

Barton Blossoming

Growing Inclusive Public Space in
Murray Hill, Queens

May 2023

UPM 609 - Lab Analysis of Public Space

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Agenda

1. Our Approach
2. The Neighborhood
3. Community Engagement
4. Guiding Insights
5. Visions for Barton Avenue
6. Next Steps



Our Approach

Our class

Throughout this semester, our class was tasked with **exploring design and programming options for Barton Avenue Open Street** in Murray Hill, Queens, in collaboration with the local small business community.

Our client, **Asian American Federation (AAF)**, connected us to the neighborhood's business owners who they have deep relationships with through their Murray Hill office.

Listening to the Place

Since our kickoff in early January, we have approached our work with the goal of gaining a **multi-layered understanding of the neighborhood.**

We knew it was essential to better understand the community's **history**, its **triumphs**, its **challenges**, and the **aspirations** of people who call this place home.



Arc of Work

Our work was completed in stages to ensure that our understanding of the neighborhood grew as we moved forward.

- ❖ January + February: **Desktop research, contextual analysis, & neighborhood observations**
- ❖ March: **Community engagement**
- ❖ April: **Forming recommendations**

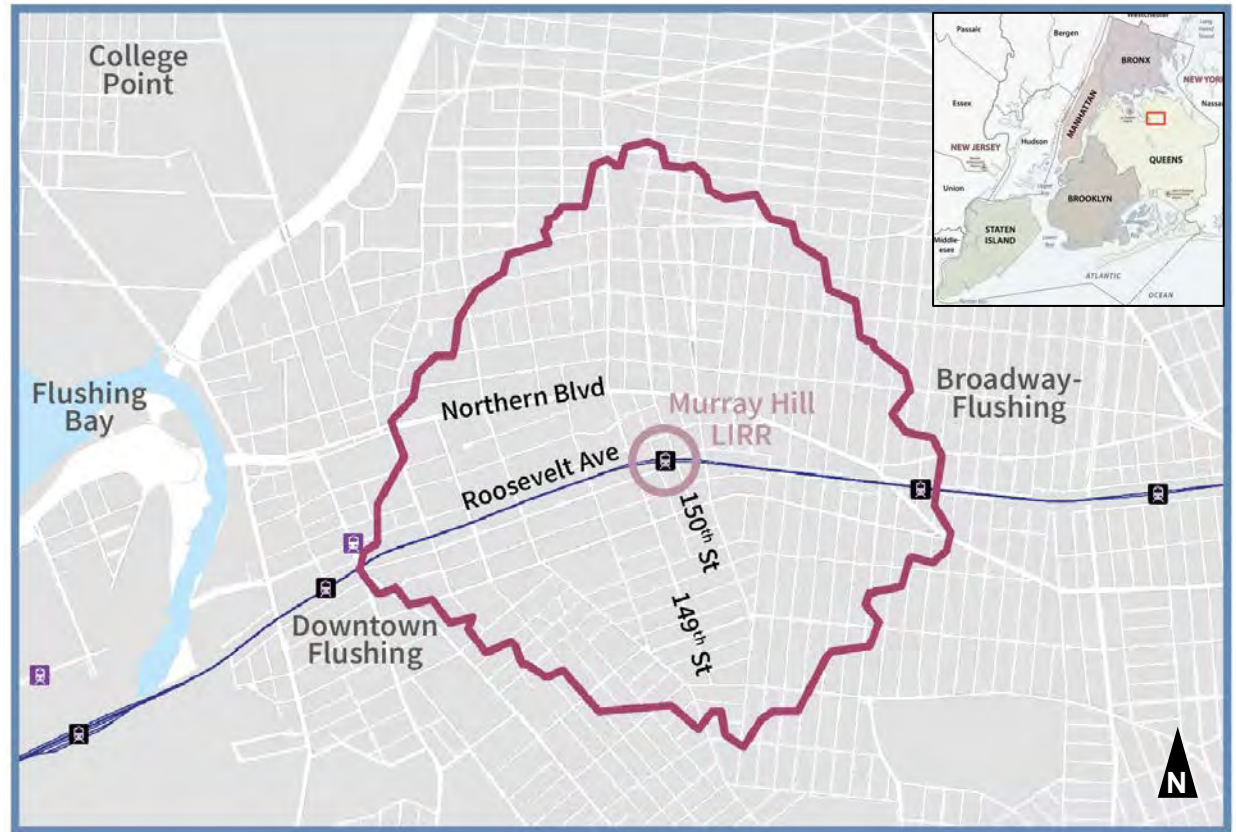


Area of Focus

— 15-min walking distance from Barton Ave & Murray Hill LIRR station

Why a 15-minute walk?

- To better understand the hyper-local context of Barton Ave & the adjacent plaza
- To include the 3 commercial corridors of Northern Boulevard, Food Alley (our focus), & 162nd Street

