Grand Army Plaza Capital Vision

Workshop for Larger Prospect Heights Study
November 16th, 2022

Welcome!
6:30 – Workshop Opens
6:35 – Welcome
6:45 – Presentation
7:00 – Breakout Rooms
7:55 – Closing
Workshop Agenda

1. Overview of the Prospect Heights Public Realm Study
2. Overview of Grand Army Plaza
3. A New Vision
4. Breakout Groups
5. Next Steps

Let’s start with a poll!

In what neighborhood do you live?
Why are we here?
Growth and Changes to the Neighborhood

- Substantial private and public projects in or near the neighborhood over the years
- Increased population with ongoing work at Atlantic Yards and future efforts along Atlantic Avenue
- Evolving use of the streets following the COVID-19 pandemic with the introduction of open streets and outdoor dining
Ongoing and Future Initiatives

Atlantic Yards Development
Berm and Arch restoration by PPA and DPR
Water Main Replacement by DEP
Flatbush Ave Bus Priority Project
Atlantic Ave Mixed Use Plan by DCP
Washington Ave Capital Project

Initiative limits are diagrammatic only
Public Realm Capital Improvements

As part of the 2023 budget, the city allocated $1.8M to conduct a Capital Project Scope Development (CPSD) study for:

- Grand Army Plaza
- Vanderbilt Avenue
- Underhill Avenue

DOT is partnering with the Department of Design and Construction (DDC) and local stakeholders to conduct this study over the next few years.
What is a CPSD Study?

The CPSD program is a way to clearly determine project scope, cost, and other key factors before construction capital dollars are committed.

Typically reserved for larger-scale projects with substantial unknowns, which may influence cost and feasibility.

Includes:
- Traffic study
- 30% design documents
- Preliminary landscape design
- Community and stakeholder outreach
- 3 design alternatives with accurate construction cost estimates
What locations are being studied?

Grand Army Plaza
Plaza St East and West

Vanderbilt Avenue
Atlantic Ave to Grand Army Plaza

Underhill Avenue
Pacific St* to Eastern Pkwy

*Atlantic to Pacific block included in Washington Ave Capital Plan
What locations are being studied?

Grand Army Plaza
Plaza St East and West

• Capital buildout of existing public spaces
• Improvements to Plaza St East and West
• Traffic operation and circulation changes in the surrounding street network
What locations are being studied?

**Vanderbilt Avenue**
Atlantic Ave to Grand Army Plaza

- **Key Stakeholders/Communities**
  - Prospect Heights Neighborhood Development Fund, local businesses, MTA
- **Long term vision of geometric changes to support the Open Street**
- **Study of full, partial, part-time closures or a combination of both to facilitate more public space**
What locations are being studied?

Underhill Avenue
Pacific Street to Eastern Parkway

- Key Stakeholders/Communities
  - Prospect Heights Neighborhood Development Fund
- Long term vision of geometric changes to support the Open Street
- Study of best typical block designs that facilitate access while maximizing usage of Open Street
What is the process?

DOT and DDC Public Outreach Strategy:

- Presentations to city agencies, local organizations and community boards, as well as elected officials
- Initial idea gathering workshops, workshops of initial designs, and final presentation of study findings

The three locations will be studied holistically, however, outreach and stakeholder engagement will happen separately for each location to allow for more focused feedback

Key stakeholders for Grand Army Plaza include:

- NYC DPR
- Prospect Park Alliance
- NYC DEP
- GrowNYC
- Landmarks Preservation Council
- Public Design Commission
- MTA
- Brooklyn Public Library
- Plaza Street Block Association

Draft Schedule

2022
- Summer 2022 – Study Funded

2023
- Fall/Winter – Initial Outreach
- DDC onboards Design Consultant
- Traffic Study and Initial Design
- Presentation/Workshopping of Preliminary Design

2024
- End of 2024 – Completion of Study
Grand Army Plaza
Grand Army Plaza

Location

• Large “traffic oval” made up of the inner roadways and outer Plaza St ring
• Flatbush Avenue crosses the plaza from the northwest to the southeast
• Vanderbilt Ave, Union St, Prospect Park West, and Eastern Parkway all terminate at various points around the oval
1. Entrance to Prospect Park on the south
2. Brooklyn Public Library on southeast corner
3. Soldier’s and Sailor’s Memorial Arch and Bailey Fountain in the center
4. 2/3 Grand Army Plaza station on the north
• B69 and B41 buses run through the plaza
Grand Army Plaza

