

Community Board 8
Calvary Community Church
1575 St. John's Place (corner of Buffalo Avenue)
Brooklyn, NY 11233
February 12th, 2026

Members Present

Sharon Alexis-Pierre
Peter Anekwe
Princess Benn
Gail Branch-Muhammad
Dian Duke
Drew Gabriel
Nizjoni Granville
Mohammad Hassan
Jamell Henderson
Tafari John-King
Jennifer Jordan
Frances Langley
Dr. Sarah Lazur
Lisa Maldonado
William Meehan
Kwasi Mensah
Mimi Mitchell
Robert Puca
Yahya Raji
Conor Ross
Brian Saunders
Meredith Staton
Lesley Steele
Briana Uwa
Gib Veconi
Irsa Weatherspoon
Regina Wilson
Robert Witherwax
Deborah Young

Members Absent/Excused

Akua Aidoo
Isaac Andino
Benny Faygen
Tamika Gibbs
Robert Lapointe
Fior Ortiz-Joyner
Taraya Pettway
Anika Roach
Ezra Roth
Robin Smith
Dina Tate
Katie Taylor
Dana Thompson
Mark Thurton
Ryan Tucker
Kimberly Watson
Sharon Wedderburn

Elected Official Representatives

Tendai Watkins – Office of Assemblymember Zinerman
Connie Little – Office of Councilmember Mealy
Orlando Ross – Office of Congresswoman Clarke

Agency Representatives

Alicia Pritchard, Brower Park Library Branch Manager
Venus Scantlebury, Civilian Complaint Review Board

CB8 Staff Present

Michelle George, District Manager
Julia Neale, Community Coordinator

The regular meeting of Community Board 8 was called to order at 6:09PM by Ms. Irsa Weatherspoon, Chairperson.

Public Comments –

Ms. Mayan Zik from One Crown Heights, announced a ballet program and referenced an upcoming Crown Heights festival.

Ms. Sarah Gronim from Local Climate Group Brooklyn announced an event at the library at 6:00 p.m. and discussed a forthcoming energy-storage project expected to come to Brooklyn, describing shipping-container-style battery systems that draw energy from the grid and help stabilize or revitalize it; she noted that an expert at the library event could speak further about the technology and its possible impact on electric bills.

Mr. Jamell Henderson spoke again during public comment about his uterine fibroids advocacy campaign, noting that fibroids affect a very large share of women—especially Black women before age 50—and that he is continuing his effort to recruit 1,000 men in support of awareness and policy change. He referenced pending legislation, including S3576 and a related Assembly bill (recorded in the notes as A85530, sponsored by Kristen Gonzalez Rojas per the notes), and said the campaign is focused on improving research, treatment access, and reducing harmful or overly corrective fertility-related interventions. He shared that flyers are available, a link is circulating, and community members can contact him directly (a phone number was provided in the notes) to participate in upcoming events. A community member then asked why this issue was not being addressed through the Health & Human Services Committee.

Ms. Venus Scantlebury from the Civilian Complaint Review Board shared information about resources for reporting and investigating NYPD misconduct, including where residents can make complaints.

Ms. Deb Young from Crown Heights North Association (CHNA) announced an upcoming meeting at 1055 St. Johns Place on February 28 and noted that CHNA is co-sponsoring an electronics and textile event (details in the newsletter).

Ms. Alicia Pritchard, Branch Manager of Brower Park Library, shared library updates, including that the Eastern Parkway Branch will be closed for three years. She also noted that an Adult Learning Center will be using the library for sessions, shared her contact email (abritchard@bklynlibrary.org), and mentioned Brooklyn Supports as a senior-resource group. Additionally, BPL has a books by mail program where books are mailed to homebound individuals.

Mr. Yahya Raji, Executive Director for the Brooklyn Neighborhood Improvement Association, provided information on "Mr. Raji, ED of Brooklyn Neighborhood Improvement Association, provided information on the organization's services to the community. Founded in 1980, BNIA is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit dedicated to improving Central Brooklyn and East New York. Born out of a community response to urban decay, BNIA has spent over four decades tackling housing instability, economic challenges, and neighborhood decline. Based at 465 Sterling Place, Brooklyn, NY 11238, it serves as a HUD-certified housing counseling agency and a key player in affordable housing development.