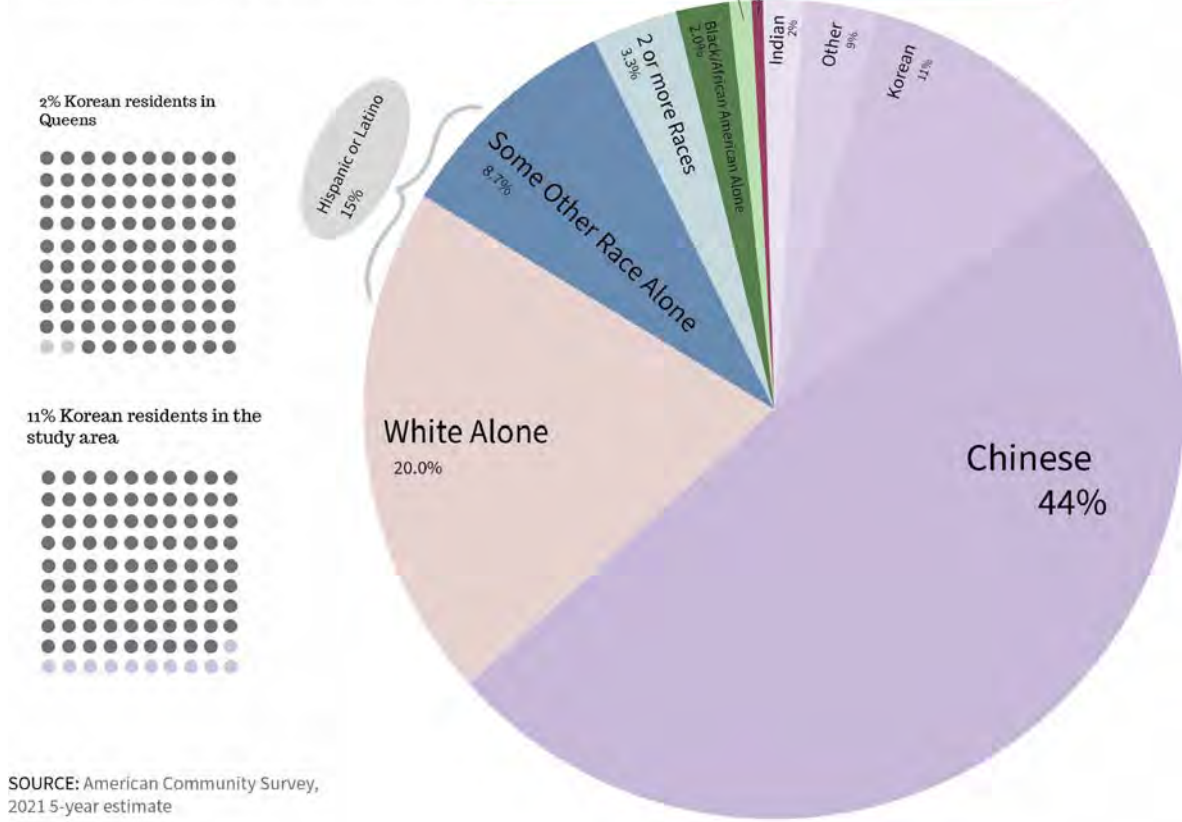


The Neighborhood

Immigration Patterns

- First inhabited by the Indigenous Matinecock and Munsee Lenape people, until being settled by Dutch and English colonies
- Subsequently settled by East Asian immigrants (particularly Korean in Murray Hill and Chinese in Flushing)
- Murray Hill's population has become **increasingly Chinese & Hispanic/Latinx**, while its **Korean population has decreased** in the last two decades.

STUDY AREA: DEMOGRAPHIC SNAPSHOT



Public Life

We observed **seven themes of public life** in Murray Hill:

Seeing & Being Seen

The built environment and gathering places of Murray Hill make for a place where Seeing and Being Seen is part of the neighborhood's fabric.

Transitional

Murray Hill is in a delicate Transitional period where demographics are changing rapidly to reveal gaps between generational, ethnic, language and economic groups.

Clustering

Clustering of ethnic, generational, and other affinity groups, makes for a neighborhood with distinct pockets of social gathering.

Small is Big

In such a hyperlocal neighborhood, little changes go a long way, and small acts are immediately noticeable.

Making Place

Expressions of culture and care are visible throughout the neighborhood, as people Make Place with signage, intimate gardens, and other ways of personalizing their spaces.

IYKYK

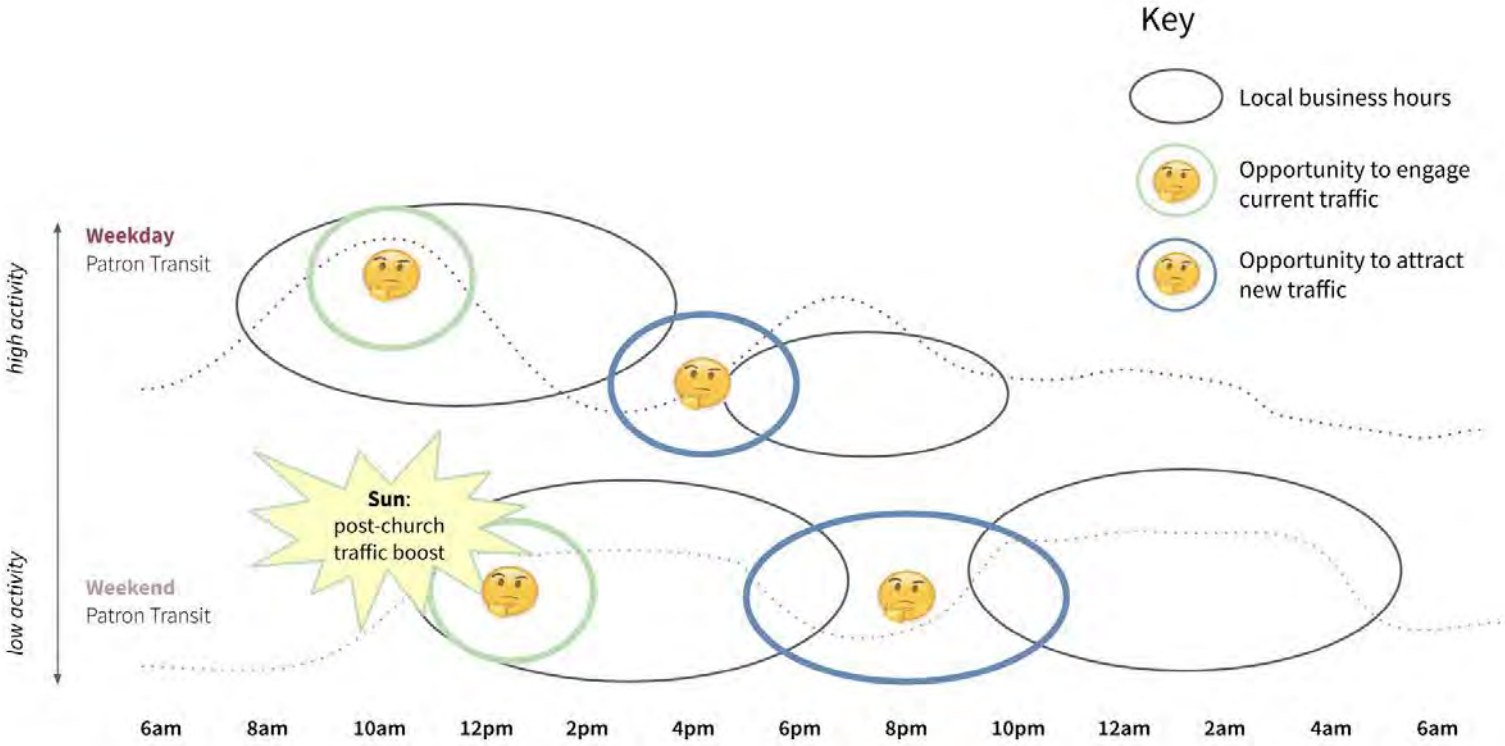
Rich with culturally-specific cuisine and services, Murray Hill is a place of insider-knowledge, where If You Know You Know (IYKYK).

