

The following oral history memoir is the result of 1 videorecorded session of an interview with Angela Battaglia by Cynthia Tobar on May 10, 2016 in New York City. This interview is part of "Cities for People, Not for Profit": Gentrification and Housing Activism in Bushwick. Kurt Steger has reviewed the transcript and has made minor corrections and emendations. The reader is asked to bear in mind that she or he is reading a verbatim transcript of the spoken word, rather than written prose.

Angela Battaglia

[Start of recorded material 00:00:01]

Cynthia: It is Tuesday, May 10th, and we are here in the offices of the Ridgewood Bushwick Senior Citizen's Center.

Angela: Council.

Cynthia: Council, and can you please state your name and your role?

Angela: Yes; I'm Angela Battaglia. I'm the Assistant Executive Director for Housing Services and Community Relations.

Cynthia: Fantastic. So thank you for being here; it means a lot to get your story included in the collection for the archive. I'd like to ask about what your earliest memories were like living in the neighborhood, how long have you been in the neighborhood, your earliest childhood memories and stories, any influences of your family growing up, your education? You can pretty much begin anywhere you like.

Angela: Okay. So I was born and raised in Bushwick. I was schooled - at least elementary school - in Bushwick. I'm going to give you street locations because they really do come into play. I spent the first six years of my life on Troutman Street between Wilson and Central, and then we made - we were very tight in a small [railroad] apartment. I have one sister and one brother. We moved to Knickerbocker and Dekalb where I actually resided until - I was 25 years old. I did go away to school; I went to Fordham in the Bronx. I commuted the first year and then I moved up there in the middle of the second year.

My recollections of a child were a very neighborhoody-neighborhood, which I really loved. I mean people knew each other; they greeted each other on the street. It was for the most part, as I look back, as a child I don't consider something a very ethnic neighborhood, but looking back I realize it was a very ethnic neighborhood. It was largely Italian/American, at least where I lived, very much so.

There were pizzerias on almost every corner. There were homemade macaroni shops - we call it macaroni as Italian/Americans; you know that's pasta? There were stores that had barrels of snails for sale and what is regarded as

bacalhau, both in I think the Spanish culture and the Italian culture, which is cod fish, right on the street. Bread stores - most people did their bread shopping in a bread store, their meat shopping in a pork store or a butcher. It was different. It was a simpler time.

When I was a kid there was a vegetable cart that came around drawn by a horse, if you can believe that? And as I was growing up - so I went to an elementary school that was Catholic. My dad was very Catholic and felt that we should all go to Catholic schools, and he saw to it that we did. So I went to St Joseph Elementary School, which is now called St Francis Cabrini because it merged with another school right on Suydam Street between the same two cross streets, Wilson and Central. I told myself I wouldn't say, um; where was I going with this? Oh, help.

Cynthia: No worries; it's interesting that you talk about the points of education [unintelligible 00:03:13]. Can you tell me a little more about that?

Angela: So yes. My dad, as a very ardent Catholic felt that all of his children should be educated in Catholic schools, so myself, my sister who is three years older than I am, and my brother who is three years older than she is, therefore six years older than I, all attended St Joseph Elementary School, one through eight. When it was time for high school we all applied for Catholic high schools. My sister, Marie, who is a wonderful person but really hated schools, had a hard time getting in and my dad really worked hard to get her into a Catholic school. That's how important it was to him, and she did get into a Catholic school, and we all went to Catholic high schools.

And then when it was time for college, of course, my sister wasn't interested but my brother and I both attended Fordham. I was following in his footsteps, yeah. Education was very important to my dad, so much so that my brother, Jack, who is really the intellect in the family, went onto law school. He went to Columbia Law School, and when I graduated at Fordham University in 1974 my dad near begged me to go to law school. And I just wasn't interested but he really felt that education was really, really very important.

Cynthia: And what was the role your father played professionally?

Angela: My dad was a transit worker, so he was a blue collar worker. My mom was a stay-at-home mom. She was a secretary until the point that she started having children and then she was a stay-at-home mom. She was married to my dad while he was in service; in fact he was in the air force. He got married in his uniform and then went back overseas.

Yes, and so just again going back to what I was saying earlier - the neighborhood itself was very congenial. People kind of knew each other; people were sort of identified by the parish they went to. As I was growing up,

and particularly when I moved to Knickerbocker Avenue at age six, to show the changing dynamics of the neighborhood I realize now that before the Italian/Americans migrated in it was a German community, but there were also Jewish people in the community.

The building we moved into, my neighbor right across the hall was an older couple, Jewish couple, and they actually ran a photo studio on the second floor of the building. Within very few years of me moving, or the family moving to Knickerbocker and Dekalb, the neighborhood started to change and become more Latino. We say Latino now; at the time it was mostly Puerto Rican migrants.

And to me it was very important that a neighborhood - even then, I'm six years old, you know - be diverse. I found it so exciting that the person who lived across the hall from me spoke English but also spoke Spanish. And as a result, and this is also a very interesting dynamic, I went to the Diocesan High School that was Christ the King High School. That particular high school did not give you a choice - they may have a different policy now - in the language class that they put you into but you had to graduate with three years in a Regent's Diploma.

My first year of high school I was put in a Latin class, which I remained in for three years; I didn't start studying French until my second year but they told me I was studying French and not Spanish. I love the language. It was actually beautiful, but I realized I wasn't - it wasn't helping me communicate with the people that were migrating into the neighborhood and I really felt it was really important to be able to communicate with my neighbors, those that were monolingual English/Spanish.

So when I went to college I started studying Spanish then, and by the time I graduated college I was fairly fluent, as I am now, and I probably could read and write Spanish as well as I read and wrote English because it was really important to me.

For a few years I took jobs in corporate America, not too many years, and I decided I really had to come back and contribute to the neighborhood where I grew up. So in 1978 I volunteered at the local senior center, which was at 319 Stanhope Street, which is still a senior center - it's called the Ridgewood Bushwick Senior Center.

I was asked to call up the director there - his name was Vito Lopez - and I did, and I went for an interview with him and told him that I would very much like to volunteer. I was in-between jobs. I was looking for a job that was socially redeeming, but at least until the point that I got another job I wanted to help the seniors in the community where I grew up.

And when he asked me my name I said Angela Battaglia, and he said to me, "Are you any relation to John Battaglia?" and that was my dad, and of course I very proudly said, "Oh yes, that's my father." We were a very tight family and he said to me, "Doesn't your father volunteer at St Joseph?" and I again proudly said, "Yes," and he said, "And you're here to volunteer?" and I said, "Yes." And he said, "Doesn't anyone in your family work for a living," and he just totally took me off guard.

