

FABNYC 20/20

A VISION PLAN



Arts
Culture
Community
Lower East Side

SUMMER 2021

FABnyc is 20. We're deeply proud of what FAB has accomplished in the past two decades. We're choosing to celebrate our history not only by looking back and remembering... but by looking forward. What are our hopes for the next twenty years? Do we have a vision for our work in the Lower East Side that goes beyond a season or two?

Cultural equity is essential for a thriving LES. In our FABnyc 20/20 vision plan, we're sharing ideas that expand opportunities for cultural participation, nurture partnerships, and activate open spaces for creativity and community.

We hope this vision plan will spark imagination, dialogue, and deeper collaboration with partners and neighbors on the future of arts and culture in the LES.

—FABnyc
September 2021





ABOUT THE FAB 20/20 VISION PLAN

In 2020, FABnyc was invited to join the Neighborhoods Now program launched by the Urban Design Forum and Van Alen Institute.

Neighborhoods Now was created to connect neighborhoods hard-hit by the COVID-19 pandemic with design firms. Expanded in 2021, the program convened working groups to address how underutilized outdoor spaces could be sites for community programming and cultural revitalization.

FAB began working with DLR Group in May 2020. Marvel, Buro Happold, and SHoP Architects joined the vision plan team in February 2021. Pentagram provided graphic design.

The purpose was to share a vision of how neighborhood open spaces could support expanded cultural and community use - a vision rooted in values of equity and access.

The team has worked with FAB to conduct a series of visioning sessions, site visits throughout the neighborhood, and charrette sessions to establish existing conditions and design goals.

FAB 20/20 TEAM

Alice Shay, Buro Happold
Celia Sanchez Zelaya, Buro Happold
Christine Ghossoub, Buro Happold
Keira Thompson, Buro Happold

Christina Kruise, DLR Group
Karen Polanco, DLR Group
Vanessa Kassabian, DLR Group
Yogesh Saoji, DLR Group

Ishita Gaur, Marvel
Jonathan Molloy, Marvel
Michael Obot, Marvel

Cathy E. Jones, SHoP Architects
Annie Kwon, SHoP Architects
Amy Goldwasser, SHoP Architects

Luke Hayman, Pentagram
Laura McNeill, Pentagram
Avery George, Pentagram
Ben Law, Pentagram

Ryan Gilliam, FABnyc
Dakota Devereux Scott, FABnyc
Imani Vieira, FABnyc

FABNYC: MISSION

FABnyc is a team of artists and organizers working to preserve, sustain, and grow the cultural vibrancy of the Lower East Side neighborhood.

FABnyc works in partnership with the community – bringing artists and arts strategies to:

- Fight physical and cultural displacement
- Build collective power and collaboration
- Increase equity and access to cultural resources and public space
- Support local resiliency and community health

FABnyc's markers of cultural vibrancy

- All residents have multiple opportunities to access and participate in arts and culture
- The neighborhood is home to a diverse network of thriving cultural organizations
- The cultural legacies of the community are honored and shared
- Arts and culture are integrated into everyday life



FABNYC: HISTORY

Fourth Arts Block (FABnyc) was founded by grassroots arts and community organizations on East 4th Street to rally against their own displacement from the neighborhood. Through collective advocacy and with community support, groups successfully purchased six buildings and two vacant lots from the city, all deed-restricted to nonprofit cultural use. Today the East 4th Street Cultural District houses 14 arts groups, 10 cultural facilities, and 22 performance and rehearsal venues, and has more active cultural space per square foot than any other block in New York City.

FAB's focus area expanded six years ago to embrace the full Lower East Side, from 14th Street to Canal, from the Bowery to the East River. Through our programs we produce public art and performance, organize community festivals, offer support to 45 member cultural organizations, and commission creative projects that address affordable housing, resiliency, small business survival, and cultural equity.





TIMELINE ON EAST 4TH



Pre history

Small waterway leads towards marshland to the east, habitat of beaver, otter, and black bear

1600

1625

First Africans arrive, enslaved by Dutch; some labored on local farms

1664

British oust Dutch, establish New York

1700

1800

1832

Developers build Albion Place, a row of upscale Greek revival homes

1900

Pre colonization

Path at western end of East 4th (now Bowery) is the primary Lenape path running north/south in Mannahatta

1624

Dutch arrive, begin to build farms ("boueries") along Lenape trail



1900

The Lower East Side is the most densely populated place on earth



TIMELINE ON EAST 4TH (CONT.)



1959

Robert Moses leads NYC purchase of 4th Street properties to be razed in 'slum clearance' program

1974

Ellen Stewart secures month to month "as is" lease for La MaMa for vacant building at 66 East 4th; other cultural groups follow

2001

4th Street arts groups organize against their displacement, founding Fourth Arts Block (FABnyc)

2020

NYC reaches \$45 million investment in 4th Street cultural buildings

2005

NYC transfers 8 properties to FAB groups for \$1 each, deed restricted in perpetuity

2000

1910

Union organizing centered at Labor Lyceum, 64 East 4th

1959

Residents form Cooper Square Committee to stop demolition of East 4th Street

1994

Cooper Square forms first community land trust for low income residents in NYC



2016

FAB grows, expanding activities to serve the entire Lower East Side

2021

FAB turns 20



Cultural organizing is a way to make change.

I keep talking about the Lower East Side, its architecture, and its built environment as being critical to how people meet on the streets, plazas, and parks. That's most often where cultural organizing happens - and it can be a very organic way of learning about issues in our community.

You're exiting the echo chamber of your digital life and having these organic interactions with folks.

—Andrea Gordillo



THE LOWER EAST SIDE

The Lower East Side (LES) is a place shaped by immigrants and working people with a vibrant culture marked by murals, community gardens, and civic activism.

FAB's focus area is the Lower East Side (LES) and corresponds closely to Community District 3 in Manhattan, from 14th Street to Canal, from the Bowery to the East River.

47

Arts & culture spaces

36

Community gardens

4

Large parks

11

Open streets

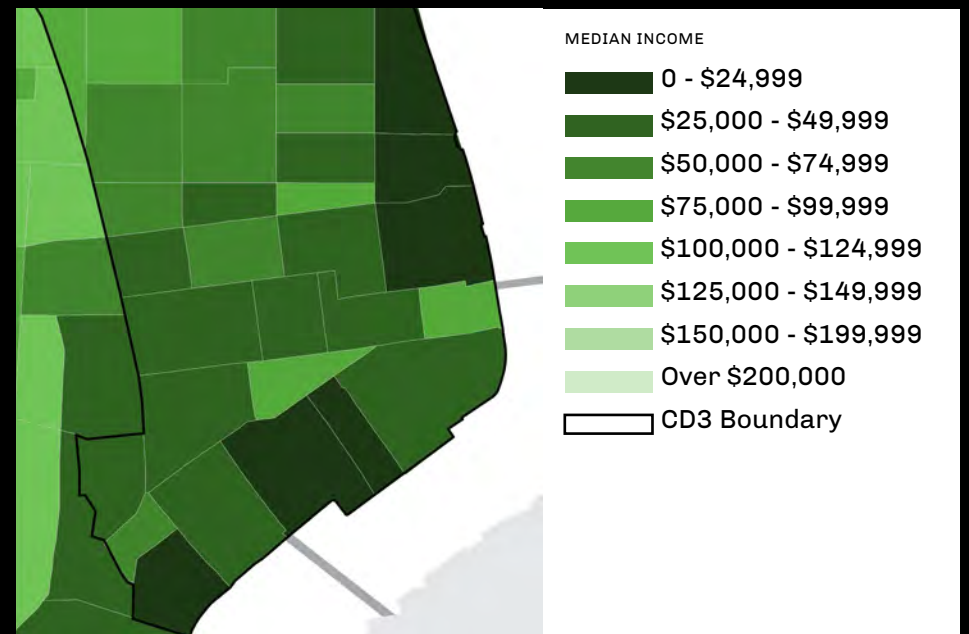
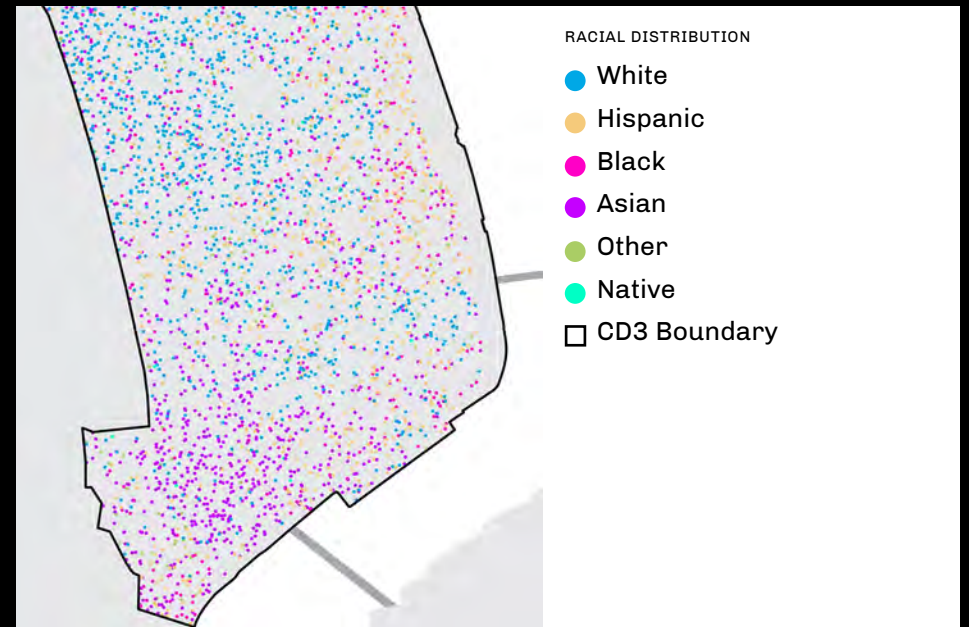


COMMUNITY DEMOGRAPHICS

The LES is one of the most densely populated districts in NYC with a population of 155,000 residents. It has experienced decades of gentrification but still contains dozens of strong cultural and community nonprofits and significant areas of affordable housing, including 14,000 units of public housing.

Two thirds of residents identify as people of color (POC); more than one third are foreign born. Languages spoken include Spanish, Mandarin, and Cantonese. An estimated 30% of residents were living in poverty prior to the Covid-19 pandemic.

The neighborhood has one of the largest income divides of any NYC community, and this continues to grow. Preventing the displacement of residents and small businesses is a district priority.



COMMUNITY DEMOGRAPHICS

14,000

units of Public
Housing

2/3

residents
identify as POC

36%

of residents are
foreign-born

36%

of residents are under
18, 32% are seniors

24%

of residents are living
below the poverty line
(vs 16% citywide)

\$41,302

community District 3
median income



COMMUNITY DEMOGRAPHICS

The Lower East Side has a rich history as a home to an extraordinary range of cultural traditions and a launching place for creative experimentation.

However, as the area has become more unaffordable, it has seen a dramatic loss of artists and cultural organizations that cannot stay due to rising rents and property prices. Adding to this trend, the arts and culture sector was particularly hard hit from the Covid-19 pandemic, with the performing arts sector alone losing 69% of total jobs from February 2020 – April 2020.

The neighborhood has long fought to remain a home for community-driven cultural production and creative activities, a space for inspiration and collaboration – including the activation of its public spaces as places for gathering.