DIY

Visible in handmade additions to store frontages, makeshift parking signs, and the donated folding chairs, tables, and handmade planters

Business + Culture

We identified a **cultural biorhythm** present in the neighborhood, offering opportunities at specific hours:



Transportation Patterns

MOVEMENT
Murray Hill & Flushing, Queens

Macro scale

LEGEND :

- Private vehicles
- Public Transport
- Bicycles
- Pedestrians



Q44 SBS to The Bronx

Union Street

35th Ave

Northern Blvd

154th St

Murray Hill

Murray Hill LIRR Station

Flushing

LIRR

41st Ave

Sanford Ave

43rd Ave

62nd St

7

Greenery + Open Space

Open space

Murray Hill: Public Open Space

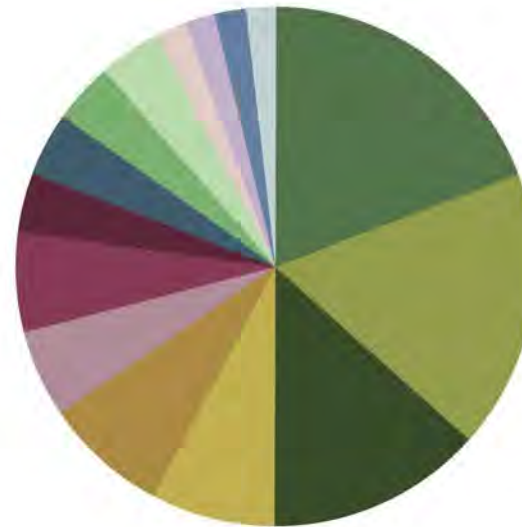
- Focus Area (15-Minute Walk From Site)
- 7 Train Station
- LIRR Stations
- Parks
- Street Trees



Murray Hill has **only 2.8%** of its land designated as parks. That's compared to 9.5% in Queens CD 7, and 8.9% in Queens as a whole.

Sources: NYC DCP 2022, DOF 2022, MTA 2017

Tree species



- Green ash - 19.2%
- Ginkgo - 17.3%
- Pin oak - 13.5%
- London planetree - 7.7%
- Norway maple - 7.7%
- Japanese flowering cherry - 5.8%
- Northern red oak - 5.8%
- Flowering dogwood - 3.8%
- Littleleaf linden - 3.8%
- Shingle oak - 3.8%
- Black locust - 3.8%
- Japanese pagoda tree - 1.9%
- Japanese tree lilac - 1.9%
- Sugar maple - 1.9%
- Unknown - 1.9%

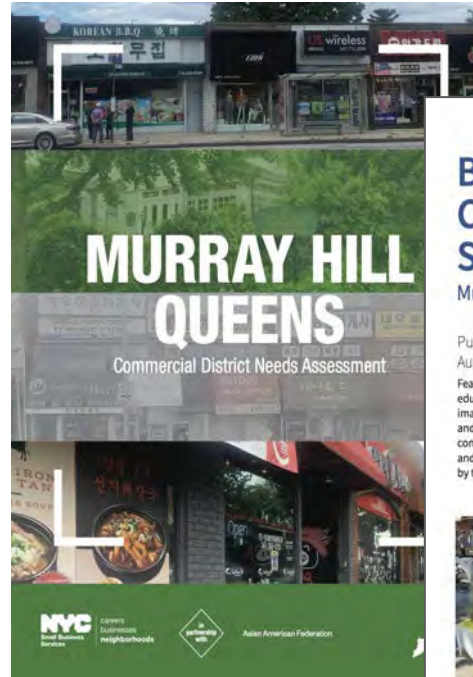
Community Engagement

Existing community engagement data

Our work with Murray Hill's commercial areas build upon previous engagement conducted by other organizations, notably:

- A **Commercial District Needs Assessment (CDNA)** conducted by **NYC Small Business Services** between 2021 and 2022.
- A **Public Space Workshop** on Barton Avenue Open Street conducted by **Street Lab** in August 2022.

The insights gained from this data were supported by our own direct engagement strategies



Barton Ave Community Feedback Summary

Murray Hill, Queens

Public Space Workshop on
August 12, 2022 from 3-6pm

Featuring a collage activity; a DOT
education table with information and
images about Open Streets, Street Seats,
and Plazas; surveys and polaroid portrait
comment cards. Additional programming
and sticker-voting engagement provided
by the Asian American Federation.