As it happened, at that time there was a program called CETA - I should remember what that stood for - C E T A. It was a federal program aimed at giving jobs to the unemployable or unemployed, and thank God I fit into the latter of those two categories. I was unemployed. In order to, however, qualify for CETA you had to have earned less than a certain amount of income in the previous 12 months, and because I had resigned a job, which my older brother told me wasn't very smart to do, to resign a job without another job, but I really was ready to get back into public service or to get into public service, period.

So I had a gap and that gap of not having worked put me in the financial category that I had earned less than the amount. And Vito Lopez at the time told me that there was an umbrella group that was called [Ermandad Espana], and they were hiring maybe a dozen or more CETA workers that would be placed throughout the community, and that eight of them were to be placed - or perhaps it was six - at the Ridgewood Bushwick Senior Center.

And he asked if I was interested in applying for one of them, and I did, and I started working under the umbrella of Ermandad on March 20th, 1978, and I've been here ever since.

Cynthia: And tell me a little bit about what helped you, I guess, from resigning from that corporate job and the kind of work you were doing, to the type of public service orientation to helping seniors in the community?

Angela: So I guess with a Catholic upbringing we were always taught to treat our neighbors as ourselves, to help people. At the time this was a very working-class community and I would venture to say as I - by the time I had graduated college it was also a poor community; a lot of families on public assistance, a lot of families with need.

So I do admit that straight from college I wasn't into the public service mode. I was into traveling and earning money, because during college as we all know, unless you have a part time job which goes right back into paying for school expenses, I didn't know what it was like to be able to go a Broadway show or to do fun things, and I wanted to.

So the first job I took was actually - I wanted to work for an airline. My older sister had worked for American Airlines and she traveled all over for free. She traveled to Puerto Rico on a Saturday morning and came back Saturday night, and I was thinking, boy, would I love to do that but I would go for the whole weekend because, keep in mind, when I graduated college I was fairly fluent in Spanish and really wanted to perfect that, primarily to help Spanish speaking people.

So I applied, sent my resumes out to every single airline that was based in New York and I guess everyone had the same idea as I because there were no jobs. There were jobs as a stewardess; I did not want to be a stewardess. I wanted to work in the corporate offices but still have travel benefits. That didn't pan out.

So as I'm going through The New York Times classified I see a job based at Kennedy Airport and I go for an interview. It turned out it was working for a mutual of Omaha selling flight insurance. Now, did I want to sell flight insurance? No. However, the gentleman who interviewed me, who was quite charismatic - he could probably get anyone to take any job - convinced me that if I took this job and I was based at Kennedy Airport, that someone would discover me and I would get an airlines job and I would be able to fly all over the world.

And that didn't happen. However, during the six months that I worked there - I started in the summertime and I left in February - I actually made some of the best friends that I have until today. And interestingly, at least half of the young women - we were all young women, there were no men; I guess they didn't apply - but half of the young women that were part of that group went onto graduate school and entered a professional career.

I was the first of all of them to leave because I just didn't want to do that anymore. I wasn't traveling. I wasn't discovered. In an effort again to be able to travel, particularly to Spanish speaking countries and South America, I took a job with an export - well, the company was [Crane] company. It is a plumbing and valve - it's an internationally known company. I took a job with their export department.

And why I did was, I was told that I would assist them with the South America trade. That I would translate documents, that I would travel to South America and I was just thrilled. The job itself; the most boring job I ever had. We were doing estimating for export of valves and plumbing supplies - imagine this?

I never got to travel so I worked there for two years and at the end of the two years I realized it was a dead end, and at that point I guess - I think this happens in life with everything, it even happens with relationships. You know,

you get to the point where you realize it's not working. It's not what I want and I'm not going to stay in it anymore.

So I decided, just like that of course - I gave him a few weeks' notice - that I no longer wanted to work there. It wasn't what they had offered me. It wasn't what my expectation was. There was no traveling. I also realized, and this is something worth noting, that it was a very male-dominated setting. The males moved up, the females stayed behind, and I was never of a strong feminist mind, but that troubled me. It just troubled me. I knew if I stayed there I would go nowhere.

Cynthia: And around what age were you at this time when you were making this transition?

Angela: So it would have been 1970 - the end of 1977 - I was born in '52 so I was 25. So I left; I left in about November if I'm not mistaken. It was almost Thanksgiving, Christmas. Of course it was hard when Christmas came to realize I wasn't getting a pay check anymore.

Cynthia: And were you still being supported or helped out with your family?

Angela: I was still living at home, and I failed to mention that in 1977, that same year, my parents - remember again that my dad was a blue collar worker - they bought their first house, still in Bushwick, on the corner of Willoughby and St Nicholas, yeah.

Cynthia: And what was the area like around that time when they had purchased the house there?

Angela: So the neighborhood started to change during that time. There was a lot of speculation on the part of, I'll say landlords. Buildings were being purchased up for gain, for financial gain, and it was felt that many of these buildings were being actually burned down intentionally. There were a lot of arson fires going on. The blackout of 1977 nearly decimated the neighborhood. The neighborhood was changing.

The block - again this is a very interesting point - somehow above Wyckoff Avenue the blocks were stable. They weren't hit by the looting and the arson, and I think mostly because they were smaller buildings, particularly the buildings between St Nicholas and Cypress. There were only two avenues, by the way. The houses were small, one and two family homes, owner-occupied; they weren't hit by the arson and speculation. But below Wyckoff Avenue you were starting to see whole blocks burned down.

And when I offered to volunteer at the Senior Center it was to do something worthwhile while I found my place in the world, and when I did meet with

Vida Lopez and he asked me if I was interested in a job, I of course said, yes, because I knew it would be based at the Senior Center and I would be helping people.

And there were a group of - let me see - eight of us; there were eight of us that were actually under his supervision as the director of the Senior Center. But the arm that - we didn't really report to but that we gave our timesheets to, was Ermandad Espana and they gave us - our pay checks came from there. So at the time Vito Lopez decided that he was going to pair us off two, two, two and two.

Two would run an educational program for seniors and from that came a community-based college program that was free, under Ridgewood Bushwick Senior Citizen's Council. We could talk about that dynamic later, but at that time it was the center, and then the Ridgewood Bushwick Senior Citizen's Council was founded, which got its own grants and grew into the enormous social service agency we are today under the guidance of Vito Lopez.