COMMUNITY DEMOGRAPHICS

47

arts & culture
spaces (FAB, 2021)

2,400+

resident artists
(CUF, 2015)

100

(4%) DCLA listed
cultural organizations
(DCLA 2020)

1,634

cultural FTE jobs
(NYS, DOL, 2019)



CHALLENGES TO CULTURAL EQUITY

Key challenges to cultural vibrancy in the LES:

1. Displacement due to gentrification contributes to cultural losses for immigrant, migrant, and low income residents
2. Concentration of cultural institutions in wealthier, less racially diverse areas
3. Financial barriers to sustaining or opening community-oriented cultural spaces
4. Need for greater connection and engagement between residents and local cultural institutions
5. Disparity between size of LES creative output and funding investments
6. Cultural histories and markers do not reflect the full diversity of the LES

“

I think it's important to meet people where they're at. I also think it's important to take people out of their comfort zone... to draw people out of their homes to see, take ownership of, participate in all the other things and beauty our community has to offer.

I'd like to see more local engagement. I think that institutions should reach out — not only so that we can benefit from being the recipient of all that beautiful art and culture, but also to create opportunities for the local community to be able to tap into this world, begin to make connections, begin to feel a part of that community as well. I don't think that happens as much as it could.

—Damaris Reyes



VISION STATEMENT

Vision to advance cultural equity

1. Create new and strengthen existing opportunities for inclusive cultural participation
2. Expand community access to and use of open space
3. Nurture and sustain local engagement, collaboration and stewardship
4. Honor the multiple histories and cultures of the LES





DESIGN APPROACH

- Create **adaptable infrastructure** and design strategies site-specific to LES
- Ensure ADA **accessibility** and equal experience for all users
- Promote **safety** with clear sight lines, visibility, and lighting
- Provide interactive elements to **engage the community**
- **Be flexible and scalable** – provide opportunities for storage, electrical access, shading, seating
- Use existing systems to fold in **signage and wayfinding** (storefronts, light poles, sidewalks, etc)
- Utilize **sustainable materials**
- **Connect existing communities**, across age groups
- Provide access to **information, financial resources and educational programming**
- Support and **honor cultural legacies** and site histories

“

Last summer the Black Lives Matter movement was happening in the city and a whole rally came through here. I remember being upstairs working from home and I could hear drums, I could hear all this music, and I’m like ‘what is going on?’

I went downstairs and there are artists, activists, standing up, sharing words they wrote, this dancer got up and started to dance while the spoken word was going on. And you can just see community.

—Tareake Dorill Ramos



VISIONS FOR ACTIVATION

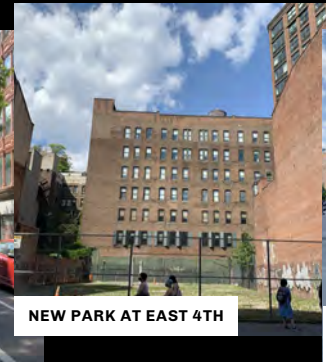
FAB and the design team are highlighting nine sites for potential creative activation.

Sites were selected based upon FAB's collaborative partnerships, existing relationship to the site, knowledge and understanding of the site's history, and alignment with the overall goal of advancing cultural equity.

These activation ideas are intended to generate community dialogue with partners, residents, and stakeholders about expanded cultural and community use of neighborhood open spaces.



**EAST 4TH STREET
CULTURAL DISTRICT**



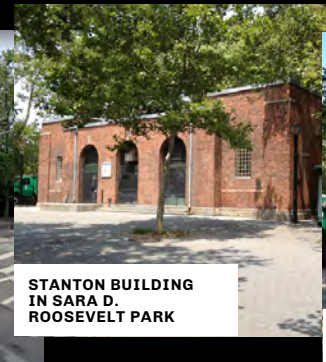
NEW PARK AT EAST 4TH



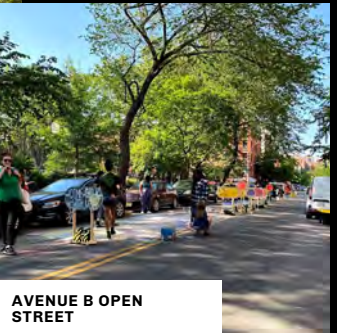
**COOPER SQUARE
PLAZA/KINTECOYING**



**CHRYSTIE STREET
AFRICAN BURIAL
GROUND + M'FINDA
KALUNGA GARDEN**



**STANTON BUILDING
IN SARA D.
ROOSEVELT PARK**



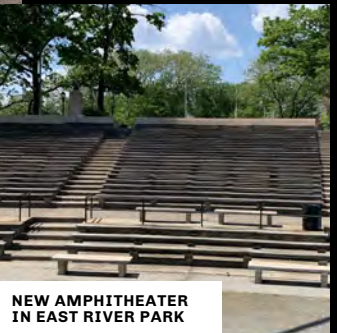
**AVENUE B OPEN
STREET**



PIER 36



OPEN SPACES NYCHA



**NEW AMPHITHEATER
IN EAST RIVER PARK**

EAST 4TH STREET CULTURAL DISTRICT



EAST 4TH STREET

The creation of the East 4th Street Cultural District in 2005 was led by a coalition of arts and community organizations on the block who organized as Fourth Arts Block (FABnyc). Housing 14 arts groups, 10 cultural facilities, and 22 performance and rehearsal venues, the block has been identified as having more active cultural space per square foot than any other block in NYC.

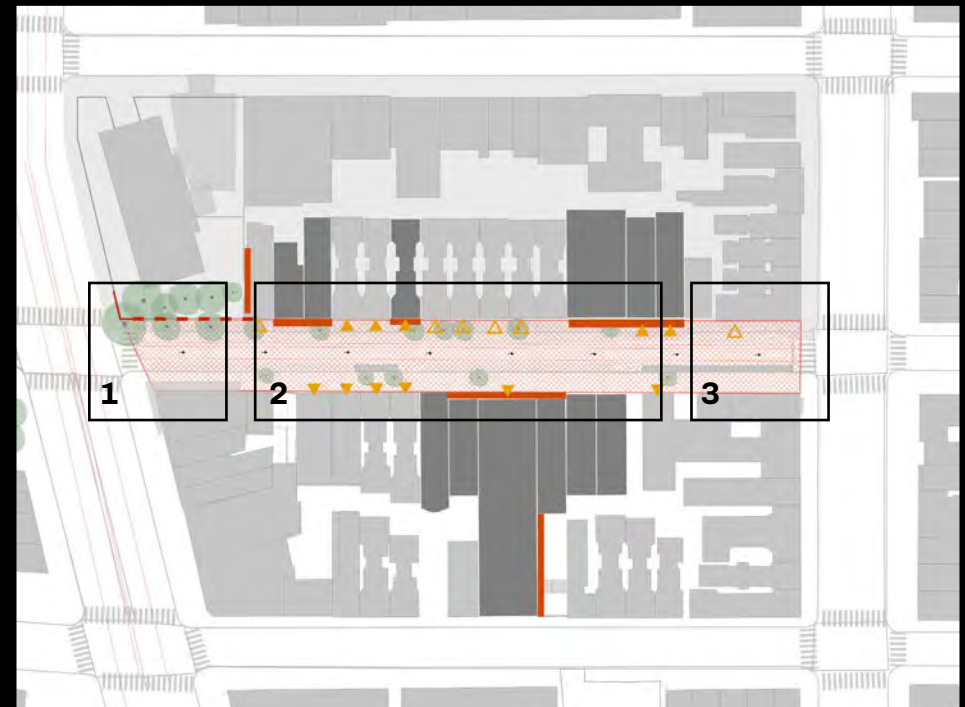
East 4th Street is also home to the first Community Land Trust in New York City which provides low-income residential units and below-market rents for small businesses, Community Board 3, and Cooper Square Committee whose tenant organizers initially brought 4th Street cultural groups together and actively partnered with them on every step of creating the East 4th Street Cultural District.

In 2021, East 4th Street became an 'Open Street' managed by FAB. Throughout the summer, the Street is closed every Thursday to traffic. Cafe tables and chairs are set up, children bring out their scooters, and the arts organizations on the block provide music and theater.



EAST 4TH STREET

For more than a century, East 4th Street between Bowery and Second Avenue has been a cultural hub for the performing and visual arts, an organizing space for labor and housing, and a home for immigrants, workers, artists, and low income communities.



LEGEND

Site	Projections/Art/Mural	Art Intervention/FAB or MHA Bldg
Cultural Institutions/FAB	Fences/Plaza/Gateway	Art Intervention/Private Bldg
Existing Trees/Lighting Design		



1. GATEWAY AT BOWERY AND EAST 4TH STREET



2. EAST 4TH STREET MID BLOCK SECTION

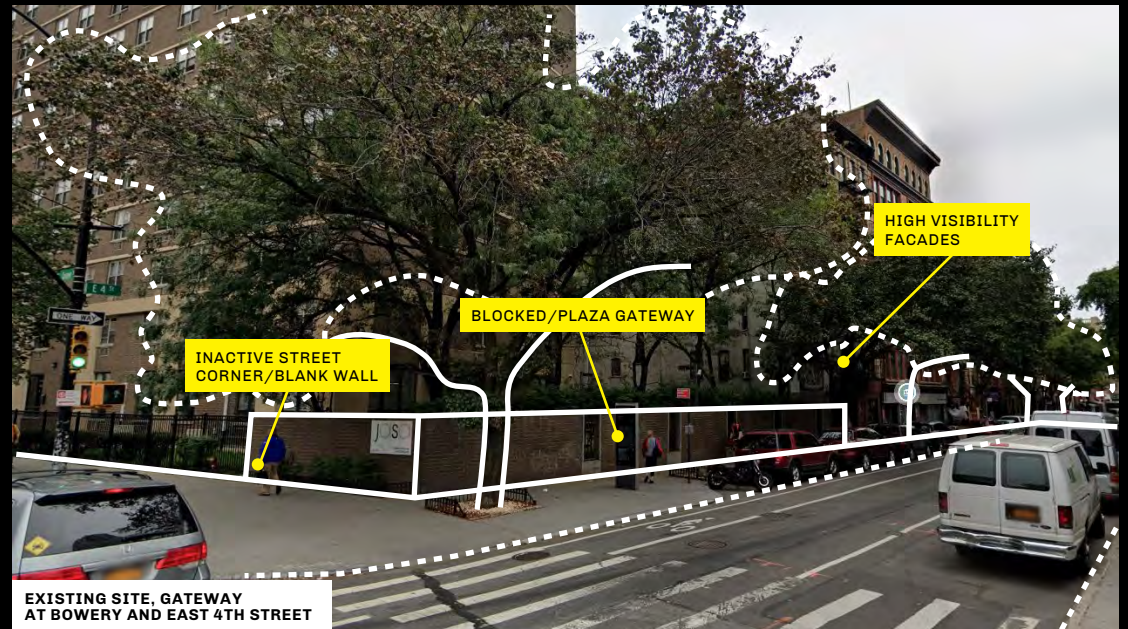


3. GATEWAY AT 2ND AVENUE AND EAST 4TH STREET

EAST 4TH STREET

Existing conditions

East 4th Street is subdivided into three sections for design activation and programming. These sections include (1) the Gateway at Bowery and East 4th Street; (2) the Mid-Block Section; (3) the Gateway at East 4th Street and 2nd Avenue.



EAST 4TH STREET

Vision for activation: mid-block

The strategies for mid-block focus on creating an identity for this unique cultural district, emphasizing the presence of the cultural organizations and inviting residents and the broader public to participate. East 4th Street's new Open Street designation and regular closure to traffic enables a range of programming activities.

SHORT-TERM Interactive maps and art installations along the sidewalks, lighting projections on facades, walls, trees.

MID-TERM Creating a themed trail to connect the block's cultural institutions to one another, map-based history and cultural journeys, more complex art and lighting installations engaging multiple cultural buildings.

LONG-TERM Creation of an arts canopy, artist kiosks, art focused electronic markers and signs, long term art installations.