Street Lab
Fall 2022

Direct community engagement methods

Our community engagement was undertaken using three methods:

1. Community Survey

A brief Google Form aimed at individuals and small businesses.

2. 'Tea Chats'

An in-depth 20-30 min discussion, aimed at community leaders who are familiar with the neighborhood.

3. On-site Activities

Three on-site engagement activities on the Open Street and adjacent plaza, aimed at passersby and daily users of the plaza.

Total no. of people reached: **54**

- Survey: **4**
- Tea Chats: **6**
- On-site Activities: **44**

Profiles:

- General community members: **48**, including:
 - **5** children
 - **4** teens
- Community orgs: **2**
- Public sector reps: **2**
- Business owners: **1**
- Artists: **1**

Survey

- Our short Google Form survey was **intended for community members** (such as small business owners and local residents)
- Circulating the survey proved to be challenging, and responses were fewer than planned.
- Despite this, we gained insight into some of the community's **perceptions of the neighborhood**

Barton Avenue: Let's Hear from You! / 당신의 의견을 들어봅시다! / ¡Escuchemos de usted!

lande200@pratt.edu [Switch account](#)
Not shared

* Indicates required question

Which language? / 어떤 언어? / ¿Qué idioma? *

English
 한국어
 Español

Next

"It feels like a **secret spot** that only locals would venture out to."

"I don't visit Barton Avenue that often because I don't drive which makes it a tiny bit **difficult to get here.**"

What race / national origin best describes you? Check all that apply. *

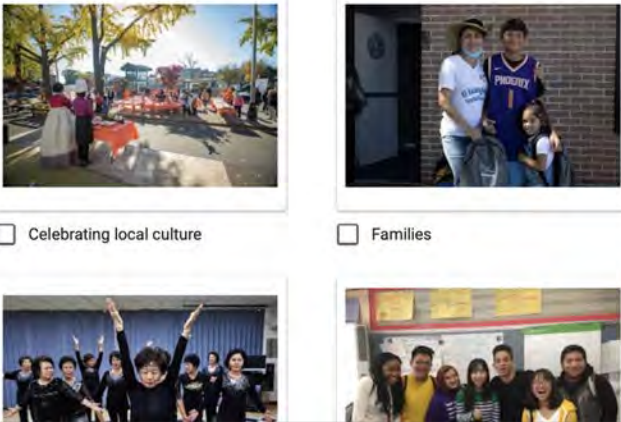
Asian - Korean
 Asian - Chinese
 Asian - Thai
 Asian - Indian
 Asian - Filipino
 Hispanic - Mexican
 Hispanic - Puerto Rico

Please elaborate on your answer to the previous question. Why do you choose to visit the Barton Avenue Open Street? If you tend not to visit Barton Avenue, why is that? *

Your answer

In this neighborhood, I would like to see more events that are for... (Check all that apply) *

Celebrating local culture
 Families



Tea Chats

Our 'tea chats' proved to be one of our most successful engagement strategies, and provided us with valuable insight into the neighborhood's hugely diverse social environment.

These chats involved **20-30 min conversations with community leaders** who are familiar with the neighborhood.

We had tea chats with representatives from:

- The local private sector (including **local small businesses** and the **Murray Hill Merchants Association**)
- The public sector (including **NYC Department of Small Business Services**)
- Local non-profits (including **YWCA Queens** and the **Queens Historical Society**)
- **Local artists** and **cultural organizations**

"**Let's Eat Alley.** We've all heard about that."

"We'd always go to Flushing on the weekends too, and I think this is like a **very familiar experience** for all kind of Asian American kids growing up in East Queens, or just Queens in general."

"But now it's like, you know, **you don't go to Flushing anymore.** I don't think the Korean American community really seeks out Flushing to do those mundane things anymore, unfortunately."

On-Site Engagement Event

On Sunday, April 23 we created **three activity stations** in the Open Street and LIRR plaza, including:

- **Bucket Toss:** passersby were asked to throw a hacky sack towards their design/programmatic preference
- **Chalk Draw:** passersby to freely draw images in chalk on the pavement of what they want to see in the space.
- **Your Art Here:** large blank posters with colored markers attached. Passersby were asked to draw what they want to see in the space.



On-Site Engagement *continued*



BYOBarton (Build Your Own Barton) - FIELD NOTES Kids !!
Remember to note: time observed, people qty / demographics, general vs. activity-specific observations

BUCKET TOSS
open space I
seating- IIII
Games IIII
performances/stage IIII
Art III
Greenery IIII

Other
= Latino user just goes to train for work
people looking in buckets



On-Site Engagement *Findings*

- The results from the Bucket Toss showed preference for **seating, games, performances, art, & greenery.**
- The drawing activities (Chalk Draw & Your Art Here) indicated a significant interest in **greenery, recreation (dog walking & sports),** and **food enjoyment.**
- Our conversations with members of the public shed light on the huge **social** role of the plaza (especially for the local elderly), and **play** for children.

Guiding Insights

5 Key Insights Guided our Recommendations

From contextual research, previous community engagement, and our community engagement

- 1. Clearing pathways, building bridges.** Barton Avenue can serve as a vital site to create connections across cultures and age groups.
- 2. How can Barton Avenue be more welcoming towards women and children?** Some women we spoke with expressed apprehension at spending time in Barton Avenue due to the space being dominated by men.
- 3. A place in transition; a neighborhood in transition.** Murray Hill is in a transitional period where demographics are changing rapidly. The neighborhood itself also sits at a transition point between high and low density areas. High quality public spaces can help to bridge these gaps.
- 4. The importance of Korean identity; the challenge of cross-cultural connections.** The strong Korean identity of 먹자골목 / “Food Let’s Eat Alley” is one of Murray Hill’s strengths and prides. Yet bridges have yet to be established among and across the broader set of cultures and ethnicities in the community.
- 5. How can each of Murray Hill’s communities authentically connect with or express themselves through Barton Avenue?** Residents and visitors alike value Murray Hill for its “authentic” character, yet there are often divergent definitions of authenticity.

