Smoking Prevention and Tobacco Control Act: Banning Outdoor Tobacco Advertising Near Schools and Playgrounds." (American Journal of Preventive Medicine; 40(3): 295-302), 2011.

<sup>4</sup>Supra note 1.

munities. The anecdotal survey results and mapping project serve as a reminder of the saturation of tobacco advertisements, product displays and other marketing (collectively referred to as “tobacco ads” or “ads” throughout this report) that youth are exposed to in their everyday lives. The Community Mapping Survey found the following:

NYPIRG staff and student volunteers surveyed 45 stores.

- 24 stores were in Flatbush (53%)
- 12 stores were in Tremont (27%)
- 9 stores were in Flushing (20%)

NYPIRG students and staff volunteers observed at least one tobacco ad in the following types of stores:

- 31 Corner Store/Bodegas
- 5 gas stations
- 3 pharmacies
- 3 grocery stores
- 2 smoke shops
- 1 non-food retail store

Surveyors observed 136 tobacco ads on the exteriors of store buildings.

- Of the 136 total exterior ads, 107 ads were observed in the Flatbush area, 15 ads were observed in the Tremont area, and 14 ads were observed in the Flushing area.

Surveyors observed 209 total tobacco ads on the interior of stores.

- Of the 209 total interior ads, 120 ads were observed in Flatbush, 46 ads were observed in Tremont, and 43 ads were observed in Flushing.

**Surveyors observed a total of 345 interior and exterior tobacco advertisements within a small radius around the three high schools included in the project.**

## SURVEY HIGHLIGHTS

### Survey Methodology

Volunteers were trained by NYPIRG's Smoke-Free Project Coordinator to canvass neighborhoods and map tobacco advertisements, product displays, and other marketing observed on the exterior and interior of stores. Three neighborhoods, Flatbush in Brooklyn, Tremont in the Bronx, and Flushing in Queens, were surveyed between April and June 2013. In each neighborhood, between three and six main blocks were surveyed directly surrounding a high school. Small, residential streets that do not provide through-traffic to the main blocks were not always included. For instance, in Flatbush, the main thoroughfares of Nostrand Avenue, Bedford Avenue, and Flatbush Avenue were included, but the residential streets of East 21st Street through East 29th Street were not included.



Photo: Megan Ahearn

Effort was taken to map an area of similar significance and size in each neighborhood. This always included the streets directly around the high school and contiguous streets with local bus and subway stops that serve the school. The survey results collected are anecdotal and unscientific.

Maps of each neighborhood are attached to this report. The areas surveyed include:

Flatbush: Ditmas Avenue, Newkirk Avenue, Foster Avenue, Farragut Road, and Avenue I all between Ocean Avenue and Flatbush Avenue as well as Flatbush Avenue, Bedford Avenue, and Ocean Avenue between Ditmas Avenue and Avenue I and Nostrand Avenue between Glenwood Road and Avenue I.

Tremont: East 180th Street, East 179th Street, East 178th Street, and East Tremont Avenue all between Washington Avenue and Hughes Avenue, as well as Washington Avenue, Bathgate Avenue, 3rd Avenue, Lafontaine Avenue, Arthur Avenue, and Hughes Avenue all between East 180th St and East Tremont Avenue, and Monterey Avenue between East 179th Street and East Tremont Avenue.

Flushing: Horace Harding Expressway, Reeves Avenue, Melbourne Avenue, and Jewel Avenue all from Kissena Boulevard to Main Street, as well as Main Street and Kissena Boulevard both between Horace Harding Expressway and Jewel Avenue.

All stores in each neighborhood were canvassed; however, a store was only surveyed when at least one exterior ad, interior ad, tobacco product display or other tobacco company marketing was observed. For each completed survey, the type of business was identified. Surveyors were asked to classify each store by one of these categories:

- Corner Store/Bodega
- Non-Food Retail
- Restaurant
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_

Types of stores which were identified as “Other” include gas stations, pharmacies, smoke shops\*, and grocery stores.

### **Types of Businesses Surveyed**

A store was surveyed when at least one exterior ad, interior ad, tobacco product display or other tobacco marketing was observed. Traditional tobacco cigarettes, hookah, cigar, cigarillo, and electronic cigarette ads were all included in the survey. In total, our staff and student volunteers surveyed 45 stores.