Design Activation/ Toolkit ideas for East 4th Street



EAST 4TH STREET

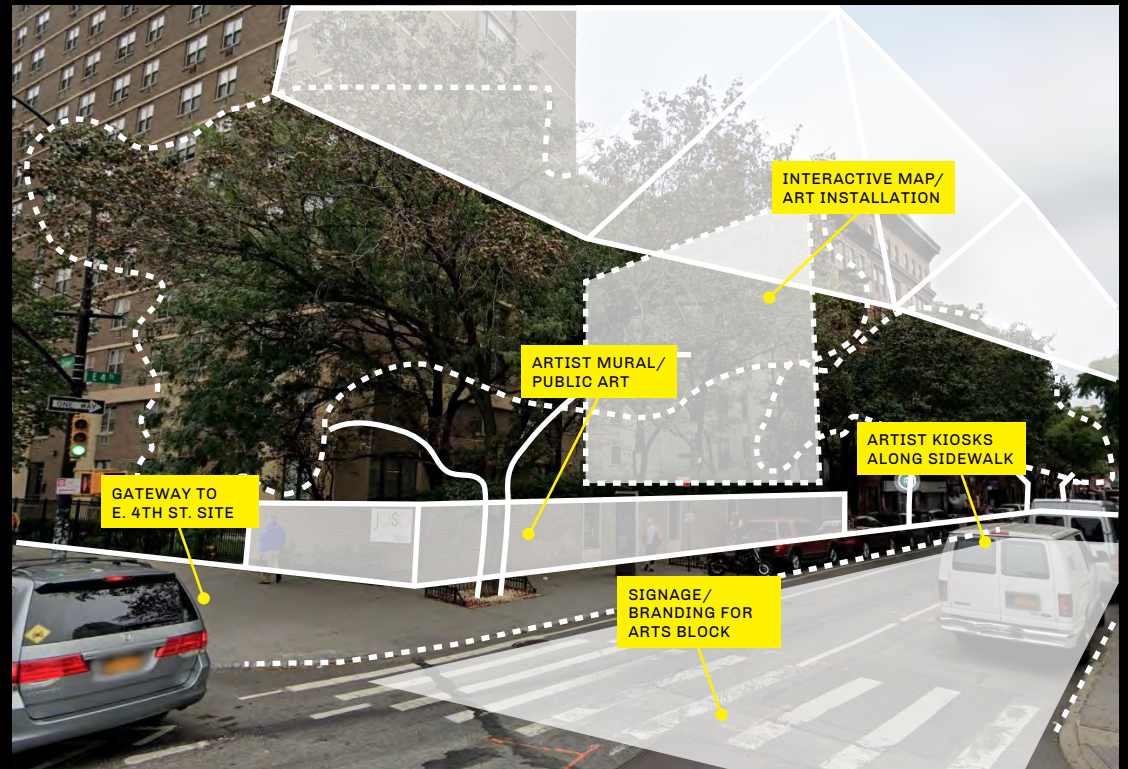
Vision for activation: gateways

East 4th Street includes two gateways at the east and west ends of the block: (1) Gateway at Bowery and East 4th Street; (2) Gateway at East 4th Street and 2nd Avenue. The design and programming strategies for the gateways include ideas that focus each gateway as a welcoming entry to East 4th Street and the cultural life it contains. All strategies must take advantage of the context and peculiarities of each gateway intersection and could include the following:

SHORT-TERM Public art installations on each gateway's blank and compound walls, and mid-block strategies such as lighting projections on walls, buildings, and trees.

MID-TERM Highlight each intersection as an East 4th Street Cultural District gateway, could include the use of signage, graphics, public art, and overhead sculptures.

LONG-TERM More complex and elaborate public art, lighting, and wayfinding interventions.



Design Activation/ Toolkit ideas for East 4th Street



“

I feel like when I was younger there was much more intermixing of micro communities - getting older, as the neighborhood gentrified, there was more separation...

Micro communities can be ethnic or socio economically different communities, but also theatre companies, galleries, small businesses, families... It is like a little ecosystem, but those ecosystems can be cut off from other ecosystems.

How do we create, through the arts, more opportunities for these ecosystems to coalesce and have crossover?

—Kendra Krueger



NEW PARK AT 35 EAST 4TH

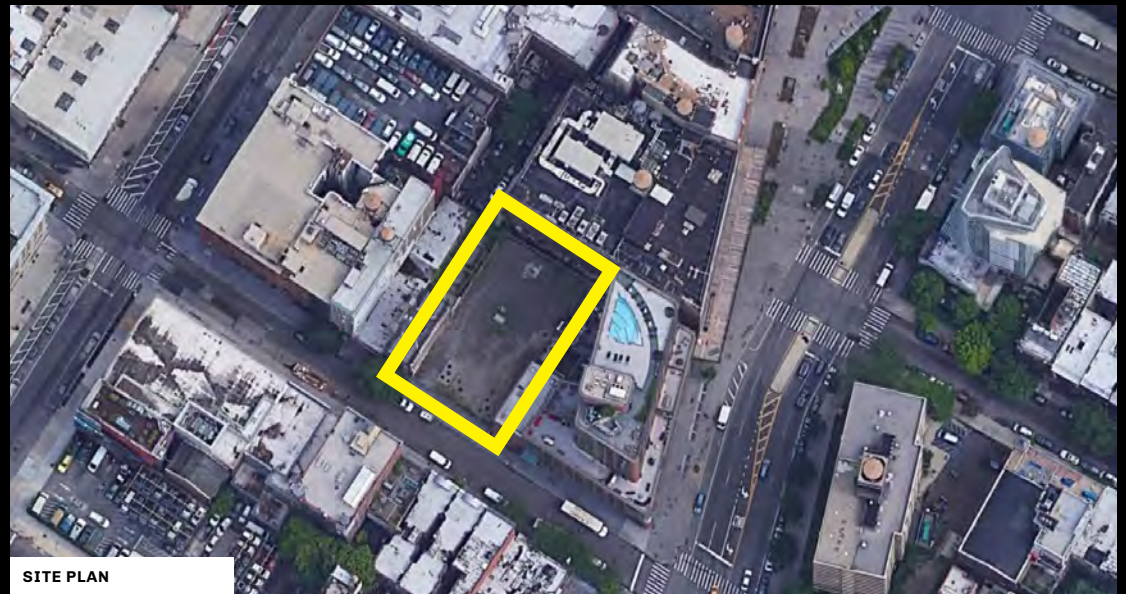


NEW PARK AT 35 EAST 4TH

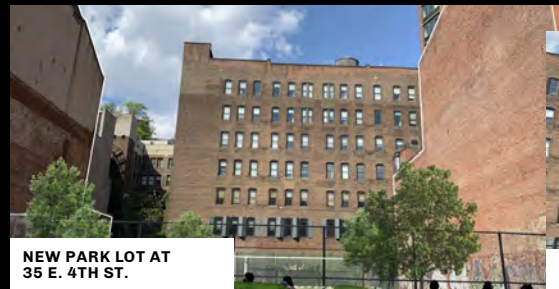
This city-owned lot is a primary access point to Water Tunnel #3 and has been under the jurisdiction of the New York City Department of Environmental Protection. The lot is now being transferred to the New York City Department of Parks and Recreation to become a new open space for the community.

Given the physical limitations due to the need for ongoing truck access to the water tunnel and the site's location a half block from the East 4th Street Cultural District, FABnyc believes the park can best serve the community through cultural programming and neighborhood gatherings.

FABnyc has been collaborating with Councilmember Carlina Rivera, the Merchant's House Museum, and 4th Street arts organizations to advocate for regular community and cultural programming at the new park.



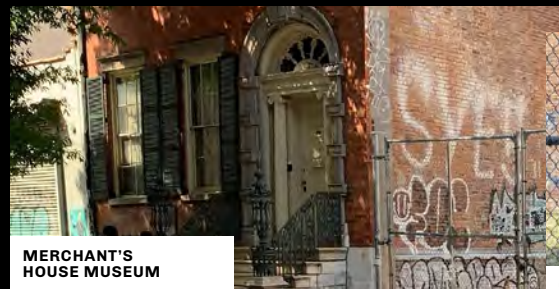
SITE PLAN



NEW PARK LOT AT
35 E. 4TH ST.



RESIDENTIAL
BUILDING
(37 EAST 4TH ST.)



MERCHANT'S
HOUSE MUSEUM



OUTSIDE PARK LOT,
FACING EAST

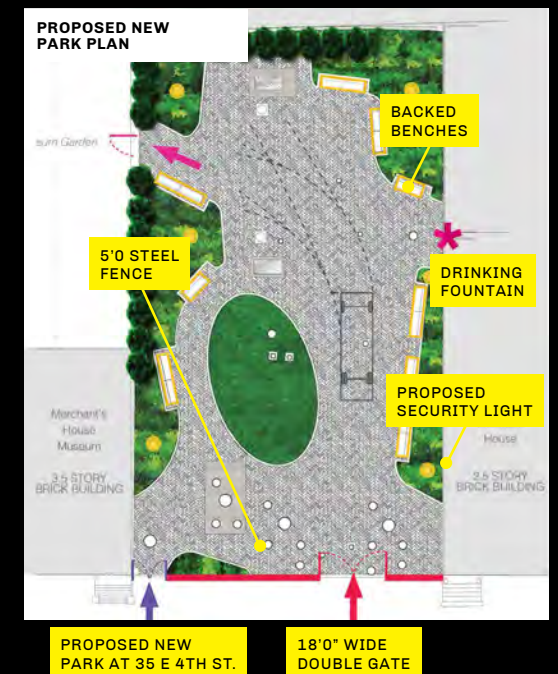


NEW PARK AT 35 EAST 4TH

Existing conditions

The lot's flat, open surface, spaciousness, and location separate from residential apartments make it a promising option for outdoor arts and cultural programming, both now and into the future. Additionally, it is adjacent to the Merchant's House Museum and there are plans to link the lot to the Museum's back garden.

Any designs for the lot, however, are constrained by the need to provide ongoing access for trucks to the water tunnel entrance, making playgrounds untenable and limiting plantings to the perimeter of the site.

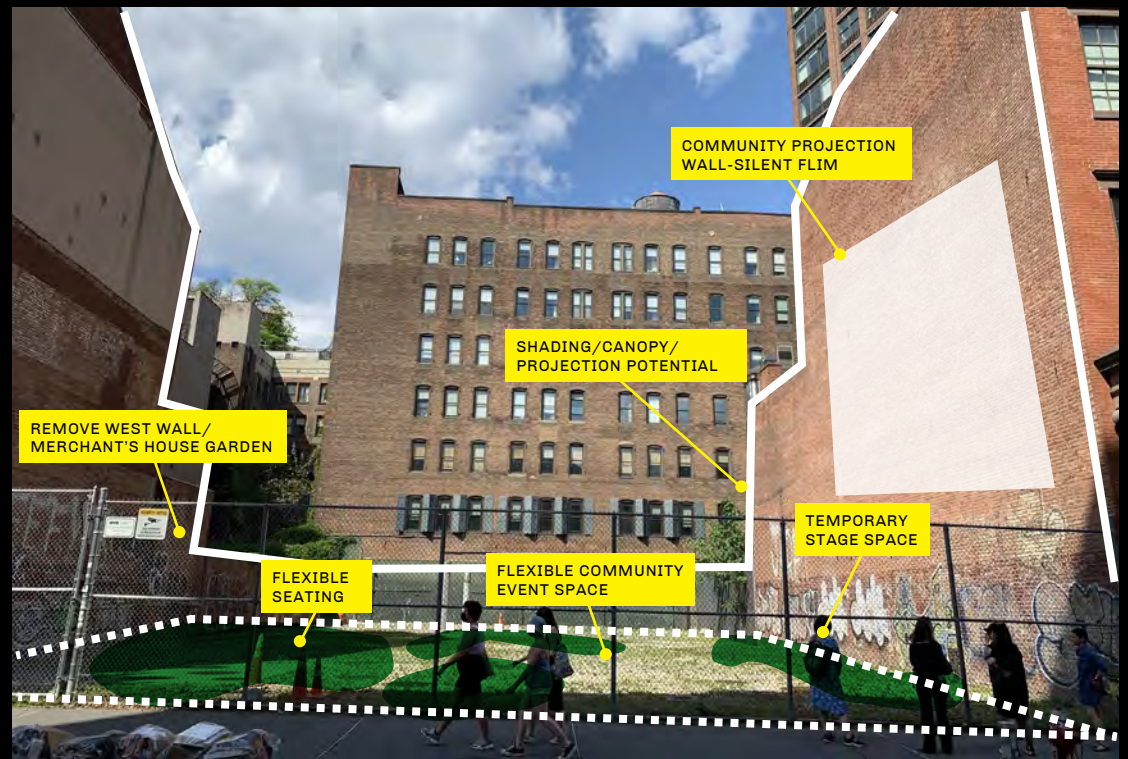


NEW PARK AT 35 EAST 4TH

Vision for activation

The design and programming activation strategies for the new open space at 35 East 4th Street focus on design alterations and recommendations to the NYC Parks' proposed concept design, which was previously shared with FAB. The alterations call for adjusting the lawn area for seating and performances, the inclusion of storage, and the placement of electrical outlets, as highlighted in the adjoining diagrams.