Visions for Barton Avenue

1. *The Streetshare Model (Governance & Programming)*
2. *Design Concepts*

1. The Streetshare Model

Governance and Programming for Barton Avenue

What is a Streetshare?

A **scalable and cross-cultural practical and values framework** for community-based governance and programming, meant to facilitate community ownership and stewardship.



Potential partners

- Art and Heart
- Aeon Martial Arts
- Bowne St. Community Church
- Comunidad Con Proposito
- East-West Music School
- Fo Guang Shan New York Temple
- **JHS 189 Q School**, including the Adult and Continued Education Program
- Korean American Civic Empowerment (KACE)*
- **Korean American Senior Citizen Society of Greater New York**
- Korean Traditional Music and Dance Institute
- MinKwon Center*
- NY Shaolin Temple Kung-Fu Center
- **Queens Council on the Arts**
- **Queens Public Library***
- Safari Day Care
- Sarang Adult Day Care Center
- Sikh Center
- **Street Lab***
- Street Life Ministries
- The Shield Institute
- Volefer Orth Museum

- **Greater Flushing Chamber of Commerce**
- Korean American Family Service Center*
- Korean Community Media Broadcasting
- Merchant's Association*
- **Queens College at CUNY**
- **Queens Historical Society**
- **YMCA***
- **YWCA***

- **Design Trust for Public Space**
- Murray Hill Neighborhood Association
- **Small Business Services (SBS)***

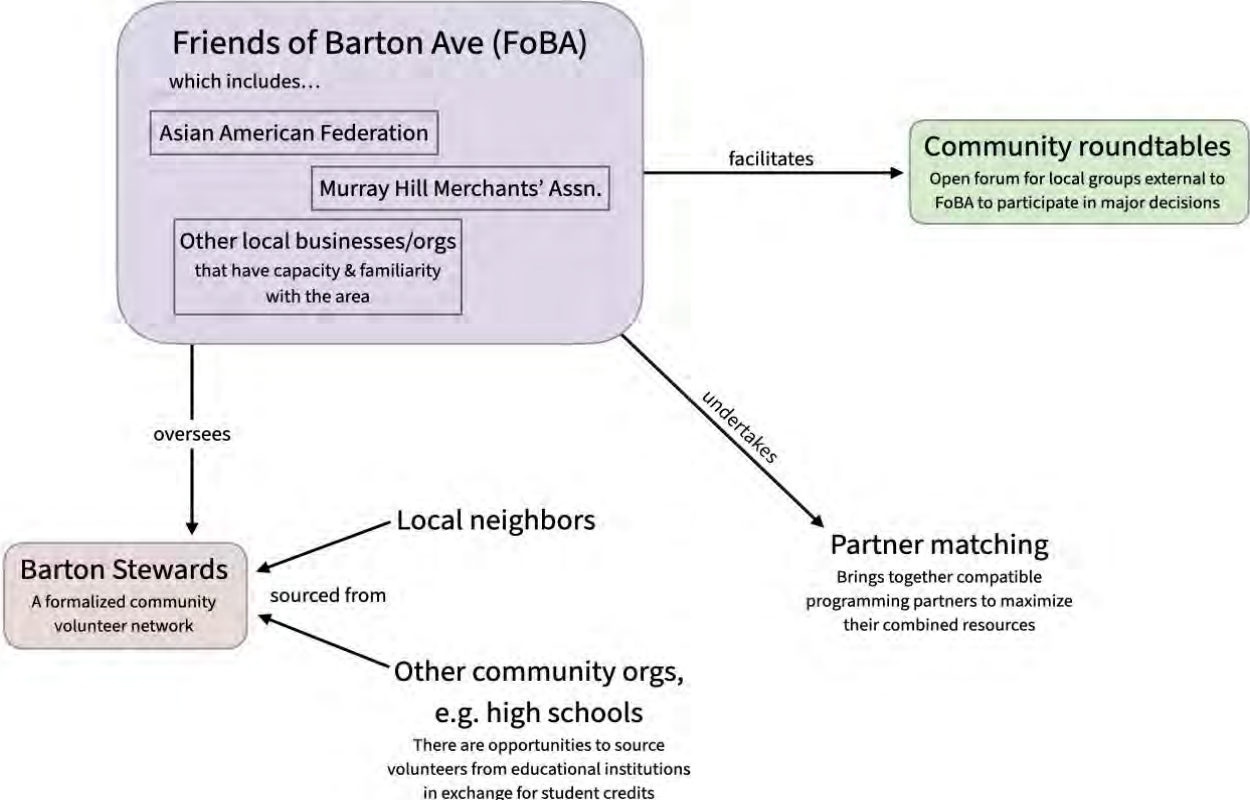
Innovation Partner -- An organization/agency which can help scale up the Open Streets through more complex & consist programming, governance, and physical design. These partners also have access to more resources: financial, personal, or otherwise.

* = Current Partner



Governing the Streetshare

Barton Avenue Streetshare Governance Structure



Friends of Barton Avenue (FoBA)

Governing board comprised of AAF, MHMA, and other partners with interest and organizational capacity

Facilitates...

