

Album

PHOTOGRAPHS by GARETH SMIT

Staten Island, for Locals

THREE YEARS AGO, Gareth Smit moved to New York City from South Africa to study photography. His first subject was Eric Garner, or rather the memory of Eric Garner, a black man who was killed by Officer Daniel Pantaleo on July 17, 2014, on the North Shore of Staten Island, across the street from Tompkinsville Park.

"I spent my first year in New York photographing that project," Mr. Smit said. He took time to develop relationships with people in the area who knew Mr. Garner, he recalled. "Then I fell in love with the North Shore."

Staten Island is the famously forgotten borough, removed both geographically and from the minds of many New Yorkers. Mr. Smit found that the tourists who visited generally did so only to experience the view from the Staten Island Ferry.

"It's a community that is not often seen, and often pushed into another conversation, like 'Republican stronghold,'" Mr. Smit said.

That will change, though; the North Shore is the site of multiple waterfront development projects, including an outlet mall and luxury housing, that will forever alter the community. But Mr. Smit was less interested in what's to come.

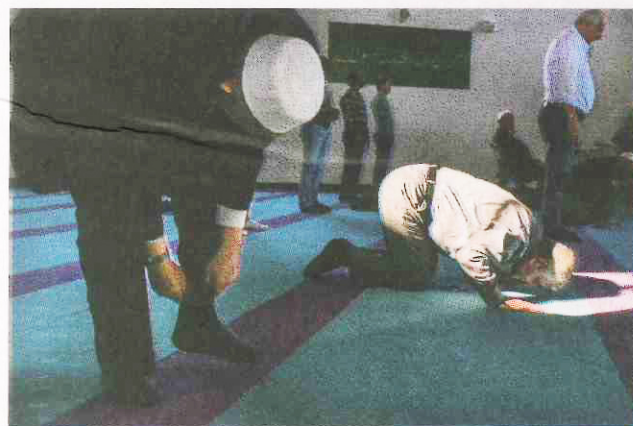
Shooting along Victory Boulevard, Mr. Smit found diverse, bursting communities. The North Shore is home to Little Sri Lanka and Little Liberia. To serve a bustling Albanian enclave, there's a mosque with a school and a community center.

Mr. Smit was expecting people whose communities were ravaged by Hurricane Sandy to welcome the new development. He found it wasn't that simple. Many North Shore residents moved there because their previous neighborhoods had become unaffordable with new development.

Some Staten Island youths whom Mr. Smit met might feel differently about the development. "They feel excited about the mall becoming a place where they can hang out," he said. His exhibit, "North Shore," will be on display Sept. 16 at the Alice Austen House, 2 Hylan Boulevard, Staten Island. GREG HOWARD

ONLINE: VIEW FROM THE NORTH SHORE

More of Gareth Smit's photographs: nytimes.com/metropolitan



The North Shore of Staten Island is home to diverse communities, including Little Sri Lanka and Little Liberia.