The proposed design activations work within the constraints and requirements of the NYC DEP and would help in activating the park, making it an anchor location for programming by LES cultural and neighborhood organizations. Eventually, these organizations could serve as stewards of the new park.



Design Activation/ Toolkit ideas for New Park at 35 East 4th



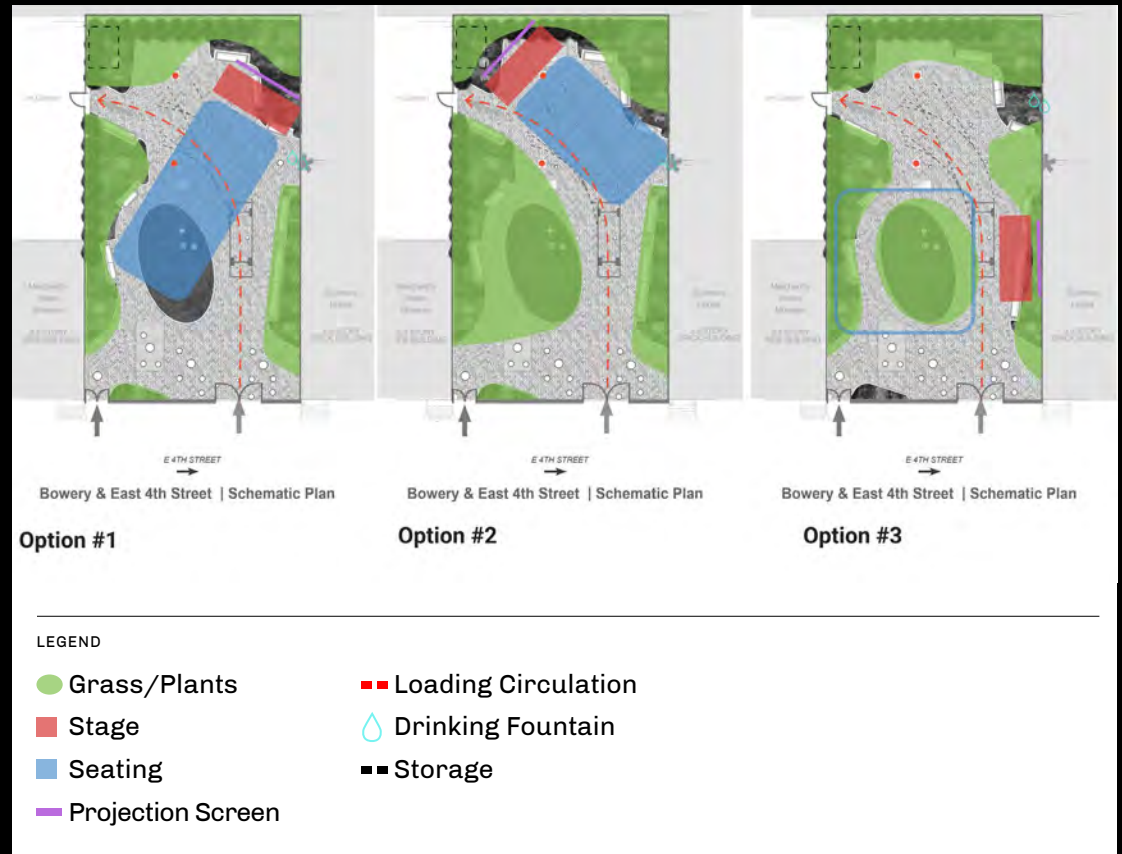
NEW PARK AT 35 EAST 4TH

Vision for activation

SHORT-TERM Temporary art installations on the fence, lighting installations, movie and/or event projections on the blank walls, yoga classes, storytelling, senior fitness programs, small concerts.

MID-TERM Multi-day programming and installations which still provide necessary access for vehicles including summer art camps, weekend performance festivals, an urban campground, bike swaps, art installations, a “junk” playground, local crafts market, gardening program with raised beds for edible or flower gardens.

LONG-TERM Resource intensive strategies such as creating an arts canopy, artist kiosks for hands on artmaking, art focused electronic markers and signs, a temporary Japanese garden, longer term art installations.



“

Public art should have some sort of civically engaged underpinning. It can't just be something aesthetically pleasing for folks — it really needs to be something that is active.

How do we find artists with that sensitivity, who can create a public art piece that's active and that invites people to get involved in their community?

—Alejandro Epifanio



COOPER SQUARE PLAZA/ KINTECOYING

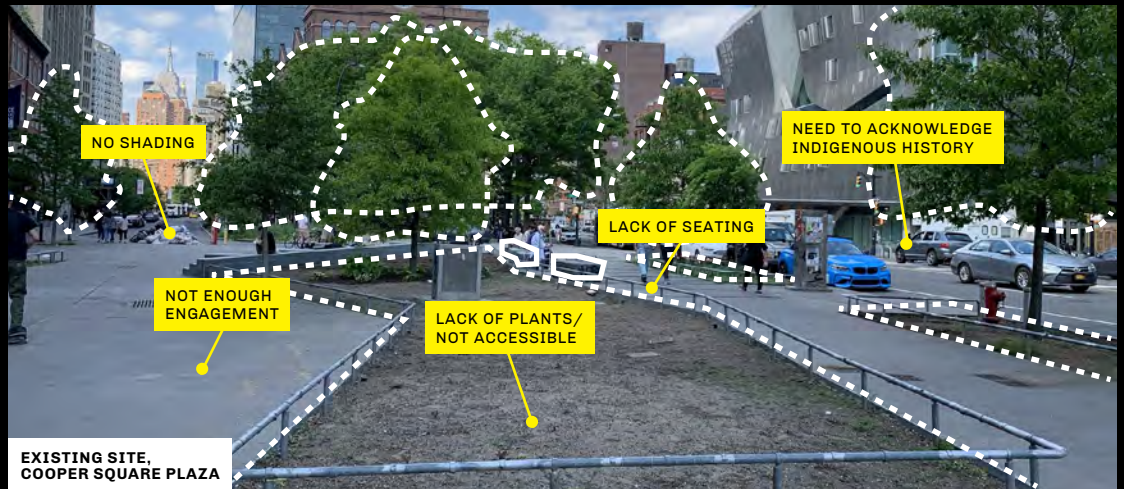


COOPER SQUARE PLAZA / KINTECOYING

Existing conditions

The Cooper Square Plaza is situated at what was once Kintecoying, a major crossroads and meeting ground for Lenape peoples, a site for trade, diplomacy, and games. FAB would like to work in partnership with Indigenous communities, local cultural groups, and community partners to develop programming which reflects, honors, and engages people while deepening an understanding of Indigenous culture at Kintecoying.

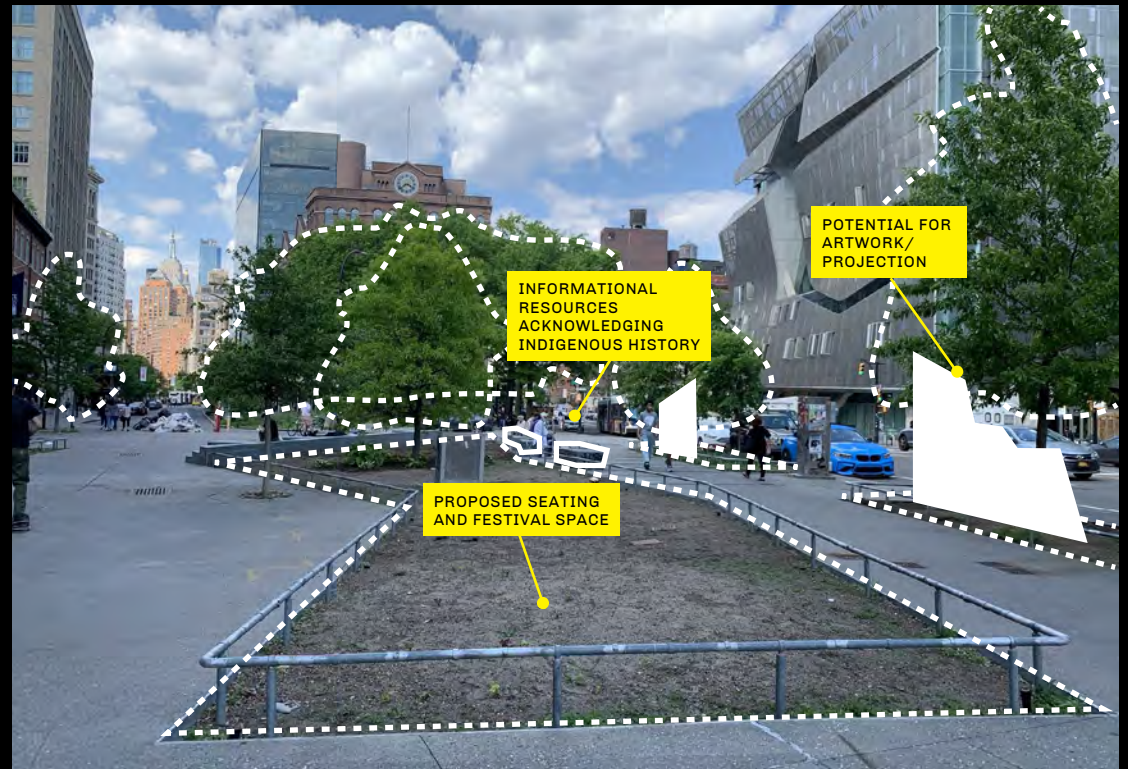
Activations could include an Indigenous market, performances, art installation that pays homage to the history of the site, or gardening projects which reference Indigenous ways of life.



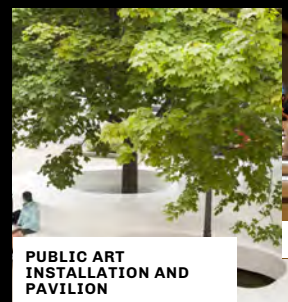
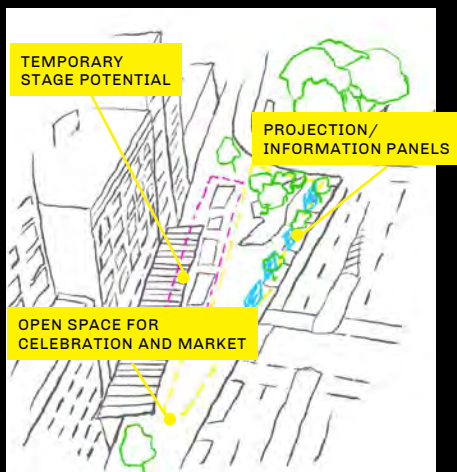
COOPER SQUARE PLAZA / KINTEGOYING

Vision for activation

Shaped by input from Indigenous and community partners, activations could include an Indigenous market, performances, art installation that pays homage to the history of the site, or gardening projects which reference Indigenous ways of life



Design Activation/ Toolkit ideas for Copper Square Plaza



The background of the image is a halftone-style photograph of a city street. The image is composed of a grid of small dots, creating a textured effect. The scene shows a street with white lane markings, a person riding a bicycle in the distance, and a line of trees along the sidewalk. The overall color palette is dominated by yellow and green tones, with the text in black.