So two of the young people were placed in education to run - or to develop a free community-based college program for seniors. Two were based in the Meals on Wheels program to identify seniors that could not get out of their homes that needed meals delivered to their homes. Two were based in a homecare program, to get out into the community and determine if there were seniors that needed home healthcare, and that spun off into one of the largest home attendant agencies in the city, which was us. And two were placed in the housing field; it was me and the only gentleman among us.

His name was Harry [Marakowitz], and the two of us were asked to run a housing program, and I almost fell off my chair. I didn't know - what does a housing program do? What would a housing program do? But what I found out in no time flat was that the speculative landlords or property purchases were trying to drive out, even then, the low income people; primarily the seniors.

So when I came on board my job was really to help seniors that were in regulated apartments and many, if not most, were to either freeze their rent or to get Section 8, which at that time anyone who was eligible for Section 8 got Section 8, and you may now that Section 8 is a rent subsidy program whereby the person or household only pays a third of their income towards the rent and the government picks up the rest forever.

There has to be a lease that gets renewed every two years, the apartment has to get inspected. Most of these apartments, if not all of these apartments were past inspection and I helped a lot of seniors stabilize in their housing with Section 8 or a senior's rent increase exception.

Cynthia: How dire was that situation when you came in?

Angela: It was pretty dire because I realized, and again I was being trained by a woman who worked for the city HPD office, which was right up the street in 300 Wyckoff Avenue. She would come every Wednesday. Until I and Harry were hired to help people with their issues, their housing issues, their rent issues or their substandard housing issues, a person came from the local HPD office every single Wednesday to see seniors that had housing issues, and that was the person who trained me.

And I dove into it, if that's the right word, because I was so touched by how poor these seniors were and how hard it was to pay their rent, which although in those days was very low it was not low enough to enable them to be able to pay rent and put food on their table. And I was even more horrified and appalled by the level of services that were beginning to be retrenched by what I would say were, certainly unscrupulous if not evil landlords, to drive low income people, not only seniors, out of their households. And before long I became a tenant organizer and I started organizing buildings that were without services and I did a pretty good job, I have to say.

Some of them are some of the best buildings in Bushwick now. One of them, one of the bigger ones which happened to be on the same block as the Senior Center is a 25 unit building, brick building, beautiful building. The apartments were all large with box rooms. When I entered that building they came to Vito Lopez and he said, "See Angela, she'll help you," and we started meeting and organizing. We took the landlord to court. We got the repairs made.

Eventually the tenants bought their own building in a tenant-owned coop, but when I went there for the very first time, Cynthia, I was standing on ground level and I - it was four storey building; it still is - and I could see the sky because every single apartment had leaks that resulted in gaping holes and people were living in these apartments, if you could even imagine.

Cynthia: My goodness. And what was the demographic of the people affected by these -

Angela: So that particular building was, in my view, the perfect building because it had Latinos, it had Italians and it had African/Americans. It was truly a mixed building, which told me that at some point the owner was truly a person who really wanted to integrate people and help people and create or maintain solid, well-maintained housing, and over time - I don't know what would have induced the owner, because it was a new owner that drove the building into the ground.

And I suspect perhaps that because the area was being redlined, so buildings in this area weren't able to get fire insurance and I suspect an owner of a

building that couldn't get insurance for their building might be inclined to walk away because that did happen. There was a lot of owner abandonment in this particular neighborhood.

Cynthia: And it's interesting that you noted that geographic difference before, above Wyckoff Avenue versus below Wyckoff Avenue. Do you have any other reflections or thoughts to share about that, like why that would be?

Angela: Well, again, I think the reason it was solid and not prone to these arson fires is because these buildings were primarily small buildings, one and two family homes that were owner-occupied. There were some three and four family homes primarily on St Nicholas Avenue, but they were also owner-occupied. As with everything, and I don't know what drives migrations of populations into a specific community and out. I do know that people of a particular ethnic group or racial group or cultural background look to settle with their own, and that stands to reason.

The Italians started moving. Some of them moved up into Ridgewood and bought homes, many of them were renters that bought homes, and some of them moved to Long Island. The dynamic was that Latinos were moving into those buildings, but once again they remained owner-occupied because they were small.

But the difference between a building of six units and over, as you might know, or five and less, is that a building of five units or less is not rent-regulated and an owner is not obligated to give a lease, can raise the rent as often and as much as he or she would like, provided there is 30 day notice, and can ask people to move at whim. There doesn't have to be a stated cause because there are no regulations, as long as someone is given 30 day notice and an eviction notice.

No one can get evicted without going to court first, but in those cases, at best you could, by a tenant being asked to leave by an owner who wanted to either maybe move in himself, maybe rent to someone else at a higher amount, maybe rent to a family member. It wasn't all mal-intentioned; much of it was. But if they were asked to leave the best we could work out in court for them was six months, but that's where Section 8 came in again. If I can apply for Section 8 for seniors or if Section 8 had seniors, it was easy to get a transfer so that they could find another apartment where they were comfortable.

There were some situations that were harder than others. I remember - and it did work both ways - so I do remember an older woman who lived on Irving Avenue between Dekalb and Stockholm, was a four family home. She owned it. I don't remember her name nor do I remember her ethnic background, but I do know that she had someone living in her building who was a real nuisance.

He was loud. He was troublesome. He didn't pay rent and she came to me, and she was a senior.

This is probably the only time that I can say that I actually was directly involved in getting someone evicted; I mean directly. And it worked and I still remember the day because I actually stood by her side because she was nervous as this gentleman's belongings were put out on the sidewalk. Something you don't ever want to see. I mean, here at Ridgewood Bushwick we own and manage 2,000 units of affordable housing.

An eviction is the action of last resort, because our goal in doing all of this is to provide solid, decent, safe, affordable housing and when there are issues that force a family not to pay rent we try to work with them, and we do. And of course, as with everything, there are some families that move into our buildings that are undesirable, that may be involved in undesirable activities, and those are the families that we do move, to remove and we're largely successful.

Cynthia: But tell me a little bit more about that context of - the history of this organization? You're starting as a tenant organizer; you're starting to find your place, [unintelligible 00:29:27].

Angela: Yes, of course.

Cynthia: What was the significance of the Ridgewood Bushwick Senior Citizen's Council, eventual council? How did that development begin to take place? It seems that there was a lot of relationship-building within the community; how did that network get formed? How did people instinctually know I can come here and get help?