BNIA offers affordable Homes and expert guidance for Brooklyn families. HUD-certified counseling supports stable ownership futures. Additionally, the organization provides eviction help and advocacy for tenants; assists with organizing block associations for community strength and rights, and empowers youth with skills and leadership. Regarding youth programming, they are a neighborhood partner for the Summer Youth Employment Program (SYEP), partnering youth with local organizations and businesses that serve as work sites for SYEP.

For more information visit www.thebnia.org.

Elected Officials

Office of Assemblywoman Stefani Zinerman

Ms. Tendai Watkins announced a career expo on February 18 (11:00 a.m.–1:00 p.m.) at Boys and Girls High School and said a flyer would be circulated with additional details. The representative also promoted an “Aging in Place” planning session for caregivers on February 20, focused on helping caregivers navigate long-term planning and support needs. In addition, the office announced a Homeowner Management session on February 28 (11:00 a.m.–1:00 p.m.) at Restoration Plaza, which will include property-tax resources and information on veterans’ exemptions.

Office of Councilwoman Darlene Mealy

Ms. Connie Little for Council Member Darlene Mealy’s office reminded attendees that new tax season support is available and that residents can get help completing taxes through the office. Constituents were encouraged to contact the office Monday through Thursday with questions or to access services.

Office of Congresswoman Yvette Clarke

Mr. Orlando Ross reported that the office has met with CB8 and CB9 and is beginning a listening tour, with resources available to residents. In Q&A, members asked about the congresswoman’s powers and portfolio, and the representative noted she chairs an energy-related committee and works across additional issue areas. The representative also stated that an AMI-related bill was introduced last year but is currently stalled in the House, reportedly due to Republican opposition. In response to questions from Gail Branch-Muhammad and Meredith Staton regarding postal issues and potential post office closures (including the location at St. Johns and Albany), the representative said the office could assist but asked that issues be formally submitted before follow-up, and committed to reporting back. Members also asked about possible federal support for passive housing; the representative referenced HUD programs and noted there are HUD-related housing resources in the neighborhood, but the response in the notes remains partial.

Acceptance of Minutes

A motion was made by Gib Veconi to accept the January minutes, seconded by Sarah Lazur. There was one correction made to the notes. It passed by unanimous voice vote.

Committee Updates –

Economic Development — Ms. Lisa Maldonado, Vice Chair. Maldonado reported ongoing work on a Nostrand Avenue corridor project, including the Winter Lights contest, which involved collaboration with multiple partners. She also shared plans for a cleaning and beautification effort along Nostrand Avenue, with the exact location still to be determined. The March and April committee meetings will be held at Brower Park Library and will focus on highlighting and supporting small businesses. In March, Brooklyn Public Library’s Business Solutions Center will provide in-house services to entrepreneurs while providing an overview of all services available (for free) to aspiring business owners.

Seniors — Ms. Gail Branch-Muhammad, Chair. The Seniors Committee reported that its Black History Month programming and bingo session went well. The next meeting is scheduled for March 4, and the committee is now planning Women's History Month programming and is accepting suggestions for future events.

Environment, Sanitation & Transportation — Mr. Robert Witherwax, Chir. The EST report focused on winter conditions and sanitation operations, noting that snow clearance takes precedence during active weather response. Members were advised to call 311 if garbage or compost is not collected, and also to report uncleared bus stops and uncleared bike lanes.

Public Safety — Ms. Jennifer Jordan, Secretary. Jordan reported that the committee met on January 26 and is planning a new sports day to take place in May and June. The next Public Safety Committee meeting is scheduled for February 23 at the 77th Precinct.

Health and Human Services — Ms. Tamkia Gibbs, Chair. The committee did **not** meet in December or January; the next meeting is March 9, 2026, and will include a stigma-reduction session on cannabis use.

EST – Action Items

1. Base License Renewal for International Car Service, 623 Washington Avenue (near Dean Street)

In New York City, livery base stations are (Taxi Limousine Commission) TLC licensed for-hire bases that dispatch livery vehicles on a prearranged basis. Livery vehicles are designed to carry five (5) or fewer passengers, and are charged based on flat rate, mileage, or zones. The base is merely the dispatch station for those that call to have a car service come to pick them up. Generally, there are no idling vehicles or waiting vehicles to dispatch.