- 24 stores were in Flatbush (53%)
- 12 stores were in Tremont (27%)
- 9 stores were in Flushing (20%)

In total, 31 Corner Store/Bodegas, 5 gas stations, 3 pharmacies, 3 grocery stores, 2 smoke shops, and 1 non-food retail store were surveyed. Corner Stores/Bodegas represent 69% of total stores surveyed, gas stations represent 11%, pharmacies and grocery stores represent 7% apiece, smoke shops represent 4%, and non-food retail represents 2%. Corner Store/Bodegas represented the most common location for tobacco ads in all boroughs.

- In Flatbush, 15 Corner Store/Bodegas, 3 grocery stores, 2 gas stations, 2 smoke-shops, 1 pharmacy, and 1 non-food retail store were surveyed. Flatbush had the most diverse type of stores included in the survey.
- In Tremont, only Corner Store/Bodegas were found to have tobacco advertisements. 12 Corner Store/ Bodegas were surveyed.
- In Flushing, 4 Corner Store/Bodegas, 3 gas stations, and 2 pharmacies were surveyed. Flushing represented the most even split between types of stores.

\* Only the exteriors of the two smoke shops were surveyed since you must be 18 years or older to enter the stores. However, passersby of all ages are exposed to the store exteriors.



### Exterior Advertisements

Surveyors observed 136 total tobacco advertisements on the exteriors of store buildings including the walls, windows, doors, and other property of the establishment. Of the 136 total exterior ads, 107 ads were observed in the Flatbush area, 15 were observed in the Tremont area, and 14 were observed in the Flushing area. Flatbush ads represent 79% of total exterior ads observed, Tremont ads represent 11%, and Flushing ads represent 10%.

### Interior Advertisements

Surveyors observed 209 total tobacco advertisements on the interior of stores. The interior of the store includes in, on and around counters, shelves, registers, interior walls, ceilings, and other places easily visible from anywhere a customer might stand. Compared to the total number of interior ads observed, Flatbush represented 57%, Tremont represented 22% and Flushing represented 21%. Citywide, of the 209 total tobacco ads, 74 (or 35.4%) were visible from the doorway into the store. In Flatbush, surveyors observed 120 interior tobacco ads, 33 of which were visible from the door. In Tremont, surveyors observed 46 interior tobacco ads, 21 (nearly half) of which were visible from the door. In Flushing, surveyors observed 43 interior tobacco ads, 20 (nearly half) of which were visible from the door.



Photo: Robert Noonan

### Health Warnings

There were only 11 health warnings about smoking observed at eight different stores. 4 warnings in 3 stores were observed in Flatbush, 6 warnings in 4 stores were observed in Tremont, and 1 warning in 1 store was observed in Flushing. These signs are posted voluntarily and possibly remnant of a New York City mandate for tobacco retailers to post graphic warnings that was ultimately overturned in the courts.

### Brand Observations

Newport brand tobacco product advertisements were found most frequently on store exteriors, followed by Marlboro. However, Newport was only seen on the exterior of one store in Flushing, Queens. Inside of stores, Newport brand tobacco products were again found the most frequently, followed by Marlboro. However, it is worth noting that Newport advertisements were not observed in any store interiors in Flushing (see Brand Frequency List pg 13-15 for more information).

## **Conclusion**

The large amount of advertising around schools, as shown by this survey, indicates an effort by tobacco companies to reach audiences that include youth. While youth are engaging one another on public health issues related to smoking and helping their peers make decisions in their own best interest, we can do more. This problem is one that the public is supportive of tackling head on. According to a 2011 public opinion survey, 65% of New Yorkers support limiting tobacco retailers near schools. For more information please visit [www.nypirg.org/health](http://www.nypirg.org/health) or [www.nycsmokefree.org](http://www.nycsmokefree.org).