Angela: Okay; so when I arrived in 1978 the director of the Senior Center was Vito Lopez. I will tell you, Cynthia, I have never, or had never been in the presence of a person who was as inspiring and holistic in his approach to deliver services to a community. I mean, he was he person who said, we're going to create this homecare component. We're going to create this educational component so seniors could go to college if they never had a chance to, right here in the community, for free. We're going to create a Meals on Wheels component because there have to be some seniors that can't get out and they deserve a hot meal too.

And he was director of a center that funded meals so it wasn't out of his pocket. The meals were being cooked there; all it took was a vision to get out in the community. At the same time he organized all the local blocks around the Senior Center, and when I was brought on board he told me, "You are going to organize a neighborhood association," and again, I was shaking in my boots.

And I remember him bringing a whole bunch of people from all these respective block association, to the Senior Center, and telling the group that this is Angela Battaglia, she's going to start the Northern Bushwick Residents Association, and he said, "Why don't you introduce yourself?" And he had just said my name, and I was so nervous that I forgot my name.

But because he was so inspirational and broad in his approach - because I'll go back to the way the agency developed and grew - he was so inspirational that within no time I was running that group. I got it incorporated; I was all over the community. He was all over the community but so was I because I felt if you can get out there the same way he did from his beginnings there, you could identify the people and their needs, engage them.

And the focus at the time - his focus was our purpose is to identify the needs in this poor, working class community and develop programs to meet those needs. And he realized in that thinking that the Ridgewood Bushwick Senior Center, which was a city-funded center, was not the mechanism to bring in these programs because at the time the city didn't encourage their centers to go beyond what they were funded to do.

Cynthia: Even the context of that time; it was the midst of the fiscal crisis in the city so it's amazing that anything like that could have even - like what was that like?

Angela: Well, I can tell you this. He decided along with - and I should go back - when I started working there every other week, on a Monday morning there was a meeting of a group called Ridgewood Bushwick Interagency Council, and this man, Vito, brought in the local hospitals, the local community board, the police, the other service providers in the community, other programs that serviced youth if there were any, programs that serviced the elderly.

We sat around a table and talked about what the neighborhood needed. It was at that table that it was determined that it in order to bring in funds for programs, even at a point where there was a fiscal crisis, that a not-for-profit agency would have to be developed. And there was a board and it became the Ridgewood Bushwick Senior Citizen's Council, and the very first grant that we received as a council was written by one of the two young people that were the homecare component, and it was for an intergenerational program; \$20,000 grant.

And in those days this also funded rent; it funded rent, her salary if you can believe this, and a part time salary. And it was at a little store front on Irving Avenue and the goal was to bring young people out of the schools, junior highs and high schools to integrate with the seniors. To go to the store for them, to help them with minor household chores, to learn how to make pizza from them, and it was very successful.

And from there we started - there was no internet at the time - we started reaching out to local agencies, city agencies, and I'll give a perfect example. One of the Northern Bushwick Neighborhood Association meetings, which was at the time meeting once a month - I don't remember if it was the last Tuesday of every month - Vito would - I was based at the center - he would say to me, "Try to get good guest speakers," and I would say, "Guest speakers? Who am I going to get?" He said, "I'll get you a few speakers at the beginning and then as you get to feel comfortable you'll be able to reach out yourself."

One of the people that he got to a meeting was the HPD, Housing Preservation and Development, the City Housing Agency Commissioner and his name was [Nat Leventhol], and he came to a meeting and he addressed the group. The group, again, were people that were active on their own blocks, the Stockholm Street Block Association.

I still remember the people. Alice Hartley, the Himrod Street Block Association. Michael Scarpetta, Charlie Signorelli, the Hart Street Block Association. They would all come and they were asking questions and it was a really good dialogue and I was beginning to feel it. This is what you do. You bring guest speakers out to give information.

Anyway, as the CETA program was phasing down, if it weren't for the vision of Vito Lopez in directing all of us - and again we were all young people who knew nothing about these respective fields - but he guided us and he inspired us and he encouraged us. He encouraged us all to seek out from different sources of government, whether it was the Department of Social Services - HRA is the Human Resources Administration; I don't remember what it was called in those days. It may have very well been called that.

But he encouraged the young woman, Chris Fisher, to reach out to that agency to see if there were grants to be applied for, for homecare services. He asked me to call the Commissioner directly. I was so nervous I can't even tell you, but I did. I called the Commissioner and he got on the phone, which shocked me, and I said, "Well, I'm calling to see if there is any hope for a not-for-profit to get a grant so that we can go out there, hire people to go out there and help tenants, protect their rights, help landlords upgrade their buildings," and he said, "You know ..." - this is amazing - "... that is a really good idea."

I run this group - this was Vito's idea - I run this group called the Bushwick Taskforce. It was in response to the massive loss of property in Bushwick; the hundreds and hundreds of vacant lots, the arson that was going on throughout the community. This Bushwick Taskforce, which was under this housing

commission's goal was to, with the community, plan for the community, and he invited me to the meeting.

And at that meeting he announced that there would be a special grant program for communities and not-for-profits that would be a pilot called the Community Consulting Contract, which still exists today - neighborhood groups just like the Ridgewood Bushwick Senior Citizen's Council has this funding to just provide landlord/tenant services. Where was I going with - I've lost my train of thought on that.

Cynthia: I mean it's a good segue into describing what, as a non-profit, originally non-profit you guys were trying to get up off the ground, can you describe to me what the environment was like in regards to city agencies and mayoral support for your organization at that time? What was the environment like and what were some other active initiatives that were going on in the neighborhood that you guys were perhaps partnering with, other organizations or partnerships?

Angela: I don't recall as well the other organizations that we partnered with. Perhaps someone in one of the other fields - don't forget I was the housing field - could better relate to that question. I can tell you that - well, the agency didn't need me to do that because it did have Vito who was all over the community. But the one thing that he encouraged me to get involved in, which I did immediately, was the local community planning board, and it was that group of people that really helped shape this neighborhood in every conceivable sense.

Cynthia: And around what time was this now?

Angela: It had to be 1979, and I actually sat on the local community board from 1979 until 1996 when I was appointed to the New York City Planning Commission, and it was a conflict to remain on both so I resigned from there and became a city-wide city planning commissioner, which I really enjoyed.

But getting back to our fledging years - so the two young women who were doing the homecare component, I don't recall how they hired people to go into the homes for short periods of time; maybe it was all intergenerational. I really don't remember, but I do remember that shortly thereafter the city, realizing that there were a lot of homebound people that needed in-home help, put out a request for proposals, an RFP, for a home attendant program and we applied for it.

