

COMMERCIAL DISTRICT LIGHTING GRANT IMPACT REPORT 2024





PROGRAM OVERVIEW

The Department of Small Business Services launched the Commercial District Lighting Grant to fund nonprofit organizations to address commercial district needs for lighting improvements.

In the inaugural cohort, SBS awarded \$1.4 million to 16 community-based organizations to develop, design, and implement creative lighting installations. The program's goal is to empower community-based organizations to respond to local conditions and opportunities related to lighting, such as concerns of insufficient street lighting at night, poor perceptions of safety, an absence of placemaking activities, and other objectives related to business support and commercial revitalization.

Projects also incorporate elements related to district marketing, streetscape enhancements, design innovation, or other quality of life improvements that promote the unique identity of the neighborhood. Ultimately, these lighting installations help foster safe and vibrant commercial districts.

THE POWER OF LIGHT

The Commercial District Lighting Grant extended daytime economic activity, such as shopping, cultural activities, and dining, into spatial and temporal planning for the night.

Public feedback reported that these creative lighting installations contributed to an improved sense of safety and security in the neighborhoods served.

Placemaking interventions in the evening responded to the 24/7 rhythm of New York, bringing new access to residents and workers who commute outside of the traditional 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. schedule.

Projects launched after the holiday season helped secured additional press coverage and foot traffic during quieter winter months.

Grantees developed partnerships with lighting designers, fabricators, and city agencies, and piloted creative and unique designs that have never been deployed in NYC before.

BY THE NUMBERS



Community Events

231



Businesses Benefitted

2,620



Media + Press Engagements

130



Average Increase in Luminosity

188%



Additional Private Funding

\$421,000+

INSTALLATIONS

- 1 BEDFORD-STUYVESANT**
Bed-Stuy Gateway BID
Bridge Street Development Corporation
- 2 CYPRESS HILLS**
Cypress Hills LDC
- 3 DOWNTOWN BROOKLYN**
Downtown Brooklyn Partnership
- 4 DUMBO**
DUMBO BID
- 5 EAST HARLEM**
Uptown Grand Central
- 6 EAST VILLAGE**
Fourth Arts Block
- 7 FLATBUSH**
Flatbush Development Corporation
- 8 FLATIRON**
Flatiron NoMad Partnership
- 9 GARMENT DISTRICT**
Garment District Alliance
- 10 HARLEM**
125th Street BID
- 11 JAMAICA**
Downtown Jamaica Partnership
- 12 LONG ISLAND CITY**
Long Island City Partnership
- 13 MIDWOOD**
Kings Highway BID
- 14 MORRIS PARK**
Morris Park BID
- 15 WEST VILLAGE**
West Village BID



SPOTLIGHT

BEDFORD-STUYVESANT

BED-STUY GATEWAY BID

The annual Shop Small Popup Holiday Marketplace at Marcy Plaza was illuminated with a Winter Wonderland of shooting stars featuring dozens of local businesses from Fulton Street.

Programming included Community Thursdays, which featured offerings from nonprofit and community organizations, and Caroling in the Plaza on Fridays, featuring yule-tide sing-alongs with local houses of worship.



BEDFORD-STUYVESANT

BRIDGE STREET DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION

In partnership with the Tompkins Avenue Merchants Association, Bridge Street Development Corporation installed 2 custom neon signs highlighting the neighborhood's culture and commerce.

The businesses surrounding the project reported increased traffic and interest, and the installation has become a backdrop for many pictures taken by neighborhood residents.

