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Grocery grumbles in Downtown Brooklyn

By Michèle De Meglio

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Hunger pains are hitting Downtown Brooklyn residents.

Locals took to the street to call attention to the lack of affordable and high-quality grocery stores in the area.

“This has been part of our general campaign around development in Downtown Brooklyn and Fort Greene — the lack of services,” explained Valery Jean, incoming executive director of Families United for Racial and Economic Equality (FUREE), which organized the rally with the Urban Justice Center.

Standing outside of Bravo supermarket on Myrtle Avenue in Fort Greene, the groups distributed a report dubbed “Food Fight.” It found that 84 percent of survey respondents want more grocery stores. FUREE says Downtown Brooklyn, specifically Fort Greene, is a “food desert.”



Protesters gather at Bravo Supermarket on Myrtle and Carlton avenues.

“It’s easier to get a gun in parts of Fort Greene than it is to find an apple and that’s unfortunate,” said City Councilmember Letitia James. “We need fresh food options.”

Fort Greene residents were hit hard when the local Associated Supermarket was knocked down to make way for a new residential building currently under construction at Myrtle Avenue and Ashland Place. The new building is expected to house a supermarket but residents of the Ingersoll and Whitman Houses fear it will be out of their price range.

“There’s no guarantee that the prices are going to be affordable for the public housing residents who are going to be living across from it,” Jean said.

With limited grocery options, many residents are forced to travel via bus or subway to affordable supermarkets.

“For people who are on fixed incomes, it becomes a hardship to have to travel so far to get food,” Jean said.

The Urban Justice Center and FUREE hope to encourage developers to build additional grocery stores in the coming years.

“There’s been a loss of supermarkets throughout New York City with higher concentrations in low-income and working-class areas. We see it as a larger issue of access to affordable and healthy food,” Jean said.