We were all young college graduates that maybe knew nothing when we came here, but were smart enough to determine what to put into a proposal, again, under Vito Lopez's guidance. He would review our paperwork and say, "You

should really demonstrate need.” To make a long story short, Chris Fisher under Vito’s guidance, put in for a home attendant program for 200-caseload.

That meant that 200 elderly or disabled people would be cared for in their homes anywhere from four hours a day, five days a week, to around the clock - they did have to be Medicaid eligible - and that same program would hire the home attendants to do it. We’d train the home attendants, certify them and send them in these homes and match the home attendant with the family.

So if it was an Italian/American family, attempt to put someone who was linguistically and culturally sensitive, and we got the award. That was probably in 1980 and we of course, because we were growing outside of our walls, we were housed in the Senior Center only temporarily; we started opening all these store front offices.

The home attendant program itself had such a large staff that it rented space at 300 Wyckoff Avenue, which was a bigger space where the local HPD office was, and we placed - we hired home attendants and placed them in the homes of the elderly that had needs, as I said. Anywhere from four hours a day, five days a week, to around the clock, 24 hour care.

We did so well at that, that when we were audited we would get 100 percent in our audits. I don’t take credit for that. I was running a housing program, but the person running it, which was Chris Fisher at the time, deserves the credit for it. We grew from a 200-caseload home attendant program to a 1,200-caseload home attendant program. That meant that we were servicing 1,200 homebound elderly or disabled younger persons in their homes in Bushwick and Williamsburg primarily, so that meant there were that many homebound families. And we were hiring the home attendants, we were training them, we were sending them into the home, we were processing their timesheets, so that was one program that we were particularly proud of.

We continued to run an education program. We got the community-based college - and that little component moved out to its own office - I don’t remember what the funding stream was for them. They, however, got LIU, Long Island University to do a community-based college program right in the community and we used to use the rooms at the Senior Center during the evening for those programs.

Then there was the housing program. I moved out to a little store front at 158 Wyckoff. I was there for about two years and we would start to apply for any grant that we heard was available, and the way we heard about these grants was really through mostly letters coming to us. You would sign on to be notified if there was a special program; there was no internet.

We didn't have computers, and we would get a notification and it would tell you - in many cases you had to go there personally to pick up the request for proposal and the documents. In some cases they'd send them to you. It was a timeline. We'd fill them out and we started applying for every - and every grant available.

As with the housing program - so I had a state-funded program and a city-funded program. One was HPD and one was DHCR, and it enabled me to hire workers to sit at a desk for people who came to us, and to get out in the community to make sure that people were living in habitable conditions, and we did do tenant organizing.

We also applied for - it was some type of program or grant to hire young maintenance workers, and this may have been through another federal program, unemployed or unemployable, to do home repairs in the homes of the elderly, and I coordinated that program.

And then the smoke detector board got passed, that every single home would have to have a smoke detector, and Vito Lopez went to the fire department and said, "You know, these seniors, they may not be able to afford a smoke detector," so the fire department instituted a free smoke detector program for seniors and low income families. And I was the one who was responsible for the program in Bushwick with these young - they were mostly men - who were hired to actually go and place them in the homes of the elderly.

As time went on, what was most apparent to all of us is that we are servicing people in their homes; we are doing a really good job of it. We have senior programs now, home help aide programs for the bed-bound and homebound seniors; we deliver meals to the homebound seniors. We have a full service Senior Center that assists with entitlements, crisis intervention, whatever a senior needed and those services were, at that time, provided by bringing someone from the city agency to the site to provide the service. But eventually we would apply for grants to conduct these services ourselves, with grants.

We all became acutely aware of the impact on everyone in the neighborhood, particularly seniors, of all these vacant debris-strewn lots. And I still remember the day - once again, you know, we were the Ridgewood Bushwick Senior Citizen's Council, Vito Lopez was the director of the Senior Center but he was our guiding force.

He said to me - at this point I was probably managing, oh, what could it be, \$200,000 worth of grants; nothing. He said, "You have to start developing housing," and I said, "Do you mean having housing constructed?" "Oh yeah," he said, "You have to ..." There are federal grants for senior housing and I'm like, "I can't do this; I can't do this." He said, "Angela, you don't have to do it. You will see if there are grants, then you'll hire someone, a consultant, to

help you write it. I'm sure these agencies have a list of people that could help."

And sure enough, we went to HUD, the Federal Housing Agency, they had list of consultants. The way it would work, and the consultants knew this as well - don't forget, I had never done this - they realized that they were doing this on spec. They were doing it for free unless you got the grant, and if you got the grant then their fee was incorporated. And we identified this firm; it was [Karakas] and Associates. They gave you list; they couldn't steer, but we called out and this particular firm we felt really comfortable. There were two of them.

The main principle was Hip Karakas and his assistant was Richard [Comerford]. We don't work with Richard Comerford anymore because we are so good that we don't need consultants, but in those days Richard was our primary consultant and he helped us apply for our first senior building. It was 60 units, all project-based Section 8, and now we run seven senior buildings because we learned how to do it and we kept applying, and at the same time we started applying for other sources of funding for developing housing.

We were particularly fortunate because, in I'm thinking 1984, the local council member - we were unfortunate that the local council member was convicted of a crime and lost his seat, but we were fortunate in that we had a State Assembly member who was active, who decided to run for that seat leaving the Assembly seat open, and everyone who knew Vito said, "You should run, you should run," and did, and he became the State Assembly member.

And truthfully, Ridgewood Bushwick was - because we were in effect his child, whenever there was a state grant to be applied for he would make us aware of it. He didn't hand us the money and he couldn't direct the money to us but he certainly, when the state agency went to him and said, "These three agencies applied in your district," he would always endorse what we were doing, and we grew and grew and grew. And right now we are - and this is for [soft] services - a \$129 million agency.

Cynthia: And can you describe what the soft services entail?

Angela: They are our youth programs, and again, Elena Zullo who runs the program now for at least 25 years I would think - by the way, I'm here 38 years; I told you when I started. She has in-school programs where they go into the schools and service the children from three to six. She has out-of-school programs where youth go to her youth center to be tutored and to learn - and to learn science and math and arts and culture and sports.

She ran for a while - it was a unique concept at the time - probably 15, 20 years ago the state funded something called a latchkey program whereby they would fund local not-for-profits to have youth whose parents work, come to either the main site or stay at the school with supervision, until six o'clock when their parents could come pick them up. We ran that program.