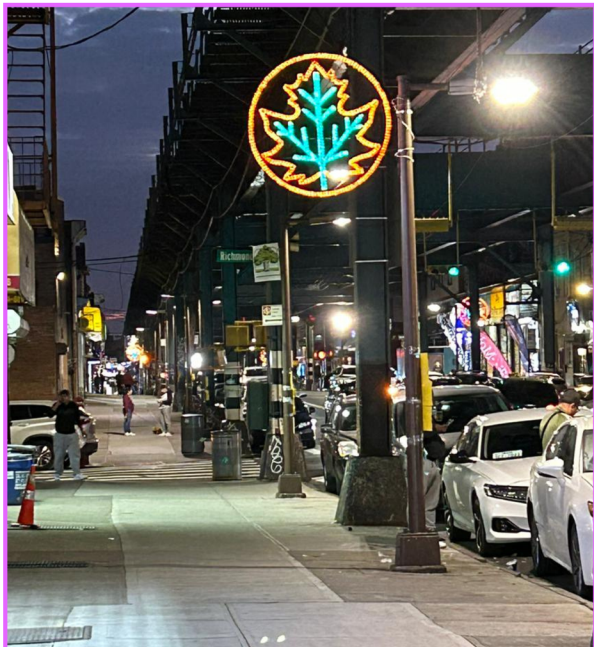
SPOTLIGHT

CYPRESS HILLS

CYPRESS HILLS LOCAL
DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION

Cypress leaf lights were installed underneath the elevated train along Fulton Street, brightening this dark commercial corridor at night. 325 businesses directly benefited from the lighting installations.

To foster community engagement, Cypress Hills LDC launched a social media campaign and photography contest that offered prizes from local businesses to participants who shared photos with the lights on social media. Based on the positive feedback, the leaf design is now used as part of ongoing branding for the commercial district.



DOWNTOWN BROOKLYN

DOWNTOWN BROOKLYN
PARTNERSHIP

Leveraging other planned programs to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the birth of Hip Hop, artist April Walker curated illuminated projections in Albee Square that highlighted iconic women in Hip Hop.

Despite facing design challenges with the initial project concept, the Downtown Brooklyn Partnership was able to pivot and gain access to electricity nearby and develop a new concept that illuminated a large wall above a vacant lot.

SPOTLIGHT

DUMBO

DUMBO BID

In response to disruptive street construction in the commercial core, the BID projected a rotating series of 7 unique kinetic artworks on the side of the Manhattan Bridge anchorage and other large walls in 5 different locations. This installation activated the neighborhood for a total of 6 months in the winter.

Simultaneous with this project, the BID led a marketing campaign that promoted new and struggling businesses while bringing attention to the lighting artwork. The outdoor projectors installed through this project can be used for long-term programming to feature new illuminated artworks designed by local artists.



EAST HARLEM

UPTOWN GRAND CENTRAL

Casting a warm glow over an adjacent vacant lot, the 4 custom metal-cast neon signs encouraged locals to feel welcome and cared for in the neighborhood.

Installed on a building that serves as a gateway to the newly formed East Harlem 125th Street BID, in future years the signs will move to new locations on the corridor so that they can “bless” different locations with their positive message as the BID works to build a stronger local community.

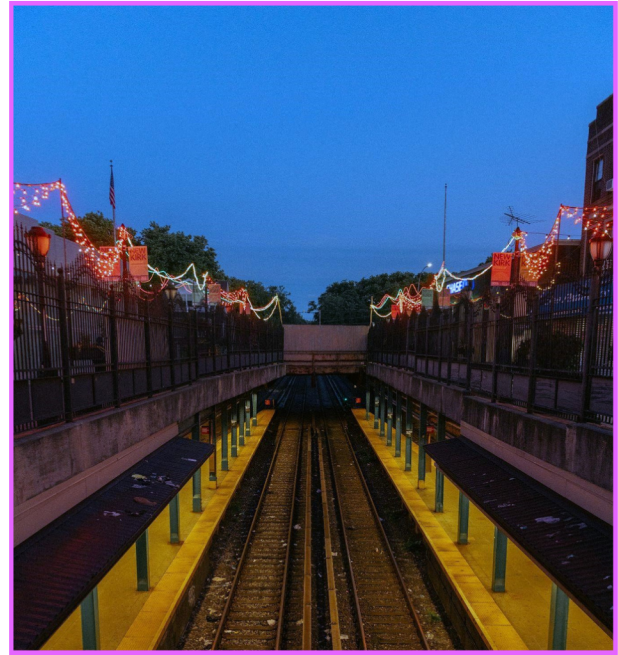
SPOTLIGHT

EAST VILLAGE

FOURTH ARTS BLOCK

10 illuminated sculptures called ‘The Guardians’ were fabricated from recycled materials and installed on building facades on less frequented commercial side streets. Each site highlighted neighborhood histories and linked to an online map featuring local small businesses, the East Village Independent Merchants Association, and local cultural organizations.