1. **Community Roundtable**

- a. Open forum for local groups external to FoBA to participate in major decisions

2. **Barton Stewards**

- a. Formalized community volunteer network

FoBA's Networks for Outreach and Communication

1. A **Barton Avenue Streetshare** Facebook and/or Instagram page.
 - a. Community Calendar
 - b. Events submissions form
2. **Resource Fairs**
 - a. A tabling event to connect local residents to community resources also provides a place to network and raise awareness in the wider community.
3. **Partner Matching**
 - a. Brings together compatible programming partners to maximize their combined resources

Funding the Streetshare

- Funding via programming partners
- “Plug and Play” partners
- City and private grants

Existing funding for Barton Avenue:

- Small Business Services (SBS)
- Department of Transportation (DOT)
- Personal budgets of AAF & MHMA

See our report's appendix for detailed funding information

Case Study: **Cross-Cultural Public Space at Avenue C Plaza**

Site: Avenue C Plaza

Location: McDonald Avenue & Avenue C, Kensington, Brooklyn

Jurisdiction: DOT Plaza

Established: 2010

Governing group: Kensington Cultural Council (KCC), which includes:

- ArtBuilt
- Arts & Democracy
- Bangladesh Institute for Performing Arts
- Casa Cultural
- The Singing Winds
- Naturally Occurring Cultural Districts NY (NOCD-NY)



KENSINGTON CULTURE AT AVENUE C PLAZA with Artbuilt Mobile Studio



JUNE FRIDAYS:

4-6PM Bangla Language and Music Classes
with Annie Ferdous, BIPA



5-7PM Learn Nakshi Kantha Embroidery
with the Bangladeshi Ladies Club



SATURDAY, JUNE 18, 1-3PM

Neighborhood Scavenger Hunt and Story Workshop with Roohi Choudhry

Spend an afternoon exploring the familiar streets around Avenue C Plaza and scavenging for stories. Then come back for writing prompts to help you turn your found scraps into story treasure.



SATURDAY, JUNE 18, 6-8PM

CELEBRATING IMMIGRANT CULTURE CONCERT

with music from around the world including Yacouba Sissoko, Brooklyn Raga Massive, and more! Presented by Arts & Democracy in collaboration with ArtBuilt.



SUNDAY, JUNE 19, 1-5PM

Free Store with Kensington-Windsor Terrace Mutual Aid and Arts Activities with Arts & Democracy

ARTBUILT



Activating Barton: Suggested Programming

Priorities

Performances
+ festivals

Celebrating
culture +
community

Movement +
play

Learning

Building
connections

Community
stewardship

Potential activities

Annual Korean Festival

Moon festival

Concerts

Sogo
Dance

Karaoke

Public
markets

Community
gallery and
art walk

Block
parties

Food tour

Movie night

Dance
classes

Martial arts
classes

Yoga

Boxing

Ping
pong

Events for
local
business
owners to
connect

Events for
children
and
caregivers
to connect
and play

Calligraphy class

Cooking class

Language
exchange

Resource
distribution

Barton Day

* Based on public surveys

Barton as a **Community Resource Hub**

- **Resource fairs**
 - Events for local business owners to connect.
- **Events for children and caregivers** to connect and play. (YWCA)
- **Language exchange groups** (Queens Public Library, Queens College at CUNY, and the Queens Historical Society)



Annual Events

- Barton Day (Season opener)
- Closing of the Season
- Design Days (with growth)
- Cultural festivals



Innovation Partners

Innovation partners help scale up Barton's capacity through more complex programming and access to resources.

- YWCA
- Queens College at City University of New York (CUNY)
- Design Trust for Public Space
- Photographer Janice Chung & her exhibition 'Photoville'



MURRAY HILL
PLAYGROUND

OPERATING HOURS
6:00 a.m. - 9:00 p.m.
Except when school is in session.

WELCOME

Please be courteous and respectful to others.

RULES PROHIBIT:

- Littering
- Smoking
- Consumption of alcohol
- Glass containers
- Use of bicycles
- Pets
- Amplified sound, except by permit
- Feeding birds or squirrels
- Entering the playground after it is closed
- Demonstrations or events over 20 people, except by permit
- Vending, except as allowed by law or permit

For questions about Parks or to report an incident, please call 311 or visit nyc.gov/parks.

BIENVENIDO

Por favor, sea cortés con los demás.

REGLAS PROHIBEN:

- Arrojar residuos
- Fumar
- Consumir alcohol
- Ingresar con botellas de vidrio
- Usar bicicletas
- Mascotas
- Sonido amplificado, excepto con permiso
- Ingresar al área de juegos si está cerrada
- Demostraciones o eventos con más de 20 personas, a menos que tenga un permiso
- Vender, a menos que tenga un permiso
- Hacer parrilladas
- Hacer fuego
- Ingresar con vehículos motorizados que no cuenten con una autorización específica

Si tiene consultas sobre Parks o quiere informar un incidente, llame al 311 o visite nyc.gov/parks.

請對他人保持禮貌和尊重。

規定禁止：

- 亂丟垃圾
 - 亂丟垃圾
 - 吸煙
 - 飲酒
 - 攜帶玻璃容器
 - 騎自行車
 - 攜帶寵物
 - 擴大音量（除非獲得許可證）
 - 導向餵食鳥類
 - 在遊樂場關閉後進入遊樂場
 - 在遊樂場內進行商業活動
 - 使用明火
 - 在沒有特別授權的情況下駕駛機動車進入
- 如果有關於公園的任何疑問或需要舉報事件，請撥打 311 或訪問 nyc.gov/parks。

WARNING

Some surfaces may become hot.
Please take precautions with exposed skin.

ADVERTENCIA

Algunas superficies tal vez estén calientes.
Tenga cuidado con la piel expuesta.