She runs an adult literacy program whereby adults who are illiterate learn and then go on to get a GED and some of them - up until about five years ago we ran the free community-based college program. We stopped running it or sponsoring it because it was no longer free and all of our services are free and we didn't want to have a program that was affiliated with us or based at our site that would charge low income people.

So the other educational programs are - she runs English as second language programs, and those particular participants - it's really very - it's very heartwarming and encouraging to see a husband, a wife that struggled to put food on their table; they go to work and then at night they come to us to learn English, and then they go to take their GED, and some of them even go on to better professions because of this. We have job training programs, by the way.

We run homelessness prevention services, which primarily consist of lawyers that are based at this site and other sites throughout the community to defend and protect tenants' rights because in this time of gentrification, not unlike years ago when the speculation was driving - speculators were driving low income people out so they can rent to higher income people or at higher rents. It must be cyclical because that has happened again, except in the old days it wasn't gentrification; if anything it was demoralizing the neighborhood. It was making it more of a downtrodden neighborhood.

Now the goal is to drive out the poor people, drive out the indigenous people and put in people of means at higher rents, and we protect the rights of the people in these buildings.

Cynthia: And I guess taking into scope those early days and when it started to become a larger organization, can you walk me through that history up until the current situation, and the time now talking about gentrification and what kind of services and initiatives under housing that the organization is focusing on?

Angela: Well, there was always a need to ensure that people in a neighborhood such as Bushwick, which for many of the past 30-something years was one of the poorest in the state, to educate the tenant population about their rights and to assist them in maintaining their rights and asserting their rights. And throughout the ages there are always property owners who do it merely for financial gain.

They have no interest whatsoever in the conditions in the homes and we have, through the years, been a magnet, a place to come, walk-in clients who are either feeling that they are being overcharged their rent or they're not receiving services, and we organize their buildings. We do advise them of their right to hold a rent strike if they're not getting services.

We do accompany them and represent them in court as a group or as individuals if they are being unfairly - they're evicted or not receiving services, if they're being locked out. Does that answer the question? I'm not sure if I'm getting - we've been doing that for the longest and we continue to.

Cynthia: And what has been - I guess it reverts to city support and state support - can you reflect on those changes and challenges because it seems like you were successful in some of these maybe but getting all these state funds, and I'm just curious about what that situation is like now for the organization, especially given the different facet of the housing crisis as it stands now?

Angela: So using maybe legal services as the basis of the discussion, again we were very lucky that we had an Assembly member who was very assertive with the commissioners of the state agencies. I can't say with absolutely certainty that he convinced the governor at the time or the department of social services at the time, because now it's called OTDA, Office of Temporary Disability and Assistance.

But that agency developed a program; a program to fund local not-for-profits to provide legal services and they had two separate programs funded out of that agency at the same time. One was called HIP, Housing Intervention Program - Homelessness Intervention Program, and the other was called SHIP - Supplementary Homelessness Intervention Program. One of them was primarily for families - and they all had income guidelines; you had to be the poorest of the poor but the people here were so they qualified - and the other was for single individuals who were poor; singles or unmarried adults.

And we applied for those funds from the inception maybe 20 years ago - by the way, we had to change our incorporation in order to be able to provide legal services, and when we realized that we really had to provide on-site services as opposed to going to an outside legal service provider, we did change our incorporation documents and we started applying for grants.

We received the HIP and SHIP grants. At the time it enabled us to hire maybe two or three attorneys. Over time that enabled us to hire more attorneys and then they started phasing out. But we were always very proactive so we were always looking for funds, and at this point we were doing it on our own. We didn't need Vito to tap us on the back and say, "Go after this, go after that." We now knew what we needed to do.

So our legal program, although the state has somewhat retrenched those funds, they have - the state monitors an entity called IOLA - Interest on Lawyer's Accounts. I don't really know how that money goes in there but I know that the state gives it out to not-for-profits that apply and show a valid program of providing legal services, so we receive those funds.

Then there is the Office of Court Administration, which up until now or up until maybe five years ago, administered the courts but never gave out grants. But they were realizing that there were so many people coming to court unrepresented, and that someone who appears in court unrepresented against someone who has an attorney, particularly in the housing field, in many if not all cases loses their case or leaves with unfavorable terms. They began a grant program so we applied for that and we get that.

In addition to that, what we do do is we go to our local elected officials who are all very aware of the level of services we provide, and the effects, the positive impact of these services, and we ask them for city council funds for legal money, and for the past probably ten years we get an average of \$300,000 a year from them, which enables us to hire a couple of lawyers, a couple of organizers.

So right now our program consists of nine attorneys, three organizers, two case managers/intake specialists and one and a half administrators, and we service close to 500 cases a year. People that are being either harassed or not receiving services like heat and hot water, people who are being locked out - that's an harassment tactic, and people who are being unfairly evicted.

And in addition to that we educate the community by going door to door to advise people of their rights. All of our staff in the legal department are bilingual because you have to be here. We hold informational sessions. We hold sessions with lawyers. We are so well-known now that people come in right off the street.

But you had asked earlier, what was the broader approach to stabilize people? We realize that there had to be other means of stabilizing families other than making sure that they were not being overcharged for rent and making sure that they were stable in their homes so we started - we applied to United Way for a food stamp program, which we have administered now for over ten years.

And at the beginning we would screen people and then send in their application and wait for it to be approved, and then the applicant would have to go into the city and they'd ultimately be approved for food stamps. Now we actually do the certification right on-site. And we help people stabilize themselves in housing by enhancing their income.

At the same time we've developed job training programs which we still maintain. To help low level residents, people that don't have a level of education to necessarily get into a high tech field, we train them to become security officers, we train them to become maintenance workers and we train them to become home health aides. The women tend to go into the home health aide field; the men tend to go into the security and building maintenance field, but we train them. While we're training them we help them get a GED if they don't already have one and we help them get jobs.

Cynthia: And given the present day challenges what do you view as some of those challenges directly that you encounter in your discussions with other groups about affordable housing and how best to serve the needs of the community when we talk about affordable housing and what it means?

Angela: Well, the biggest challenge is that there is not enough of us to fight off all of them, and who is all of them? All of them are people of means that could purchase buildings in this community, drive everyone out if the people don't know that they may have rights. If they're small buildings they really don't have rights. Knock down these buildings; build big buildings that are all now market rent units and driving out indigenous people.

Our biggest challenge is getting out there - and we're out there - but we can't get to everyone, nor can we convince everyone to come to us. We're very good at engaging the community because they know us, they trust us. We're very good in getting them to trust us and to believe that they do have rights, but there are many people who slip through the cracks.