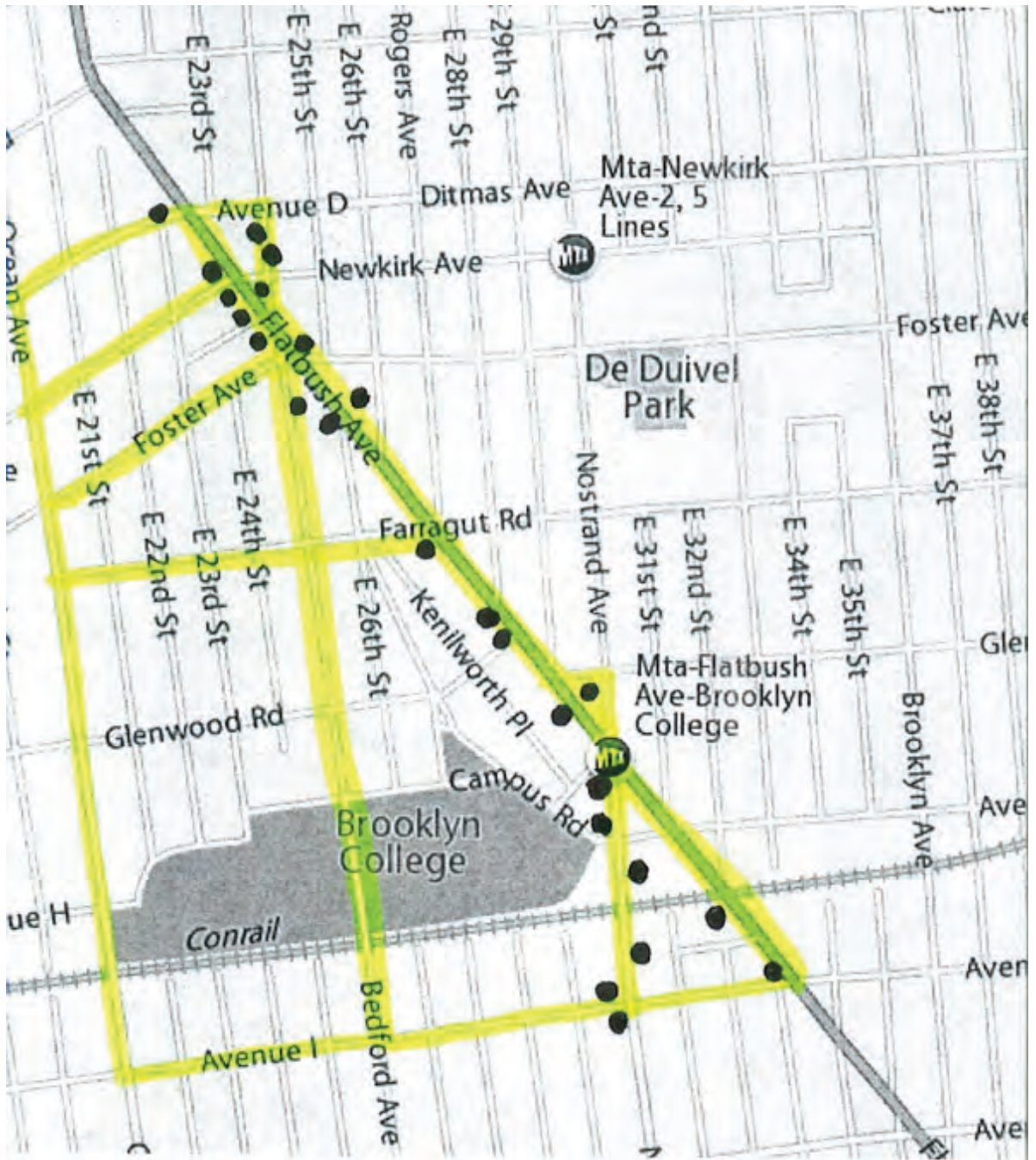


## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS AND CREDITS

Observations were carried out by NYPIRG staff as well as college and high school students working with NYPIRG. Surveyors include the following: Megan Ahearn, Tiffany Brown, Sebastian Bullock, Niara Carrenard, Armando Chapelliquen, Noah Jackson, Faiza Khan, Tamari Khornauli, Talia LeRay, Robert Noonan, and Brandon Robinson. The Community Mapping Survey and pilot mentorship program were made possible by funding from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. The program was also made possible through the support of the NYC Coalition for a Smoke-Free City. For more information, contact Megan Ahearn at NYPIRG at [mahearn@nypirg.org](mailto:mahearn@nypirg.org) or visit [www.nycsmokefree.org](http://www.nycsmokefree.org).

Cover page photo: Tobacco Free NYS <http://www.tobaccofreenys.org/Tobacco-Marketing-Works-NY.html>.

