# How to use the State of the City

## GEOGRAPHIC DEFINITIONS

This report presents information for the entire City of New York, for the five boroughs, and for the "neighborhoods" within each borough. The City divides the boroughs into a total of 59 community districts; the United States Census Bureau, however, divides the boroughs into 55 sub-borough areas. We have included reference maps for community districts and sub-borough areas beginning on page 132. This report provides data for community districts where available but uses data at the sub-borough level for indicators not available for community districts. We often use the term neighborhood to refer to both community districts and sub-borough areas.

## BOROUGH

New York City consists of five boroughs—the Bronx, Brooklyn, Manhattan, Queens and Staten Island. Each New York City borough is also a county. Counties are legal entities with boundaries defined by state law. The Census Bureau uses boroughs as the major geographic entities in its data products for New York City.

## COMMUNITY DISTRICT

Community districts are political units unique to New York City. Each of the 59 community districts has a Community Board whose members are appointed by the Borough President of that district; half of the members are nominated by the City Council members who represent the district. The Community Boards review applications for zoning changes and other land use proposals, and make non-binding recommendations about those proposals. They also recommend budget priorities.

## SUB-BOROUGH AREA

Sub-borough areas are geographic units created by the Census Bureau for the administration of the New York City Housing and Vacancy Survey. They are designed to approximate New York's community districts. These same areas are also defined by the Census Bureau as Public Use Microdata Areas (PUMAs) of at least 100,000 people. In New York City, these PUMAs are co-terminus with the sub-borough areas, so we are able to use the two interchangeably. Because sub-borough areas are constructed from census tracts, their boundaries do not coincide precisely with community district boundaries. There are 59 community districts in New York City but only 55 sub-borough areas. The Census Bureau combined four pairs of community districts in creating the sub-borough areas to improve sampling and protect the confidentiality of respondents. These pairs are Mott Haven/Melrose (CD 101) and Hunts Point/Longwood (CD 102) in the Bronx, Morrisania/Crotona (CD 103) and Belmont/East Tremont (CD 106) in the Bronx, the Financial District (CD 301) and Greenwich Village/Soho (CD 302) in Manhattan, and Clinton/Chelsea (CD 304) and Midtown (CD 305) in Manhattan.

## RANKINGS

The 2009 edition of this report includes rankings of the five boroughs and all 59 community districts or 55 sub-borough areas for each indicator. The neighborhood ranked first has the highest number or percentage for the measure at issue, even if the measure is for a quality that one might think is "best" if lower. However, because data for several indicators—including all indicators drawn from United States Census Sources—are only available at the sub-borough level, these indicators are ranked out of 55 total neighborhoods. In addition, a few indicators were not available for all neighborhoods and therefore are ranked out of a subset of neighborhoods. For instance, the Furman Center only calculates the index of housing price appreciation and the median price per housing unit at the community district level for the predominant housing type in that district. Therefore the rankings for housing price appreciation for a given housing type are out of a substantially reduced subset of the community districts. We note where this is the case.

## INFLATION ADJUSTMENTS

When reporting dollar-based indicators, we adjust amounts for all years to 2009 dollars. This allows for more consistent comparisons across years for individual indicators. The inflation-adjusted values include median monthly rent, median rent burden, median household income, home sales prices for median price per unit.

## MARGIN OF ERROR

Many of the numbers presented throughout the State of the City are estimates based on surveys of the population. The data presented from these surveys are estimates of what the actual figures would have been if the entire population had been surveyed. As such, the estimates are subject to a margin of error.

For instance, the estimate of the poverty rate in CD 201 in 2007 is 25.1% with a margin of error of ± 3.2%. This means that there is a 90% probability that the interval from 21.9% to 28.3% covers the true poverty rate of the area. The estimate of the poverty rate in CD 201 in 2008 is 30.8% with a margin of error of 4.4% meaning that there is a 90% probability that the interval from 26.4% to 35.2% covers the true poverty rate. Thus, while there appears to have been a small increase in the poverty rate in CD 201 from 2007 to 2008, it is also possible that the poverty rate stayed constant around 27% over the two years and the apparent difference is entirely due to sampling differences.

Due to space constraints, we have not published the margins of error for the data in this book. Small year-to-year changes in sample estimates may be a result of sampling error and should be used with caution. We encourage readers to pay more attention to trends over several years than minor year-to-year changes.

## METHODOLOGICAL CHANGES

We have revised the methodology we use to derive several indicators in this edition of the *State of the City* as compared to past editions.

We do not adjust the repeat sales index for inflation, to be more consistent with the widely-used Case-Shiller Home Price Index. This change will make all of the sales price appreciation numbers reported in this year's edition of the *State of the City* different from those reported in prior editions. However, we will continue to use the revised method in upcoming reports.

As we gained a more thorough understanding of the data and research questions involved, we have refined our method for calculating the number of certificates of occupancy issued. We now include some temporary certificates of occupancy in the "Certificates of Occupancy Issued" indicator. For more information about how this is calculated, please see the Data Sources and Methodology section of the *Causes and Consequences of New York City's Residential Building Boom* chapter on page 20. The new method more accurately reflects when units become available for occupancy.

We have enhanced our transit indicator "Residential Units Within 1/4 Mile of a Subway/Rail Entrance" to include all rail lines, not just subway lines. Similarly, we have enhanced our park indicator "Residential Units Within 1/2 Mile of a Park" to use a walking distance buffer instead of an absolute distance.