Historical Context

• Included in the initial 1861 plan for Prospect Park and designed in 1867 by Frederick Law Olmsted and Calvert Vaux

• Designed to be a grand entrance to the park to separate the noisy city from the calmness of the park
Grand Army Plaza

Function and Use Today

• ‘Front Door’ to ‘Brooklyn’s Back Yard’ with one of the main entrances to Prospect Park
• Primary pedestrian, transit, bicyclist and freight thoroughfare
• Connects neighborhoods to civic institutions such as Brooklyn Public Library, Brooklyn Museum, and Brooklyn Botanical Garden
• Civic gathering point for 2020 “Black Lives Matter” marches and Presidential Election demonstrations
• Home to the Grand Army Plaza Greenmarket, the second largest in the city
Grand Army Plaza

Past Work

• Long history of community partnership and in-house DOT projects
  o 2002 Capital project added triangle near Public Library
  o 2004 One-way bike lanes added to Plaza St
  o 2007 DOT project added three new concrete triangle on the southeast corner of the plaza
  o 2008 study by the Design Trust for Public Space
  o 2010, 2011, and 2012 in-house DOT safety projects on north and south ends of the plaza
  o 2012 project added two-way bike lane to Plaza St
  o 2018 DOT project updated southern most public space to formalize park closure to vehicles
  o 2022 DOT project to add curb extensions and bike parking around Plaza St
Grand Army Plaza

Current Components

- Relatively equal distribution of roadway, planting, and pedestrian space
- Isolated refuges create “pedestrian islands in a sea of vehicles” feel on southern portion of the plaza

Let’s take another poll!

How do you travel to or through Grand Army Plaza?
Grand Army Plaza

Existing Issues

Walking:
• Long waits to cross the street in complex crosswalks
• Uninviting space due to heavy traffic and large roadways (islands in a sea of vehicles)

Biking:
• Complex routing through the oval with long waits at crossings
• Un-protected lanes on Plaza St

Transit:
• Slow buses due to heavy traffic
• Convoluted routing of B69

Driving:
• Complex and confusing operations and lane designations
• Heavy congestion and traffic spillback on Union St
A New Vision
A New Vision

Goals for a capital reconstruction

1. Create a world class public space
2. Improve pedestrian connections around and through the plaza
3. Provide seamless connections to Vanderbilt Ave and Underhill Ave public spaces
4. Improve and strengthen bicycle connections
5. Speed up bus operations
6. Simplify traffic operations
A Spectrum of Ideas

1. Build Out Existing Painted Spaces in Permanent Materials
2. Consolidate Flatbush Traffic
3. Unify Public Spaces

“As Is”

Big Changes
Breakout Workshop Groups
A New Vision

Open Workshop Discussion

1. Identify additional issues and problem locations
2. Highlight what works currently
3. Identify goals for the study
4. Respond to big ideas
Report Back

What was your groups main takeaway?

1. Create a world class public space
2. Improve pedestrian connections around and through the plaza
3. Provide seamless connections to Vanderbilt Ave and Underhill Ave public spaces
4. Improve and strengthen bicycle connections
5. Speed up bus operations
6. Simplify traffic operations
Be Heard!

Take our survey

- Currently we have over 1,500 responses!
- Survey will close at the end of November
- Summary of survey and workshop to be shared by the end of the year

Link in chat!
One final poll!
Which Big Idea best embodies your vision for Grand Army Plaza?

1. Build Out Existing Painted Spaces in Permanent Materials
2. Consolidate Flatbush Traffic
3. Unify Public Spaces
What comes next?

Spring 2023

• Implement Vanderbilt and Underhill In-house Street Improvement Projects

Summer 2023

• Feedback workshops for Vanderbilt and Underhill portions of study area

2023

• On-going outreach for Flatbush Avenue Bus Priority Project
• Public presentation of proposals for Washington Avenue Capital Project
Thank You For Attending!