## Flatbush Map\*



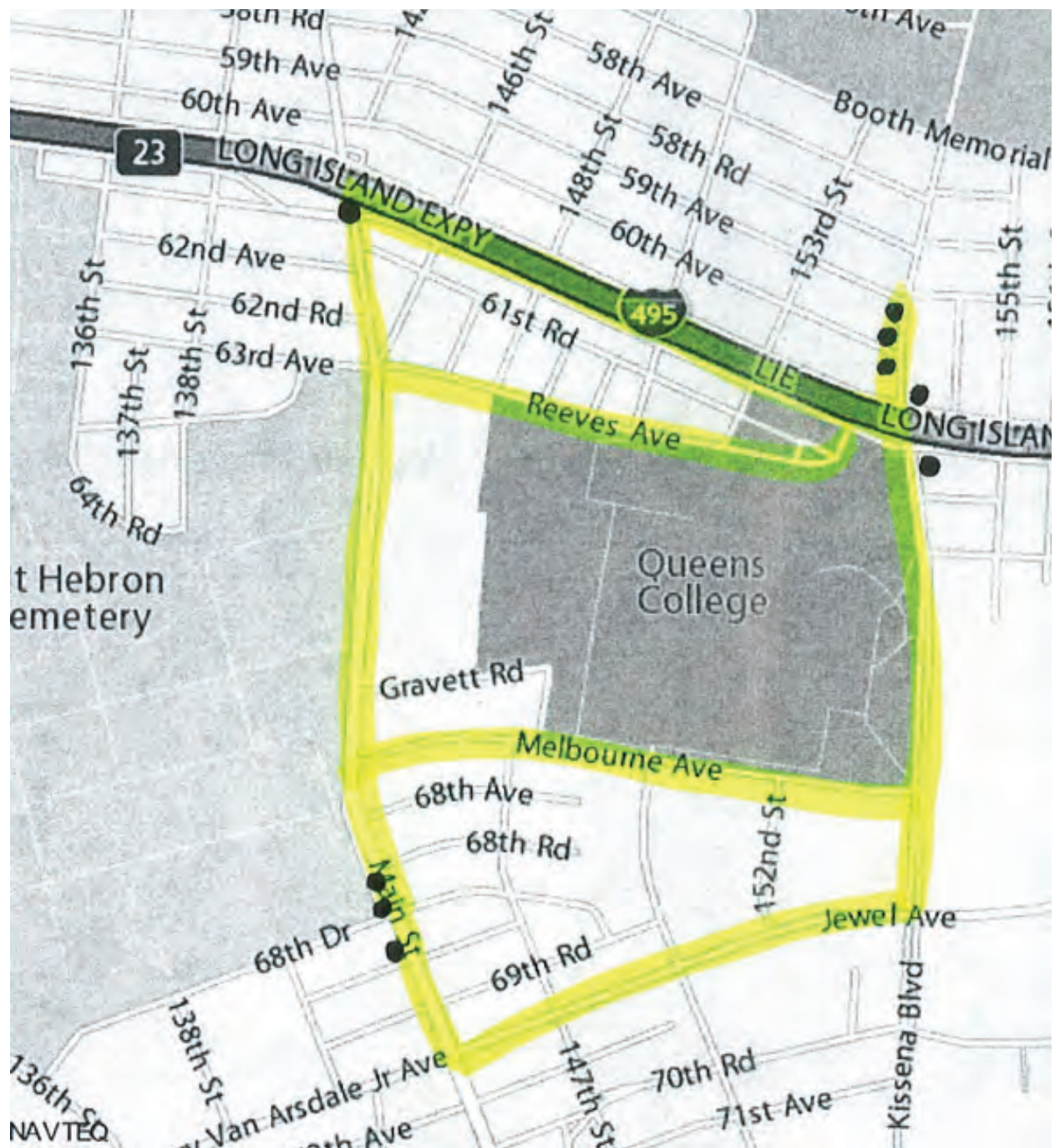
\* For all maps, highlighted blocks were canvassed and black marks indicate a store which was surveyed.

