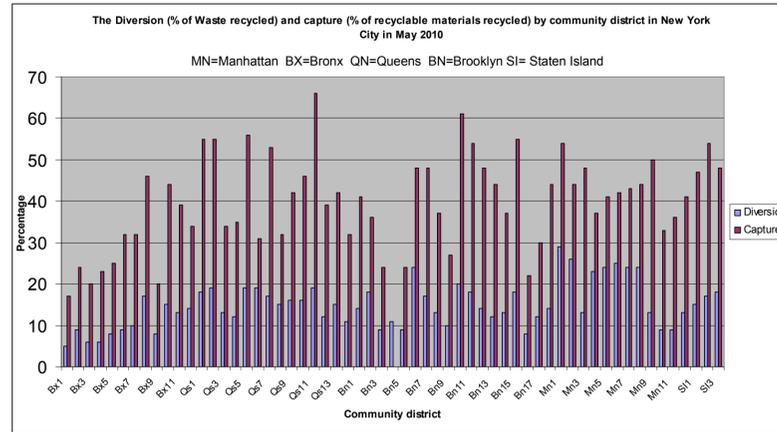
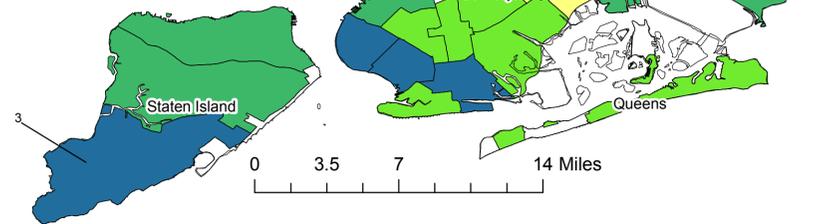


An Examination of Trash Recycling and Wealth in New York City

Percentage of total trash collected by DSNY in July 2010 which was recycled, (Diversion rate) by community district.

Overall, people in wealthier areas seem to recycle more waste. The wealthiest community districts in Manhattan (Districts 1, 2, 4, 7 and 8) have the highest recycling rates between 21 and 29%. All of these community districts contain census tracts with million dollar homes. Staten Island's 3rd district has one of the higher recycling rates compared to other community districts, despite being one of the poorer districts. This anomaly may be due to memories from the Fresh Kills Hill Landfill. Districts 2, 3, 4 and 5 in the Bronx, are some of the poorest districts and also have the lowest percentage of waste recycled. In this area only 5 to 10% of waste is recycled. Many homes in these districts value less than \$200,000.

Percentage of total waste collected which was recycled

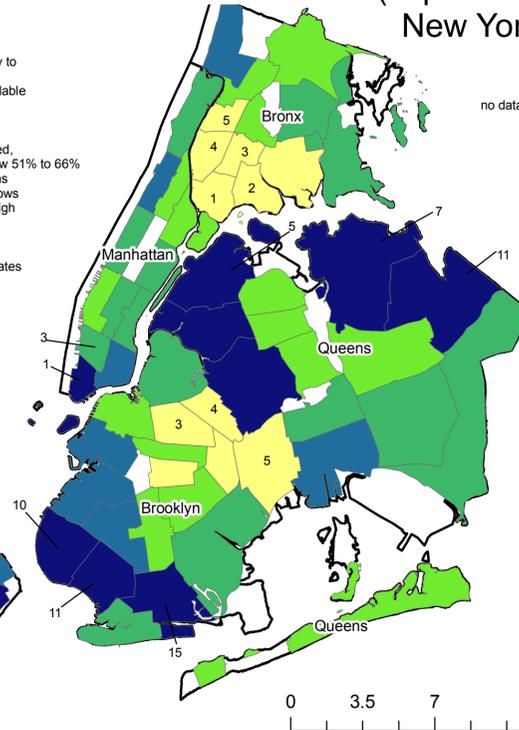
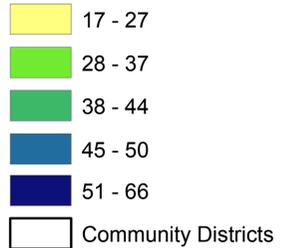


The 11th district of Queens has the highest capture rate at 67%. This is not New York's wealthiest district, but most of its homes value between 600,000 and 800,000 making it reasonably affluent. The 1st and 3rd districts of Manhattan have the highest diversion rates. The first district only has one tract reporting data which has homes valued between \$666,668 and \$888,883. The third district may buck the trend of wealth and recycling because its home values range from some of the lowest in the city to some of the highest. There is no way to determine how much recycling occurs in each census tract, but it is reasonable to assume much of the recycling occurs in the wealthiest census tracts. The first district of the Bronx has the lowest diversion and capture rate. Almost all of its median home values are less than \$200,000.