CHRYSTIE STREET AFRICAN BURIAL GROUND + M'FINDA KALUNGA COMMUNITY GARDEN

“

There's an urgency around memorializing things, telling different stories, and hearing people's stories.

It feels precious, especially when there is an actual fight going on over what story gets told and what is true.

— *Debra Jeffreys-Glass*



CHRYSTIE STREET AFRICAN BURIAL GROUND

FAB is working in collaboration with the members of M'Finda Kalunga Community Garden to create a permanent memorial for the African Burial Ground on Chrystie Street.

From 1795 to 1834, forty years which saw the slow emancipation of Black New Yorkers and the end of slavery in the state, the Chrystie Street African Burial Ground was a central site of meaning and ritual. The adjacent area was also home to some of the first farms owned by formerly enslaved Africans, Black churches, African Free Schools, and mutual aid groups like the Africa Society. The LES has little public history of its Black communities, their presence for 200+ years, or the reasons behind their migration away from the LES.

The M'Finda Kalunga Community Garden ("Garden at the Edge of the Other Side of the World"), has established the longest running Juneteenth celebration in the LES. FAB commissioned the installation of "LES Black & Red" by Dennis Redmoon Darkeem honoring Black and Indigenous histories of the site for Juneteenth 2021.



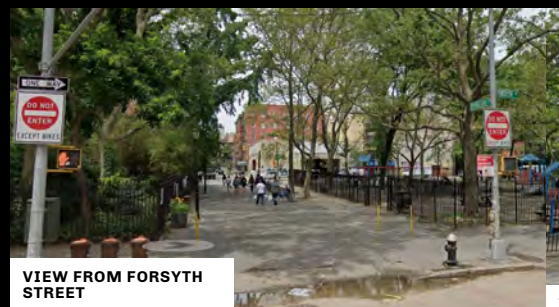
SITE PLAN



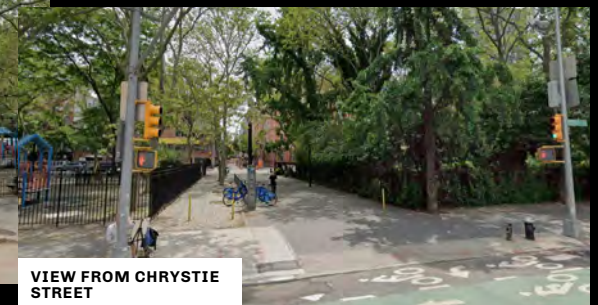
SIGN OUTSIDE
M'FINDA KALUNGA
GARDEN



"LES BLACK & RED"
JUNETEENTH ART
INSTALLATION



VIEW FROM FORSYTH
STREET



VIEW FROM CHRYSTIE
STREET



CHRYSTIE STREET AFRICAN BURIAL GROUND

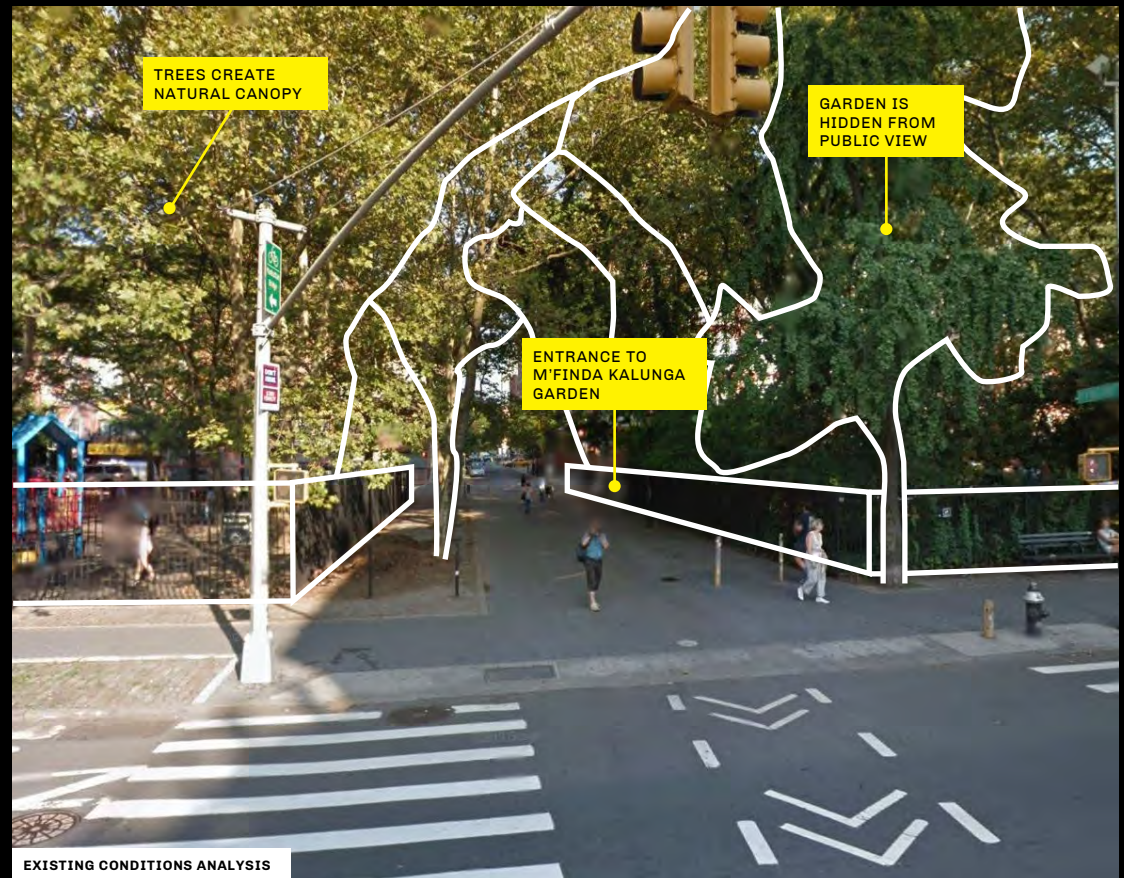
Existing conditions

The site most suited for publicly engaging this history is along the northern boundary of the M'Finda Kalunga Garden where Rivington Street passes through the park as a pedestrian thoroughfare. The plaque at the entry to the garden is currently the only trace of the site's history.

SHORT-TERM Expand on the garden's Juneteenth celebration through additional public events, new signage, and art installations that celebrate and amplify the site's history.

MID-TERM Create the beginnings of a permanent memorial occupying the space between the thoroughfare and the garden.

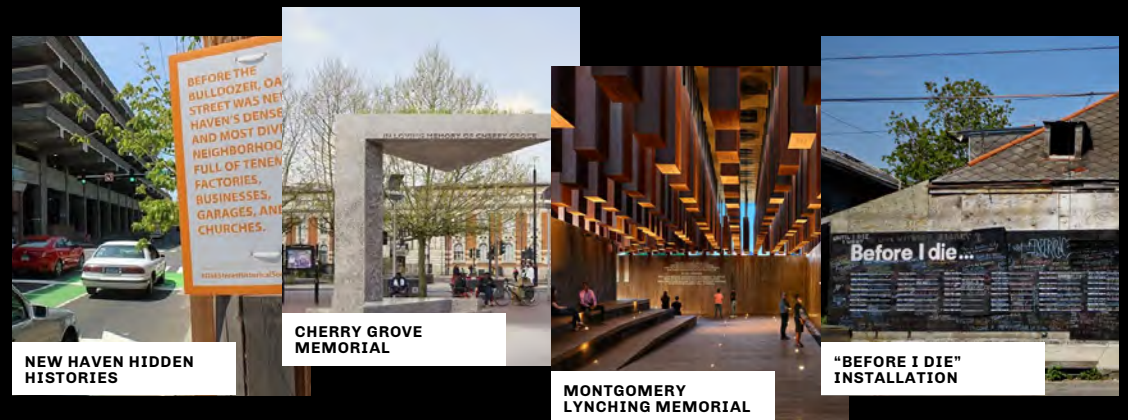
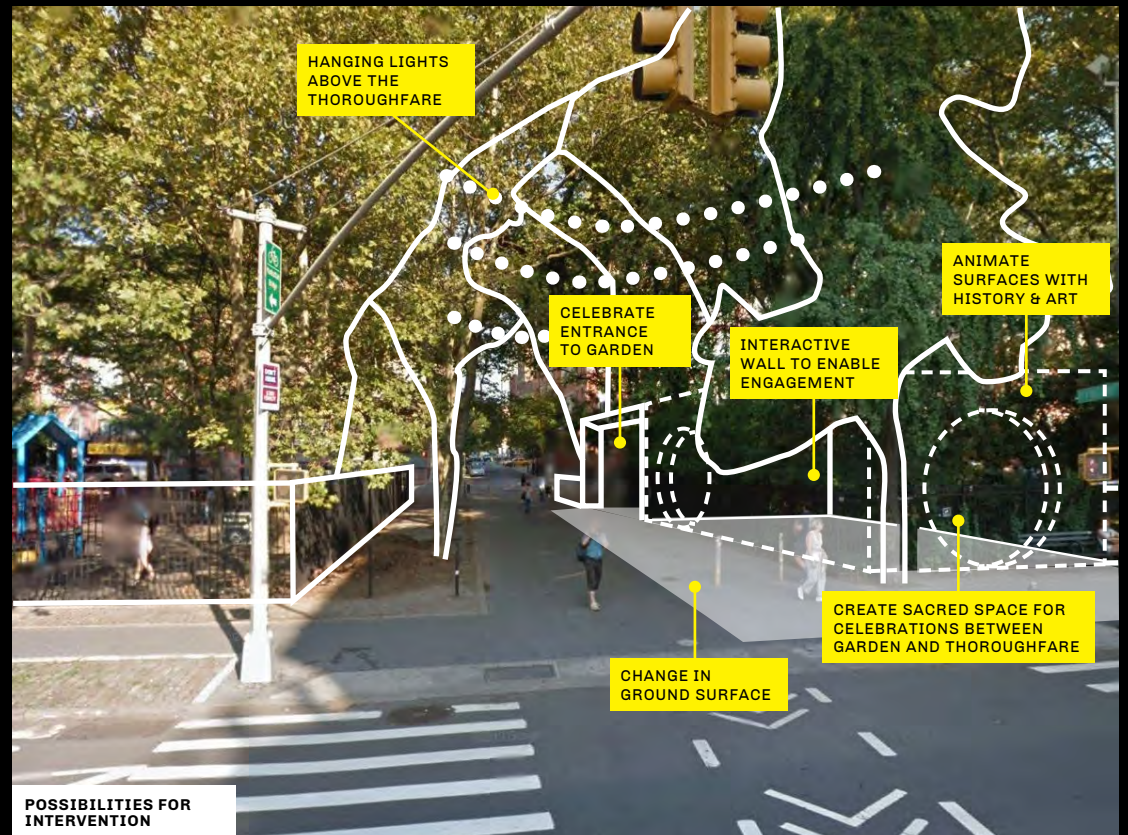
LONG-TERM fully realize a permanent "living" memorial creating a space for commemoration, libation, ceremony, and gathering.



CHRYSTIE STREET AFRICAN BURIAL GROUND

Vision for activation

Our design team was inspired by the concept of a “living memorial” that does not isolate the past but brings the site’s history actively into the present, making it a hub for connecting and building community.