There were no issues or complaints reported by attendees and the committee voted 16 in favor with 5 abstentions to support the base license renewal for International Car Service in hopes that the full Board supports its recommendation.

No comments were given, and a motion to support the application was made by Sarah Lazur, seconded by Conor Ross.

Vote Results: 26 Y / 0 N / 0 A, motion passes

2. Beyond Plastics Resolution

The committee heard an in-depth presentation from Carol Smolenski and Susan Boyle about plastic waste and its impact on the environment. Unnecessary plastics in the NYS waste stream cause enormous costs, ecologically, financially, and socially. Currently, 40% of the waste stream is plastics and packaging costing tax payers an average of \$500B a year. Excess strain on waste systems = more trucks, more emissions. Furthermore, microplastics are a health hazard, with wildlife and humans suffering plastic toxicity every year.

Ms. Boyle and Ms. Smolenski are requesting a letter of support from CB8 for PACKAGING REDUCTION AND RECYCLING INFRASTRUCTURE ACT, SB 1464 / AB 1749. A draft resolution (attached and read into the record) will accompany any support to our elected officials for the bills.

The committee voted unanimously to support AB 1749/SB1464 and the accompanying resolution. It hopes the full Board supports its recommendation.

“Brooklyn Community Board 8

Support for the New York State Assembly and Senate to Pass a Strong Packaging Reduction and Recycling Infrastructure Act (Senate Bill 1464/Assembly Bill 1749)

WHEREAS, packaging makes up approximately 40% of the waste in New York state, and;

WHEREAS, managing waste costs New York taxpayers hundreds of millions of dollars annually, and;

WHEREAS, most plastic packaging is not recyclable, and reusable and refillable packaging systems are not widely available, and;

WHEREAS, plastic causes serious pollution, including litter and use of toxic chemicals, and;

WHEREAS, companies that produce packaging should be responsible for the costs of managing packaging waste, not just taxpayers, and;

WHEREAS, enacting the Packaging Reduction and Recycling Infrastructure Act, pending in the New York Assembly and the New York Senate, would reduce waste, increase recycling rates, create jobs, reduce toxicity in packaging, provide millions of dollars in savings for local governments and taxpayers, and lower greenhouse gas emissions, and;

BE IT RESOLVED, that Brooklyn Community Board 8 urges the New York state legislature to pass and Governor Kathy Hochul to sign into law a strong and effective Packaging Reduction and Recycling Infrastructure Act, Senate Bill 1464/Assembly Bill 1749, and;

RESOLVED, further, that Brooklyn Community Board 8 shall forward copies of this resolution to Governor Kathy Hochul, New York Assembly Speaker Carl Heastie, and New York State Senate Majority Leader Andrea Stewart-Cousins, the local state assemblymember, the local state senator, and all others deemed necessary and proper.”

No comments were given, and a motion to support the application was made by Conor Ross, seconded by Jamell Henderson

Vote Results: 27 Y / 0 N / 0 A, motion passes

SLA – Action Items

1. Life is Sweet, 608 Nostrand Avenue – Full license (recorded music, licensed patio/deck)

- Applicant seeking hours of operation of 6AM to 4AM daily
- Coffee shop turned nightlife establishment
- Multi-cultural small bites/tapas
- 10 tables with 20 seats with one service bar with 14 seats
- Licensed security guard

The committee voted unanimously with 12 in favor to support the application with the requirement that the applicant reduce hours to 2AM Sunday thru Thursday. They will be allowed to stay open for 4AM Friday and Saturday. The committee hopes the full Board supports its recommendation.

No comments were given, and a motion to support the application was made by William Meehan, seconded by Meredith Staton

Vote Results: 26 Y / 0 N / 0 A, motion passes

2. Dining Out application for Bilt Bar, 583 Vanderbilt Avenue (sidewalk café)

Dimensions of sidewalk café of 24 feet by 6 feet along Vanderbilt Avenue and 30 feet by 6 feet along Dean Street. Number of seats unknown

The committee voted unanimously to support the application without modification in hopes that the full Board supports its recommendation.