Estimated percentage of recycleable materials collected by DSNY which enter the recycling stream (capture rate) by community district in New York City in July 2010.

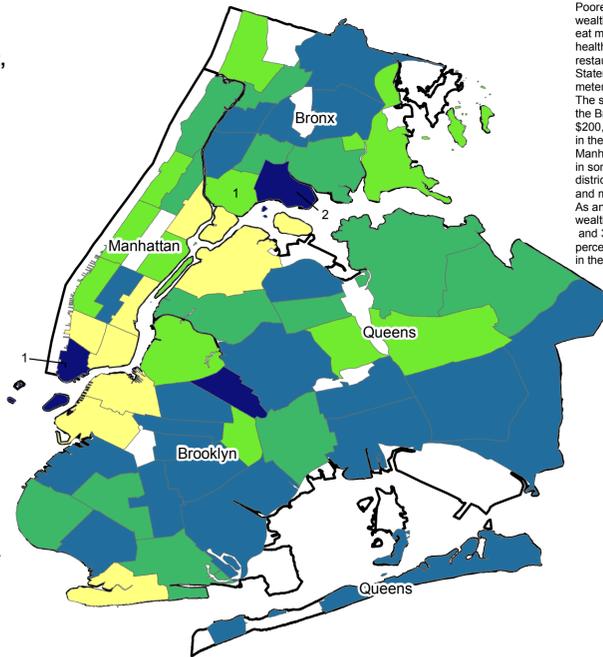
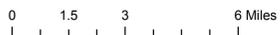
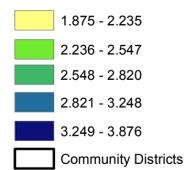
no data was reported for hollow boundaries

Percentage recycled.



Waste meter* of each community district in New York City in July 2010.

Waste Meter* by community district, July 2010

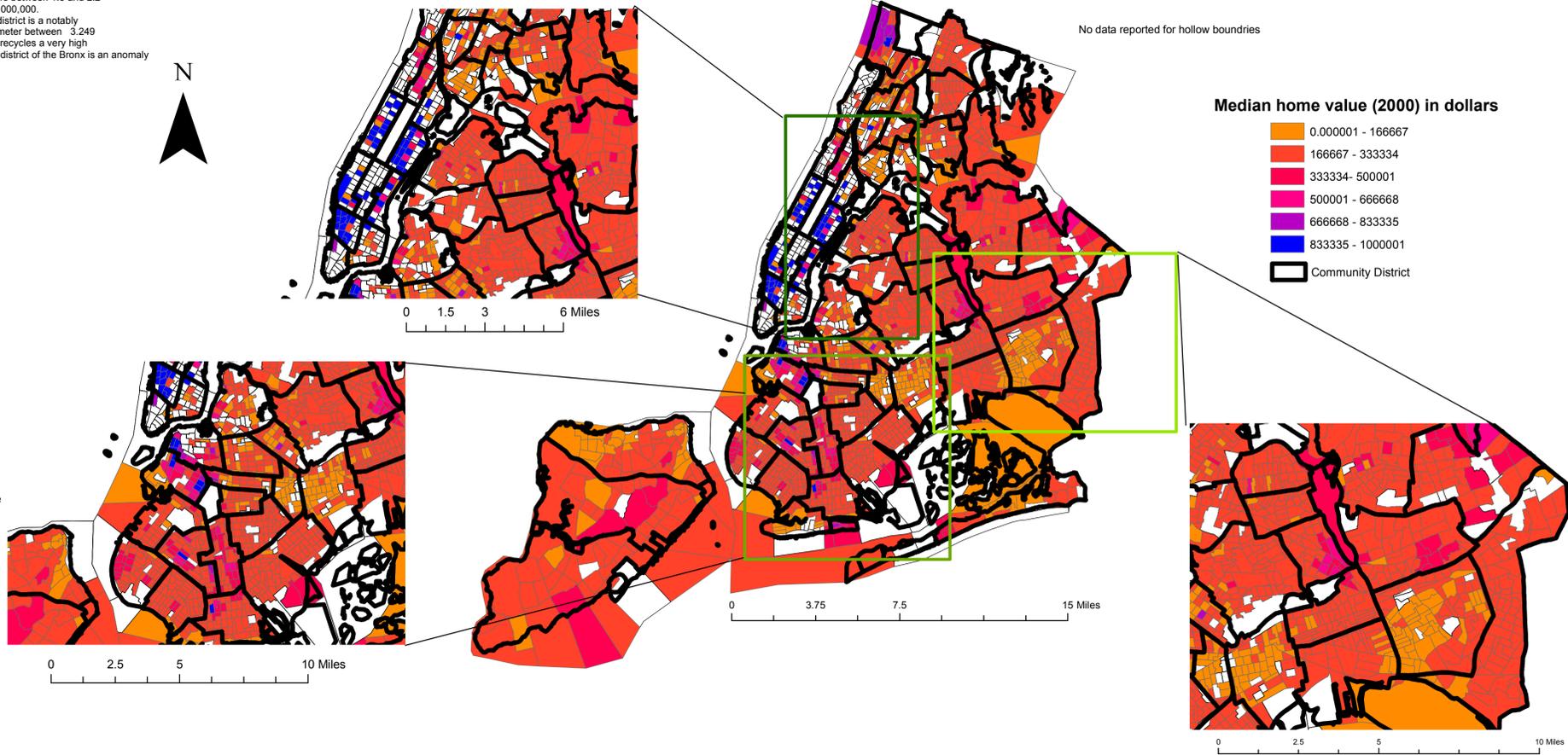
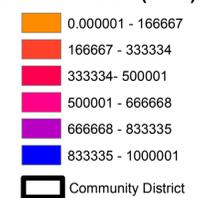