“

This Juneteenth was, I think, so different..to have partners to work with us, as invested in this coming together as the gardeners were.

I don't know how you quantify that... to have a partner who says, what you've done matters, and we are here to back you up.

—K. Webster



STANTON BUILDING IN SARA D. ROOSEVELT PARK

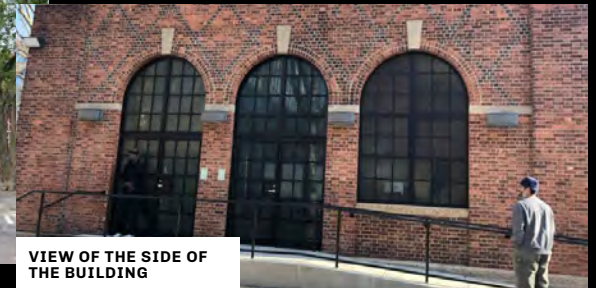


STANTON BUILDING IN SDR PARK

FAB has been a member of the Stanton Building Task Force since 2018 to advocate with residents for the return of the building to community use. Despite four decades of community advocacy and multiple commitments from NYC Parks Department to reopen the building for programming it continues to serve as a supply terminal.

The Task Force has held community input sessions, worked with student designers from Pratt to develop design concepts for a re-opened Stanton Building, and, in partnership with FAB, created cultural programs to engage neighbors in experiences of what could take place at the site.

Here we offer additional ideas of how transformations of the building and the surrounding site could support park uses, environmental learning, and cultural engagement that centers issues of resiliency and sustainability.



STANTON BUILDING IN SDR PARK

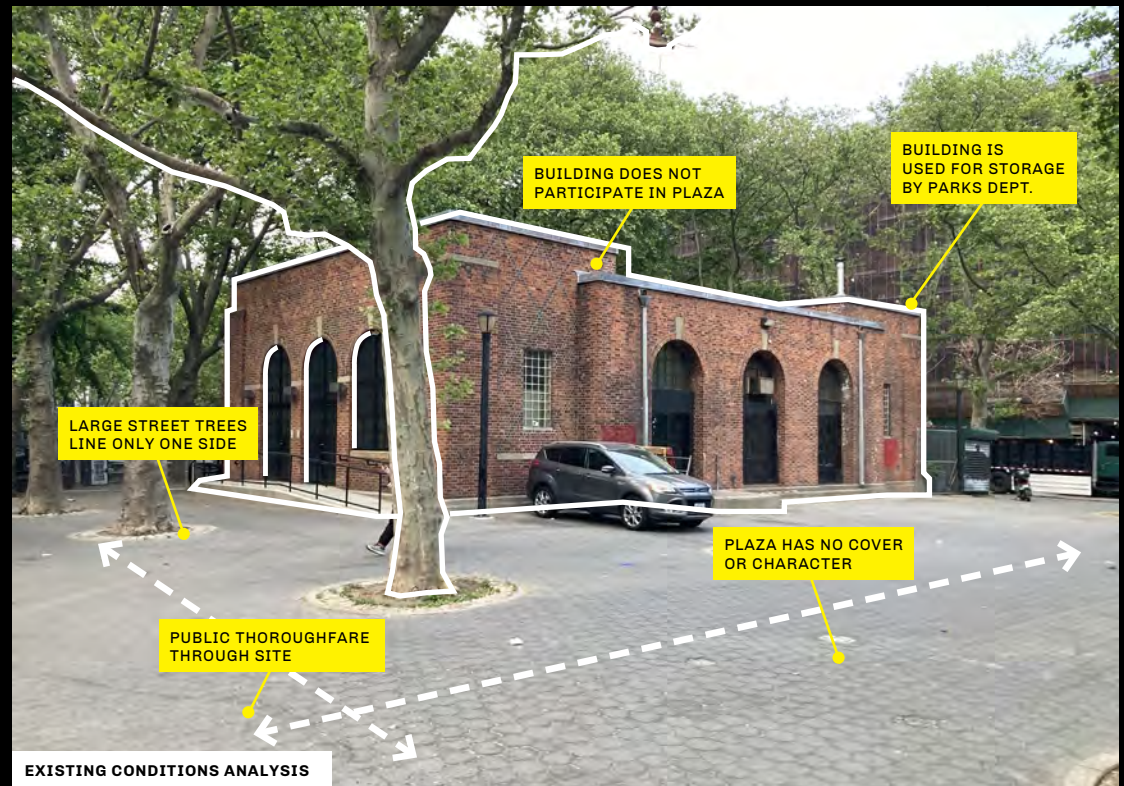
Existing conditions & vision for activation

The Task Force has already explored many possibilities for bringing the Stanton House back into active community use. Their design ideas have focused primarily on the building's interior. We sought to complement that work with activation ideas for the area immediately surrounding Stanton House.

SHORT-TERM Building on the history of community events hosted in the plaza in front of building, using the space for community gathering, learning, arts, and music.

MID-TERM Use the building exterior to provide permanent physical infrastructure for outdoor events and activities in the plaza space.

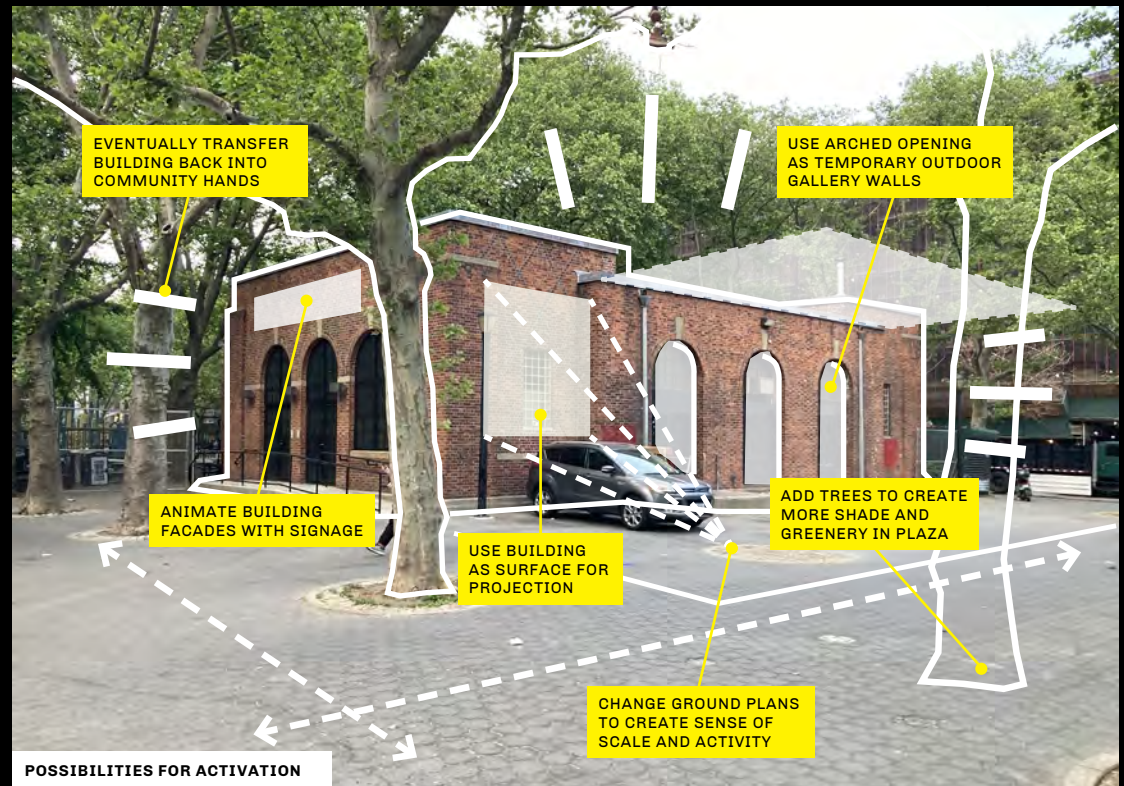
LONG-TERM Accomplish the transformation of the building from a storage site into a community center, with the interior spaces restored as a public resource for the neighborhood.



STANTON BUILDING IN SDR PARK

Vision for activations

Designs prioritize bringing public activity back to the site as soon as possible by engaging the outdoor spaces around the building. While the building may remain dormant until organizing efforts succeed, the spaces around it could become a site for cultural and community events.



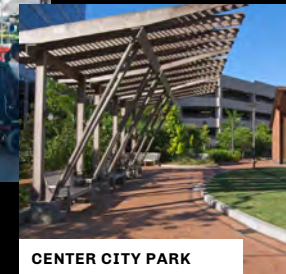
Design Activation/ Toolkit ideas for Stanton House



MARBLE ARCH PROJECTIONS



UNION SQUARE FARMER'S MARKET



CENTER CITY PARK



WASHINGTON SQUARE PARK FOUNTAIN

“

The old Chinatown that we knew before the pandemic, I feel like is dying out. Businesses are closing. In a way, my childhood is also dying. But then the new hope I have ... younger generations like me, they're opening up Chinatown again. And they're the ones that feel empowered to carry on this specific New York Chinatown culture. So I feel hopeful about that.

My parents are both immigrants from China, and I'm the first generation American. So I always had this conflict, like I wasn't American enough. Like, I've never been to Red Lobster, like the basic American typical life. But I'm also not really, like, Chinese. I can't connect to that part, either. So I'm constantly in between.. at a certain point, I'm just making my own culture.

—Coco Lin



AVENUE B OPEN STREET



AVENUE B OPEN STREET

FAB is a programming partner to the LoIsaida Open Street Community Coalition (LOSCCC) which manages the Avenue B Open Street. From 7th to 14th Street, Avenue B has been a 'shared street' in the NYC Open Streets program since 2020. FAB joined LOSCCC in 2021 to provide arts programming on Saturday afternoons, at which time one block of Avenue B, between 8th and 9th Streets, adjacent to Tompkins Square Park is fully closed to traffic.

LOSCCC has been collaborating with designers to imagine different possibilities for a future full closure of Avenue B. FAB is joining that visioning process with ideas about potential connections between Avenue B and Tompkins Square Park and other ways to support community and cultural programming on the street.



AVENUE B OPEN STREET

Existing conditions

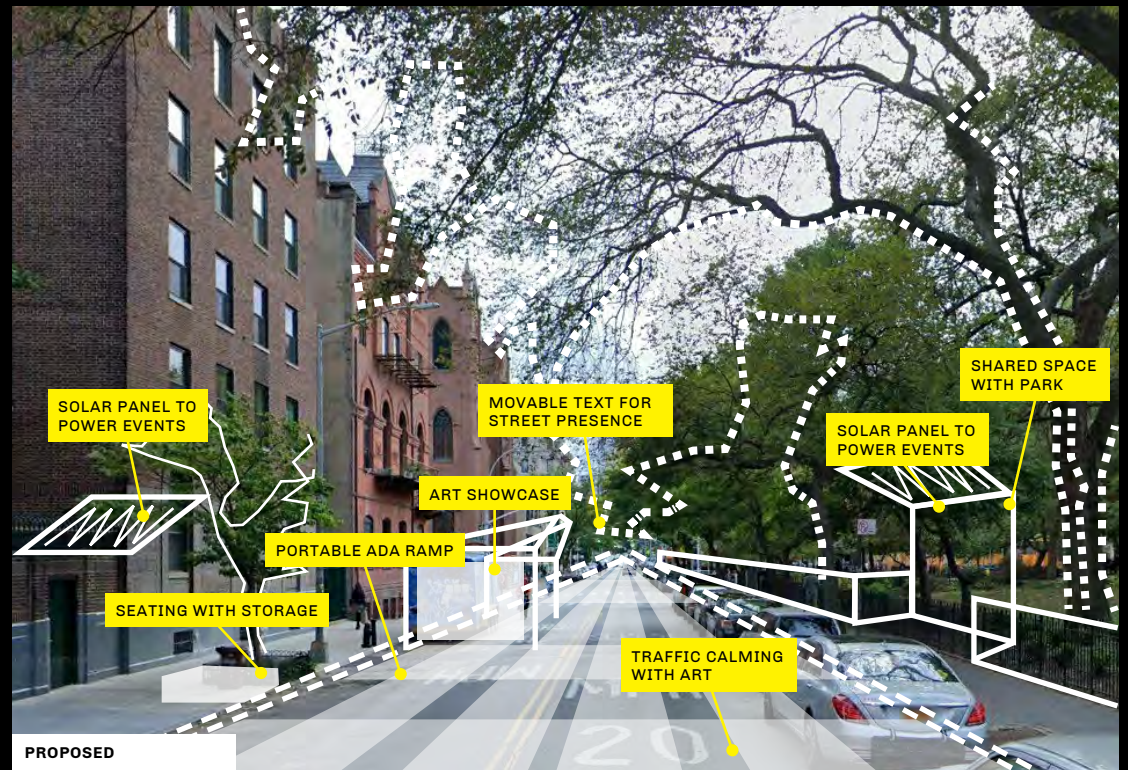
Programming the Open Street on Avenue B poses numerous challenges. Parked cars are often left in place despite 'no parking' rules during hours when the street is fully closed. Finding accessible storage for DOT tables and chairs, as well as equipment and supplies for programs is a significant concern. Although the programming site is adjacent to Tompkins Square Park, there's no physical engagement between the two spaces.