No comments were given, and a motion to support the application was made by Mark Thurton, seconded by Meredith Staton

Vote Results: 28 Y / 0 N / 0 A, motion passes

LHU – Action Items

The Housing and Land Use Committee met on Thursday, February 12, 2026 at Stuy Park Housing. The committee received an update on the preliminary work that our Fund for the City of New York fellow has begun to address the board's concerns about housing affordability. The goal is to repair the housing ladder to find housing stability and mobility in Crown Heights. Additionally, the committee voted to table a FRESH application for 1034 Atlantic Avenue until March pending official design plans.

The committee had one adjudicatory item, an **application for a Certificate of Appropriateness, 1184 Dean Street.**

This building is located in the Crown Heights Historical District between Nostrand and Rogers Avenue. A presentation was made by the applicant's architect, Mr. Hackjong Choi of HCK Architects on behalf of the building owners. The applicant seeks a Certificate of Appropriateness for windows located on the front facade of the ground and parlor floors. At the time of designation, there were curved glass windows located at the ground and parlor floors. The relevant transoms will be restored. Between the time of designation and when the current owner bought the building, the windows were changed to flat windows. The present owners seek to replace the windows with new windows. That filing flagged the issue of the missing historically appropriate curved windows. According to the owner's architect the cost to replace the curved windows is approximately 10x the cost of the desired flat windows.

The Crown Heights North Association (CHNA) reviewed the application prior to the meeting. CHNA initially supported the architect's proposal for flat windows. However, following the discussion of the windows, The chairperson and president of the CHNA and its Secretary on behalf of CHNA rescinded their support which allowed the owner to replace the windows with flat windows with flat windows. This would not preserve the building's facade as it was at time of designation.

The committee voted unanimously with 21 in favor to not support the application in hopes the full Board supports its recommendation.

Robert Puca asked about the Landmarks Preservation Commission's position and whether an LPC hearing had been scheduled; the architect stated that the LPC hearing is scheduled for February 24 and that the applicant would see what guidance LPC provides. Meredith Staton asked whether the windows had historically been stained glass, and the answer recorded in the notes was no. Mr. Puca also asked when the building last had round/curved windows, and the response indicated that at the time of designation the windows were curved, but that changes occurred between designation and the current owner's purchase. Members emphasized the need to ensure that the application aligns with the original designation record, and there was clarification that a prior application had already approved curved windows. Gib Veconi noted this is a common type of application in which applicants seek a less expensive alternative than the historic condition as usually is what LPC recommends, and he stated that LHU often votes no in those cases.

A motion to support the committee's recommendation was made by Gib Veconi and seconded by Sarah Lazur.

Vote Results: 24 Y / 0 N / 4 A, motion passes

Cannabis – Action Items

The Cannabis Committee met on Wednesday, February 11, 2026 via Webex. The committee discussed the following Cannabis renewal applications:

- 1. Brooklyn Organic Buds, 623 Bergen Street (between Vanderbilt and Carlton Avenues)**

The representative, Salar Rivani appeared on behalf of the applicant, Mr. Ray Saltus, who was working at the dispensary at the time of the hearing. Mr. Rivani provided the following details:

- CAURD license for the single member LLC (registered to Ray Saltus) issued two years ago and it is time to renew the license before it can become a standard retail dispensary license
- Business has been open since late August 2025
- Hours of operation 8AM to 10PM Sunday thru Thursday and 8AM to midnight Friday and Saturday
- Currently operated by the owner and occasionally with assistance from his son with no additional employees at this time
- Started out significantly in the red due to the slow-moving processes on the part of OCM
- Integrating into the community seamlessly with clientele from neighboring businesses being the most supportive customers
- No delivery services yet, but seeking to begin pre-order for pick up service in the coming months
- Experiencing some difficulties marketing the dispensary due to its location on a side street and OCM's significant restrictions. Several of the restrictions have eased a bit, making it easier to offer promotions, discounts, and loyalty rewards
- The community benefit plan is deeply connected to the dispensary's non-profit arm, Lit Legacies, which offers education in Cannabis operations planning, real estate, awareness, and other workshops focused on how to grow and become retailers.

The committee had several questions regarding operations and differences between the presented application from two years ago and current operations. Mr. Rivani explained that the presented application from two years ago was wishful projections and hopes, but the reality is much different. Regarding security personnel, he explained that it is not necessary at this time due to the lack of heavy patronage, but there is a virtual attendant where customers must scan their state issued ID card to ensure they are legal age.

The committee voted unanimously with 13 in favor of supporting the application and hopes the full Board supports its recommendation.

It was noted that there was a leak in the building that delayed inspection

A motion to support the committee's recommendation was made by Jamell Henderson and seconded by Lisa Maldonado.

Vote Results: 25 Y / 2 N / 2 A, motion passes

2. 4081P Group (DBA Transcend, 772 Nostrand Avenue (between Sterling and St. John's Places)

Ms. Mar Fitzgerald was representing the two owners, CAURD applicants Messrs. Paul Dorestant and John Gordon. She explained that due to difficulties removing the illicit cannabis dispensary operators from the site, they were unable to gain access to begin their

buildout until mid-December 2025. While they, too, have been licensed for two years and must renew, they have not begun operating at the site that has been proximity protected since December 2023 and need to renew the CAURD license.

They reminded the committee of some of the key components of their operational plans as follows:

- A focus on consumption means other than smoking (edibles, teas, tinctures, salves, etc.)
- A focus on clientele that are less experienced users than those with experience to highlight cannabis education
- Design will be a simple yet discreet storefront with a “triage” area/vestibule before entering the showroom.
- Applicants did apply for the delivery option but do not foresee having delivery due to the tight regulations and expense, but that will rely on customer need and desire
- Expect a difficult first 6 to 9 months after opening but are confident they will be able to succeed depending on how quickly they can determine customer trends and adjust
- Community benefit will be partnerships with existing nonprofits and other organizations that are already working in the community to increase knowledge and awareness of cannabis
- Design layout unavailable due to just accessing the space and gutting it.

Most of the committee’s questions were about how they would distance themselves from the illicit shop to inform the community that they are legitimate. The applicant recognized the concerns and acknowledged that it might be difficult in the beginning, but they stated they are confident they can overcome the issue with transparency, proper branding and marketing, and ensuring that their NYS licensed dispensary sign is visible.

The committee voted unanimously with 14 in favor to support the renewal license in hopes the full Board supports its recommendation.

There was a longer discussion for this license application. Members asked what “education” would mean in practice, and the applicant/representative described education as covering product effects, consumption risks, and responsible use. There was also discussion of CAURD (Conditional Adult-Use Retail Dispensary) licensing and the purpose of a triage/check-in area, which was described as a point where IDs are checked before customers enter the showroom. Ms. Fitzgerald explained that CAURD licenses are part of a temporary program and that licensees are being transitioned into a newer state framework and corrected the Board’s notes that the applicants are not CAURD licensees, but rather are Social and Economic Equity (SEE) applicants. SEE applicants are individuals from communities disproportionately impacted by cannabis prohibition policies, minority and women owned businesses, distressed farmers, and service-disabled veterans rather than those directly impacted by prohibition like CAURD licensees.

Additional questions were whether literature or counseling resources would be available, and the response was that counseling and cross-referenced resources would be offered, alongside state-required signage on overuse and wellness/safety. Ms. Branch-Muhammad asked whether the business intended to join the Nostrand Avenue business association. Ms. James asked how the

operator would identify overuse, and the response was that the store would limit the amount of product a person can buy and track purchases within a 24-hour period. Sarah Lazur commented that dispensaries can only do so much about abuse and noted what she viewed as a double standard compared with liquor stores. Mimi Mitchell asked for clarification on opening hours, including whether the dispensary could open at 8:00 a.m.

A motion to support the committee's recommendation was made by Gail Branch-Muhammad, and seconded by Jamell Henderson.

Vote Results: 25 Y / 1 N / 3 A, motion passes

New Business

Under new business, the executive board noted that the Board's bylaws need to be updated, with the last update recorded in 2020. The Board discussed forming a bylaws committee by the end of the month to begin drafting revisions.

With no further business to be discussed, the meeting was adjourned at 8PM. The next meeting will be held on Thursday, March 12, 2026 at St. Teresa's located at 555 Sterling Place at 6PM. All are invited to attend.