Poorer people seem to have a higher waste meter than wealthier people. This may occur because poorer people eat more packaged foods than wealthier people who eat healthier foods which come in less packaging or eat meals at restaurants. Staten Island is the poorest borough but has the highest waste meter (between 3.2 and 3.9) in all community districts. The same is true on the lower west side of the Bronx with many homes valued below \$200,000 with a waste meter between 2.8 and 3.2, most notably in the 2nd district. Manhattan, the wealthiest borough shows low waste meters in some of its wealthiest community districts such as in districts 2 and 3 with waste meters between 1.8 and 2.2 and many homes valued over \$1,000,000. As an anomaly, Manhattan's 1st district is a notably wealthy district, but has a waste meter between 3.249 and 3.876. However, this district recycles a very high percentage of its waste. The 2nd district of the Bronx is an anomaly in the opposite fashion.

Median home values (2000, in dollars) by census tract in New York City

No data reported for hollow boundaries

Median home value (2000) in dollars



Recommendations: New York City should encourage people to recycle more materials and lower their overall waste tonnage. Manhattan has high diversion rates but low capture rates for a wealthy community. The city should fight this sense of apathy by reminding residents what materials can be recycled, by radio or television commercials ect. There are many white collar workers in this area so much of the recyclable material which ends up in the garbage is probably paper. The city should tell office building custodians to add more recycle bins, and encourage business leaders to make sure their employees recycle. Efforts such as these would easily bring the capture rate from its current 38% to 44% up to nearly 66%. In poorer neighborhoods with low diversion and capture rates, and high total waste tonnage, the city needs to educate people of the necessity of recycling. This can be done through advertising, and awareness raised as part of the curriculum in the schools located in poorer neighborhoods. The city should also provide economic incentives to food vendors who reduce the amount of packaging on the food. A 5 cent plastic bag tax as instituted in the District of Columbia, and an excise tax on fast food purchases as was proposed by then Chicago Mayor Richard Daley for his city may also help New York reduce its total waste tonnage. Measures such as these would reduce total waste tonnage among both the rich and the poor. Lastly and most importantly, DSNY can do its own part to increase diversion and capture rates by accepting more materials for recycling, including paper cups, plastic bags and food trays which are accepted for recycling in other communities around the country.

Source: New York City Datamine:
(Waste data and community district polygons)
United States Census Bureau:
(Census tracts, median home values)



John J. Doherty, Commissioner of Sanitation



Michael R. Bloomberg, Mayor

Map by John Joseph Bardo