AVENUE B OPEN STREET

Vision for activation

Ideas for supporting expanded community use of the Open Street include traffic calming, better accessibility, storage, solar energy, and a new relationship with Tompkins Square Park.



Design Activation/ Toolkit ideas for Avenue B Open Street



“

One of the things that I love about having art in the Open Street is that you can just stumble upon it, you can just stumble upon an amazing jazz trio — and pause. Take a beat from wherever you were rushing off to and experience that moment, that gift that musicians have, that our dancers have to just grab your attention and take you out of your own world.

It's way beyond entertainment, it's a break, it's a shift.

—*Laura Sewell*



PIER 36



PIER 36

FAB is joining with Friends of Pier 35 and Henry Street Settlement to develop pathways for transforming Pier 36 into a space of safety and community engagement through a strong focus on arts and culture. The site, which connects to Pier 35, and runs almost four blocks along the waterfront, at the rear of Basketball City and NYC Department of Sanitation, is managed by NYC Economic Development Corporation.



ANALYSIS



PIER 35 ENTRANCE



PIER 36 WALKWAY
ALONG SOUTHERN EDGE



SITE MATERIALITY



VIEW OF PIER 35
FROM FDR DRIVE



PIER 36

Existing conditions

The site, which connects to Pier 35, and runs almost four blocks along the waterfront, at the rear of Basketball City and NYC Department of Sanitation, is managed by NYC Economic Development Corporation. Pier 36 is hidden from street view, with limited lighting, and feels barren and unwelcoming.



PIER 36

Vision for activation

Using Pier 35 as the point of entry, Pier 36 could unfold into a linear open space or event site with spectacular panoramic views of the East River, framed by the Manhattan and Brooklyn Bridge beyond. Visions for activation include creative installations of art and lighting, seating and shade, plantings and improved access.



Design Activation/ Toolkit ideas for Pier 36



“

Pier 36 has unique challenges. It serves as an active dock for a lot of boat traffic that comes into NYC. But any area comes with challenges. We believe we can transform that particular pier, not just by putting a mural on the wall, but maybe something else, maybe thinking bigger than just a mural...

Arts and culture can change the way people feel, the way people think about a space and a neighborhood.

—Trevor Holland



OPEN SPACES WITHIN NYCHA



“

It's hard when you think about outdoor space and NYCHA. Several developments, we still have FEMA doing construction because of Hurricane Sandy. A lot of times we need to get permits and that's kind of a roadblock for people, too.

And it's true, a lot of the arts and cultural centers are outside of NYCHA, and people don't always want to go into NYCHA to do the work, they don't want to even go inside to do the outreach for the work, and that's a real thing.

—*Shaheeda Abdush-Shaheed*



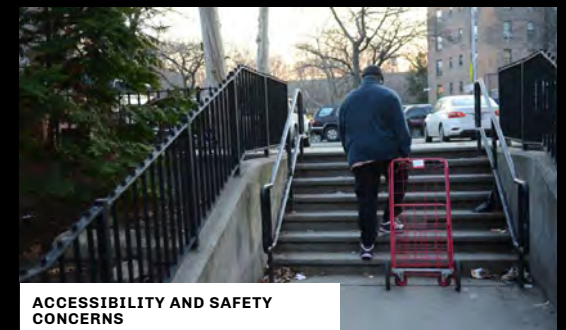
OPEN SPACES WITHIN NYCHA

Existing conditions

It is critical that any dialogue about NYCHA spaces start with a clear commitment that NYCHA residents themselves should lead the visioning, planning, and programming of open spaces within NYCHA.

FAB envisions itself as a support partner to NYCHA residents, working to facilitate their vision and bring resources to their programs. We have been learning from the Design Trust project with NYCHA residents to create a new public gathering site and cultural space at Lillian Wald, from Art Bridge's collaboration with residents to create art on construction walls, from our work with University Settlement providing arts programs for seniors in Meltzer Park and the 189 Allen Street Center, and through collaborating with the LES II Tenant Association to support expanded arts and culture activities at their Family Day event.

We offer ideas in this section as a means to seed dialogue with NYCHA residents about their own vision for these spaces and how FAB might support them in making these visions real.



OPEN SPACES WITHIN NYCHA

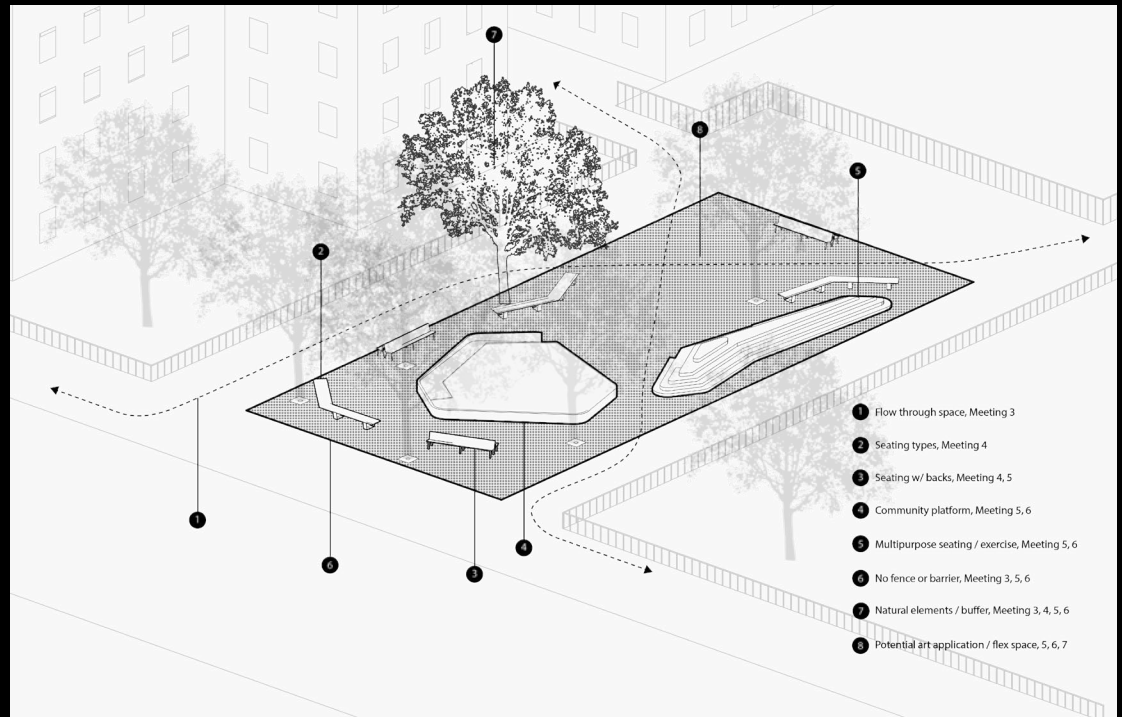
Design Trust Model

“Opening the Edge” is a project of Design Trust for Public Space, proposed by artist Jane Greengold, in partnership with NYCHA and the residents and community members of Lillian Wald Houses.

The design is located in a grassy area on Avenue D between E. 3rd and 4th Streets. The model is based on robust community engagement with residents, responding to their vision and concerns for the future use of the open space.

The proposed design emphasizes a new pedestrian flow through the green fenced-off area, a mix of seating, and a central platform for cultural activities, transforming an under-utilized space for community use.

The Design Trust collaborative process can serve as a model for activating open spaces in partnership with residents at other NYCHA developments.



OPEN SPACES WITHIN NYCHA

Vision for activation: Tower in the Park

Tower in the Park is the most common typology of NYCHA open spaces around the Lower East Side. The design of these spaces should consider proximity to residential apartments on the ground floor, better integration of open space to street, and provide different spaces for a multitude of experiences. Layout can and should foster communal seating, private seating, and play. The recommendations should build on “Opening the Edge” and NYCHA residents should be included throughout the design process.



Design Activation/ Toolkit ideas for Open space within NYCHA

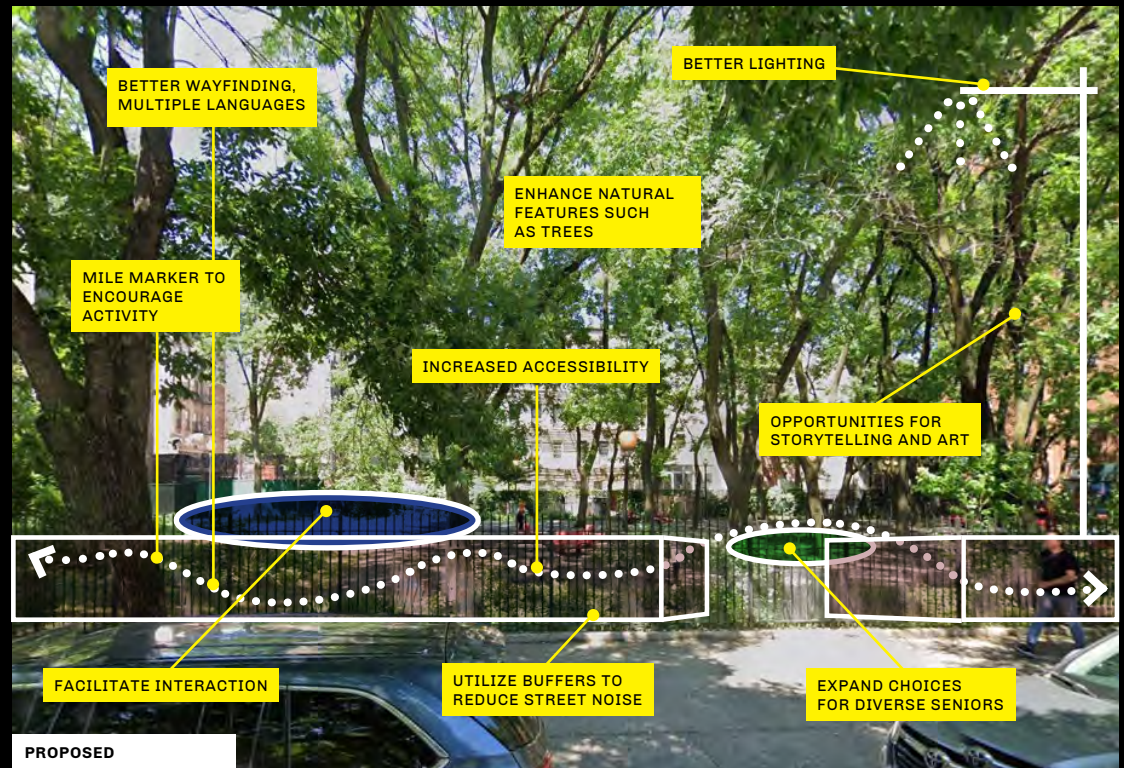


OPEN SPACES WITHIN NYCHA

Vision for activation: Design for Seniors

There are many Naturally Occurring Retirement Communities (NORCS) in the Lower East Side, all with a broad diversity of abilities and cultural backgrounds. Design can support safety and social engagement.