Project activations included a lively and packed nighttime neighborhood walking tour which was so engaging that passersby joined along the way.



FLATBUSH

FLATBUSH DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION

The Urban Braids project empowered local residents to weave colorful LED string lights together during a multi-day community braiding event. Their combined efforts produced multiple strands of lights that were installed along the perimeter of Newkirk Plaza

The unveiling event included live musical performances and food samples from nearby businesses. Locals noted their pride in being able to create something that brings safety and beauty to the neighborhood.



SPOTLIGHT

FLATIRON

FLATIRON NOMAD PARTNERSHIP

The Partnership's innovative design features planters that double as ballasts for support poles, enabling the installation of festive string lighting and colorful 'tulip' lights in the Flatiron Plazas.

The Partnership leveraged the SBS investment with 1:1 matching funds from private sources, doubling the impact of the illuminations in time for the busy holiday season.



GARMENT DISTRICT

GARMENT DISTRICT ALLIANCE

The Garment District Alliance partnered with a local artist and fabricator to design and hang 135 custom lanterns over three public plazas on Broadway between 36th and 39th streets.

Thanks to the extended duration of this unique lighting installation, the Garment District Alliance planned events and programming to advance the public's engagement with the artwork. These activations include partnerships with other cultural organizations for performances, artist talks, and community socials.

SPOTLIGHT

HARLEM

125TH STREET BID

Interactive singing trees along 125th Street debuted during the BID's annual holiday parade. The BID scheduled various musical events, including street performances and karaoke, as ways to encourage those walking on this major commercial corridor to engage with the installation.

The BID also developed a social media campaign called "Shine On, Harlem," which was a contest that encouraged people who engage with the trees to take photos, make videos, and drive attention to the attractions on 125th Street.



JAMAICA

DOWNTOWN JAMIACA PARTNERSHIP

The Downtown Jamaica Partnership installed three sets of illuminated interactive bikes that made sounds and projected images as people moved the pedals. The project fostered a fun sense of place by featuring images and audio clips based on local music history and helped contribute light along side streets and dark plazas.

These 9 interactive illuminated bikes helped develop a stronger connection among the different sections of the neighborhood and helped unify the identity of the newly consolidated Business Improvement District in Jamaica.

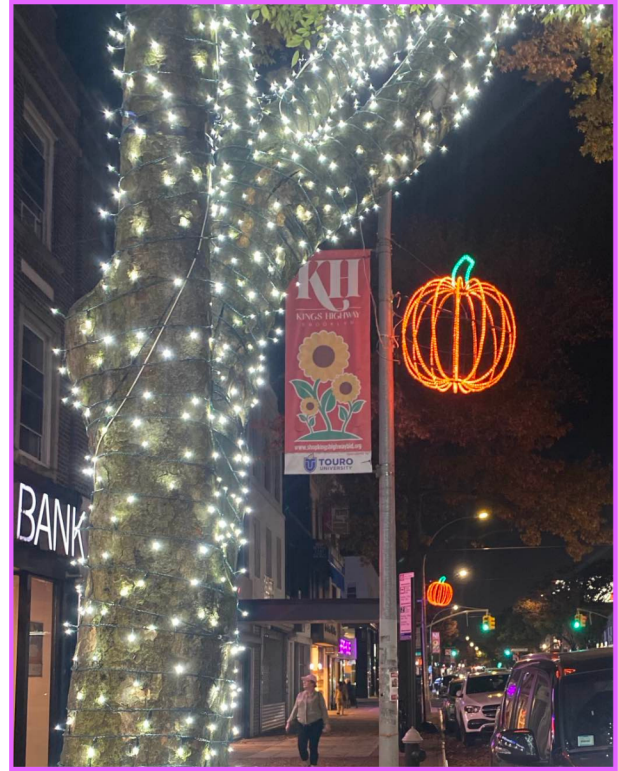
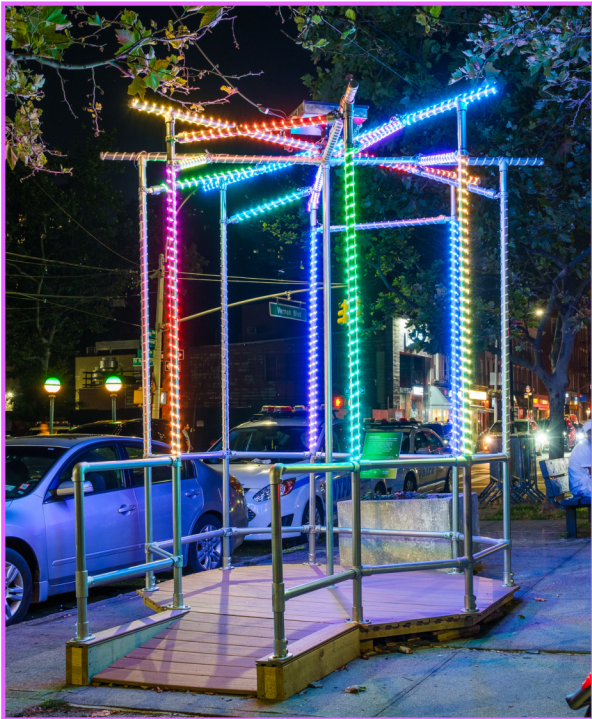
SPOTLIGHT