Not to mention a household, despite our education and our passion in educating them, that is offered \$70,000 to leave a railroad flat. They take it and they don't realize that it is really nothing. It is nothing. To them it's a landslide but it's nothing because what it will do is enable them move to another neighborhood, start paying 3,000 a month rent and before you know it, they're gone.

So our challenge is to get the word out - and we try - that whatever you do, do not accept a buy-out. Protect yourself from your rent stabilize department. You have a right to stay. You cannot be harassed by your landlord, and we've been very, very successful in advising people and convincing them that they should assert their rights, and they do.

The biggest challenge is the gentrification. I mean the people with means buying in, people - the majority of people that move into these high-end apartments are not from the community, they are not vested in the community; in many cases they don't care to vest in the community. They are, in also many cases we find, funded for their high rents by their families who live in other states.

You know some of the - I'll call them newcomers - contribute a lot to the community, and I've learned that and I appreciate that and we are engaging those that come into the community that really want to become a part of the community and help the community grow. But there are just too many buildings going up where they are drawing from people who are not vested, who do not want to contribute and for every big building that goes up, poor people have been driven out because those buildings were built on land where there was once affordable housing.

Cynthia: And how has this vision, I guess looking at how insurmountable it seems, what have been some initiatives that have been taking place in the neighborhood that you think would be good models to follow, to build upon, to counteract these waves of gentrification that are taking over?

Angela: So I've always been of the strong belief that people should be active in their community in a number of ways. They should, you know, know their neighbors, whether it's to a church or a community organization, make their voices heard. There is power in numbers. Get to know their elected officials. Make sure their elected officials know them. Vote so that they elect the people who will protect their interests.

And this community, not because of me or not because of Ridgewood Bushwick, but because it has through the years struggled and had leadership on the community board and elsewhere to encourage people to stay close, to vote, to get the best representation in, to become close to your elected officials. Our elected officials, through my 38 years here, have looked out for us, and when I say us I mean all the community-based agencies and the people, and we are very, very lucky that way.

And where I'm leading with this is right now there are two council persons that represent Bushwick, and they have joined forces to start this anti-harassment taskforce that not only talks about how to combat it, but gets all the relevant city agencies that heretofore never spoke to each other, to talk to each other. So you have the Department of Buildings, because what a landlord who was harassing tenants could try to do, is get a vacate on a building that shouldn't be vacated, and then the tenants move out and then they do what they want and the tenants never get a right back to their homes.

These two particular council people have developed this taskforce, with our participation and the participation of other housing rights advocates, to make sure that all these agency building departments, HPD, that can do a building inspection, the DAs office to make sure that if someone is criminally harassing tenants and/or destroying property to drive them out, that they are charged with a crime.

And this particular housing taskforce, with the participation of people in this room, have actually succeeded in getting probably - it may have been the very first case for a landlord - was convicted of criminal charges for harassing tenants, and we're proud of that because no one deserves to be harassed out of their home.

And if I were to tell you the tactics that this particular landlord employed - and it was all over the airwaves; they were the most egregious - breaking down someone's bathroom, breaking down their kitchen when they couldn't live there because their apartment was near destroyed. Putting guard dogs in so they wouldn't go back into their own apartment, but we prevailed. We prevailed. They're all back in there now. These apartments have all been renovated and they're all in their own apartments.

To give you another example of what we do - we are holistic, and I realize I am taking this mostly from a housing standpoint. I mean, the housing we provide is good, decent housing. The senior housing we provide all has Section 8. The senior housing, because we are dedicated to the people we serve not only has an on-site manager, a live-in sup, but it has 24 hour security. We do programs right in the buildings, whether they be painting classes, yoga classes, dance classes, computer classes, to make sure that our seniors are not isolated and they're productive members of society.

We run nine senior centers and they're all full service senior centers where a senior can get a hot breakfast, a hot lunch and integrate and participate in programs there. With regard to the housing program we continue to attempt to identify sites that we could build more affordable housing so that people that are unfortunately victims of these rising rents could possibly benefit, yeah.

Cynthia: And what role do you see for the Ridgewood Bushwick Senior Citizen's Council, I guess, in regards to the next four or five years, the way that this trajectory is going in regards to housing and tenant [price]. Where do you see the organization fitting in?

Angela: Well, fortunately we see ourselves meeting a need beyond our original borders. So our original borders were Bushwick primarily because that was the poor, distressed neighborhood; Ridgewood, which is far more stable and didn't have the types of issues that Bushwick encountered; Williamsburg did. Williamsburg had the harassment and the gentrification, as it still does.

We now see ourselves expanding our borders into Eastern York. We already have a program in Brownsville. Brownsville is number one in murders, can you imagine? We're so passionate about helping people, particularly people who may not realize that they have a right to a decent standard of living. They have a right to a safe community. We immerse ourselves into those communities and we're beginning to do that.

So we're beginning to seek program funds for programs in these communities. We run a homelessness prevention program in Brownsville, which is very, very effective. We are beginning to look for vacant land in these communities so that we can build affordable housing. We are beginning to partner with faith-based organizations because in many cases churches have land that is underutilized, so we are partnering with them to develop affordable housing.

At the same time we will vigorously maintain the program of representing poor people in housing court against the tactics of landlords, be they harassment, the retrenchment of essential services such as heat and hot water, and also in terms of making sure that their buildings are habitable. We'll go to court for them. We'll protect their rights. We will maintain ourselves in this community for as long as there is a need, and there will always be a need and in the communities that we are beginning to immerse ourselves into because we know there is a need.

Cynthia: And at the end of the day how would you characterize the impact that all this work has had on your own life and in your own thinking?

Angela: I have to tell you I wish I remembered the words she used. One of the programs that we developed probably 30 years ago, and we are now the only program, I believe in the state - I'm not absolutely sure - was our respite program. The word respite means relief and the goal of the program was to enable older people, or any caregiver who was caring for someone who really required 24/7 care - that could be an older person with dementia, that could be a mentally challenged young person - to give them relief so that if they needed, for example - if the caregiver needed to be in the hospital or needed a vacation - we would take the disabled person in a house that we owned and managed and we would take care of them anywhere from overnight to six weeks.

S Now that was probably the only program that was run on a sliding scale basis in terms of fees because, believe it or not, not just poor people need a vacation from the person that they're giving care to, and it was a very successful program. The director of that program for many years - her name is Margie Baker - she's now a school - I think she's either a principal or an assistant principal in Bushwick.