## Tremont Map





## Flushing Map



## BRAND FREQUENCY LISTS

### CITYWIDE

Exterior, [Brand] at [number of stores]	Interior, [Brand] at [number of stores]
Newport, 23	Newport, 22
Marlboro, 8	Marlboro, 18
Blu e-Cigarette, 7	Maverick, 15
Eonsmoke, 6	Black and Mild, 10
Maverick, 5	Blu e-Cigarette, 10
Camel, 5	Parliament, 9
Njoy, 3	Pall Mall, 5
Parliament, 3	Camel, 5
Spirit, 3	Salem, 4
Backwoods, 2	Eonsmoke, 4
USA Gold, 2	Backwoods, 4
Fortuna, 2	American Spirits, 2
Phillies, 2	USA Gold, 2
Black and Mild, 1	Logic, 1
American Spirit, 1	NJoy, 1
Mild Seven, 1	Bugler, 1
Logic, 1	Spirit, 1
Hookah, 1	Hookah, 1
Capone, 1	Imperial, 1
White Owl, 1	Palma, 1
Remington, 1	Capri, 1
Leaf cigars, 1	Kool, 1
Cheyenne, 1	D'ville, cigars 1
Premium cigars, 1	Drum, 1
E-Z wider, 1	Skoal, 1
	Zig Zag, 1
	Entourage, 1
	Swisher Sweets cigars, 1
	Phillies, 1
	Blue Crush, 1



## FLATBUSH, BROOKLYN

<b>Exterior, [Brand] at [number of stores]</b>	<b>Interior, [Brand] at [number of stores]</b>
Newport, 17	Newport, 13
Marlboro, 8	Marlboro, 8
Blu e-Cigarette, 5	Maverick, 7
Maverick, 4	Black and Mild, 7
Parliament, 3	Blu e-Cigarette, 5
Camel, 2	Parliament, 4
NJoy, 2	Pall Mall, 3
Phillies, 2	Camel, 2
Backwoods, 2	Salem, 2
Eonsmoke, 1	Eonsmoke, 2
Hookah, 1	Logic, 1
Leaf cigars, 1	Phillies, 1
Logic, 1	D'ville cigars, 1
Mild Seven, 1	Backwoods, 1
Cheyenne, 1	Drum, 1
Remington, 1	Bugler, 1
Black and Mild, 1	Spirit, 1
USA Gold, 1	Hookah, 1
Capone, 1	Imperial, 1
White Owl, 1	Palma, 1
Spirit, 1	Capri, 1
	Kool, 1

## TREMONT, THE BRONX

Exterior, [Brand] at [number of stores]	Interior, [Brand] at [number of stores]
Newport, 5	Newport, 9
Eonsmoke, 3	Maverick, 8
Spirit, 2	Blu e-Cigarette, 4
Maverick, 1	Black and Mild, 3
Blu e-Cigarette, 1	Parliament, 2
	Marlboro, 2
	Salem, 2
	Eonsmoke, 1

## FLUSHING, QUEENS

Exterior, [Brand] at [number of stores]	Interior, [Brand] at [number of stores]
Camel, 3	Marlboro, 8
Fortuna, 2	Parliament, 3
Newport, 1	Camel, 3
Blu e-Cigarette, 1	Backwoods, 3
NJoy, 1	Pall Mall, 2
Eonsmoke, 1	USA Gold, 2
USA Gold, 1	American Spirits, 2
Premium cigars, 1	Blue Crush, 1
American Spirit, 1	Blu e-Cigarette, 1
E-Z wider, 1	Eonsmoke, 1
	NJoy, 1
	Skoal, 1
	Zig Zag, 1
	Entourage, 1
	Swisher Sweets cigars, 1



Surveyor Name: \_\_\_\_\_

School: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone #: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## Instructions:

Thank you for taking part in this community mapping survey! To complete this survey, you will need a pen, this paper survey, a camera and a tape measure. Fill out the answers to the below questions when you observe any sort of tobacco or anti-tobacco advertisements (ads) on the exterior or interior of stores within the designated number of blocks from your high school, college campus and/or home addresses. Advertisements include pricing and promotion announcements, traditional advertisements, tobacco brand labels, the cigarettes themselves, health announcements, etc. If you are unsure, take a picture of the advertisement and fill out the survey in full. Use a different survey form for each store that you observe tobacco and/or anti-tobacco ads on or in. Please take a picture that can be emailed at a later time of all tobacco or anti-tobacco ads and signs. Please be as specific as possible in your answers.