LONG ISLAND CITY

LONG ISLAND CITY PARTNERSHIP

The Lumina Arcana project featured two pergolas adorned with vibrant colorful lighting designed and built by local artists.

The installations were strategically placed at Vernon Mall and Gordon Triangle, transforming these underutilized public spaces that bookend a small business corridor into lively, inviting spaces. Additional programming such as kids activities were offered to encourage the community to feel welcome to use the spaces.



MIDWOOD

KINGS HIGHWAY BID

Decorative lighting on trees and poles along Kings Highway helped brighten this commercial corridor for the holiday season.

To address safety concerns in and around Sgt. Joyce Kilmer Square, the Kings Highway BID added streetlamp appendages and tree lights to brighten the corridor and successfully mitigate the negative perceptions of safety at night.

SPOTLIGHT

MORRIS PARK

MORRIS PARK BID

The Pulse light installation celebrates connections, transformation, and love for the Bronx. Located in the newly renovated Loreto Playground, the Pulse transformed the space into a 24-hour gathering site for the community and helped attract visitors to the Morris Park Avenue commercial corridor.

This creative project featured a calendar of colors and motion patterns over a 6-month period such as red, white, and blue to celebrate July 4th and the National Puerto Rican Day Parade; yellow, green, and red for Juneteenth celebrations; and rainbow colors for LGBTQ+ Pride celebrations. Not only did it receive positive media attention - it was also awarded an Honorable Mention at the 2024 international LIT Lighting Design Awards.

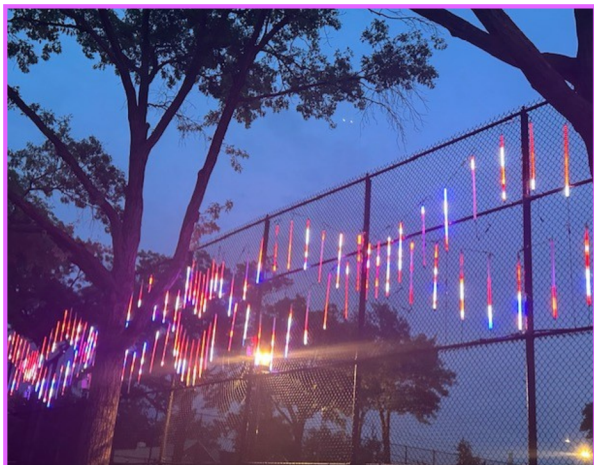


WEST VILLAGE

WEST VILLAGE BID

This colorful project illuminated multiple sites across the West Village. On Bleecker Street, temporary festoon lighting was hung for the holiday season but was extended for year-round outdoor lighting. As part of their “Pride in the Village” campaign, the BID installed colorful uplighting on building facades and rainbow crosswalks around Christopher Park and the Stonewall National Monument. In Father Demo Square, electrical conduits were installed to add tree lights and fountain illumination, enabling future installations as well.

In the past, Christopher Park suffered from vandalism and theft due to low lighting levels on the eastern side of the park. Following the installation of the BID’s lighting project, the New York Pride organizers reported that 2024 was the first year that the Pride flag installation was not damaged, vandalized, or stolen during Pride weekend.





careers
businesses
neighborhoods