警告

某些表面可能会变热。请采取预防措施保护外露的皮肤。

Governance + Programming: **Inside-Out & Outside-In**

“Inside-Out” Activities:

- Primary & secondary school art, performance, and civic events
- Plant exchange & “greening” days (“BYOPlant”)
- Morning & Evening wellness classes

“Outside-In” Activities:

- Korean Food Fair
- Street Lab “Meet a Small Business” Pop-up
- Neighborhood History Tour by the Queens Historical Society



Street Lab’s “Meet a Small Business” event
Source: Street Lab

2. Designing a Neighborhood Anchor

Four Design Concepts for Expanded Public Space

Design: **Direction & Intent**

*Our design recommendations center around the idea that **Barton Avenue can become the anchor for a network of expanded public space** in Murray Hill's 먹자골목 / "Food Alley."*

Each of our four concepts incorporates the following elements that residents have expressed as important to them:

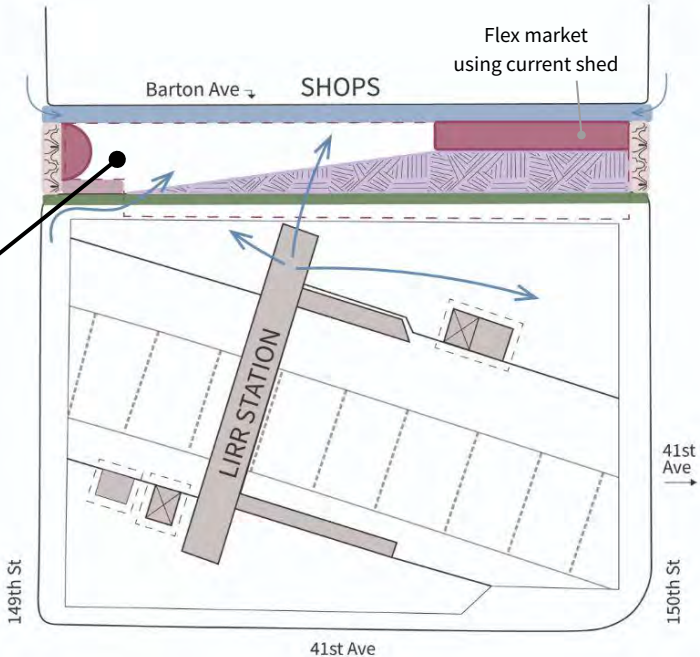
- ❖ Areas for **peace, relaxation**, and just **hanging out**
- ❖ A place that can be activated for **lively cultural events**
- ❖ Suitable to a wide range of **community programming**
- ❖ Improved **tree cover** and **shade** for the summer months
- ❖ **Connection to the surrounding local businesses** where people love to eat

Concept 1: Branching Out









The Open Street is extended to encompass the full length of Barton Ave



Semicircular stage with flexible seating creates buffer from nearby traffic



Implementation: Identify parking solutions, build understanding of neighboring businesses' needs, secure near-term streetscape investments

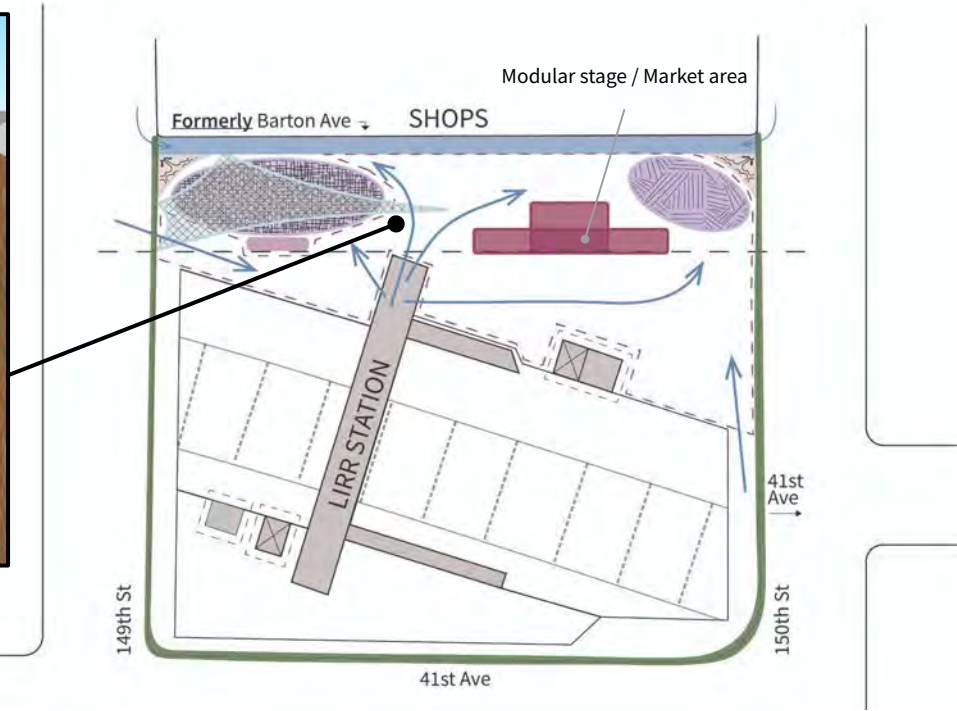
-  Pedestrian Flow (bubble = keep open for movement; arrows = likely paths)
-  Greenery (street trees and/or bushes)
-  Flora (planting boxes with flowers)
-  Programming Infrastructure
-  Full Activation Program Area
-  Storage
-  Flex Seating Area (moveable, can be put away during full programming activation)
-  Weatherization (shade structure/protection from sun & rain)





Concept 2: Plaza Time

Barton Avenue becomes a plaza through the DOT Plaza Program



Shade sail over flexible seating offers respite from the summer sun



-  Pedestrian Flow
(bubble = keep open for movement; arrows = likely paths)
-  Greenery
(street trees and/or bushes)
-  Flora
(planting boxes with flowers)
-  Programming Infrastructure

-  Full Activation Program Area
-  Storage
-  Flex Seating Area
(moveable, can be put away during full programming activation)
-  Permanent (Fixed) Seating Area
-  Weatherization
(shade structure/protection from sun & rain)

Implementation: Build relationships with DOT, make a plan for becoming a management partner