She once said to me, "You know Angela, all of us, all of the workers, we go home at night and we feel really good because we know we're helping people and we're helping them with core needs, not just a friendly hello," which is important too but core needs. She said, "But you know Angela, you're the lucky one because you're giving them keys to an apartment. You know the services that we give come and go; a person who needs respite will be here one day and we'll never see them again, but you're giving someone something

for life. You're giving them an affordable home. A well maintained home" and that stayed with me.

I will tell you, up until about five years ago any household that we gave a set of keys to for one of our apartments, I was in the room when that person got the keys, because I felt it was really important for me to meet them, to congratulate them, to tell them that they had a place to come to. It's not only - I always said this - it's not just bricks and mortar; it is people. We do this for the people. We develop the housing for the people but we're good at developing it and we're developing beautiful housing.

So I think the way it's impacted my life is that - there were days I went home that I was extremely stressed or sad because of the way people were being forced to live because a landlord was being - was harassing or retrenching services or not providing extermination and the like, but the one thing I always knew was that we were here to defend their rights. I go home at night. I lay my head on my pillow and I can go to sleep, and I can go to sleep with a smile on my face.

And I will tell you, Cynthia, I was one of the lucky ones; I happened to be taken under the wings of Vito Lopez and I learned everything I know from him, but more importantly, I developed the passion, the drive, the lack of intimidation to reach for the stars, to call a commissioner, to call a congress person because no one is any better than you. We're all here to provide services for the community.

So that was where I lucked out. I was able to spread my wings, go off on my own, learn how to develop housing, hire staff to run the programs. The housing office right now has 172 staff and that ranges from organizers, community organizers, tenant organizers, lawyers, to maintenance staff in all of our buildings.

Cynthia: Are there plans for more affordable housing needs within Bushwick [unintelligible 01:16:17] development?

Angela: Well, the problem within Bushwick is that there is no more free land, so I don't suspect they'll be much more affordable housing here in Bushwick. But as I said, we will reach out to the neighboring areas such as Brownville and Eastern York and attempt to develop housing there. And at the same time - and I want to mention that Bridget is in the room - Bridget is not so much a newcomer anymore because she is fully vested in the community and she's been here for over a decade.

She has immersed herself - I didn't know her at day one - but I assume from day one because she is well-known, well respected; really active. She is, in my view, the epitome of an activist. I tell her all the time, "I was you. That was

me.” I was involved in everything. I fought for everyone’s rights. I went to every group. I spoke up to encourage people to, you know, again assert their rights.

We are now - we have learned through Bridget that we have to engage the changing culture here. We have to. It’s our neighborhood. Whether you’re a Latino, whether you’re an aspiring artist, we’re all one neighborhood and we should all aspire to make the neighborhood better, to assert everyone’s rights and to appreciate what everyone brings to the table.

So as much as we may appreciate the little Dominican bakery across the street, we should appreciate, learn from, engage in, the cultural activities that many of these newcomers are bringing. You know people hear art; it’s not all painting. It is dance. It is music. It is beyond that. I have never been a really artsy person but Bridget is helping me become a little more familiar with all of that, and we’re bringing it to our youth.

For example, tomorrow we’re going to a venue in the neighborhood where they actually assist disabled young people to engage in cultural activities in music, and they help young people become recording artists and they have agreed to meet with our youth and maybe help them along. We’re involved with the theatre group that is trying to get people involved in how to run a theatrical production, but how to make it worthwhile with neighborhood themes such as gentrification.

The youth center has a program run by a young artist himself - well, maybe not so young anymore, he’s been with us over 20 years - called My Voice Theatre. What he does is he engages local youth, junior school, high school, into a theatre group. He trains them, he directs, but he allows them to choose the themes. And I will tell you, very often when you see one of their little skits or performances, they focus on drugs and the impact of drugs on young peoples’ lives, on domestic violence. And you know when these young people are bringing out these themes, that they have been directed impacted by it - and that’s a terrible thing - but they at least know that they have, once again, a place to go to be nurtured and to be helped.

Cynthia: I think we’re done. Any final words before we wrap up?

Angela: I was beginning to say that I am at the end of my career here. You know I feel that I’ve done what I’ve set out to do. I’m here a full 38 years. If I maintain myself another year and a half it will be 40 years. I appreciated and enjoyed every single day of my work here but I believe it’s time to turn it over to other people.

And so I am spending - I have spent the past six months, I will spend the next six months training people to do what I do, but more importantly to do as I do.

To understand that it's never about the rent we're collecting or the buildings themselves, although we must collect our rent to manage good buildings and we must manage good buildings; it's about the people that live in them.

We have to be sensitive to their needs. We have to meet with them so we can hear their needs. We can help direct their children if need be or their relatives. We have to maintain a presence in this community, one that people know they could come to whenever, with whatever issue they may have. And I will tell you, Cynthia, I will not leave here until I know that the person and persons that I've left this to, will do it exactly how I've done it, not because I have such a high opinion of myself, but because I know what's in my heart and what the community deserves, and they deserve no less.

I have told everyone, no one walks in this office and leaves here feeling un-serviced. If it is something we don't do, let's find out who does it, and let's direct them there because people who walk in with a need deserve to be serviced. And trust me no one - it takes swallowing one's pride to walk into a service program and ask for help, and we should make that as easy for people who need help as possible.

So once again, as I wind down, and I am winding down, I will make sure that the legacy I've created continues. It's really important to me to know that when I walk out the door that the services will be maintained. And by the way - and I don't want to go into all these details - but we're beginning to be very creative in our approach in other areas.

And one for example, is we are initiating this program, with Bridget as the manager, called Bushwick Cooks, and what we're hoping to do is to find a venue that is large enough to enable the little person across the street that makes and sells pasta at Christmas time, to start her own business by giving her a place where she can use a commercial size oven, where we could teach about healthy food products. We could possibly even grow healthy food products.

But engage the community in an entrepreneurial program that not only benefits people that would otherwise not be able to start their own businesses, but also benefits the people in the community, because one thing this neighborhood still sorely lacks is really good supermarkets with fresh produce and fresh meats. But we're getting there, and I think part of the reason we're getting there is because of the surge of new people that have a higher expectation and a higher demand, and that does benefit the indigenous people.

So there really is, I guess, a symbiotic relationship of sorts, and all that I would ask for of the new population is that they respect the indigenous population and their right to remain and they work with them towards a better community.

Cynthia: Thank you so much.

Angela: Thank you, Cynthia.

[End of recorded material 01:24:06]