Business Name: _____		Borough: _____
Street Address: _____		Zip-Code: _____
Type of Business:	<input type="checkbox"/> Corner Store/Bodega	<input type="checkbox"/> Non-Food Retail
	<input type="checkbox"/> Restaurant	<input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____

## 1. EXTERIOR TOBACCO ADVERTISEMENTS

o How many tobacco ads are on the exterior of the store?: \_\_\_\_\_

o List the tobacco brands that are advertised on the store's exterior?: \_\_\_\_\_

o For each ad, where is it placed (near door, on window, at eye level/near ground/above head, etc.)? \_\_\_\_\_

- Ad 1: \_\_\_\_\_
- Ad 2: \_\_\_\_\_
- Ad 3: \_\_\_\_\_
- Ad 4: \_\_\_\_\_
- Additional ads: \_\_\_\_\_

## 2. INTERIOR TOBACCO ADVERTISEMENTS

o When you first enter, how many tobacco ads are visible from the doorway?: \_\_\_\_\_

o Do you see any tobacco ads inside the store?: (circle one) YES or NO

- If YES, how many?: \_\_\_\_\_

o What tobacco brands are advertised in the store?: \_\_\_\_\_

o For each ad, where is it placed (on counter, in front of register, behind register/counter, on window, hanging from ceiling, on store shelves, on wall at eye level/near ground/above head, etc.)? \_\_\_\_\_

- Ad 1: \_\_\_\_\_
- Ad 2: \_\_\_\_\_
- Ad 3: \_\_\_\_\_
- Ad 4: \_\_\_\_\_
- Additional ads: \_\_\_\_\_

o For each ad, how large is the largest text (use tape measure)? \_\_\_\_\_

- Ad 1: \_\_\_\_\_
- Ad 2: \_\_\_\_\_
- Ad 3: \_\_\_\_\_
- Ad 4: \_\_\_\_\_
- Additional ads: \_\_\_\_\_

o For each ad, what colors are used (please be specific and include whether they are bright, dull, etc)?

- Ad 1: \_\_\_\_\_
- Ad 2: \_\_\_\_\_
- Ad 3: \_\_\_\_\_
- Ad 4: \_\_\_\_\_
- Additional ads: \_\_\_\_\_

### 3. INTERIOR TOBACCO PRODUCT DISPLAYS

o Do you see cigarette packs OR cartons displayed anywhere in the store?: (circle one) YES or NO

o Do you see other tobacco products (e.g., smokeless products, cigars, pipes, papers, loose tobacco, etc.) displayed anywhere in the store?: (circle one) YES or NO

o Do you see cigarette packs, cartons or other tobacco products displayed behind the cash register?: (circle one) YES or NO

o Please describe each tobacco product display. Measure shelf space by counting the number of “pack facings” on the front row of shelves and displays. Count the number of packs across and down and multiply. Cartons stacked with the longest side facing front count as five packs; cartons stacked with the shorter side facing front count as two. One pack facing equals seven square inches.

- DISPLAY 1:
  - Location of display: \_\_\_\_\_
  - Size of display (total pack facings/horizontal x vertical): \_\_\_\_\_  
(size in sq. inches or pack facings x 7): \_\_\_\_\_
- DISPLAY 2:
  - Location of display: \_\_\_\_\_
  - Size of display (total pack facings/horizontal x vertical): \_\_\_\_\_  
(size in sq. inches or pack facings x 7): \_\_\_\_\_

### 4. ANTI-TOBACCO HEALTH-WARNING ADVERTISEMENTS/SIGNS

o Are there any anti-tobacco health warning ads on or in the store?: (circle one) YES or NO

- If YES, how many are there?: \_\_\_\_\_

o For each health-warning ad, where is it placed (on counter, in front of register, behind register/counter, on window, hanging from ceiling, on store shelves, on wall at eye level/near ground/above head, etc.)?

- Ad 1: \_\_\_\_\_
- Ad 2: \_\_\_\_\_
- Ad 3: \_\_\_\_\_
- Ad 4: \_\_\_\_\_
- Additional ads: \_\_\_\_\_

o For each health-warning ad, how large is the largest text (use tape measure)?

- Ad 1: \_\_\_\_\_
- Ad 2: \_\_\_\_\_
- Ad 3: \_\_\_\_\_
- Ad 4: \_\_\_\_\_
- Additional ads: \_\_\_\_\_

o For each health-warning ad, what colors are used (please be specific, include whether bright, dull, etc)?

- Ad 1: \_\_\_\_\_
- Ad 2: \_\_\_\_\_
- Ad 3: \_\_\_\_\_
- Ad 4: \_\_\_\_\_
- Additional ads: \_\_\_\_\_

5. What grabbed your attention most as you went through the store?: