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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**BEDC LAUNCHES STUDY OF BUSINESS ACTIVITY IN  
OCEAN HILL/BROWNSVILLE, BROOKLYN**

BROOKLYN, NY—March 20, 2006—Brooklyn Economic Development Corporation (BEDC) is launching a study of the business community in the Ocean Hill section of Brownsville, Brooklyn, to determine the retail needs of local residents and identify the types of businesses operating there, Joan Bartolomeo, BEDC president, announced today.

This month, BEDC will begin mailing surveys to residents and retail businesses in an area bordered by Fulton Street, Rockaway Avenue, Eastern Parkway Extension, and Buffalo Avenue. Graduate students from New York University's Wagner School of Public Service are working with BEDC as consultants on the project and will help analyze the results of the surveys and identify demographic trends in the neighborhood.

“BEDC became aware of the enormous potential for business development in Brownsville when we partnered with Michael's Development Corporation, the designated developer for the rebuilding of the Prospect Plaza housing development under the Hope VI Program,” Ms. Bartolomeo said. “As BEDC researched the potential for retail and commercial development on that site, we were impressed by the number of new housing units being built in the area. It seemed logical that these new homeowners would want someplace to shop and find services – that spurred BEDC to look at the bigger picture in Brownsville, exploring wider opportunities for business development in the community.”

Surveys will be mailed to about 600 businesses surrounding the Prospect Plaza complex, which is bordered by Saratoga Avenue, Park Place, Howard Avenue, and Sterling Place, asking whether the business is retail or service; the number of years it's been in operation; number of employees; types of employees needed at the business; current obstacles; and financing concerns. Separate surveys will be mailed to 900 homeowners in the area to gather additional information about local spending habits, services used, and the types of stores or businesses shoppers would like to see in the area.

“Although for many years Brownsville was characterized by housing abandonment and high crime, the community is now in the midst of a startling revitalization, with over 1,000 units of new, market rate housing coming on line since 2000 and many more in the pipeline,” said

Margaret Nelson, director of real estate for BEDC. “New residential development has increased the neighborhood’s population and additional retail services are needed to serve the influx of new residents.”

Last year, the Settlement Housing Fund sold to homeowners 37 new affordable townhouses it had developed at Dean Street and Saratoga Avenue, and vacant lots that had languished for years in the City’s Housing Preservation and Development portfolio have been sold to nonprofit and private developers who have built or plan to build new market rate and affordable housing.

BEDC also is playing an active role in commercial revitalization efforts on 15 blocks of Nostrand Avenue in East Flatbush by conducting similar business and residential surveys to determine the types of businesses residents and local employees would like to see in the neighborhood. The goal of that project is to increase business activity and attract shoppers to stores on Nostrand Avenue.

BEDC, a private, nonprofit organization, was established in 1979 to stimulate Brooklyn’s economy and create job opportunities for the borough and its residents. BEDC has evolved into a multi-service, business-consulting agency, serving more than 1,000 clients annually and offering comprehensive economic development services. More information is available at [www.bedc.org](http://www.bedc.org).

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