- Improve control with better wayfinding and orientation in multiple languages
- Focus on low-impact high-benefit interventions such as mile-markers to encourage physical activity
- Provide areas that facilitate interactions and foster social support
- Create a sense of security through better lighting, fewer isolated areas
- Enhance natural features such as trees to promote relaxation and make the spaces beautiful and tranquil
- Increase accessibility for all levels of mobility and for people from varied cultural backgrounds
- Provide opportunities for storytelling and art projects
- Utilize buffers through planting or seating to reduce street noise and provide respite
- Offer expanded choices as seniors are diverse with varied needs and preferences



Design Activation/ Toolkit ideas for Open space within NYCHA



“

After my first meeting at the Lower East Side Community Culture Council, I came back home excited. I'm like, oh, wow, I'm part of something in the LES. And I'm always talking to my neighbors about it and letting them know.

Like, we had the mini festival on Avenue B. I got some neighbors to show up. One of my neighbors he's like, oh, my kids had a great time with that. That's my reward right there. Because then he asked me, are they gonna have another one? I said they have something going on every weekend. He said he's been going.

That's my reward. You know, getting people to see other things right here, they don't have to travel elsewhere.

—Saarah Medrano



NEW AMPHITHEATER IN EAST RIVER PARK



“

You can't have community without arts and culture. It's both an organic byproduct of people coming together, which creates community, and it's also the glue that holds the community together. They're completely intertwined.

There's probably a direct correlation between the strength of your community and the robustness of your arts and culture. They play off each other. The stronger your community is the more you're going to have people supporting arts and culture, investing in it, being a part of it themselves. So they're one and the same.

We have a strong community and with that comes a strong arts and culture backbone.

—*Jamie Rogers*



NEW AMPHITHEATER

One of the most radical transformations of the Lower East Side is taking place at East River Park. The East Side Coastal Resiliency Plan, which was created in response to the widespread flooding caused by Hurricane Sandy in 2012, calls for the complete overhaul and rebuild of the Park in response to climate change. One element of the plan is the creation of a new amphitheater which is scheduled to open in 2025/6 at the site of the existing East River Park Amphitheater, built in 1941. As the largest outdoor venue in the LES, there is considerable potential for an enhanced amphitheater with the proper programming and accessibility to activate the arts along the River.

There is currently no plan or funding for programming at the amphitheater. Without a plan for on-site storage, restrooms, or other support facilities, organizers will need to provide and transport significant equipment and materials for most public events. The costs involved in using the amphitheater can be real challenges, especially to small community and cultural organizations. FAB is exploring how equitable local use can be facilitated and supported once the new amphitheater is opened.



EXISTING AMPHITHEATER

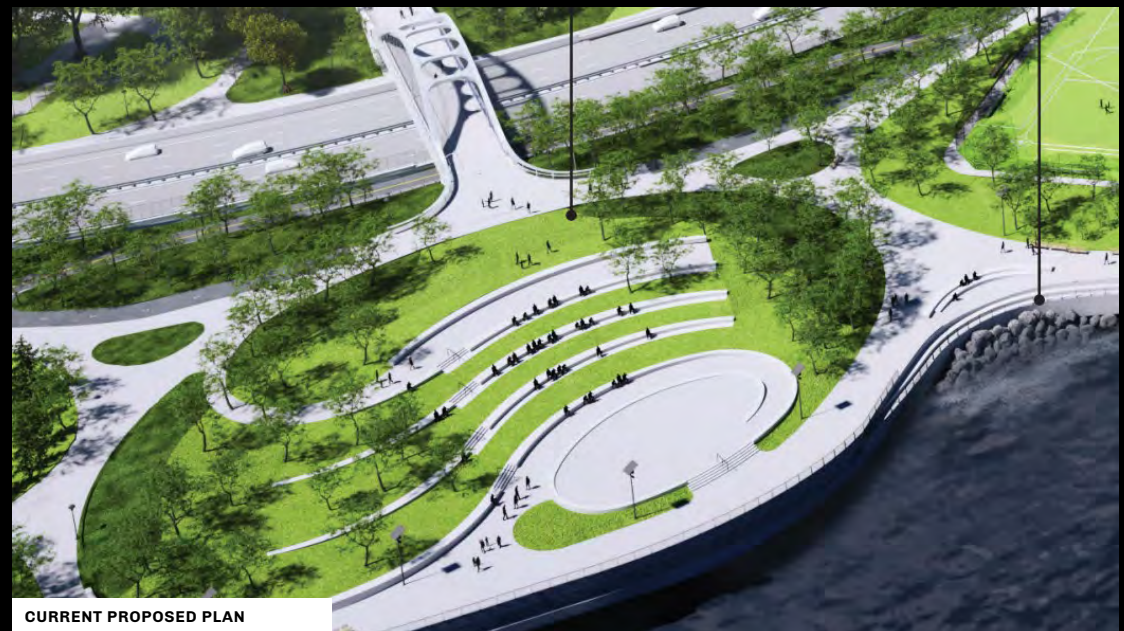


NEW AMPHITHEATER

Design analysis

The proposed design study focuses on integrating passive flood protection, providing a more gracious and accessible connection to the site by the Corlears Hook Bridge, and creating a sense of arrival. The proposal also looks at adjusting the amphitheater to be ADA compliant, creating a more flexible seating configuration, providing better acoustics, offers an analysis of the desire for including amenities and infrastructure, and the potential for variable scaled performances. To enhance performances and events for the community, it is recommended to further consider

- Need for temporary and/or permanent restrooms
- Height and design of stage structure ensures that rigging of lighting and audio meets performance standards and a control position is defined
- Lawn illumination for safety
- Storage for equipment such as speakers, additional seating, podia, electrical cords, et
- Concessions area; space for program staff



NEW AMPHITHEATER

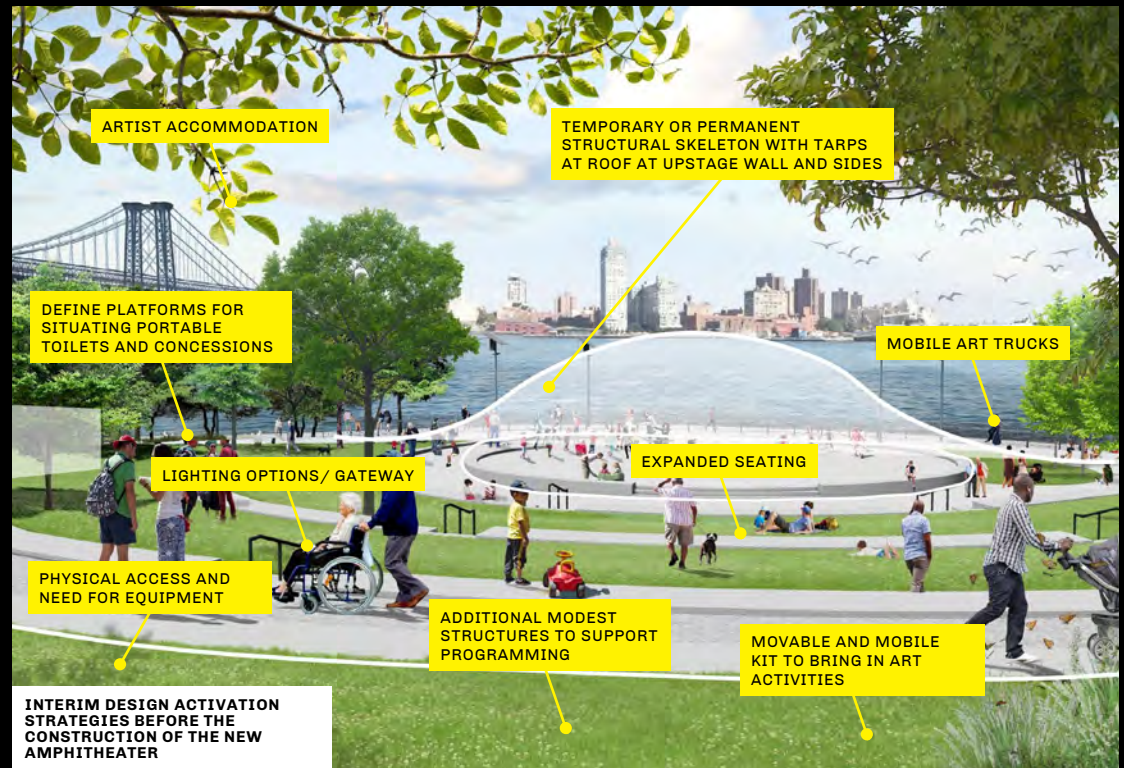
Vision for activation

Activation strategies for the amphitheater focus on addressing challenges related to accommodating a diverse range of activities (live performance, graduations, casual gathering, fitness classes, and so on) as well as transporting the equipment required to make those activities possible. All strategies should consider affordability of access for local, LES-based user groups.

SHORT-TERM Bicycle carts (like FAB's 'art cart') designed to transport program materials.

MID-TERM Mobile art trucks, sound or lighting installations, creation of an outdoor gallery space, temporary dressing rooms for artists, defined platforms for portable restrooms and concessions.

LONG-TERM Additional structures and amenities to support programming including restrooms, concessions kiosks, adjustable canopies to protect audience members from the elements.



Design Activation/ Toolkit ideas for New Amphitheater



“

I would just say, you know, for anyone who's going to read this, it's important for folks to use every opportunity to highlight and lift up arts and culture as a way to keep ourselves sustainable.

We're going through difficult times, not just in this state, but in this country and we need ways to be able to build with one another.

I always think of food, music, arts and culture when I think of the things that are keeping us joyful inside, feeling at our best.

—*John Blasco*



CLOSING

FABnyc was founded because artists and small companies on East 4th Street could not succeed without working together. We are deeply aware that community strength relies on collaboration. Our vision isn't meaningful unless it meets up with the visions and hopes of Lower East Side residents, artists, community and cultural organizations.

As we move forward in the years to come, we will hold ourselves accountable to our values and goals. We will regularly assess our work using the following guiding questions:

Are we expanding opportunities for cultural participation?

Are we engaging and supporting our community?

Are we centering equity?

We fully expect that ideas presented here will develop, change, and grow in dialogue with the LES community. We're extremely grateful to all the designers who have donated their time, skill, and imagination to creating this document.

We have great love and respect for the LES community. FAB's future is grounded in our heartfelt desire to strengthen the inclusive cultural life of the Lower East Side so that it sustains all the people who call this place home.



RESOURCES

[Fourth Arts Block \(FABnyc\) ↗](#)

[Neighborhoods Now ↗](#)

[Urban Design Forum ↗](#)

[Van Alen Institute ↗](#)

[Buro Happold ↗](#)

[DLR Group ↗](#)

[Marvel Design ↗](#)

[Pentagram ↗](#)

[SHoP Architects ↗](#)

[Community Board 3 Manhattan ↗](#)

[Design Trust for Public Space ↗](#)

[East Side Coastal Resiliency Project ↗](#)

[Friends of Pier 35 ↗](#)

[Loisaida Open Street Community Coalition ↗](#)

[M'Finda Kalunga Community Garden ↗](#)

[NYC Open Data. DCLA Cultural Organizations \[dataset\]. Nov.10, 2020. ↗](#)

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Fourth Arts Block (FABnyc)

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