Concept 3: Town Square

Barton Avenue becomes a DOT plaza and the adjacent LIRR plaza is redesigned simultaneously to create a cohesive public space



Added shade and greenery creates pleasant places to linger near 41st Ave



-  Pedestrian Flow
(bubble = keep open for movement; arrows = likely paths)
-  Greenery
(street trees and/or bushes)
-  Flora
(planting boxes with flowers)
-  Programming Infrastructure
-  Full Activation Program Area
-  Storage
-  Flex Seating Area
(moveable, can be put away during full programming activation)
-  Permanent (Fixed) Seating Area
-  Weatherization
(shade structure/protection from sun & rain)

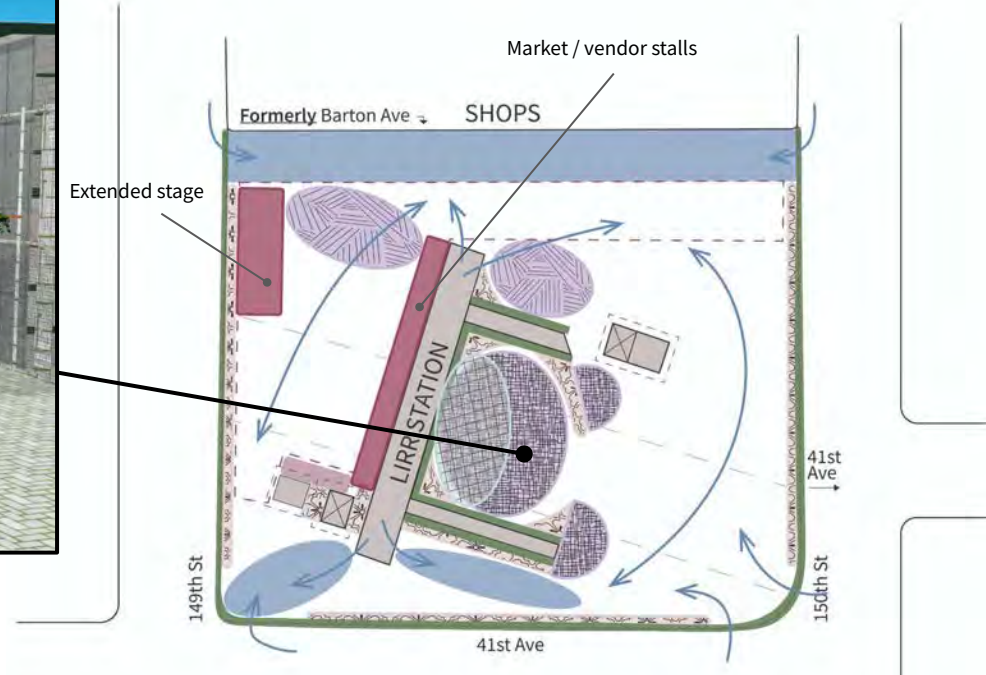
Implementation: Build public & political support, work towards an administrative agreement between DOT & MTA





Concept 4: Cap the Tracks

A deck is added over the LIRR tracks creating a unified public space between Barton and 141st Avenues



With the tracks capped, the possibilities are endless



-  Pedestrian Flow
(bubble = keep open for movement; arrows = likely paths)
-  Greenery
(street trees and/or bushes)
-  Flora
(planting boxes with flowers)
-  Programming Infrastructure

-  Full Activation Program Area
-  Storage
-  Flex Seating Area
(moveable, can be put away during full programming activation)
-  Permanent (Fixed) Seating Area
-  Weatherization
(shade structure/protection from sun & rain)

Implementation: Build broad public, political, and administrative support and secure large-scale funding

Temporary Activations

The L



The U



The Megablock



Street closures branching from Barton Avenue on a **weekend, seasonal, or event-specific** basis

Can be paired with any of the four design concepts, or even earlier

Parking Opportunities

There are a number of private parking lots in the area which are **not being used to their full capacity**. AAF or the Merchants Association may be able to secure agreements for weekend, seasonal, or special event use of these spaces.

High Potential Lot: Gleason Funeral Home

- Approximately 50 spots
- Just three blocks from Barton Ave

Dedicated Spots:

- Exploring with DOT whether dedicated spots could be created for patrons of the 먹자골목 / Food Alley
- Metered at the same rate as those on 41st Avenue to facilitate circulation



Next Steps

Bringing it All Together

At any scale that AAF and its partners are able to reach,
we believe Barton Avenue can and will blossom.

Streetshare

	Immediate	Small-Scale	Medium-Scale	Large-Scale
Governance	Resource Fair 1-2 Primary Partners	Community Roundtable Grow volunteer capacity Pursue small-scale grants	Formalize Friends of Barton Avenue Pursue collaborative grants	Refine FoBA Formalize Barton Stewards
Programming	Plug & play partners Closing Day event	Community Hub events One-off events	ID Innovation partner Opening Day event Annual programming	Design Day Festival Activate Innovation Partner
Design	Street trees Modular stage Adapt sheds Temp. art installations	Concept 1: Branching Out	Concept 2: Plaza Time	Concept 3: Town Square Concept 4 Cap the Tracks

Short-term steps

Many of the recommendations for governance and programming rely on increased capacity on AAF's part, or on a larger governing body to facilitate these activities. **In the short term, we suggest the following steps to build local partnerships and expand capacity:**

1. **Identify one to two additional partners to join AAF and MHMA** in managing the Open Street to build capacity in the short term
2. **Pursue grants** that are aligned with current programming and design priorities
3. **Prioritize Plug-and-Play Partners** as they can provide immediate activation of Barton Avenue with limited input required from AAF
4. **Focus on local networking** to build connections for future seasons
5. **Host one-off events** with new partners to experiment with programming
6. Identify and make an initial contact with **a priority Innovation Partner**

Thank you!

