



NEWS RELEASE

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Students Examine Tobacco Marketing In Three Brooklyn Neighborhoods

NYPIRG Releases the Findings in “Adverse Adverts” Report, Covering Bay Ridge, Boerum Hill, and Bushwick

Brooklyn, NY- Tobacco remains the number one cause of preventable death in the United States,¹ killing ten times more United States citizens than in all the wars fought by the U.S. throughout its history.² When used correctly, tobacco products kill their customers, but the largest cigarette companies are investing big money to reach new smokers, spending over \$9 billion nationally—and \$213.5 million in New York—to market their products each year.³ While cigarette advertisements have left billboards and TV commercials, they now bombard customers in local corner stores and bodegas, pharmacies, and other stores. Unfortunately, these also happen to be places that young people visit frequently.

Tobacco marketing is an especially significant issue when it comes to youth. Nearly 19,000 New York City public high school students under the age of 18 currently smoke, and nearly 30,000 others tried smoking for the first time.⁴

The U.S. Surgeon General has found that the more tobacco advertising and marketing youth see, the more likely they are to smoke.⁵ That’s why it’s troubling that there are over 9, 000 licensed

¹U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. The Health Consequences of Smoking—50 Years of Progress: A Report of the Surgeon General. Atlanta, GA: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion, Office on Smoking and Health, 2014.

² *Supra note 1.*

³ U.S. Federal Trade Commission (FTC), Cigarette Report for 2012, Issued March 27, 2015.

<https://www.ftc.gov/system/files/documents/reports/federal-trade-commission-cigarette-report-2012/150327-2012cigaretterpt.pdf>; and Campaign for Tobacco Free Kids, estimated tobacco industry marketing in NYS prorated based on cigarette pack sales in the state, http://www.tobaccofreekids.org/facts_issues/toll_us/sources/.

⁴ Stalvey L, Grimshaw V, Johns M, Coady MH. Promotion of Tobacco Products in Retailers in New York City. NYC Vital Signs 2013; 12(1):1-4.

⁵ U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. Preventing Tobacco Use Among Youth and Young Adults: A Report of the Surgeon General. Atlanta, GA: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Centers for Disease

tobacco retailers in New York City and 75% of them have been found to be within 1,000 feet of a school.⁶ Whether it's a trip to the corner store for milk, a walk from the subway stop to school, or a stroll to the park, kids and teens are seeing tobacco marketing in alarming quantities.

To begin to explore the barrage of tobacco marketing in Brooklyn, NYPIRG student volunteers and staff surveyed and mapped tobacco advertisements and product displays they observed within a one to seven block area surrounding four high schools in Bay Ridge, Boerum Hill, and Bushwick, Brooklyn. These locations provided a snapshot of tobacco marketing in three geographically and socio-economically diverse neighborhoods. The results were then compiled into an anecdotal report entitled *Adverse Adverts*.

“Our findings serve as a reminder of the sorts of tobacco ads, product displays and other marketing that youth are exposed to in their everyday lives,” said Megan Ahearn, NYPIRG Organizing Director.

Adverse Adverts found that forty-one stores in the sampled areas of the three neighborhoods contained at least one tobacco advertisement or product display. **Surveyors observed a total of 310 tobacco advertisements and product displays within one to seven blocks surrounding the four high schools included in the project.**

“At first I didn’t notice the advertisements, but when I did, they were everywhere. It was crazy—it was definitely a wake-up call,” shared Jean Pierre Felder, a BMCC student and surveyor. “A lot of young people have an immortality mentality—that they can quit at any time—but that’s just not the case. Smoking is costly to your health and your pocket.”

The high schools included in the project are: the High School of Telecommunications, Arts and Technology in Bay Ridge; Coy L. Cox School (PS 369) in Boerum Hill; and two high schools that are across the street from one another in Bushwick—Bushwick Leaders High School for Academic Excellence and EBC High School for Public Service (K 545).

The full report can be found at www.nypirg.org/health/adverseadvertsreport.pdf.

Additional reflections from surveyors:

“While surveying, I was really surprised at the amount of non-traditional tobacco products I saw. Many of the walls were made primarily of e-cigarette brands and flavors, as well as multiple brands of rolling papers and loose tobacco,” shared surveyor Tiffany Brown.

“There was a big Marlboro tobacco display that was directly next to the deli menu, it was very eye-catching. At a different store, there was an Eon Smoke vaporizer sticker right on the ATM,” remarked Tassia Rosa, surveyor and Brooklyn resident.

Additional findings in *Adverse Adverts* include:

- NYPIRG staff and student volunteers surveyed 41 stores: 34 corner stores/bodegas; 2 discount chains; 2 gas stations; 2 smoke shops/hookah bars; and 1 grocery store.

Control and Prevention, National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion, Office on Smoking and Health, 2012.

⁶ Luke, Douglas A., PhD, et. al. "Family Smoking Prevention and Tobacco Control Act: Banning Outdoor Tobacco Advertising Near Schools and Playgrounds." (American Journal of Preventive Medicine; 40(3): 295-302), 2011.

- Surveyors observed 113 tobacco ads on the exteriors of store buildings.
 - Of the 113 total exterior ads, 52 ads were observed surrounding the two Bushwick high schools, 33 ads were observed surrounding the Bay Ridge high school, and 28 ads were observed surrounding the Boerum Hill high school.
- Surveyors observed 101 total tobacco ads on the interior of stores.
 - Of the 101 total interior ads, 43 ads were observed surrounding the two Bushwick high schools, 36 ads were observed surrounding the Bay Ridge high school, and 22 ads were observed surrounding the Boerum Hill high school.
- Surveyors observed 96 total tobacco product displays on the interior of stores.
 - Of the 96 total tobacco product displays, 60 displays were observed surrounding the two Bushwick high schools, 22 displays were observed surrounding the Boerum Hill high school, and 14 displays were observed surrounding the Bay Ridge high school.

ABOUT NYPIRG

The New York Public Interest Research Group (NYPIRG) is New York State's largest student-directed research and advocacy organization. Our principal areas of concern are environmental protection, consumer rights, higher education, government reform, voter registration, mass transit and public health. We are a nonpartisan, not-for-profit group established to effect policy reforms while training students and other New Yorkers to be advocates. Since 1973, NYPIRG has played the key role in fighting for more than 150 public interest laws and executive orders. NYPIRG has a long and successful history protecting New Yorkers of all ages from the negative effects of smoking—from addressing tobacco marketing targeting youth to supporting smoke-free spaces. www.nypirg.org